

We Are Not Separate From Nature

The reckoning is coming. Whether we want it or not.



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In the western world, we have held a long philosophical tradition. It is the idea, that we are not separate from nature. Instead, the guiding philosophy has been that we are above nature. We believed that we can control it. We had a strong belief, that we could bend natural forces to our will. This is illustrated in the biblical scriptures.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

The bible, ESV, Genesis 1:26,

This system of belief comes crashing down fast. It was always false. We were never above nature. We were always a part of it. Western civilization was really inventive in masking this simple fact. We built structures and systems. Like flood barriers and sophisticated water treatment systems. They enabled us to pollute water to our heart's delight. We constructed irrigation

systems. And we produced industrial fertilizers and pesticides. This enabled us to grow food crops in soil that [no longer contained life](#).

We Left the True Costs to the Countries in the Global South

When I was a kid, the media would often parade pictures of black and brown children. They usually suffered from the destructive forces of nature. Droughts in Africa. Floods in Bangladesh. Polluted rivers in South America.

But the truth is inconvenient. We let black and brown people shoulder the cost of civilization. Through colonization, warfare, and capitalism, we forced them to adopt our consumerist culture. We needed the markets to expand the capitalist empire.

And we also exported our problems. Do you know, why so many Somalians turned to piracy? Because we dumped [our toxic waste in their waters](#) and emptied them of fish. We took away their livelihood.



Do you honestly believe that all this waste is produced by Africans?

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China is indeed one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gasses. Most of these emissions come from producing cheap, mass-produced items. The same ones that we consume in the west. As a matter of fact, the Chinese farmer will not buy a new iPhone every year. They are in reality our emissions. We didn't even shy away from using poor countries as [landfills for our waste](#).

Abusing nature has consequences. We just didn't see them. After all, We exported the consequences. All so we could feel good about ourselves. And put

the blame on the black, brown, and indigenous people. We called them uncivilized. That way, we felt good about ourselves. We get upset about the destruction of rainforests in Brazil. We replaced the forests with palm-oil plantations. Yet, the palm oil products from these plantations end up in supermarkets in the west.

The Western Empire Will Learn That We Are Not Separate From Nature

Our usual strategies are no longer working. The sins of our past exploitation of nature are coming back to haunt us. The consequences are compounding. And this time, the west will not get a free pass. We are not separate from nature, and we are learning it the hard way.

The ecosystem in one of Germany's largest rivers [has collapsed](#). Because of pollution, coupled with an extreme drought. The low water levels do not dilute the pollutants enough. The result is piscicide.

In Denmark, cancer-causing forever chemicals are in [nearly every drinking water](#) reservoir. Above all, we even found PFAS in remote regions of the [Himalayas](#). They have entered our food chain for good.

Most of Europe is experiencing droughts that we didn't think are possible. Our [rivers are drying up](#). Towns are running out of water. Forest fires are consuming our [monoculture forests](#), that we planted for profit. And in the case of Germany, we can't even extinguish them. Because of [munitions and toxic chemicals](#) in the ground.

Air pollution is a major [contributor to early death](#). Also in Europe. But in our hubris, we [disinvested in the infrastructure](#), which will enable us to do something about it. You can't move away from cars if you offer [no alternative for people](#) to transport themselves.

Change Is Coming. Whether We Want It, or Not

There is an upside to all of this. Change is coming. Whether we want it or not. We either understand, that we are not separate from nature, or we perish. All these effects will continue to compound. They will destroy our agriculture and livelihoods. Mother GAIA is demanding her price. And no discounts will be offered.

The philosophical idea, that we are part of nature, and not above it is not new. Indigenous people practiced this philosophy for thousands of years. All things considered, It is time for the west to let go of its hubris. We were never separate from nature. We just pretended we were.