

Love: a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties <maternal love for a child> (Webster's Dictionary).

The human relationship with nature is similar to the forever known and told Greek tale about Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus fell in deep love with Eurydice, a beautiful nymph, and married her. They were very much in love and happy. Until one day, when Aristaeus, Greek God of the land and agriculture, became fond of Eurydice and actively pursued her. While trying to flee from Aristaeus she ran into a nest of snakes, which bit her fatally on her leg. Distraught by the death of his wife, Orpheus played sad songs and sang so mournfully that all the nymphs and gods wept. On the god's advice, Orpheus traveled down to the underworld and by his music softened the hearts of Hades and Persephone, who then agreed to allow Eurydice to return back to Earth on the condition that when Orpheus guided Eurydice back to the upper world, he couldn't look back. In his anxiety, he turned to look at her, and she vanished for the second time, forever. They were torn apart by a series of unfortunate events and when Orpheus was given a chance to heal wounds, he mistook it; therefore he was never able to access Eurydice again. I find this tale of the desperate Orpheus and fatally tragic Eurydice to relate to our current state with nature. This Earth has provided life sources for the human species, but during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relationship between humans and nature has rotted. Whatever happened to "treat others as you would like to be treated?"

In the early stages of human civilization, nature was idolized, worshipped, and cared for. Many early religions symbolized nature as a higher power or something to be entirely respected. Tim Murphy, PHD, History of Religions at the University of Alabama in his lecture about "Probing the Relationship Between Native Americans & Ecology," said that we should "see humans not as rulers of the Earth but as fellow citizens with all life forms and to see the biosphere as a continually conserved natural order of nutrients cycling through both living and non living parts of the environment." To get to this place of complete sustainability in agriculture, we need to come to terms with ourselves that we do not rule the earth, but coexist. What is Love? We ask ourselves this question daily because it applies to how we abide by our relationships with others. How we treat the Earth is a reflection of how we treat ourselves, and once we learn to love each other, we will then be able to love nature.

Stories have been told throughout the history of human kind; in ancient Greek and Roman mythology, tales were told to clarify why things existed, why things happened, etc. Through time, stories have been used as a tool of understanding, learning lessons, fear, love, conquering sadness, belief; anything can be adjusted and told as a story. *The Giving Tree*, a book written by Shel Silverstein has been an iconic tale told for the past 56 years. I find this story to exemplify how far away we have gotten from nature. In the story, a young boy befriends a tree. The boy would swing on the tree's branches, eat its apples, lay under its leaves, and the tree was happy when the boy was contented. As the boy grew older, he would come back to the tree, and take its apples, so he could sell them in the market and make profit. Long after that, the boy came back, wanting a home and a family, so he took the tree's branches to build a home, and the tree was happy that the boy was happy. Soon after that, the boy came back, and took the tree's trunk to build a boat, until there was nothing left. Years had passed, but the boy finally came back, and the tree told him that there was nothing left to take because all that was left was a stump. And the boy said, that's ok, I just need a place to sit, and the tree was happy. Let's say that mankind takes the role of the boy, and nature as the Giving Tree, and to be quite frank I don't see much of a

difference. Humans over time have taken natural resources for granted, taking until there is nothing left.

Industrial agriculture is a modern form of farming that refers to industrialized production of poultry, livestock, fish, and crops. Downsides of industrial farming include global warming from heavy use of fossil fuels, increased ozone pollution, increased health risks from pesticides, surface and groundwater polluted with animal waste, and environmental costs. Throughout the past 100 years in American agricultural history, nature has been just as disrespected as the position of the Giving Tree. We keep on taking and taking until there will eventually be nothing left. According to Peter Raven, writer of 'The Importance of Global Bio Diversity,' if you take a look into the 4.5 billion years of history on Earth, 3.5 billion years of life on Earth organisms have existed on land for only 430 million years. Homo evolved into Homo sapiens 500,000 years ago. Humans are relatively new to the planet, while our complex biological communities have been developing over millions of years. There are 45,000 types of vertebrates in the world, and we have named and categorized 90%. There are 1.7 million described species; half are insects, and we have described 35,000 species out of an estimated million. We know very little of our environment, still. There are three interconnected factors that are driving the destruction of biodiversity throughout the world (let alone America): human population, consumption rate per person, and appropriateness or choice of technology. If you look into the history of mankind: ten thousand years ago, agriculture was first developed and the entire human population was two million. By Christ, 130 million, 1 billion by 1820, 2 billion in 1930, and 2.5 billion in 1950. From 1950 to 2020 (a 70 year difference), within the lifespan of an individual in an industrialized country, the world population will have grown from 2.5 billion to 7.5 billion. It is also estimated that 20% of all species in the world will become extinct within the next 25 years.

These problems we have today with our environment surely didn't evolve on their own. We cannot modify nature, because that is simply unnatural, and we don't live on a man made earth. We need to stop destroying and using up biological communities because even if nature may forgive us for these intolerable acts, the damage has been done and we can't simply purify and bring back all life forms that have been discouraged through damaging their resources or being killed off. As if all of nature and the planet were infinite in their capability to support us. "We kill all the caterpillars and complain that there are no butterflies," says John Marsden, author of *The Dead of Night*. We often go for the quick fix; killing off the existing species won't provide us with a positive outcome, but exactly the opposite. We must be patient with nature because through the stages of transformation, you wouldn't expect a caterpillar to evolve into something so beautiful as a butterfly. This issue also relates to a term used in Chaos Theory, "The Butterfly Effect." This theory describes how small changes to a seemingly unrelated thing or condition can affect large, complex systems. We think something so small as a caterpillar doesn't have a huge impact on our atmosphere, but it does, tremendously. Once a caterpillar has evolved into a butterfly, it pollinates flowers through the process of absorbing nectar through its proboscis. The butterfly's long proboscis allows it to access flowers that a bee couldn't and its lightweight allows it to land on the most delicate of plants. Also, butterfly's larvae is important to farmers and gardeners to control plant growth because butterflies are sensitive to ecological changes, the lifespan of the insect help indicate scientists the current health of the ecosystem.

There are 20,000 species of butterflies in the world, 700 in the United States & Canada, and 6,000 in Latin America. Some localities in Eastern Peru have 15,000 species of butterflies, twice as many in single square mile as in the US and Canada. A prime example is Fungi; there are 70,000 described species of fungi out of what may be a total of 1.5 million. Those million

and a half species of Fungi, along with bacteria are the primary decomposers in the biosphere. They are present in 80% of all flowering plants, playing a vital role in the transfer of nutrients. Fungi are also useful in industrial processes and is a source of antibiotics, and as a primary source in wine, bread, and beer. Out of all the species we have categorized and named, 1.7 million of these species occur in temperate regions: U.S., Canada, Europe, Japan, and Australia, leaving only 700,000 named species in all of the tropical regions. In reality, ten million or more species of organisms are in the tropics, meaning we have named fewer than 5% of them. It is just becoming apparent that the Earth is a living and breathing thing, not a block of concrete. This earth has feeling.

What we give to the Earth, it gives right back to us. The Golden Rule states that one should treat others' as one would like to be treated. Modern ecologists recently started to appreciate Native America's ecological practices and have developed what is called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) that employs more traditional methods of probing the human relationship to the environment. By rediscovering traditional and ecological knowledge as adaptive management, we will be taking a step closer to truly knowing and respecting our surroundings. We need to sustainably harvest our resources by using effective systems of knowledge, acquisition, and transfer while using respectful interactive attitudes. Native American beliefs and philosophy recognize the power and spirituality of nature, so can't we illustrate that as well? We all must live together in harmony, as one nation. Unity will bring peace, and peace will bring love. By using sustainable farming and gardening practices, nature will show its truest and purest form, and that connection will grant us the benefit of a healthy environment. We all grow up in different cultures, have different ways of going throughout life, but to live peacefully in this world we have to accept each other and work with what we can. The same ethic applies to how we treat the Earth; we cannot change nature's ways of life or modify them, because then we are creating a bad relationship. In order to pursue a good stable relationship, we must take into terms that love can conquer all, and love's ability to be contagious.

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