

narrow, utilitarian interpretation of that position. Some have interpreted the "dominion" passages of Scripture (cf. Gen. 1:26, 28) to give humans unlimited power over nature and to teach that nature is valuable only insofar as it satisfies human material needs.<sup>11</sup>

However, Scripture provides a different view in that even before the creation of humans, God honored other parts of the created order by calling them good (cf. Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). The fact that the created order also gives glory to God (Ps. 19:1), completely apart from humans and what they do with creation, would indicate further that nature serves something beyond human purposes and, as such, it must be respected and honored. Biblical passages such as Job 38 through 41 also emphasize creation's vast scope in relationship to human understanding. The Judeo-Christian tradition is anthropocentric but not in the sense that there is no transcendent standard that requires humanity to account for its stewardship of the created order. Appropriate dominion means acting as responsible stewards of creation. We are creatures made in God's image, which surely involves genuine respect and appreciation for nature, for understanding and treating it as God would.<sup>12</sup>

However, the effort to move beyond an anthropocentric to a biocentric view neither fits with our moral sensibilities nor yields useful policy prescriptions. First of all, the various attempts to derive a biocentric theology have been stymied in determining agreed-upon stopping points for the rights of nature. Although early efforts concentrated on the concept of sentience, philosophers and theologians have been unable to present a workable definition of what sentience includes. Edward Abbey, a leading deep ecologist, has said, "unless the need were urgent, I could no more sink the blade of an ax into the tissues of a living tree than I could drive it into the flesh of a fellow human."<sup>13</sup> Rene Dubos, a prominent bacteriologist, believes that just as people and wolves should coexist, so should people and germs.<sup>14</sup> Philosopher Paul Taylor argues, "The killing of a wildflower, then, when taken in and of itself, is just as much a wrong, other-things-being-equal, as the killing of a human."<sup>15</sup> But even granting rights to living creatures does not solve the problem, since several leading figures in the environmental movement now argue, in the words of Michael I. Cohen, that "rocks and mountains, sand, clouds, wind, and rain, all are alive. Nothing is dead."<sup>16</sup> giving the force is in it.

By contrast, the Genesis creation account makes a clear distinction between humans and the rest of the created order. We alone are made in the image of God; therefore, there are clear and meaningful differences between humanity and nature. Again, this is not to argue that there is a single purpose for nature, viz., the service of humankind. However, because people reflect God's image, it

Because we are like God  
is appropriate to speak of human rights and responsibilities that do not extend to other parts of the natural order.

One test of a moral theory is its fit with common-sense notions of right and wrong. This is not to say that morality is subject to ratification by majority vote, but if people generally find that sophisticated ethical theories fly in the face of what the person on the street thinks of as right, one must ask if those theories are correct. The fact that most humans want to draw a distinction between the well-being of their child and that of the diphtheria bacteria competing for the child's life should tell us something. The fact that even the most ardent fans of biocentrism eat spinach salads and walk on grass should also reveal something concerning the internal consistency of the claim that "all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization...."<sup>17</sup>

At the policy level, anthropocentrism is also essential. Every call to save the environment is predicated upon human action. We are asked to respond to stories of environmental disaster, to evidence that nature is being altered in unfortunate ways, and to appeals to reverse the damage that humans inflict upon the natural order. But every one of these is a call to change, and it is humans who are being asked to change. This presupposes that humans are the reasoning creatures of the universe, the ones who respond to moral arguments. This is a human-centered perspective that depends upon a human-centered view of the universe human made problems!

It is unclear how, in a world of human attempts to develop an appropriate perspective on nature, it is possible to have anything but an anthropocentric perspective. A standard definition of anthropocentrism is the interpretation of the world through human values, and it is this human-centered worldview that many radical environmentalists want to expunge from our thinking. When people call for an acknowledgment of rights for nature, they are suggesting that humans, through their thought processes or actions, recognize those rights. If there are rights embodied in nature, they will have relevance in our world only because humans choose to recognize them. Any rights that have significance for human institutions will be conceived of and acted upon by humans. It is difficult to see how one can have any meaningful policies or ideologies that practically affect nature unless they are seen through human eyes.

Laurence Tribe has called for us to choose "processes ... which ... avoid a premise of human domination."<sup>18</sup> But the very process through which Tribe chooses to express the rights of nature, namely, the legal system, has no way of removing human domination. In fact, the claim he makes for nature to have rights independent of any human influence is really a claim that particular



172 Whole List of Books that Say Everything is Just Fine

169 - The Laissez Faire Folks are the ones who

- 1) Really believe in science & rational evaluation
- 2) Believe technology part of god given creative impulse

3) Don't need to get as emotionally involved in environmental issues

169 - "because the ultimate hope for Christians does not lie in this world"

and 4 (167) They can have a number of good goals, not just this one

5) Hes for - appropriate dominion - acting as responsible stewards of creation. (Behind a Double Negative)

159 Formation of National Religious Partnership

Those that say X from theology is at the heart of the problem want completely revised theology of Nature that rejects anthropocentrism and duality

161/162 But Because, since we are like god we do have more rights than other things