In reading literature on nature, and humanity's relationship to it, we may find ourselves in one of two camps. One camp holds that as we are of the Earth, the Earth is of us, and therefore coexistence must include not only other people, but also other beings, living and non-living alike. Another camp, while not overtly malicious in its outlook, holds that nature exists for humanity's sake, and that while we should not destroy it, nature's bounty is for us, as the primary species upon the earth, to use. An ethical dilemma exists, then, when attempting to understand one's feelings about, and place in, humanity's relationship with nature.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, America's original inhabitants were swept before the onslaught of expansion by European settlers, who saw a vast land to be plowed, planted, mined and manipulated. The expressed view of many of the indigenous people was one of affinity with the earth and nature, as with a family member. "We are part of the earth, and it is part of us," said Chief Seattle in 1854. He continued, "The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man - all belong to the same family." Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh, baptized as George Copway, related in his autobiography, originally published in 1847, "I was born in *nature's wide domain!* The trees were all that sheltered my infant limbs - the blue heavens all that covered me. I am one of Nature's children; I have always admired her; she shall be my glory; her features - her robes, and the wreath about her brow - the

seasons - her stately oaks, and the evergreen - her hair - ringlets over the earth, all contribute to my enduring love of her." "Nature will be Nature stil' while palaces shall decay and fall in ruins. Yes, Niagra will be Niagra a thousand years hence! The rainbow, a wreath over her brow, shall continue as long as the sun, and the flowing of the river! While the work of art, however impregnable, shall in atoms fall." (Lauter, p.1488).

This view of Nature and land as an equal member of earth's "family" presents an ethical dilemma when looking to exploit it for human's benefit. Aldo Leopold's explanation of a "land ethic" as one that "...simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land," seems simple enough, but living within the boundaries of such an ethic is much more complex than stating it. Humanity's relationship with Nature changed when the first grain was intentionally planted, the first sheep domesticated, the first stream fished with something other than bare hands; at that point, we began our conquest of Nature. "Here we freed ourselves from the food supply nature haphazardly offered by developing new strains of animals and plants whose sole purpose was to serve our needs." (Gonsalves,p.499). While the indigenous peoples of America have a fealty toward the land, even a nomadic people exploit the land until the resource runs out, or, like the Yanomami of the Amazon highlands, build, hunt and farm until the resources run out, and then move on. What we are talking about in going to a strict land ethic may be impossible for us, as a species, to survive under. We then must consider a different idea, which allows for humanity's use of Nature, but not abuse of it.

The expansion of European civilization, whether called "Manifest Destiny," "White

Man's Burden," or some other self-serving euphemism, has marked a subjugation of Nature and extant cultures to the will of profit. Mere use of Nature for moving beyond subsistence has spun wildly out of control, beyond even what is necessary for a modicum of growth. Perhaps the indigenous Americans knew this would happen when the sale of their ancestral, and then their treaty, lands was demanded of them. The idea of selling land was alien to their way of thought anyway. "One does not sell the land upon which the people walk," said Tashunka Witko, known to us as Crazy Horse. (Brown, p.262). This idea was echoed by Heinmoot Tooyalaket, also called Chief Joseph: "The earth was created by the assistance of the sun, and it should be left as it was....The country was made without lines of demarcation, and it is no man's business to divide it." (ibid., p.300). The growth of cities, and subsequent decrease in Nature, was bemoaned by Chief Seattle: "The sight of your cities pain the eyes of the red man....There is no quiet in the white man's cities....The clatter only seems to insult the ears." "The earth is not (the white man's) brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on." But not just land has been exploited for profit. The over hunting of beavers to make hats in Europe, the slaughter of millions of buffalo on the Great Plains for their skins, and for sport, the killing of turtles in Costa Rica for their cartilage, as written about by David Ehrenfeld, all point to a disdain for Nature, and the rise of avarice. "Here is where the voice of ethics speaks. It must condemn greed, avarice and cupidity as the excessive and unreasonable indulgence of human desires." (Gonsalves, op. cit.).

In order to learn how to coexist with Nature, and not merely conquer it, we must realize what Nature, left alone, truly is. Thoreau held that we should "...have our

national preserves, where no villages need be destroyed, in which the bear and panther, and even some of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be 'civilized off the face of the earth'..." (Thoreau, The Maine Woods, p. 403). Emerson, who enjoyed nature, albeit a more civilized Nature than Thoreau, wrote that "Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other's hands for the profit of man." (Lauter, p.1505). Thoreau felt that only the poet could truly appreciate Nature, for everyone else, such as the woodsman or the hunter, have their own ends in mind. But, alas, poets do not feed the world. Wallace Stegner has written that "We need to listen to the land, hear what it says, understand what it can and can't do over the long haul...To learn such things, we have to have access to natural wild land...(W)e could look forward to a better and more rewarding national life if we learned to renounce short-term profit, and practice working for the renewable health of our earth."

Chief Seattle asked, possibly knowing the answer beforehand, that the white man respect the land as the red man had done. "Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth." Having lived with Nature for thousands of years had given the indigenous peoples an understanding that land is not just location, not just a place; the total experiences of the land, the plants, the living beasts, and the non-living minerals, waters, and winds give meaning to the word place. David Ehrenfeld realized this when he wrote of the Costa Rican turtles' eggs "Falling as they have fallen for a hundred million years, with the same slow cadence, always shielded from the rain or stars by the same massive bulk with the beaked head and the same large, myopic eyes rimmed with

crusts of sand washed out by tears. Minutes and hours, days and months dissolve into eons...At Tortuguero I learned the meaning of place, and began to understand how it is bound up with time."

The intelligent and respectful use of the earth, not the blind exploitation of it, nor the idealistic but unrealistic total harboring of it, holds the ultimate promise for humankind. But we must set our goals on coexistence with each other, as well as with Nature, and not on unbridled growth for growth's sake. In response to Gordon Gecko, greed is not good.