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# Back to the Garden

## Introduction

*We are stardust, we are golden*
*We are billion year old carbon*
*And we got to get ourselves back to the garden*

So sing Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young to Joni Mitchell's words from the song "Woodstock" (Mitchell). Assigning to the concept of "garden" a deeper concept of a symbiotic relationship with nature, these words echo a message present in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* which Tremains relevant today. Although the environment is in a state of decline stemming, in part, from the Christian-based view that separates man from nature, and current policies and practices do little to alleviate environmental damage, Thoreau suggests an alternative, environmentally-friendly view where simplicity replaces excess luxury and humans are subject to natural systems. The urban environmental paradox is a significant obstacle to the implementation of Thoreau's idea. Using the urban environmental problems that result from vehicular commuting traffic as an example of the urban environmental paradox[1], I argue that this paradox exists because the current hyper-individualistic viewpoint, which trends toward ethical egoism, is a significant obstacle to the implementation of readily-available solutions, and note that the holistic value in Aldo Leopold's land ethic suggests beneficial guidelines to adopt. Recognizing the arguments that have been raised against holism, I also consider how a holistic environmental ethical frame might withstand the criticisms and remain viable and useful.

## Part One: Back to the Garden

There remains little question today that the environment is in danger. "Every living ecosystem is in a state of decline and the rate of decline is increasing" says a widely varied group of monitors, such as the United Nations Committee on the Environment, the Smithsonian, and even the World Bank (Sheppard). Though the media prefers to report a preponderance of conflict on this issue, the actual research performed by Naomi Oreskes in 2003 shows that among peer-reviewed journal submissions,

the consensus position states that "rapid climate change by human-caused inputs has been causing and will likely continue to cause warming" (Oreskes 16986). It seems reasonable to suggest that environmental degradation and global warming are threatening the long term status of life on earth. The correlation between anthropogenic carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions and global warming is quite clear. Although "critics of global warming are right to insist that no definitive causal connection has been established[,][,]... there is compelling evidence linking global warming with human activity" (Kaufman 317). Science explains how $CO_2$ emissions cause global warming even if the causal connection has not been made. Kaufman goes on to point out "it is one thing to know that A causes B, and another to know *how* A causes B. Given what is at stake with global warming, prudence would counsel not holding out until the last shred of evidence makes a causal connection between industrial activity and dangerous levels of global warming undeniable" (Kaufman 317).

Global warming is just one element of many that shows how the predominant method of interacting with nature is not sustainable. Steeped in the Christian tradition, many humans look upon nature as something which is there to be used and controlled however they desire. Walter O'Briant notes that there are two separate views of man[2] in relation to nature: "man apart from nature" and "man a part of nature" (O'Briant [Kaufman] 49). The common western paradigm maintains that humans are not a part of nature because they were created by an omniscient and omnipotent God in the image of God. God is above all creation; since humans are created in His image, they too transcend nature. "It is noteworthy here that this characterization has been made in the notions of creature, Creator, and creation," writes O'Briant, "for in our religious tradition particularly the basis for man's uniqueness has been found in relation to his Creator. The most important feature of this relation is that man was made in the image of God" (O'Briant [Kaufman] 50). Humans think because they rule the world, they can do with nature just as they please. This so-called western Christian view is what Lynn White, Jr. calls "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen ... [its] striking story of creation [suggests that] God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: No item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes" (White [Kaufman] 44). If all of creation exists only to serve human's purposes and humans are not a part of nature, nature becomes merely a resource to be exploited. Mankind's "careless attitude toward his environment has been reinforced by ... a frontier attitude – the notion that whenever our surroundings are depleted of the elements needed for our mode of life there will always be virgin territory for our expropriation and exploitation" (O'Briant [Kauf-

man] 52). Unfortunately, unsustainable practices are leaving the world with no frontiers left to exploit.

This process has not proceeded willy-nilly without any sorts of checks at all. Following the predominantly utilitarian or consequentialist ethic of John Stuart Mill (Kaufman 9), there have been regulations applied in an attempt to protect the greatest number of people. Environmental Law and a policy system for determining it have been created. Unfortunately, this system does not work perfectly.

Grounded in a complex regulatory structure designed to deal with environmental problems one at a time and pollutant by pollutant, the laws and regulations that comprise federal environmental law and serve as a template for all state environmental programs are, environmental law professor E. Donald Elliot explains, 'premised on the fiction of an omniscient center' capable of dealing with all environmental problems in a centralized and uniform manner (Shutkin 101).

While some imagination may be required to agree completely with Shutkin's analysis, it is at least interesting to note that the omniscient center at the head of the complicated bureaucracy resembles closely the omniscient God at the head of Christianity; in our relationship to nature, both appear to be problematic.

In addition to environmental law and policy, America also has an environmental movement at both the professional organizational level and at the grass roots level (Shutkin). Neither, however, has successfully overcome the problem of separation between humans and nature; nature remains "out there," apart from humans. "'If the overriding objective of environmental activism is protection of the entire environment,' Mark Dowrie writes, 'the traditional environmental movement was not more than half a movement. Limited from the start, it was almost obsessively oriented toward wilderness, public land, and natural resources conservation" (Shutkin 120). In this movement, humans are still not an integral part of nature, and nature is not an integral part of humans. "William Cronon decries environmentalists' habit of 'idealizing a distant wilderness' at the expense of the local, the everyday" (Shutkin 120). The "local" and "everyday" are the root and foundation of today's urban environment. Currently, more than half of the world's population is now living in urban environments (Sheppard).

Thoreau stated that "the same questions that disturb and puzzle and confound us have in their turn occurred to all the wise men; not one has been omitted; and each has answered them, according to his ability, by his words and his life" (Thoreau 185). A wise man himself, Thoreau addressed in *Walden* the root causes of many of the environmental questions facing our society today. "As early as the mid-nineteenth century, George Perkins Marsh and Henry David Thoreau, among others, called

for the conservation of nature, despairing, as Marsh did, that 'Man has too long forgotten that the earth was given to him for usufruct alone, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste'" (Shutkin 91). Thoreau was not a subscriber to the "man apart from nature" view; he is the epitome of the "man a part of nature" attitude. As such, Thoreau provides the foundation for a very different relationship with nature. Albert Einstein stated: "The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them." Similarly, it seems foolish to think that today's problems can be solved without stepping out of the box. Clearly, the current views of nature are not working. "More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink the old one," states White (White [Kaufman] 47). Using the same methodology over and over and expecting a different result is truly insane. Thoreau's experiment in *Walden* provides the map for an out-of-the box method, for Thoreau was definitely not an in-the-box philosopher. His view of nature is nothing like the current popular view of today.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach," writes Thoreau (172). While at Walden Pond, Thoreau lived very simply, choosing to eschew many of the assumed "necessities" of contemporary life. He found they were not at all necessary. "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hinderances [*sic*] to the elevation of mankind" (Thoreau 115). Cornell University economist Robert Frank would heartily agree with Thoreau today. "[Frank] argues in *Luxury Fever* that our obsession with high-end consumer items is not making us happy" (Kaufman 432). This very obsession with consumer luxury items is one of the primary factors harming our environment today. Items such as running shoes, blue jeans, and carpets take a significant toll on the environment through exploitation of natural resources, and human labor, and they produce significant quantities of air, water, and environmental pollution, in addition to other industrial waste ("Life-cycle Studies"). Thoreau proved that it was more advantageous to avoid unnecessary luxuries. "I wish to show at what a sacrifice this advantage is at present obtained, and to suggest that we may possibly so live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage" (Thoreau 128).

Living simply without obligation to unnecessary luxuries was indeed an advantage that allowed Thoreau the opportunity to focus his attention elsewhere. "By deliberately reducing his material wants, [Thoreau] found that he could live on very little and thereby devote the bulk of his time striving to comprehend what nature has to teach. *Teach* is the right word. Thoreau views nature as a source of wisdom" (Kaufman

378). Instead of nature being an object kicked around at the every whim of any person, nature is to Thoreau an important source of information. Thoreau learned to rely on a symbiotic relationship with nature for survival, which required an alteration in typical, everyday city-style, apart-from-nature thinking. Similarly, faced with the idea of losing the world, we, too should make a shift in our thinking. Denying that we are a part of nature and nature is a part of us is the source of our problem. Thoreau's message in *Walden* serves as an example of how one can avoid this problematic style of thought. It is easy to give a cursory glance to *Walden* and assume that the idea is for everyone to grab a small handful of spending money and retreat from the city to his or her own remote Walden Pond, build a small shack, and live simply like Thoreau did. That, however, is not Thoreau's message, nor would it be environmentally wise. Unlike John Muir-influenced Murray Bookchin suggests, the Confederal system of eco-community would appear to lead to one giant urban-esque landscape. Most humans are naturally social creatures. It is important to note that Thoreau was only a short distance from Concord, that he regularly walked to town and maintained continued interaction with other people, and that it was during this time that he spent his famous night in jail in protest of taxes to a government whose policies he did not support. He writes: "Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs" (Thoreau 228). Through simile, Thoreau again equates human society with nature.

Kaufman notes that "reading Thoreau often brings about an inner transformation that makes it impossible to participate fully in our market-driven, consumer-oriented society in quite the same way ... we can continue to function within it, but henceforth at some critical distance" (Kaufman 379). That critical distance is the first step in beginning to apply new solutions. Thoreau's symbiotic relationship between humans and nature suggests a simple, sustainable lifestyle; as such, it remains a relevant, significant, and foundational suggestion for the alteration of current values that can reduce accelerating ecological decline.

**Part Two: Root, Root, Root for the Home Team?**

The adoption of Thoreau's relationship with nature faces a significant obstacle: the paradox of urban environmentalism. In his forthcoming book, *The Paradox of Urban Environmentalism*, James Sheppard identifies this paradox:

Despite awareness that the values and policies adopted in urban environments contribute to environmental trends that threaten the ability of urban environments to function well as habitats for multiple species,

and despite the fact that the knowledge needed to reverse these trends exists, efforts to arrest these trends continue to enjoy only halting success (Sheppard, forthcoming).

The urban environmental problems that result from vehicular commuting traffic are an example of the urban environmental paradox. Automobile pollution, especially in urban environments, is a fact. Pollution mitigation devices such as catalytic converters have helped to reduce vehicular emissions. However, the quantity of people driving single-occupancy cars has increased rapidly enough to offset these technical solutions. Add to this that many people want the newest, coolest, and often the most environmentally detrimental vehicle. Aldo Leopold metaphorically anticipated this type of behavior years ago:

How like fish we are: ready, nay eager, to seize upon whatever new thing some wind of circumstance shakes down upon the river of time! And how we rue our haste, finding the gilded morsel to contain a hook (Leopold 42).

Leopold's colorful suggestion aside, the reliance on the individual vehicle for commuting has also resulted in the destruction of many urban ecosystems in the expansion of roadways to accommodate the ever-increasing number of vehicles on the road. Fortunately, public transportation, carpooling, walking, and hybrid vehicles are all well-known options that reduce the problems of single-occupancy vehicles. Though the overall benefits of these transportation alternates are clear, implementation—especially in Kansas City—does not happen. This is clearly an example of the paradox of urban environmentalism: the problems are known, the solutions are known, but these solutions have little success at being implemented (Sheppard).

The prime obstacle to implementing these known, available, and obvious solutions rests in the preponderance of hyper-individualism, which is currently highly valued in our society. When questioned, many people respond that public transportation, carpooling, or walking is not convenient, that air pollution isn't their problem, or—even worse—that they are not aware that a problem exists. Ignorance of the problem functions as an incentive to avoid action; if people refuse to acknowledge the problem, they do not have to act. The other common responses—"it's inconvenient, I can't do it" and "it's not my problem"—suggest an individualistic trend that is heading toward psychological egoism, which Tom Beauchamp and Norman Bowie identify as "the view that everyone is always motivated to act in his or her own perceived self interest (Beauchamp and Bowie 16). It is not that the individuals really *can't* use an existing solution; they merely *choose* not to. Bryan Norton would identify this behavior as an example of a *felt preference*, or "[a] desire or need of a human individual that can at least temporarily be sated by some spe-

cific experience" (Norton [Kaufman] 328). This type of thinking follows right in line with what Richard Sylvan defines as human chauvinism, where "humans, or people, come first and everything else a bad last" (Sylvan [Kaufman] 96). Peter Singer calls it an example of speciesism, which "is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those members of other species" (Singer [Kaufman] 151). Vehicular emissions, however, have exceeded even speciesism. The negative impacts of air pollution are adversely affecting other humans—members of our own species—as well. Our behavior is perverse, like the diabetic who simply must eat that chocolate chip cookie despite drastic medical results. We pack ourselves, as veteran rock group The Police sing, "like lemmings into shiny metal boxes" and join the "suicidal race" commuting to and fro each day.

Another reason that existing solutions are enjoying only minor success is that the media and advertisers frequently bombard us with the message that hyper-individualistic behavior is acceptable and even necessary. This approaches ethical egoism, which suggests that "one *ought* always to act on the basis of one's own best interest" (Beauchamp and Bowie 18). Ethical egoism is a dangerous place to be. Thomas Hobbes evaluated it this way:

Imagine a world with limited resources, where persons are approximately equal in their ability to harm one another, and yet, everyone acts exclusively in his or her own interest... everyone would be at everyone else's throat; such a 'state of nature' would be plagued by anxiety, violence, and constant danger" (Beauchamp and Bowie 18-19).

This description sounds very similar to how the media portrays many urban environments. The stability of this environment would be tenuous at best. J. Baird Callicott agrees:

A society, indeed, is particularly vulnerable to disintegration when its members become preoccupied totally with their own particular interest, and ignore those distinct and independent interests of the community as a whole (Sober [Kaufman] 305).

Aldo Leopold's holistic land ethic, however, offers a different method of thought and action from hyper-individualism which might help to resolve the urban environmental paradox. His view considers the community as a whole, extending moral consideration to all ecosystems. It makes sense: anything that damages one part, damages the whole. "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise," reads Leopold's maxim (262). The holistic method has a strong foundation in the philosophy of David Hume, which suggests that not every moral sentiment derives from individualistic principles, but instead there are "inborn moral sentiments which have society as their natural object"

(Callicott [Kaufman] 274). Hume suggests that "[we] adopt a more publick [*sic*] affection and allow that the interests of society are not... entirely indifferent to us" (*ibid*.). Leopold extends the definition of society to include the "biotic community" and shows that it deserves moral consideration because it is also an object of "publick affection which all normal human beings have inherited from a long line of ancestral social primates" (*ibid*.). He establishes six important environmental management guidelines:: One should exercise carefulness when tinkering with nature. One should avoid trigger itch when intervening. One should assess possible consequences of actions whenever possible. People should act as member-managers, not as conquerors. Pointing-the-finger blame should be surpassed by mutual accountability and responsibility. Finally, people should connect the need to act differently with the need to think differently (Sheppard).

Moving to Leopold's holistic way of thinking may seem like a big step, but using this maxim as a guide to dealing with our obsession with single-occupant vehicles reduces the problem of the urban environmental paradox. Carpooling, using public transportation, driving a hybrid vehicle, or walking whenever possible are all existing solutions. Each is very careful tinkering within an existent system. None fail the trigger-itch test; we've known these options for a long time. Possible consequences have been (or can be) evaluated when making a choice. Everyone is an equal member and manager, and all equally share responsibility and accountability. Choosing these logical options shows a form of thinking differently than most people are thinking currently about commuting; all apply consideration to the whole ecosystem, which is vitally important to establishing mutual responsibility and accountability:

There is as yet no social stigma in the possession of a gullied farm, a wrecked forest, or a polluted stream, provided the dividends suffice to send the youngsters to college. Whatever ails the land, the government will fix it. I think we have here the root of the problem. What conservation education must build is an ethical underpinning for land economics and a universal curiosity to understand the land mechanism. Conservation may then follow (Leopold 202).

Adopting a more holistic, all-inclusive view already works on urban environmental problems, as William Shutkin shows with the example of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in Roxbury, a small urban community near downtown Boston. Faced with hazardous trash dumps, toxic brownfields, and numerous other problems stemming from traditional urban renewal, white-flight, and abandonment issues (Shutkin 143-154), what made Roxbury's struggle successful was the holistic, all encompassing view:

Out of extraordinary adversity spanning several decades, the Dudley

neighborhood has been able to pull together to engage in comprehensive community planning, resulting in a sophisticated, innovative community-building strategy. With the full participation of neighborhood residents, businesses, community organizations, and local foundations, DSNI arrived at the UAS [Urban Agricultural Strategy] slowly and deliberately, improving its civic capacity for planning and problem solving along the way, creating what Greg Watson calls 'civic alchemy' – the yeasty, creative mix that comes from an engaged citizenry and produces often unpredictable, though always beneficial, results (Shutkin 162).

The key components here are "comprehensive community planning," "full participation," and "slow and deliberate" work toward a goal. Each is an important point in Leopold's environmental management guidelines. The resulting "civic alchemy" is the crowning achievement that shows the great benefit of Leopold's method: it works.

The holistic view works well from an ecological standpoint; it is a very different form of thinking, however, compared to merely an individualistic view. Harley Cahen provides the most astute argument against Leopold: "ecosystems cannot be morally considerable *because* they do not have interests" (Cahen [Kaufman] 289). They have no interests because they have no specific goals. Cahen asserts that the idea that members of an ecosystem "are cooperating to restore equilibrium" is "surely imaginable… each creature might instead be 'doing its own thing,' with the fortunate but incidental result that the ecosystem remains stable. *If this is correct, then we are dealing with a behavioral by-product, not a systemic goal*" (Cahen [Kaufman] 294, emphasis original). As an illustration, Cahen cites an example from George Williams involving a Martian biologist observing earthlings' behavior in a burning, crowded theatre. Cahen writes: "if the crowd clogs the exits in spite of strenuous crowd control efforts," the Martian could report that the crowd achieved the goal of self destruction by clogging the exits (Cahen [Kaufman] 294). The Martian would have concluded incorrectly. Obviously, self destruction is not the goal of the crowd; it is an unintended by-product of a rush for individual self preservation (*ibid.*). Likewise, the "good" or "bad" that we notice in ecological systems might be unintended by-products, not actual goals. Cahen implies that even if all individual members of an ecosystem possess goals, stating that the ecosystem itself has a goal commits the fallacy of composition: assuming that because the parts have individual properties, the whole will, too (Kaufman 33).

Cahen's argument is compelling, but I'll offer two examples that show we already accept the idea that moral consideration should be extended to collective systems. Consider a baseball team and its long-term fans. For my argument, the baseball team is analogous to an ecosystem and the fans are analogous to society in general. Like "eco-

system," the collective noun "team" is a concept we create to describe the players and allow them to play this game together. Each of the players may have an individual goal of winning the game, doing his or her best, or entertaining the spectators. Extrapolating those goals to the collective term "team," however, commits the fallacy of composition. The various individual actions of the players result in whether or not the team wins, but true fans support the team either way. Though over time, the players may all change, the team continues to exist and many fans continue to root for the home team. In making the choice to support a baseball team over time, fans extend moral considerability to the team as a whole. The choice to support (or not support) the team—to value it, defend it against put downs and ridicule, and hold it in high esteem—is a moral consideration.

The corporation is another example. It is a group of individuals working at their own individual tasks. At the most simplistic level, the CEO decides who should be hired and fired; the production workers add thingys to what-cha-ma-call-its and doodads to gizmos, creating a product. Individually, at the least, each person is working to complete his or her task and earn a paycheck. The by-product is that the corporation makes a viable "thneed"—as Dr. Suess (*The Lorax*,) would call it—and thus a profit. But the corporation itself is not a real thing:

Chief Justice Marshall, in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* in 1819 gave the corporation its classical formulation: 'A corporation is an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law. Being the mere creature of law, it possesses only those properties which the character of creation confers upon it, either expressly, or as incidental to its very existence. These are such as are supposed best calculated to effect the object for which it was created' (DeGeorge [Beuchamp and Bowie] 58).

While it can be argued that a corporation has an overall goal, the important note is that the corporation is artificial. Despite that, history shows that moral consideration has certainly been extended to corporations. Over the past 150 years, Supreme Court case "findings" have established that the rights set forth in the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution apply to corporations just as to individuals.[3] Cahen states: "I find it best to regard talk of the rights of nonhumans as an enthusiastic way of asserting moral considerability" (Cahen [Kaufman] 289). Clearly, the corporation is a non-living collective system; clearly, the Court has extended to this collective a series of rights. Though there is a difference between legal and moral rights, "moral rights… exist independently of and form a basis for criticizing or justifying legal rights" (Beauchamp and Bowie 46). At the very least, in establishing its legal rights, moral consideration is extended to the corpo-

ration.

We are familiar with extending moral considerability—even legal rights—to baseball teams and corporations. Though it makes sense, to suggest that we *ought* to extend moral considerability to ecosystems merely because we extend it to baseball teams and corporations unfortunately commits David Hume's *is-ought* fallacy: just because something *is*, it therefore *ought* to be that way. As such, Cahen's critique remains a significant obstacle to fully accepting the holistic argument on its own, despite its obvious benefits and apparent appeal; an alternate way must exist.

Bryan Norton's "weak anthropocentrism" (Norton [Kaufman] 326-337) provides just such an alternate. We do not live in a world of absolutes. Where hyper-individualism is one extreme and holism is the other, weak anthropocentrism might be the "mean between the extremes." Recall that Norton defines a *felt preference* as a human need or desire easily sated by a given experience. It involves only thinking about oneself. Weak anthropocentrism, on the other hand, includes *considered preferences*, which can "only be adopted after a person has rationally accepted an entire world view, and further, has succeeded in altering his felt preferences so that they are consonant with that world view" (Norton [Kaufman] 328). In other words, one alters felt preferences after learning about and giving careful consideration to the consequences they might entail. It is like smart shopping: rather than buying the biggest and most expensive lawnmower on the market, the smart shopper would take in to consideration not only his desire for a shiny machine, but also the potential effect that machine might have on the ecosystem as a whole. The potential consequences of the large, gas-powered machine are damages to the environment in numerous ways (gasoline dependence, air pollution, grass clippings, etc.). Knowing that, the smart shopper, then, might purchase an electric push mower that mulches the grass instead. The even smarter shopper might plant native buffalo grass, which requires little or no extra water, grows only six inches tall, and never needs mowing. In Norton's view, nature functions as a teacher; once one learns how ecosystems function, one should consider that knowledge when making decisions. Leopold would likely agree. According to Leopold, learning about the environment shows that "if the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not" (Leopold 190). Leopold's land ethic maintains room for the individual. After all, humans are also an important part of nature (Thoreau, *Walden*). J. Baird Callicott points out that Leopold's "land ethic, thus, has a holistic as well as an individualistic cast" (Callicott [Kaufman] 273). Leopold self defines:

In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror

of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such (Leopold 240).

The most beneficial features of both weak anthropocentrism and Leopold's holistic land ethic are that each (or even better, a combination of both) involves actually taking some sort of action. American philosopher John Dewey said: "Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method for dealing with the problems of man" (Dewey 65). Cahen's argument leaves us stuck in deliberation about whether or not moral considerability can be given to ecosystems, failing Dewey's call for a method, and resulting in no action taking place; the paradox continues. Leopold offers environmental management guidelines for action. Norton offers a method that checks actions that result merely from felt preferences and encourages the performance of actions that result from considered preferences instead. These actions are key to avoiding the paradox of urban environmentalism because they account for step three: actually implementing the known and available solutions.

**Conclusion**

The thinking processes that guide our interactions with the environment are flawed – they result in significant stress on natural systems, which leads to serious and accelerating ecological decline. The Christian-based view that man is somehow apart from nature is problematic. Thoreau offers a different relationship that embraces nature as the omniscient teacher and model of variety and sustainability. The message of *Walden* remains a significant and relevant suggestion to alter current values. The problem of the urban environmental paradox, however, is a substantial obstacle to doing so. It has its root in the hyper-individualistic nature of our society. We already know the problems and their solutions; we're just too self-centered to do anything about it. Aldo Leopold offers the land ethic—a holistic approach—with managerial guidelines as a solution. Even if the idea that ecosystems deserve no moral consideration is appealing, the more holistic, weak-anthropocentric approach still eliminates the problem of hyper-individualism and psychological and ethical egoism. Because they result in action, both Leopold's and Norton's methods are a viable and useful environmental ethical frame. With the urban environmental challenge at hand, both lead to the use of hybrid vehicles, public transportation, carpooling, and even walking when possible. As such, they are an important rethinking that will allow application and implementation of existing and readily available urban environmental solutions. Following this guide, we might recognize, as Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young intone, that indeed we can "get ourselves back to the garden."

(Endnotes)

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2 By "man" O'Briant and White actually refer to all humans, women and men. I use the term human synonymously.

3 A by-no-means exhaustive list of Supreme Court cases showing this includes: *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765 (1978), First Amendment; *Hale v. Henkel*, 201 U.S. 43 (1906), Fourth Amendment; *Noble v. Union River Logging R. Co.*, 147 U.S. 165 (1893), Fifth Amendment, and *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*, 118 U.S. 394 (1886) and *Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad Company v. Beckwith*, 129 U.S. 26 (1889), Fourteenth Amendment. Found at http://www.poclad.org/ModelLegalBrief.cfm#p3b1 , including relevant links to each case, retrieved online 6/24/06.

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