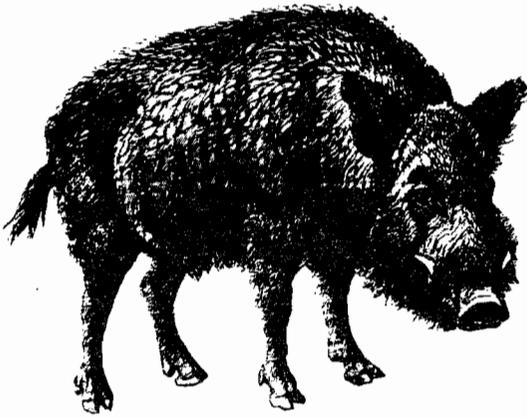


How To Construe Nature: Environmental Ethics and the Interpretation of Nature

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(1)

Does Nature have moral value? The belief that it does lies at the heart of environmental ethics. Yet two very different conceptions of environmental ethics reveal themselves when we consider how an answer to such a question might be justified. The most common approach would have us investigate the properties which natural beings possess. The assumption here is that when we know what these properties are, we will be in a position to deduce the value of Nature from a determination of the moral relevance of these properties. Appeals to sentience, self-consciousness, or life as criteria of moral considerability are examples resulting from this type of inquiry.

An alternative approach to environmental ethics, which I shall call "contextualist," would have us investigate the processes whereby Nature is construed as something which either possesses or fails to possess moral value. On this view, the value we should place on Nature cannot be deduced from the way Nature is itself; it depends on the place which Nature has acquired in our discourses with one another. In other words, the moral

status of Nature is determined by the contexts within which non-human entities are incorporated into human cultural understanding. Since our ability to value the non-human world is mediated by this understanding of what Nature is, a contextualist environmental ethics would direct our attention to the social and political matrices within which human beings become cognizant of that world.

At a time when contemporary philosophy increasingly turns toward contextualist strategies of inquiry, writers in environmental ethics still seem to prefer the direct investigation of Nature itself. The strategy of contemporary environmental ethics remains predominately foundationalist. By this I mean that it defends its criticisms of human intervention in Nature by an appeal to a standard of conduct which lies outside human thought and culture. It is supposed that if we construe Nature as it *really* is in itself, then it will be possible to apprehend the obligations which Nature imposes upon human beings with the necessary philosophical certainty. The foundationalist strategy presupposes timeless criteria of moral relevance which forever remain free of the vicissitudes of cultural interpretation.

But this strategy no longer seems philosophically plausible. Lying at the heart of this enterprise is the assumption that we can be clear about what Nature



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requires of us, since Nature is a determinate something, independent of our culturally based interpretation and understanding of what it is. Nature is not something in itself, but rather an artifact of human cultural life.

In order to pose the moral question of our obligations to Nature, we necessarily call before us a particular conception of what Nature is. It is to Nature as it is conceptualized and interpreted by historically situated human beings that we relate, not the brute and uninterpreted data of biological forces. To say that Nature is an artifact is to say that we have no access to a Nature in itself; our interpretation of Nature can never be independent of the intellectual, artistic, emotional, and technological resources available to us. These resources constitute the matrix, or context, within which what we call Nature appears to us and within which we interpret our experiences of the world.

Moral reflection necessarily poses the question of Nature's value from a standpoint that is contextualized within this matrix. Thus, the inquiry into Nature's moral status proceeds against the background of a prior interpretation and understanding of just what Nature is. But this understanding itself presupposes the historically specific matrix from within which we begin our interpretive effort. It follows from this that we cannot answer the question concerning Nature's moral value abstractly, that is, without first specifying a particular way of knowing Nature and the concrete results of that way of knowing. That the moral value of the environment depends upon a conception of Nature which in turn is relative to a particular way of knowing the world, is the contextualist premise for practicing environmental ethics.



As an example of the force of this contextualist premise, consider how beliefs about the value of wilderness areas depend upon the cultural context from within which it is perceived. When the Puritans first settled the wilderness of New England, they found it to be the grim and forbidding domain of Satan. Through the lenses of Puritan religious convictions, wild Nature possessed only negative value; religious duty demanded that it be cut down, cultivated, and domesticated.¹

Following the advent of Romanticism, however, landscape painting helped to form a more benign relationship with those wilderness areas which fit the criteria of the picturesque and the sublime. Wild Nature took on an aesthetic value which could then be used to develop conservationist arguments of a moral kind.²

But in contemporary society, the aesthetic value of Nature as a spectacle must compete with economic constructions of the wilderness. Not only do wilderness areas contain valuable timber resources, but they offer economic opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other recreational uses with significant economic importance. These uses often lead to a degradation of the aesthetic values of wild areas.

These three perspectives construe Nature differently; for one, Nature is a religious entity — the domain of Satan — for another, it is an aesthetic entity — a picturesque or sublime view — and for a third, it is an economic entity — a commercially profitable resource. Any answer to the question of Nature's moral value, then, will necessarily be guided and informed by our conception of the Nature which is intended. Thus, inquiry into the moral status of Nature must inevitably return to a moral and political investigation of the social context within which Nature is constructed.

The view that Nature is constructed within particular cultural contexts conflicts with the usual practice of environmental ethics. Philosophers engaged in environmental ethics tend to presuppose the existence of a stable Nature that is both the victim of human wrong-doing and the source of guidance on the proper path of redemption.³ Despite the internal differences between them, most of the competing views about environmental ethics agree on two things: first, the way in which we ought to treat nonhuman entities follows from the properties which those entities possess, so that Nature's admittance to participant status in the moral community depends upon its objective possession of the relevant qualifying characteristics. And second, the

function of an environmental ethic is to help us to return from our alienation from Nature so that we may live more closely in harmony with it. This will happen when we recognize that Nature qualifies for moral consideration and act accordingly. But these two points only make sense if we also agree that our understanding of Nature and its moral law comes from unmediated access to the way that Nature is in itself. If this is not possible, then appeals to follow the dictates of Nature reduce to appeals to do what is right, as that is defined by the environmental ethic in question. Nature, therefore, is unable to play the independent justificatory role which foundationalist ethics requires of it.

(2)

The idea that Nature should be our moral guide appears in a number of different guises, depending on the moral theory in question. It informs the arguments of those who deny that we have moral obligations to Nature as well as those who affirm them. Let me clarify what I mean by this.

In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Immanuel Kant denies that we can have direct duties to animals because they lack certain features necessary to participate in the moral community.⁴ In particular, they lack the capacity of reason and free will. Since animals do not possess these properties, we can have no moral relations with them directly, although we may have obligations *regarding* animals. For example, if other human beings will be adversely affected by our mistreatment of animals, then our direct obligations to other human beings require us not to mistreat animals. In any case, the question of the moral standing of animals depends, for Kant, on the objective properties which beings do or do not possess independently of how we think about them. It follows that Nature is disqualified from playing the role of victim or of moral guide from the Kantian standpoint.

The animal liberation movement attacks the Kantian perspective but retains its foundationalist framework.⁵ Peter Singer argues, for example, that to be a member of the moral community a being must possess sentience, that is, the capacity to feel either pleasure or pain. Any being which has this property qualifies for moral respect, those which do not, remain outside the protection of moral strictures. Using this criterion, Singer extends the moral community to include certain species of animals which clearly can feel pleasure and pain.

Proponents of the "land ethic" articulated by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac* criticize animal liberation theories because they focus too narrowly on the individual animal, with the result that they ignore the ecological wholes of which individual animals are a part.⁶ While animal liberationists are primarily concerned with our treatment of domestic animals, the "land ethic" starts from a concern for wild biotic communities. Our moral concern should not be to avoid pain and suffering but, rather, to maintain the stability, integrity, and beauty of the biotic community as a whole. That is what has moral value. Thus, all aspects of Nature come to have moral value, from this perspective, insofar as they contribute to the stability, integrity, and beauty of the ecosystem.

The "land ethic" thereby greatly extends the scope of the moral community. Nonetheless, the argument supposes that Nature can only make a moral claim on human beings to the extent that it satisfies an objective demand, namely, that the natural entity in question be significant for the health of the ecosystem. If it does not have that property, or if it in some way is a threat to the health of the ecosystem, then that natural entity is excluded from moral protection. Thus, some proponents of the "land ethic" suppose that hunting is compatible with their moral concern for the stability, integrity, and beauty of the biotic community.⁷

Some members of the eco-feminist movement also follow the same sort of strategy.⁸ The common commitment to foundationalism manifests itself differently in eco-feminism, however. The significance of the eco-feminist contribution to environmental ethics lies in its recognition that the environmental crisis is not merely a product of human relations to Nature. Rather, it is a symptom of oppressive relations between human beings as well. They draw a connection, then, between the culture's willingness to ignore the interests of non-human beings and the culture's willingness to ignore and suppress the interests and needs of women. Western philosophy has consistently drawn a distinction between culture and nature and associated men with culture and women with nature.⁹ Patriarchal control of Nature is seen, therefore, as intimately bound up with patriarchal control of women.

For more radical members of the eco-feminist movement these parallels suggest the possibility that women are in fact "closer to Nature" than men. While men are fundamentally alienated from natural processes,

women have managed to retain closer ties to Nature, and are thus in a privileged position to care for Nature and to guide the culture in its return to a way of life more in harmony with Nature. But this position also evinces the commitment to a Nature which exists independently of human culture. If we are to make sense of the notion that women are "closer to Nature" than men, we must first make sense of the notion that there is an objective Nature there to be "closer to" in the first place. We must agree, in other words, that these dualisms which separate men from women and culture from Nature are not merely patriarchal constructs, but reflections of the way in which Nature truly is.

The positions which I have just identified all share allegiance to the two points I mentioned earlier. They agree that our moral obligations depend upon what properties the object actually has and that a proper understanding of these properties will allow us to return to a close and harmonious moral relationship with the natural world. In the rest of this paper I shall indicate some aspects of the alternative position I am proposing.

(3)

In order to make Nature our guide in matters of morality we have to understand what Nature is. This, it seems to me, is more problematic an undertaking than many in environmental ethics suppose. Our understanding of Nature is the product of cultural institutions and the plurality of interpretations of the natural world which they make available. Before we can make Nature our moral guide, we must ask how our present understanding of Nature was constructed and how it has led us onto the particular path of environmental destruction we currently follow. From that standpoint we should ask *not*, how is Nature *really* constructed? Rather, we should ask, what understanding of Nature would support and sustain a life which is morally responsible both towards the environment and towards other human beings?

Several interpretive frameworks exist for approaching the question of how to construe Nature, although the cultural origins of these frameworks are often obscured by their proponents. For members of the Deep Ecology movement, for example, our problems with the environment stem from our one-sided anthropocentrism and concern with ever-increasing material consumption.¹⁰ The anthropocentric tradition,

which Deep Ecology attacks, perceives Nature as inferior to human nature because it lacks the properties of rationality and freedom which are essential to human moral status. Nature is thus perceived as out there to satisfy human needs and purposes, perhaps "given" by God for these ends.

For eco-feminism, on the other hand, it is the exploitive impulse inherent in men, or in the male principle as it is manifested in patriarchal institutions, which explains how it is possible for our culture to marginalize Nature as a force in moral deliberation. Patriarchal culture perceives Nature as an antagonist, an opponent to be conquered, subdued, and overcome. It perceives natural entities as competitors and threats which must be neutralized. Such a culture is symbolized by the male hunter who supposes that the life which is most in harmony with Nature is one given to the pursuit and killing of wild animals.¹¹

And for Marxists and anarchists, a certain blindness towards the environment appears to be inherent in the capitalist mode of production.¹² Profit and efficiency have not motivated ecologically responsible productive practices. For the capitalist, Nature is perceived as a source of raw materials for mass production. Drained of moral value, it is a material universe to be used for the increase of private profit and advantage in the most economically efficient manner possible.

When I say that these are interpretive frameworks, I mean that these explanations of the environmental crisis do not just attack particular forms of human action, but also critique the particular ways of construing Nature which appear to justify the unwanted human action. Deep Ecology, eco-feminism, Marxism, and anarchism provide examples of the sort of frameworks without which defining what is morally problematic about human relations with the environment would be impossible.

Once we recognize the presence of interpretive frameworks such as those I have just identified, it becomes clear that without such frameworks, 'Nature' remains an empty term and the relevance of ethics to Nature becomes completely undecidable. If this is so, then Nature can only guide us if we accept the framework within which some particular Nature has already acquired a meaning and a value for us. And if we oppose specific human practices because of their effects on the environment, then our critique cannot simply appeal to Nature as foundation and legitimation, but, rather, must

first seem to uncover the process of construing Nature which buttresses those practices and the habits of thought which motivate them. We might then try to articulate new interpretations of Nature that would motivate alternative practices.

(4)

Let me say something briefly about two ways in which how we construe Nature in our present culture is a reflection of thought patterns intrinsic to cultural categories quite separate from any notion of a Nature in itself. First, we live in a society whose economic health depends upon expanding commodity production. We should expect, therefore, that Nature will have been enlisted to support this project. Second, we live in a society which has gradually objectified human beings in the process of transforming them into participants in capitalist processes of production. We might expect, therefore, to find that Nature, too, has been objectified as a consequence of this process.¹³ In order to see this, we might ask, what interpretation of Nature would support the demands for economic growth which are part of the capitalist economy? Certainly, a view of nonhuman entities as containing spirits, needs, interests, or rights runs contrary to the desire to treat nature as a mere source of raw materials. Rather than following animistic constructions of Nature, our culture tends to give priority to a vision of Nature constructed by the natural sciences. This is true despite the fact that most people are ill-equipped to comprehend the world which is so constructed.¹⁴ The dominance of the natural scientific view of Nature as the site of merely physical relations and forces does not just advance a particular cognitive project. It also gives legitimacy to the economic and political interests of those engaged in commodity production under present conditions by undermining alternative construals of Nature which would invest it with moral and aesthetic values capable of justifying a moral critique of the prevailing social system.¹⁵

Mass production can proceed most efficiently if Nature becomes invisible to human beings or is visible only as a commodity in the production process itself. It becomes invisible when the majority of the population no longer live in direct contact with the land nor make their livelihood from an understanding of the physical objects and processes of the environment.¹⁶ For urban culture, Nature regains its visibility in the visual images

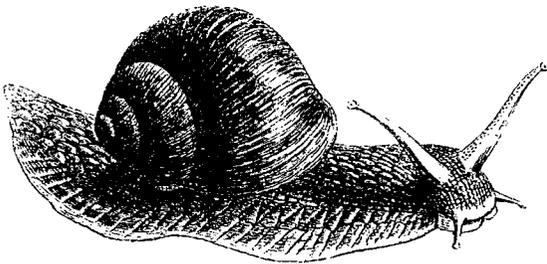
of landscape painting, travel posters, television documentaries, and advertising photographs. These images have two significant features. First, they construe Nature as a spectacle that has value to the extent that it possesses certain aesthetic visual qualities. Nature is understood to be external to the everyday life of a person, a place to visit for relaxation or edification, like a museum or zoo, but not a place in which to live. As such, Nature is understood in terms of the masks held up by the artist and the leisure industry.

The second feature of these images is that they construct Nature as a commodity to be purchased by an otherwise passive consumer. One buys the leisure weekend, or the vacation package, in order to recuperate from the everyday life of work. But this purchase promotes only an external relation to what is purchased. It is not a living interaction but a passive appreciation of the spectacle, which one buys. And in the name of this purchase the economy is licensed to continue to destroy Nature through "business-as-usual" — to make the leisure industry both possible and necessary — while at the same time preserving selected bits of it for selective enjoyment.

To say that our culture seeks to render Nature invisible and to translate it into a human commodity does not entail that it has been fully successful. The unwillingness of people to move from economically depressed rural areas on account of the "way of life" that is possible there, reveals the extent to which economic rationality has failed to uniformly dominate the deliberations of individuals. People do not, in fact, think solely in terms of their economic advantage. However, within the framework of a capitalist society, such individuals expose themselves to the suspicion that they must then be responsible for any consequent economic harm which they suffer, since they have failed to act in a fully rational manner. But that is precisely the problem. What it is reasonable to do, and what we can truly and literally say about the natural world depend upon the discourses of the dominant mode of thinking, in this case on capitalist economics and the natural sciences. Alternative patterns of thought and action inevitably appear marginal and eccentric. As such they are more easily ignored.

At this point, we must resist asking whether economic and natural scientific discourses *correctly* characterize Nature as it *really* is. Since what Nature is is a function of a particular way of knowing and thinking

about it, we might instead ask, who is empowered and who is subjugated by construing Nature in economic and natural scientific terms?¹⁷ Putting the question this way side-steps our impulse to engage a definition of Nature as if all that were at stake was a question of fact. It acknowledges the pragmatic or performative dimension of any understanding of Nature. We are led, that is, to evaluate the merits of a view of Nature not simply according to the canons of scientific method or economic efficiency, but also with regard to its practical moral and political implications for our lives and what we value. And this is no small matter. It is clear that the dominant construal of Nature ignores and marginalizes other forms of understanding and living in the world. This makes it difficult for us to perceive other ways in which Nature exists or to take seriously those who do perceive the world in ways which deviate from the mainstream perspective.



(5)

I am suggesting, then, that inquiry into Nature's moral value cannot be separated from inquiry into the ways in which we construe Nature to defend or attack the economic, social, and political practices and institutions of our society. It is no accident that the environmentalist movement has an uphill struggle trying to argue that Nature has intrinsic moral value or moral standing independent of human self-interest. Such conclusions require that we understand and perceive

Nature in ways that are different from those which currently sustain the mainstream activities of Western industrial cultures.

But what alternative do we really have, it might be asked, given that we cannot simply decide to believe that trees and animals have spirits or that they are gods, just because that might be a view of Nature which would limit our aggression against it? I am not sure that a clear, socially meaningful alternative does exist at the present time. Nonetheless, there is a model for what we might do if we take seriously the need to re-construe Nature as a part of re-valuing it. This model may be found in the writings of literary naturalists.

It is significant that most of the great figures in the environmentalist tradition are literary not philosophical writers. Thoreau, Burroughs, Muir, Leopold, Abbe, and Lopez, to name a few, all stand out as proponents of a moral relationship with Nature, yet are best known for their narrative depictions of particular settings, not for their abstract, theoretical arguments. What this literary tradition makes possible is a moral and philosophical association with place which is not narrowly economic, self-interested, or political. It re-introduces subjectivity and moral connectedness into the landscape. Walden Pond — to take the best know example — is no longer just a small lake near Concord, Massachusetts.¹⁸ It functions as a sign of Thoreau's ideas about the way one should live life. As such, Walden Pond has become a symbol which serves to recall Thoreau's writing and the respect and admiration for natural beings which he helped to promote.¹⁹

In the language of rhetoric, naturalist literature empowers the landscape through the figure of metonymy.²⁰ That is, the landscape acquires agency through this literature because it creates a close connection between places and particular ideas, values and experiences. To say that the landscape can speak to us is no more mystical and obscure than to say that the White House denied all knowledge, or that the Church announced its disapproval; all three are metonymic statements. Thus the association of particular ideas and narratives with landmarks in Nature provides one avenue by which Nature can be re-invested with a subjectivity denied to it by current exploitive interpretations. The broader task implied here is to incorporate physical into social and moral geography in such a way that Nature ceases to function invisibly, external to the everyday life of human beings.²¹

At a time when philosophers are acknowledging that the pursuit of philosophical absolutes and indubitable certainties is a bankrupt project, it is unfortunate to find the tradition of environmental ethics looking to Nature to find just such treasures.²² Appeals to "follow Nature" or to live in "harmony with Nature" mask the contexts which have given birth to the image of Nature one is to follow or harmonize with. If environmental ethics is to be critical, then it must participate in the discourses which construe Nature and reflect on the desires, needs, and motivations which constitute those discourses. Only from within this participation does it make sense to ask the normative question, how ought we to relate to Nature from the moral point of view?

NOTES

1. cf. Peter N. Carroll, Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

2. One example of an argument using aesthetic value as the basis for a moral argument can be found in Mark Sagoff, "On Preserving the Natural Environment," Yale Law Review 84 (1974): 245-252, 264-267.

3. An exception to this way of seeing the problem can be found in Steven Vogel's "Nature, Science, and the Bomb," Tikkun 3 (4): 19-21, 86-88; and "Marx and Alienation from Nature," Social Theory and Practice 14 (Fall 1988): 367-387.

4. Immanuel Kant, Lectures on Ethics, trans. by Louis Infield, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1930): pp. 239-241.

5. Statements of the animal liberation position include: Tom Regan, All that Dwell Therein: Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982); The Case for Animal Rights (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Peter Singer, Animal Liberation: a New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals (New York: Random House, 1975); Singer, ed., In Defense of Animals (Basil Blackwell, 1985); and Regan and Singer eds., Animal Rights and Human Obligations (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

6. Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac (Oxford University Press, 1966); see also, J. Baird Callicott, In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), and Callicott, ed., A Companion to A Sand County Almanac:

Interpretive and Critical Essays (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

7. Cf. J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair" in Callicott, In Defense of the Land Ethic, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-37.

8. Leonie Caldecott, Stephanie Leland, eds., Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth (London: The Women's Press, 1983); Andree Collard, with Joyce Contrucci, Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Marti Kheel, "The Liberation of Nature: A Circular Affair," Environmental Ethics 7 (1985): 138-163; Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Woman, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1980); Ariel Kay Salleh, "Deeper than Deep Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection," Environmental Ethics 6 (1984): 339-346.

9. Cf. Karen Warren, "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections" Environmental Ethics 9 (1987).

10. For significant statements of the Deep Ecology position, see Bill Devall, George Sessions, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985); Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," Inquiry 16 (1973): 95-100; Michael Tobias, ed., Deep Ecology (Avant Books, 1988).

11. This view is found in Callicott, *ibid.*; Jose Ortega y Gasset, Meditations on Hunting, trans. by Howard B. Wescott (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972); Paul Shepard, The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game (New York: Scribner's, 1973).

12. Important statements of the anarchist position can be found in Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy (Cheshire Books, 1982), and Post-Scarcity Anarchism (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1971); Andre Gorz, Ecology as Politics (Boston: South End Press, 1980).

13. Stuart Ewen's book, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), offers useful insights into the important role which advertising has played in bringing about the objectification of workers within capitalism as a part of the strategy of neutralizing opposition to capitalist work conditions. This is useful because advertising is one of the

significant sources of our present understanding of what Nature is.

14. George Steiner underlines the extent to which mathematical and scientific languages are not translatable into the natural languages of everyday discourse in "The Retreat from the Word" in George Steiner: A Reader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): pp. 283-304.

15. Cf. William Leiss, The Domination of Nature (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), especially Part Two, "Science, Technology, and the Domination of Nature."

16. See Stuart Ewen, *Ibid.*

17. This question is inspired by Michel Foucault's conception of power as expressed in "Two Lectures" and "Truth and Power" in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): pp. 78-133.

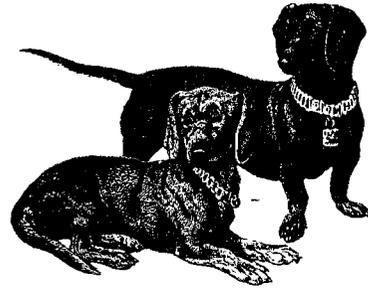
18. Henry David Thoreau, Walden (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961).

19. A "symbol" is a particular kind of sign. According to C. S. Peirce, a symbol signifies its object because of a conventional use of the sign to signify that particular object. The conventionality of the signification differentiates symbols from other signs such as icons or indexes. cf. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" in Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. by Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955): pp. 98-119.

20. The connection between symbols and metonymy is made by Chaim Perelman in The Realm of Rhetoric, trans. by William Kluback (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982): p. 102.

21. These remarks are derived from Keith H. Basso's essay on the use of geographical landmarks in the historical/moral narratives of the Apache Indians to bind the moral narrative to specific locations in the physical world of the community. Cf. "'Stalking with Stories': Names, Places, and Moral Narratives Among the Western Apaches" in On Nature: Nature, Landscape, and Natural History, ed. by Daniel Halpern (San Francisco; North Point Press, 1987): pp. 95-116.

22. In Anglo-American philosophy, one of the most influential figures in this attack on foundationalism has been Richard Rorty. Cf. Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), and Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).



APPASSIONATA:

**Giant heavy perfumed magnolia buds
The smooth voluptuous flesh of their petals
Like unmounted jewels on naked branches.
The uplifted arms of the trees
Lost in airy clouds of new green lace
Traced against the dark winter pine.
Pale froth of pink blossom.
Young strong breezes
And endless sky.
Spring has come again.**

**Earth gives birth
Fairer than I ever remember
As if to say:
This is my love story.
Look at me.
Cannot you see
How beautiful I am.**

**Adore me.
I am Goddess.
I am
The Heart of Mystery.**

Mary de La Valette