

*Humanity is Green:
Eco-Experiences and
Philosophy*



ECOLOGY AND HUMANITY

- Whether seen through the apparent lens of Lao Tzu's work Tao Te Ching – his philosophical abstractions being under-girded by ecological order – or through the late, great astronomer Carl Sagan's articulation that we are all but stardust, the universe thinking back on itself; or even through the ancient near-eastern text called Genesis, and its theological assertion that man was created out of the dust of the Earth, the imminence and grandeur of nature has asserted herself on the human mind and heart for eons, pervading every aspect of human culture and thought. Even now, with the threat of global warming and the present reality of growing animal extinction, ecology, as a topic and, even more so, a social concern, is finding itself new life in a variety of cross-disciplinary work, as well as in the arena of international talks; truly an issue that transcends racial, lingual, economic and generational divides. Ecological awareness has even made itself into pop culture: it is now fashionable to “think green” and try to “save the planet”!



WHO CARES?!

- **Why should I subject myself to hearing about the “poor earth” and its supposed problems?**



Humanity is Green!

**To be human is to be "caught up"
in ecological reality.**

You must care for "Self"



Personhood (An Eco-Anthropology)

- *Deep Ecology* (Norwegian philosopher, Arnie Naess) 1972
 - Questions man's position in relation to environment
- **Two Main Principles**
- 1) The connectivity and interrelatedness of all life on earth over against anthropocentrism
 - 2) Self-realization by means of ecological awareness.

Deep ecologists claim that before knowing what we ought to do, we must understand who we really are. (Michael Zimmerman)



Ecological Factors are an Anthropological Necessity

How does the environment directly inform our way of being?

- Biologically
- Aesthetically
- Psychologically
- Spiritually



Our Dependence on Nature

Biologically

- Appropriate ecological conditions for biological needs
 - Water
 - Air
 - Earth
 - Various life



Our Dependence on Nature

Aesthetically

- Environment as a means of informing us of what beauty is, albeit this is highly subjective



Our Dependence on Nature

Psychologically

- Environment as a means to peace; escape from “fabricated realities”
- Sense of balance when in nature
- Calming
- Wholeness



Our Dependence on Nature

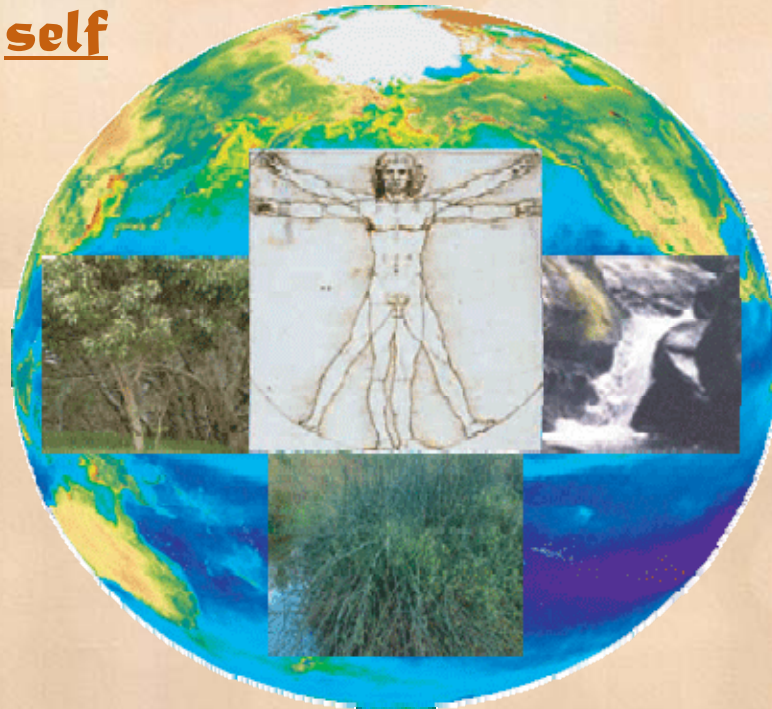
Spiritually

- Environment (biosphere) as a “hidden” pattern
 - It is our Home/Womb
 - Environment as a pedagogy for life




Couched in the Eco-sphere

Thus, to be human is to be a species that is intrinsically united to ecological reality. To forget about ecological reality is to forget about self



*The Imminence of Trash: An Illustration
of our Proximity to the Ecological Order*



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves, growing out of a small amount of dark soil. The background is a soft, warm, golden-yellow gradient, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The lighting is gentle, highlighting the texture of the soil and the freshness of the plant.

“This is a story in which we all play a part, whether we know it or not. Information-age technology has linked the world as never before, but its debris and detritus span the earth as well. From product manufacture and marketing, raw material collection, order fulfillment, disposal and recycling – and because the cultures and politics of Europe, Asia, and the Americas influence what we consider waste and how we treat it, and because ecosystems do not respect political boundaries – this is an international story. If you sit at a desk in an office, talk to friends on your cell phone, watch television, listen to music on headphones, eat cheese bought in a supermarket almost anywhere in America, are a child in Guiyu, or a native of the Arctic, **you are part of this story.**”

- Elizabeth Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxins, and Human Health*

“Garbage People”



AP / Michael Sohn




On average, how much garbage do you think you make in a day?

- “The United States is the world’s number one producer of garbage: we consume 30 percent of the planet’s resources and produce 30 percent of all its wastes. But we are home to just 4 percent of the global population. [...]”

(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves, growing out of a small amount of dark soil. The background is a soft, warm, golden-brown bokeh, suggesting a bright, sunny environment. The overall mood is one of care and growth.

On average, how much garbage do you think you make in a day?

- **“Recent figures show that every American discards over 1,600 pounds of rubbish a year – more than 4.5 pounds per person per day. And over the past generation our mountains of waste have doubled.”**

(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)

On average, how much garbage do you think you make in a day?



- *“New York City throws out enough garbage every day to fill the Empire State Building.”* (Gotham Gazette, www.gothamgazette.com/games/garbage.php)
- *Each week, the Department of Sanitation contends with 64,000 tons of garbage.”*

(Gotham Gazette, www.gothamgazette.com/games/garbage.php)



Where do you think New York City's garbage goes after it is collected?





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- “Moses’ refuse-based projects included the **Belt Parkway**, Idlewild Airport (now **John F. Kennedy Airport**), **Orchard Beach**, **Olmstead’s Riverside Park** along the Hudson, and most of the northern shore of the marshy **Jamaica Bay**, including **Marine Park**. Moses also decommissioned the city’s trash processing hub on Barren Island and filled the wetlands around the island with garbage, fusing it to the mainland to conjure up what became Floyd Bennett Field, New York City’s first municipal airport. Corona Meadows, the site of the 1939 World’s Fair, was another Moses creation built on land filled in with trash.”

(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)



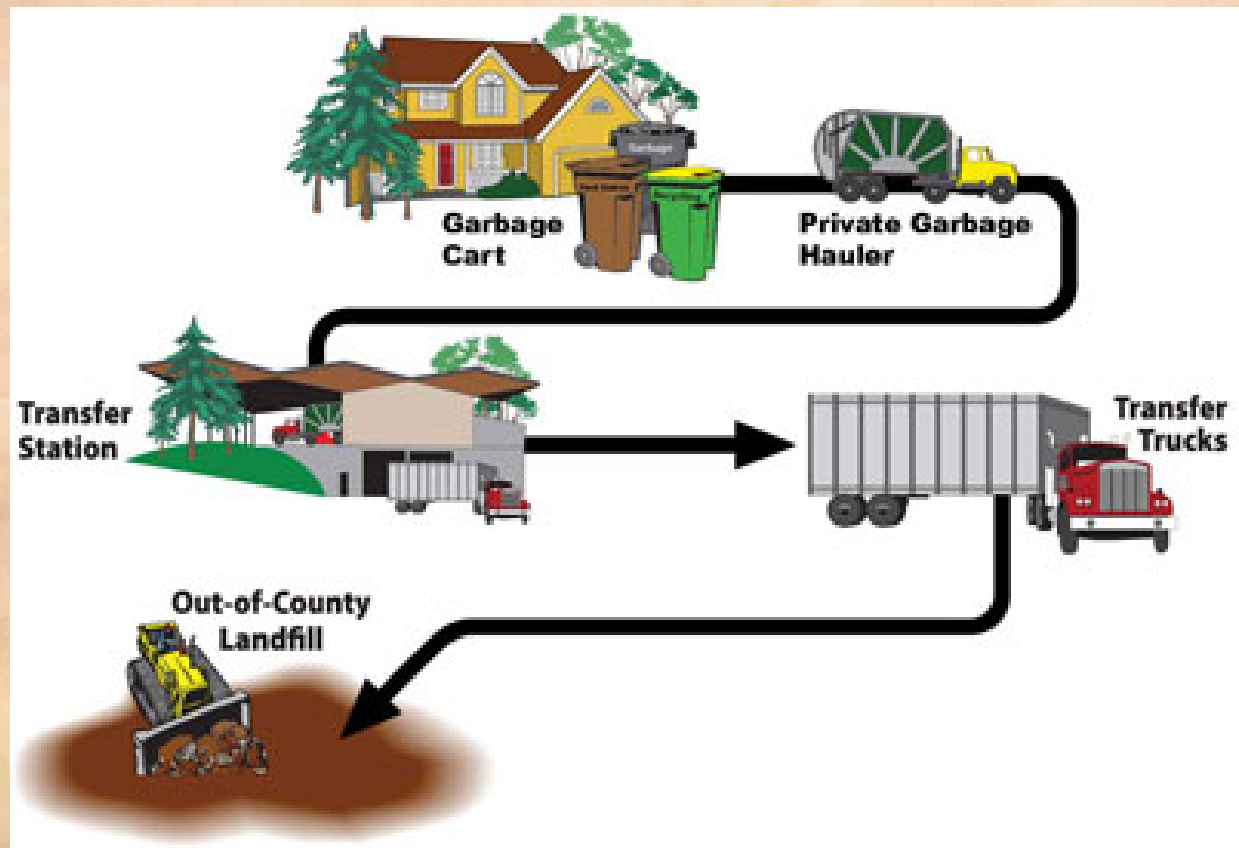
A hand wearing a white glove holds a small green seedling with three leaves and dark soil. The background is a warm, golden-brown bokeh pattern.

Where do you think New York City's garbage goes after it is collected?

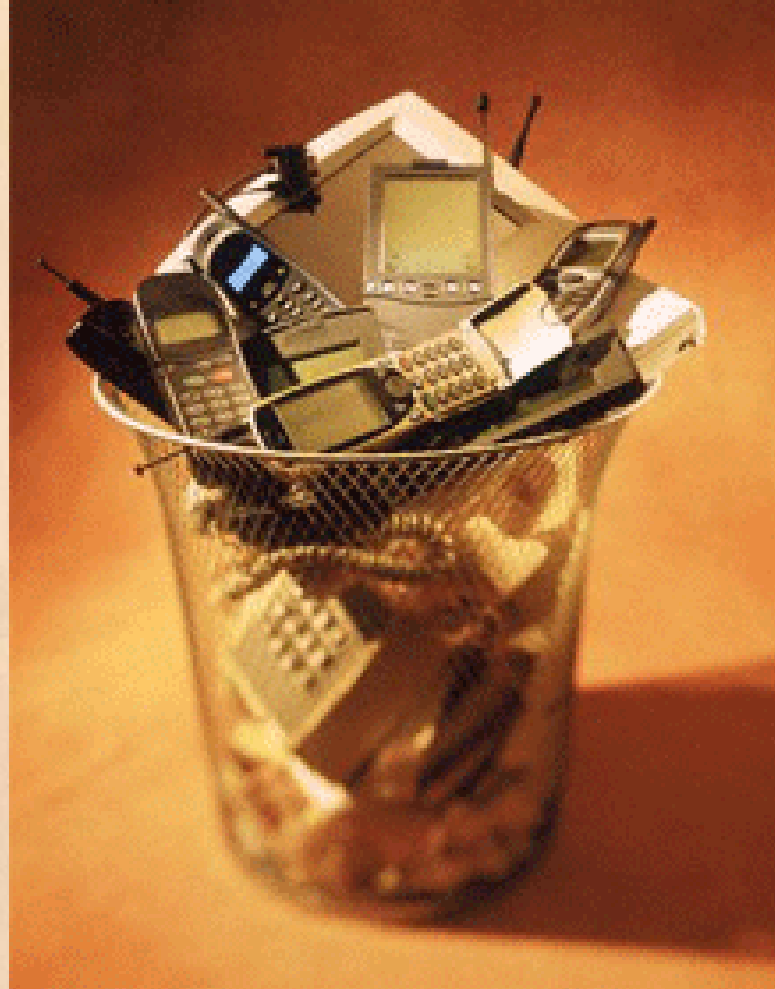
- **“New York City’s wastes get shipped mostly to Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia. These states have become trash hubs because of their geographical proximity to mid-Atlantic cities, large swaths of undeveloped land and local economies hobbled by deindustrialization.”**
(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)

Where do you think New York City's garbage goes after it is collected?

"New York State is the top waste exporter in the country at 4.2 million tons per year."



*How often do you replace your cell phone?
E-waste & its significance*



How often do you replace your cell phone?

E-waste & its significance

- **“Perhaps the most malignant and abundant exported trash today is ‘e-waste,’ obsolete electronics like VCR’s, CD players, televisions, computers, cell phones and fax machines. Rich in heavy metals like lead, cadmium, mercury and zinc [...] and other hazardous materials, e-waste is virulent stuff.”**

(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)



Obsolescence



“For no better reason than that a century of advertising has conditioned us to want more, better, and faster from any consumer good we purchase, in 2004 about 315 million working PCs were retired in North America. Of these, as many as 10 percent would be refurbished and reused, but most would go straight to the trash heap. These still-functioning but obsolete computers represented an enormous increase over the 63 million working PCs dumped into American landfills in 2003. In 1997, although a PC monitor lasted six or seven years, a CPU was expected to last only four to five. By 2003 informed consumers expected only two years of use from the new systems they were purchasing, and today the life expectancy of most PCs is even less.”

(Giles Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*)





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How often do you replace your cell phone? E-waste & its significance

- “The electronics industry, most notably producers of cell phones and personal computers, has brought **built-in obsolescence** to dizzying new heights.”

(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)


- “Each generation of high-tech equipment may be more efficient than its predecessor – in terms of performance and manufacture – but we’re producing and discarding more electronics than ever while reusing only a small fraction of their materials. This pattern of consumption means more mining, more fossil fuels extraction, and more refining, with all of the direct and secondary environmental and health impacts that come with these processes.”

(Elizabeth Grossman, *High Tech Trash: Digital Devices, Hidden Toxins, and Human Health*)



When you see this sign on a product you buy, what do you think?




When you see this sign  on a product you buy, what do you think?




“Today it’s likely that more Americans recycle than vote – yet greater amounts of rubbish are going to landfills and incinerators than ever before.”

(Heather Rogers, [Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage](#))



When you see this sign  on a product you buy, what do you think?



When you see this sign  on a product you buy, what do you think?

- “Crucially, these more holistic approaches viewed the ‘three Rs’ in a hierarchical fashion: first, reduce consumption, then reuse goods in their already manufactured form as long as possible, and then, only as a last resort, recycle.”

*(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)*

- “Recycling is the last line of defense in the environmental movement’s struggle against destructive and needless garbage... Cutting back on production and consumption, and reusing materials – in addition to recycling – would lead to a much more significant reduction in waste and present a much longer-term solution.”

*(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)*



If you were asked to pay an additional \$25 in your tuition to ensure that K&BCC's garbage was disposed of safely, would you voluntarily do so?





ZERO WASTE





“Zero waste refers to eliminating refuse before it gets made, at the front end, instead of the current norm of treating trash only after it already exists, at the back end. Some advocates explain that zero waste sprang from the inadequacies of recycling, since the latter does not directly curb waste production. **This new method is more comprehensive than reprocessing alone: ‘Zero waste maximizes recycling, minimizes waste, reduces consumption and ensures that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled back into nature or the market place.’”**

*(Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage*)*



Individual Responsibility

- “[...] the actions and habits of America’s consumers threaten to flood the world with **toxins**, just as surely as do the misguided priorities of multinational corporations. Now more than ever, end-users of new technology need to pursue higher levels of technological literacy in order to negotiate the complex interactions among technology, society, and the environment. **Ignorance of these interactions effectively grants a permission slip for technological hazards to persist**”

*(Giles Slade, *Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America*)*



“The Reality of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature.”

-Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, 1962



A hand holding a small green seedling in soil against a warm, bokeh background. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of warm colors like orange, yellow, and light brown, with circular bokeh lights scattered throughout. The hand is positioned in the lower-left corner, cupping a small amount of dark soil from which a young green plant with several leaves is growing. The overall mood is hopeful and nurturing.

We can do it!

“The solutions are in our hands. We just have to have the determination to make them happen. [...] I believe this is a moral issue. It is your time to seize this issue. It is our time to rise again, to secure our future.”

(Al Gore, An Inconvenient Truth: A Global Warming)

“Garbage People”



AP / Michael Sohn



Mission Statement

The Goals of the Eco-Festival are:

- To raise ecological literacy
- To foster civic and global citizenship
- To promote meaningful dialogue about environmental issues and sustainable development
- To inspire grass-roots environmental action and stewardship

