

Introduction

the view of nature as mechanistic
and as merely a resource for human development into private property
resulted in an unprecedented exploitation of nature
and this has led to the environmental crisis today

a countermovement to the anthropocentric tradition of thought
can be traced back to Kant and the development of Romanticism
Kant was not a Romanticist but he in some sense opened the door to Romanticism
we can see the environmental movement as part of the
Romanticist reaction against the Enlightenment
the Enlightenment was that intellectual, cultural movement that shaped much of modern Western thought
it begins in the 17th century with Descartes' optimism
that the human mind has the natural light of reason
and is thus capable, once we learn to use it properly,
of getting true knowledge of reality
The Enlightenment was developed further by Bacon's insistence on obeying nature
that is to say, observing nature in order to understand its laws
and thus commanding nature through science as a result of that understanding
the 18th century is regarded as the high point of the Enlightenment
though Locke died at the beginning of the century
his thought, both his empiricist epistemology and his political theory,
were crucially important throughout the 18th century
Newton might be thought of as the apex of the Enlightenment
and the triumph of Science and the mechanistic view of nature

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, intellectual, cultural movement
which arose in Europe at the end of the 18th century
and developed in the first decades of the 19th century
it was primarily a reaction against Enlightenment optimism in Science
as well as the Industrial Revolution
Hume's skepticism had already threatened to pull the rug out from the Enlightenment
the end of the 18th century had brought the Reign of Terror to Paris
which had been the center of the Enlightenment in the 18th century
Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) depicting the mad scientist
can be seen as one of the early works of Romanticist literature

Romanticism developed first in Germany in the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) movement
which emphasized intuition and emotion instead of the Enlightenment emphasis on reason
the German writer August Schlegel was the first to use the term "Romanticism" in 1809
as a term to distinguish "modern" poetry from the Classical
Romanticism emphasized art over science
emotion and imagination over reason
and a return to nature as an escape from modern society

Some of the major poets and writers:

Germany: Goethe (1749-1832), Schiller (1759-1805), Novalis (1772-1801), the Schlegel brothers, August (1767-1845) and Freidrich (1772-1829)

England: Burns (1759-1796), Blake (1757-1827), Wordsworth (1770-1850), Scott (1771-1832), Coleridge (1772-1834), Bryon (1788-1824), and Percy Shelley (1792-1822) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851), and Keats (1795-1821)

Some of the major visual artists:

Spain: Francisco Goya (1746-1828)

England: Blake, Constable (1757-1827), Turner (1775-1851)

Germany: Friedrich (1774-1840)

France: Gros (1771-1835), Géricault (1791-1824), Delacroix (1798-1863)

Some of the major composers:

Germany: Beethoven (1770-1827), Schubert (1797-1826), Mendelssohn (1809-1847), Schuman, (1810-1856), Wagner (1813-1883), Mahler (1860-1911), Strauss (1864-1949)

England: Delius (1862-1934), Coleridge (1875-1912)

Kant is said to have opened the way for Romanticism

by emphasizing the importance of art and the imagination

in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764)

and in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790)

where he emphasizes the importance of the aesthetic contemplation of the beautiful in nature

yet Kant was really an Enlightenment figure

in philosophy he was trying to save the Enlightenment from Hume's skepticism

he was convinced Newton had succeeded in revealing the laws of nature

and thus proving the triumph of science

thus in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant tries to show how science is possible

even if it does not reveal reality as it is in-itself,

but only reality as it appears to us (the phenomenal world)

The Romanticists took Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*

as suggesting a third realm of the *aesthetic*

independent of the *practical* (morality) and *theoretical* (science)

whereas Enlightenment science could only reveal the phenomenal world

Romanticists thinkers developed the idea that through the imagination and art

one could have insight into the deeper truth of reality in itself

Rousseau (1712-1778) is often thought of as a predecessor to Romanticism

and as already initiating a counter-movement to the Enlightenment during its high point

Rousseau's conception of the "state of nature" contrasts sharply with that of both Hobbes and Locke

life in civil society, framed by the opposition of man and nature,

was depicted by Rousseau as sick compared to the life of the "noble savage"

who lived more in harmony with nature

the Romanticist emphasis on a return to nature

was picked up by the Transcendentalist movement that developed in New England in the 1830s and 1840s

in Emerson (1803-1882), Thoreau (1817-1862) and Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

we thus see the development of American Romanticism

we can see the influence of the Romanticist return to nature

and Rousseau's "noble savage"

in our selection from Thoreau

Thoreau is of course most famous for his essay "Civil Disobedience" (1849)

and for the book *Walden* (1854)

which recounts Thoreau's attempt to retreat from society and immerse himself in nature

it is in the writings of the American Transcendentalists

that we see the roots of the American environmental movement

it is interesting that this movement can thus be traced back to Romanticism

which is scarcely noted here by our editor
this is interesting because the field of environmental ethics
developed out of the Anglo Analytic philosophical tradition
this is simply because the discourse of ethics was dominated by analytic philosophers
Analytic philosophy is more clearly part of the legacy of the Enlightenment
while Continental philosophy (Nietzsche, Heidegger . . .) is at least partly influenced by Romanticism
thus the conflict between the Enlightenment and Romanticism
provides an interesting background to the development of environmental ethics

the thing to consider in reading our selection from Thoreau
is whether or not Thoreau's position is really a break from anthropocentrism
as he is not an analytic philosopher Thoreau does not necessarily make his position very clear
he suggests on the one hand that we should see man as part of Nature
and this surely breaks with Cartesian dualism
but he also seems to suggest that we should preserve some wilderness
because it would be good for human beings
in any case we surely see the influence of Romanticism
in his desire to "speak a word for Nature"
and his celebration of wilderness and the wild human being

in our selections from John Muir (1838-1914)
we see the influence of Thoreau's celebration of wilderness
it was Muir's activism in preserving wilderness that we see here
that helped preserve Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park and other wilderness areas
Muir founded the Sierra Club which is still one of the most important conservation organizations

we can also discern an echo of the Romanticist return to nature:
"Thousands of tired, nerve shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the
mountains is going home" (96)

following Thoreau, Muir argues that "wildness is a necessity"
"mountains parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as
fountains of life" (96)

and yet, as with Thoreau, it seems this is a necessity for human beings
and thus his position is not a complete break with anthropocentrism:
"Yosemite National Park, one of the greatest of all our natural resources for the uplifting joy and peace
and health of the people" (97)

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer
and give strength to body and soul alike" (97)