CHAPTER - III

HAROLD FROMM

Harold Fromm is a visiting scholar at the University of Arizona. He is widely known for his writings on self, the environment, and academia. He is the coeditor of *The Ecocriticism Reader* and the author of *Academic Capitalism and Literary Value*.

Fromm’s *The Nature of Being Human* is a first person account of the revelations of nature. Harold Fromm is a University Associate in English as well as a member of the Institute of the Environment at the University of Arizona in Tucson. His interests range from environmentalism, Darwinian evolution, to consciousness studies.


The physical relationship between the natural world and the individual is confirmed. There is the strong relationship between the surroundings in which we live and our power of creativity. Our idea of self and free will are determined by the natural influences. Ecocritic, Harold Fromm explores the relationship between human life and nature. He argues that our perceived separation from our surroundings is an illusory construct. His exploration is based on ecology, evolutionary psychology, and consciousness studies.

In the Gestalt Perspective, individual cannot exist alone. Each individual exists within an environmental field. He / she must engage with the surrounding to survive physically, he must be able to fulfill his basic needs by using the necessary resources from his surroundings. He / she must engage with persons in the environment to survive
psychologically. Both the individual and the environment must be studied, described in the literary works.


Fromm expressed views on the physical quality of the air and its effects on people in chapter first, “Awakening to the Environment.” He said that public must be aware of the environment. Physical quality of the air is of supreme importance for the psychic and physical health of an individual. The World Bank estimates that in China four lakh people died because of outdoor air pollution, three lakh from indoor pollution, and sixty thousand from toxic water. He developed an argument for preservation of nature. His argument is based on Eastern and Western philosophy. A few people are aware of the effects of pollution upon one’s own behaviour, mental sharpness, emotional states, and physical performance. The nature of the environment influences physical health, psychological health of the people.

Fromm observed a link between deteriorating environment and production of psychological states like excitement, depression, wounded self-esteem, and cheating, drugs, crime and other pathologies. He addressed the issue of the current environmental crises. The movement to save the environment is not as selfless and magnanimous as might at first appear. We are not doing a disinterested favour to the environment through the movement. The distinction between the environment and human life is illusory. Environment is one of the aspects of survival. Species survive or perish as a result of their compatibility with the environment of their time. We as individuals survive or perish because
of our own personal compatibilities with our immediate life environments, which are aspects of the larger whole. Our very thoughts are linked to planetary conditions. Psychology, Marxism, feminism, Lacanianism, structuralism, postcolonialism and queer theories have exerted insightful influence on the literary scholarship. Ecocriticism has revitalized sense of the richness of both life and literature.

Human dispositions powerfully influence the products of the human imagination. In literature drama or narrative is more or less adaptive. Everything human ultimately derives from the evolved body and brain, Forms of expression may change on the basis of individual consciousness and culture.

Chapter two, “On Being Polluted” presents Harold Fromm’s personal account of the awareness of pollution. He became aware of pollution for the first time years ago when he was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin. He says that pollution was too obvious to be missed in Gary. Pollution had been bearable but very unpleasant. Pollution causes burning eyes, curious oppressive headaches, and a general feeling of strangeness. Pollution is also responsible for distressing ailments: dizziness, nausea, tingling pains in the extremities, and lethargic aimlessness. It impairs our ability to read, concentrate, and get things done.

The effects of pollution on daily lives have become greater all the time. Most people for one or the other reason are unaware most of the time of any actual pollution though they were aware intellectually of the existence of a problem. Pollution is ruining our lives. The people who are the natives of an industrial area are apparently insensitive to the existence of pollution. Living in the smokes for one’s entire life make people part of the normal, unnoticed environment.
According to Fromm, second cause of the obliviousness of pollution is the fact that most of the people who live in the area where there is little pollution are unaware of the destructive effects of pollution on our lives. Fromm observed that the third cause of unawareness is the smoking of cigarettes and other tobacco. Smoker is not conscious of the effects of pollution. Smokers live in an ambience of smoke and smells therefore they are not very much aware of the outside world. Air pollution has tremendous effects on plants and people. The effects of air pollution on humans are dizziness, nausea, pains, headaches, burning eyes, lethargy etc. In chapter second Fromm addressed the connection of concrete material circumstances with the daily human life.

Chapter third “From Transcendence to Obsolescence” is a philosophical, reflective essay which explores the influence of nature on human life. Environmental movement has contributed to the public and private environmental awareness around the globe. This essay also played a role as a seminal precursor to the subjective realities of life. Pollution affects one’s life style and health in a great extent. The quality of the air influences one’s day-to-day feelings.

There is a connection between weather and one’s physical state. The weather affects one’s mental state too. One could not survive without air. There is only one source of air-outside air. One feels miserable in the polluted air. Fromm explicated that air-conditioners and staying in-doors are not the remedies for pollution. Pollutants travel very far indeed.

Fromm pointed out that in the present time Nature is a great mystery for many people. It is not beyond their understanding. It is virtually nonexistent to the perceptions of the average children. When Technology obscured physical nature at every point, psychological problems turn up later on in life.
Humankind failed to see that now, as in the past; the roots of its being are in the earth. In the past people understood the intimate connections of life in the earth, because the effects of nature on people’s lives were immediate. Now our life is mediated by technology. People think that not nature but technology is actually responsible for everything in their life. The modern humanity has developed its own mythology of voluntary omnipotence. The myth is very apparent in the industrial corporations. They attack the very basic concept of environmental protection. Fromm said that the characteristic flaw of the tragic hero is conceited pride and a refusal to recognize his own finitude. The tragic flaw of the contemporary people is their unwillingness to recognize that nature is the support system for their life. Very few physicians are aware about psychological and physiological effects of pollution. Pollution makes people low spirited.

It is not merely genes, psychic history, parents, social class that determines one’s accomplishments, moods and perspectives. It is also the nature that influences immediately on the lives of the people to a large extent. Pollution makes people irritable without irritants, pessimistic without Philosophy, hungry without fasting, tired without having spent any energy, and afflicted with heartburn and indigestion without recent food.

Elements in the physical environment impact social behaviour. *The Times* emphasises the effects of positive ions on “people’s mood and health, even precipitating suicides, crimes and accidents.” Pollution also causes tension and irritability among the people.

Before two hundred years Boswell expressed his intuitive awareness of the concrete connection between nature and human life thorough his writing. In “Ecocriticism’s Genesis” Fromm said that William Rueckert is usually cited as the true begetter of the term
“ecocriticism.” He used the word in his 1978 essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” Fromm personally feels that the only true begetter of the term Ecocriticism is Cheryll Glotfelty (formerly Burgess). Cheryll Glotfelty with Fromm brought out the first and the best anthology on the nature writing and its practitioners.

Writing about environment is not entirely a new genre. One could trace it back to Eastern writing, and Theocritus, the Medievals, the European Enlightenment, the Romantics, the Transcendentalists. Association for the Study of Environment and Literature (ASLE) was established in the early 1990s. Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment appeared in 1993. With the arrival of The Ecocriticism Reader in 1996, the situation changed rapidly. Ecocriticism covers a broad spectrum. It serves as an umbrella term for very various activities. It is unwilling to be hijacked by a single, theoretical, fetishistic perspective.

Fromm proposes that environment matters in the social, philosophical, scientific, and political aspects of life.

Chapter fourth “Air and Being” deals with the influence of air on the human life. The influences of the air are irresistible. After Darwin, Marx, and Freud the sports ground of human freedom has come to seem painfully withered. We should recognize environmental constraints upon our behaviour. Fromm has narrated the personal experience of having lived in the dramatically polluted environment of north-west Indiana, not far from the steel mills and power plants that line the shores of Lake Michigan from Chicago to Michigan City. The most people are aware of pollution in the limited extent. The effects of air pollution on the general population are rarely discussed in the media.

There are few if any safe places that may protect people from the effects of pollution. Harold Fromm and Gloria Fromm moved from their rural farm fifteen miles south of Gary, Indiana, to their home about sixty
miles northwest of Gary, Indiana. They changed the residence for the sole reason that the air was making them ill more than half the year. Chicago’s northwest suburbs they experienced to be polluted though less in degree.

Mary Mellor rightly said, “Human-human relations are embedded in and constructed from human-nature relations.” We should acknowledge that we are all part of an organic system. Insensitive policies endanger the ecosystem and threaten the very survival of human societies. Human life is inextricably linked with the nature. We should recognize humanity’s kinship with the nature. Kamala Markandaya represented symbiosis between man and nature in Nectar in a Sieve. Nature nurtures human societies. It is an ever sustaining resource for all human development.

Chapter five is entitled as ‘Ecocriticism’ Genesis.’ William Rueckert is usually cited as the only true begetter of the term “Ecocriticism” in his 1978 essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” According to Cheryll Glotfelty ecological concerns are so pressing that they ought to eclipse every other concern. She completed her Ph. D. in American Literature at Cornell University. She finished up her dissertation on representations of nature in the American women’s literary tradition. She said, “If I can’t find a way to approach literature ecologically then, I will have to abandon this profession as frivolous.’

A new organization devoted to nature writing was established as the ‘Association for the Study of Literature and Environment.’ The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology inaugurated a new field of study, ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is today a bona fide field of study with unofficial headquarters at the University of Nevada, Reno, where Cheryll Glotfelty, Michael Branch, and Scott Slovic have
pioneered a programme. In 1990 Cheryll became the first official Assistant Professor of Literature and the Environment.

Harold Fromm presented the effect of air pollution on the body and thence on consciousness. He gave an explicit account of environment/body/mind interaction. Nature writing is not completely a new genre of writing. One could find traces of nature writing in Theocritus, Plato, and Aristotle. Literature of the East is rich in nature writing. Ecocriticism covers a broad range. It is an umbrella term for very diverse activities. It has diverse perspectives as it deals with a broad spectrum.

Fromm expressed the view that ecocriticism has the potential to bring necessary developments in the arts, society and even international relations in an age of global warming. Consciousness like trees and pollution is one of the material products of the environment.

“Ecology and Ideology” is the title of chapter Six. Many ideologies are in ruins today. A new intellectual universe called ecology has emerged for revitalizing inspired insights. People have been expressing concern for deforestation. People have become aware of chemical and nuclear disasters. We should restore the awareness of people’s connectedness with the earth that produced them. Industrial Revolution made mankind appeared self-creating, autonomous, and omnipotent. Ecology has filtered through philosophy, sociology, ethics, political science, psychology, history, economics, legal studies, religion, literature, and literary criticism.

In “Ecology and Ideology” Fromm introduced revitalizing and inspired insights into a new intellectual movement known as Ecocriticism. People must acknowledge the age old awareness of people’s connectedness with the material (earth) that produced them. The effect has been taking place after a long cessation during the
Industrial Revolution made mankind seem self creating, autonomous, and omnipotent. Ecology influenced considerably philosophy, ethics, sociology, political science, psychology, history, economics, legal studies, religion, and even literature and literary criticism. In the last twenty years ecological awareness has generated an intellectual upheaval which considers the impact of nature on all various aspects of life. Ecological activities are not just concerned with “stop pollution”. They have produced an ideology which defines nature, value, objectives of life on this planet. Dave Foreman’s *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* is an interesting account of social and philosophical relevance of environment. He expressed powerful emotions for the preservation of wilderness and biological diversity.

According to Harold Fromm unlike literary Marxism, feminism, and queer theory, ecocriticism will be around for a long time. It is able to shape itself to unexpected developments in the arts, society, and even international relationships in an age of global warming.

Dave Foreman and Murray Bookchin focused very bright light on one area of the ecological spectrum. Foreman worked for the Wilderness Society from 1973 to 1980. Tired of compromises with federal bureaucracy in 1980 he became one of founders of Earth First! The action group employed direct intervention to stop environmentally destructive development, deforestation, and dam building as well as road construction in wilderness areas. Foreman has expressed the principles and accomplishments of the action group in the *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*. His account makes them appear, on balance, a positive force:

> We do not engage in radical action because we are primarily motivated by opposition to authority, because we are antinomians,
but because we are for something—the beauty, wisdom, and abundance of this living planet.¹

Foreman is averse to the politics of both the Left and the Right. He believed that ecological problems are more important than economic and social problems.

Murray Bookchin has been a passionate social activist like Foreman. He has written the magnum opus The *Ecology of Freedom*. He is at his best in *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future*. He is the brilliant, mordant, racy, realistic, social philosopher. He is a utopian idealist. The utopist focuses on the past and the future, the realist on the present. He has given the account of the nonhierarchical, no dominating families:

It is hard for the modern mind to appreciate that precapitalist societies identified social excellence with cooperation rather than competition; disaccumulation rather accumulation; public service rather than private interest; the giving of gifts rather than the sale of commodities; and care and mutual aid rather than profit and rivalry.² (46-47)

Bookchin choreographs the falling off of this primal egalitarian society through stages involving acquisition of power, first by elders, then by males, warriors, small communities, city-states with direct representation, and family nation states with indirect or no representation, dominated by capitalist or communist power structures. This increase of chain of command, domination, and exploitation of each other is part and parcel of our supremacy of nature. It is hierarchy not anthropocentrism that is responsible for today’s ecological devastation.
Bookchin observed that ecological problems are only one aspect of a system of social domination extending from the human being / nature relationship to the person/person relationship. In such relationships both people and nature are degraded into the role of “resources” for exploitation by those on top. Bookchin proposed that hierarchical power relations are at the heart of all forms of exploitation and oppression.

Bookchin is one of the most powerful critics of the contemporary society. He has analysed hypocrisy, self-deception, and destruction involved in capitalism and Marxism. The ruthless expansionist foundation of capitalism requires that more and more forests, minerals, animals, and people be used to produce more and more products.

Fromm observed that many people view that the problem of the environment is an unimportant arabesque drawn around the important concerns of human life. He proposes that the environmental problem must ultimately be seen as a central philosophic and ontological question about the self definition of contemporary humanity. He emphasises that the human relationship with nature is consistent. Contemporary humankind’s perspective towards is arrogant, shocking, and suicidal disregard of its roots in the earth. Natural influence on human life is irresistible. Most people are not aware of how pollution concretely affects them at every moment of life. Polluted air is bad for humanity, plants, and for animals.

*Defending the Earth* came about in the late eighties. Bookchin explicated that the “ecological society” of the future would replace capitalism with a nonhierarchical “libertarian municipalism”. The political power will be decentralized; the local communities would take care of the neighboring ecosystems. The community would be self sufficient in energy and commodity. It would eliminate the use of non-
renewable fossil fuels. It would end the domination over people and nature by the top levels of power structure. “Either we will turn to seemingly ‘utopian’ solutions based on decentralization, a new equilibrium with nature, and the harmonization of social relations, or we face the very real subversion of the material and natural basis for human life on the planet.” Bookchin’s *Defending the Earth* provides compressed statements of the Bookchin’s and Foreman’s ideology. Both of them made the observation of the failure and inability of capitalism to deal ecological problems until they become terrible.

Ecological activities are not just related to stop pollution. They are the products of larger belief systems. Deep ecology, eco-feminism, and social ecology define the nature value, and ends of life on this planet. Ecology is also an ideology. Dave Foreman has written an interesting book, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*. Murray Bookchin has written Remaking Society.

Reform Ecology sounds good but was not adequate for conservation of the environment. It is tinkering with the leading, capitalist, human-oriented, western mode of life that is destroying the planet. Many organizations like Natural Resources Defence Council, Environmental Action, the League of Conservation Voters, and the Sierra Club are dismissed by radicals as co-opted tools of industrialism and technology. They aim to change the path and pace but not the overall direction toward ecological destruction.

Deep ecology aims to abandon the basic institutions - economic, political those characterize Western society. The term deep ecology enjoys wide currency and considerable charisma in the international environment movement. The term was introduced by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosophy professor. Deep ecology is a powerful ecology movement. Naess sketched the outlines of an ecological world view.
According to the first principle, the identity of each individual, at whatever ontological level, is not rationally autonomous of the rest of the reality. The identity of each individual is determined by its relation with other individuals. All forms of life are equally permitted to live and blossom. Human beings are not ethically privileged. Other life forms are just as morally great as we are. The principles of diversity and symbiosis enhance the opportunities for all beings to live and blossom. The fight against pollution and resource depletion is the part of the ecology movement.

Naess said that we must widen our circle of identification. We identify not merely with our family, our community, our culture, or with humanity as a whole, but also with our immediate environment, the place where we are born or to which we belong, our land, our earth. Naess envisages self-realization as the transition not only from ego to social self, but from social self to ecological self.

When we identify ourselves with nature, our innate self-love expands in proportion to our new sense of self. Our self interest becomes convergent with the interests of the rest of life. Defence of nature becomes a matter of self-defence. Naess pointed out that the process of self-realisation has affinities with Gandhi’s notion of enlightenment. An enlightened being is not alienated from anything. Self-realisation represents the actualization of our greatest potentiality for being. Self-realisation makes our life happy and meaningful. Dave Foreman expressed powerful emotions for the preservation of wilderness and biological diversity in *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*. Foreman became one of the founders of Earth First!, a more or less apolitical action group. The organization was established in 1980. It employed direct intervention to stop environmentally destructive development, deforestation, and dam building as well as road
construction in wilderness areas. Foreman put the role of human beings on the planet:

Human beings are merely one of the millions of species that have been shaped by the process of evolution for three and a half billion years. According to this view, all living beings have the same right to be here … A Grizzly Bear snuffling along Pelican Creek in Yellowstone National park with her two cubs has just as much right to life as any human has, and is far more important ecologically. All things have intrinsic value, inherent worth. Their value is not determined by what they will ring on the cash register of the gross national product, or whether or not they are good. They are good because they exist.3 (3-4)

The organization, Earth First has attracted considerable media attention. It also influenced pro-environmental legislative and judicial decisions. It is a positive force. Foreman said, “We do not engage in radical action, because we are antinomians, but because we are for something - the beauty, wisdom, and abundance of this living planet (214). Biocentrism is a position full of self-contradictions and absurdities. All life feeds on other life. The only complete biocentrist would be a dead one, who returned his elements to the earth for recycling.

Capitalist industrialist western society desires more and more economic output. Ever increasing need is destroying the planet and subverting the precise mix of elements of required for life to continue. Bookchin is at his best in Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future. The increase of hierarchy, domination, and exploitation of each other is part and parcel of our domination of nature.

According to Bookchin ecological problems are only one aspect of a system of social domination. Domination extends from human
being / nature relationship to the person / person relationship. In the system of domination, both people and nature are degraded into the role of resources for exploitation. Ecology is a social science. It finds hierarchical power relations are at the heart of all forms of exploitation and oppression. Industrial capitalism has commoditized and mechanized the world. According to Bookchin ecological society of the future would replace capitalism with a nonhierarchical model of development. The ecological society would eventually eliminate the use of non-renewable fossil fuels. Bookchin’s *Remaking Society* has the aura of a classic. It is an essential text of social philosophy. Foreman and Bookchin have firmly expressed the view capitalism is unable and futile to solve the ecological problems until they become horrible. Reconstruction of the nature is essential for the progress and sustainable development of human beings.

Foreman was disinclined to the politics of both the left and the right. He believed that economic and social problems are less important than ecological ones. Evils perpetuated by capitalist expansion can be eradicated by environmental vision only. The Ecology of Freedom is a dense work on nature.

Mary Bookchin is brilliant, realistic philosopher and utopian idealist. He is at his best in *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future*. The utopist focuses on the past and the future, the realist on the present. Hunter gatherers lived harmoniously without domination and hierarchy. It was free from the menace of supremacy and patriarchy.

It is hard for the modern mind to appreciate that precapitalist societies identified social excellence with cooperation rather than competition; disaccumulation rather than accumulation; public service rather than private interest; the giving of gifts rather than the
sale of commodities; and care and mutual aid rather than profit and rivalry (46-47).^4

The primeval egalitarian society fell through stages. The increase of hierarchy, domination and exploitation of each other is part and parcel of our domination of nature. Hierarchy is responsible for ecological devastation. We should stop devaluation of human. We should preserve social institutions which consider human worth and dignity.

Ecology is a social science. Bookchin expressed the view that ecological problems are one of the aspects of a system based on domination. In such systems people and nature are degraded into the role of resources for exploitation by those on top. According to Fromm hierarchical power relations are the basic reasons of all forms of exploitation and oppression.

Bookchin is one of the most powerful critics of contemporary society. He sees through the hypocrisy, self-deception, and destruction involved in capitalism, Marxism, and certain forms of ecology. Capitalism is ruthless in expansionist policies. It requires more forests, minerals, animals, and people to produce more products. Many of them may be unnecessary but capitalists’ main concern is to keep the economy in constant growth. Exploitative and misleading corporations degrade consumers and workers.

Bookchin believed strongly that ecological society of the future will replace capitalism with the nonhierarchical organizations at the local governments. These local political organizations will be direct representation of the population. These communities would take care of local ecosystems. They would abandon the capitalist mentality of “grow
or die.” They would wipe out the domination over people and nature by the top levels of a power structure caught in a mentality of domination.

Bookchin’s *Remaking Society* has the impression of a classic. It can be treated as an essential text of social philosophy. *Defending the Earth* makes us aware of Foreman’s and Bookchin’s ideologies. Both Foreman and Bookchin have rightly pointed out capitalism’s failure to deal with ecological problems until they become horrible. We should reconstruct nature to ensure future of our children.

Chapter Seven is about Aldo Leopold. Fromm emphasizes in Aldo Leopold: Esthetic “Anthropocentrist” that no environmentalist sought literal equality for the subject of his or her concern. Leopold introduced the idea that the use of the earth solely as an economic resource will eventually destroy both it and us. Therefore ethics must include “soils, waters, plants and animals”. Humans should not consider themselves as the sole master of the earth, but plain member and citizen of it. Leopold rightly said:

> A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.\(^5\)

A land ethic reflects that every individual is responsible for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. He criticizes universal ecological shortsightedness. He has expressed concern for the future of human life and a type of intellectualist arrogance.

The notion of ‘wholeness’ or ‘integrity’ has come in for a good deal of post-structuralist criticism. Colours, textures and relationships are mind-dependent. Old ‘New Criticism’ touchstone of organic unity should be applied in the larger context. Leopold disdains the
capitalism’s cash nexus. He also acknowledged its inevitability and its attractive side as well.

Aldo Leopold wrote *A Sand Country Almanac*. It was posthumously published in 1949. This book has now achieved scriptural status. Leopold expressed with confidence that the use of the earth solely as an economic resource will eventually destroy both it and us. Human beings behave in a responsible manner as the members of the biotic community and not the conqueror of it. Roderick Nash in *The Rights of Nature* said that “no environmentalist seeks literal equality for the subjects of his or her concern.”

*A Sand Country Almanac* aims to protect an utilizable and beautiful world. Leopold appears at times to safeguard ecosystems at the cost of individual members. Destruction of the forests in the long run is harmful to various human interests, the aesthetic as well as the ecological. Leopold is motivated by aesthetic concerns, rather than concerns about human welfare. Fromm points out that aesthetic response is the most powerful anthropocentric interest of all. It is produced by the very nature and operation of our bodies and psyches.

“Postmodern Ecologising: Circumference without a Centre” is the Chapter Eight in the book. In this chapter Fromm provided the account of Buell’s *The Ecological Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Buell has given the broad account of environmental perception, the place of nature in the history of western thought. He emphasized Thoreau and nature writing in nineteenth century America. He is acquainted with world literature, the other arts, philosophy, history, and criticism. He has remarkable depth of American literary knowledge. He is acquainted with contemporary culture. Buell’s writing is the product of his overwhelming vision,
strong moral convictions. Buell emphasized that responsiveness to nature is a great cultural value.

In Postmodern “Ecologising: Circumference without a Center” Fromm presents an ecocentric way of life. He related green writing with green thinking and green reading. Buell proposed that literary works have the power to connect environment and everyday life. He laments recent literary theories dissociation of the text, the author and the world. He said emphatically that literature must not take readers always away from the physical world but back to it.

American writing prominently deals with the issues of race, class, and gender. Nature was given a secondary place. One should free oneself from such biases. American pastoralism regards earth as nurturing mother. Earth became the victim of technological meanness. Abbey, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Annie Dillard, and their precursors like Mary Austin made a proposition that pastoral vision can transform a mode of dominion and exploitation to one of green accessibility and ecocentrism. Buell sees a movement from anthropocentrism toward biocentrism. He writes more gracefully.

Buell laments abstract quality of popular environmentalism and its disengagement from everyday life. He proposed that literary works have the power to make the connection of environment and everyday life avidly. He laments recent literary theory’s dissociation of the text, the author, and the world. He believed that author as the creator of the text should be given appropriate importance in the analysis of the text. He asked the right question: “Must literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?”

He examined American writing related with the issues of race, gender, and class. Buell stated that while arriving at ecocentric state of thinking one should not fall into other biases like environmental racism.
Earth is the nurturing mother. It has become a victim of technological callousness. We should see the earth from the perspective of egocentrism, not from a method of domination and exploitation. Buell feels that literary theory should bring association between text and world, rather than dissociation. It is anti-environmental to regard text and world as separate entities having no relation.

Thoreau was sensitive to nature for its own sake. He organized his observations into aesthetic patterns. Thoreau revealed Pastoralism, spiritualism, and sustainable agriculture. He is a motive force in the green ecology.

Chapter nine is entitled as “The “Environment” Is Us.” Books dealing with natural science and environment are now a vast industry. A startling number of disciplines have evolved since Leopold’s landmark A Sand Country Almanac of 1949. Environmental medicine, environmental history, environmental engineering, environmental ethics, social ecology, green travel, green farming, conservation biology, eco-feminism, ecocriticism etc. have made their strong presence in the academic circles. Environment literally was the matter that surrounds us. We now understand environment as part of our being, and we being part of it. Individual things are an illusion. Environment is the very essence of human existence in the world.

*Bodies in Protest: Environmental Illness and the Struggle over Medical Knoweldge* by Steve Kroll-Smith and H. Hugh Floyd is a famous book about environmental illness. Cases of environmental illness are increasing.

*Thinking Ecologically: The Next Generation of Environmental Policy* is edited by Marian Chertov and Daniel Esty. The book is about the issues of politics, industry, lifestyles, employment, and international relations. More integrated policies can solve environmental problems.
The book gives the message of interconnectedness and cooperation. A great deal of information is given about industrial ecology, ecosystem management, property rights, land use, technology, ecological la, automobiles, energy prices, and the global economy.

Fromm in “The “Environment” Is Us” deals with the impact of environment on the health of individuals. Environment is the stuff that surrounds us. Environmental illness is a new way of knowing the body in is relationship to built environment. Material world flooded with commodities promises to make life easier and healthier but does the opposite for many people. Environmental illness makes people miserable even though economically they are sound.

The contemporary problem of belief is itself the problem of the unbelievability of truths. Environment is an essential ingredient of production. People are increasingly becoming aware that “the environment” after all is really us. We are not distinct from the environment.

Peter C. Van Wyck wrote inclusive and intellectually sophisticated book, *Primitives in the Wilderness: Deep Ecology and the Missing Human Subject*. It is philosophic and self reflexive. Human beings are just one of the biological elements in the ecosystem. Deep ecologists give importance to intrinsic value of everything, rather than the instrumental value. Trees are cannot defend their own intrinsic value. In a Foucauldian ethos all communication is a power strategy. The deep ecologist fails to notice that he is an anthropocentric as anybody else. Every system of thought is a human production determined by societal and personal contingencies. No species is ecocentric, because continued existence depends on looking out for one’s own protection.
We live in a multicultural world. The ecological situation differs considerably from country to country. The persons belonging to different cultures have varying attitudes to the environment. Environment is the essence of the real human. People have become aware that environment is not something outside there, but the environment is part of our personality, and we are part of it.

Ecology and Ecstasy on Interstate 80 is the title of Chapter Ten. Harold Fromm gives the first person narration of his experience of pollution. He experienced headaches and malaise in Fullerton, near Disneyland. One of his friends fell into drowsy states several times a day. He observed in West everywhere miles and miles of poisonous air. Toxic air is the fruit of expansionism and technology. It makes millions of people feel wretched every day. It contributes to long term often fatal diseases. Electric power plants, oil refineries, steel mills, millions of automobiles, dry-cleaning plants, oil refineries, sports-utility vehicles, copper smelters have contributed to the pollution in cities. According to Fromm, technology has become one of the critical problems of contemporary society.

In “Ecology and Ecstasy on Interstate 80” Fromm presents his obsession with ecology. Fromm observes that toxic air has been making millions of people miserable. He emphasises that these are the fruits of expansionism and technology. Fromm said: “To suppose technology is not among contemporary society’s chief critical problems would be to live in a fool’s paradise, to be permanently out to lunch.” The good and bad of human life were mostly technology. Without technology human beings would never have been able to lift themselves out of primal animal existence. The bad and good were inextricably tied together. To be against technology seems to be against human life. Leopold rightly said that biocentrism enhances human life both practical and esthetic.
The physical relationship between the natural world and individuals is unquestionable. The psychosocial effect of the natural world on the human life is often less concrete. There is the close connection between the environment in which we live and our creativity but it is abstract. Our consciousness is bounded and delimited by our materiality. Our idea of self and our belief in free will derive largely from the physical surrounding.

Ecocritic Harold Fromm has explored the challenging exploration of the relationship of humanity with the natural surroundings. He has expressed his own physical experiences and observations with insights gathered from both the humanities and the sciences. Writing broadly and personally, Fromm explores our views of nature and how we write about it. He ties together ecology, evolutionary psychology, and consciousness studies to show that our perceived separation from our surroundings is an illusory construct. He argues for a naturalistic vision of creativity, free will, and the literary arts unobstructed by common academic and professional chains. At each point of this exploration, Fromm is honest, engaging, and generous.

Fromm’s Philosophical, critical, often personal, sweeping interdisciplinary and sometimes argumentative essays will change the way you think about your place in the environment. An individual cannot exist alone. Each individual exists within an environmental field with which he must engage in order to live. He must engage with the objects of his world in order to survive physically; he must have food, clothing, and shelter, or the resources for providing them. He must engage with persons in his environment in order to survive psychologically. Man, then, is both an autonomous individual person and an environmentally oriented person who needs other persons, other social institutions. Both the individual and the environment must be
affirmed, studied, and described; and the interaction between them must be affirmed, studied, and described. Man or woman are both an individual, unique phenomenon and also are participants in the social roles imposed by the culture.

The field of Ecocriticism has experienced dramatic growth and dramatic changes since its formal inception in the 1990s Washington. Ecocriticism has attracted scholarly attention, praise, and criticism as the words “environmental crisis” are heard more often in more places. The twenty-first century is a time of excitement and challenge for Ecocriticism.

Although the early 1990s are seen as the formative years of the field, the idea of Ecocriticism had already been explored by scholars in various articles. But it was the publication of Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* in 1995 and Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm’s collection, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, in 1996 that solidified Ecocriticism and gave scholars a foundation. The field of Ecocriticism focuses on literature and the environment.

Therefore, combating environmental destruction is directly linked to the fight for personal, social, political, and economic agency. This is another reason for not only recognizing people as part of landscapes, but also analyzing how this affects different communities and cultures.

Technology has made our life easy and happy. Donna Haraway may be right: we’re already cyborgs, half organism, half prostheses, half nature, half technology. Biotechnological medicine protects us from many fatal diseases. Good and bad are inextricably tied together. To oppose technology completely is wrong. We should be the master of technology, but not the slaves of technology.

The major motive for human beings is human endurance and its attendant happiness. Aldo Leopold made a significant contribution to
biocentrism. People realized suicidal human devastation is the result of shortsightedness and ignorance. Leopold offered biocentrism to enhance human life aesthetically and practically.

Human life is strongly based on the ecosystem. War and unbridled capitalist/communist technologies have endangered planet, earth. Protecting nature is in our best interests. David Ehrenfield wrote about the failures of modern technology in *The Arrogance of Humanism*. Our study of nature is study of ourselves as we are inseparable part of nature. Nature provides us with profound vision and ecstasy for life.

“Full Stomach Wilderness and the Suburban Esthetic” is the title of chapter eleven. Fromm joined the environmental movement in the early seventies. He experienced nightmare, physical and psychological illness resulted from pollution. He became an ecologically committed writer. He started campaigns against pollution.

Fromm made the proposition that wilderness is a modern invention. It is an aesthetic object, a rhetorical device. Astonishing beauty of the mountain inspires people. Suburban developments have created much of the beautiful areas in Tucson and other places. Wilderness becomes an object of contemplation, when development spreads to the place. Development technology is creative and destructive force. An open ended negotiation between technology’s good and evil effects will resolve the issue of cohabitation with nature and technology. Creation or destruction is based on values springing from ever altering human subjectivities. When enough damage has been done, people realize importance of environment and they start the work of reconstruction. Because of shortsightedness people neglect environment. Fromm has emphasized the truth that human life requires limitations to survive urban and suburban development. When we become aesthetic
we know the value of limitations. When we are assured of full stomach, we realize the aesthetics of nature.

“Coetzee’s Postmodern Animals” is chapter twelve in the book. Coetzee is a postmodern author. He is particularly sympathetic to women. In *In the Heart of the Country* he expressed the concerns of women in the effective manner. In the contemporary world foundations of belief are radically damaged. There is the urgent need to reconstruction of it. He values the sense of being. He revealed his ideas of sense of being in his 1983 Booker Prize novel, *Life and Times of Michel K*. The protagonist of the novel wanders around South Africa during an imagined time of what amounts to civil between minority whites and majority blacks. He does not care about what is happening. As a conscious being certain things impinges on his consciousness. He is mainly concerned to survive in personal freedom. He neither takes the side of blacks nor whites. Coetzee has presented the issue of personal existentialism skillfully. He has revealed the sense of concrete being during a time of the collapse of traditional South African society at the end of Apartheid.

Peter Singer wrote a landmark book, *Animal Liberation*. It was first published in 1975. J. M. Coetzee presented an ethical problem philosophically in *The Live of Animals*. There short stories about fiction writer, Elizabeth Costello. Costello informs her audience the horrors animals suffer through human abuse. It is primarily concerned with the pain and suffering we impose on animals. He recommended vegetarian diet.

Coetzee commented on new social order in his novel, *Disgrace*. New social order is not charming. Social order based on ethical values is charming. A Skeptical wise man sees too much for his own good.
Part two of book is related with Nature and Evolution. “My Science Wars” is the title of chapter thirteen. Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt published *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* in 1994. Ross identified the collapse of western civilization. Cultural Studies has emphasized the need of reconstruction of the western civilization. Levitt and Gross are liberal in their perspectives. They defended the basic reasonableness of science. They are scientists who speak the issues and languages of the humanities with exemplary sophistication as men of wide ranging culture. Their writing is clear, insightful, and witty. They also acknowledged the errors and evils that flow from science’s involvement with uncontrolled capitalist technology. Levitt and Gross object to the notion that feminist science uses a different reason from male science.

O, Paglia Mia wrote the book *Vamps and Tramps*. She is an accomplished synthesizing public intellectual. Her work speaks for itself. She says what she feels and believes.

In 1990, Paglia published *Sexual Personae*. Her writing is vital and adroit. Her outlook is perfectly clear in Sexual Personae:

Society is an artificial construction, a defence against nature’s power… civilized man conceals from himself the extent of his subordination to nature…Sexuality and eroticism are the intricate intersection of nature and culture. Feminists grossly oversimplify the problem of sex when they reduce it to a matter of social convention: readjust society, eliminate sexual inequality, purify sex roles and happiness and harmony will reign … For Sade, getting back to nature… would be to give free rein to violence and lust. I agree. Society is not the criminal but the force which keeps crime in check… Sex is power. Identity is power. In western culture, there are no unexploitative relationships. (SP, 1-2)  

The knowledge provided in the book is as fresh as ever because of Paglia’s unflagging vivacity. She attacks truism among feminists and Focauldians that human beings are socially constructed. She reaffirms
that nature runs the show. We should not fail to acknowledge nature’s power over us. It leads to an arrogance of social institutions. We should respect society as our strongest defence. We should not forget the truth that nature sustains the society. She emphasized nature and nature-in-culture. She conserves values in cultures. She catches the air and aroma of contemporary life in her speech and writing. She defends literature against politics. She richly deserves the fame. She is a person of integrity. Nature is God for her. Corrosive capitalism impacted daily life of the people. Democracy’s freedom threatens to undermine democracy itself.

Chapter fifteen, “A Crucifix for Dracula: Wendell Berry Meets Edward O. Wilson” reflects the synthesis of all the knowledge disciplines. Edward Wilson is one of those daunting scientists who write extremely well. He knows several fields deeply. His book on sociobiology is a founding text in the field of evolutionary biology. He promotes a new synthetical direction for all knowledge disciplines. He remarks:

The assumptions they made of a lawful material world, the intrinsic unity of knowledge, and the potential of indefinite human progress are the ones we still take most readily into our hearts, suffer without, and find maximally rewarding through intellectual advance. The greatest enterprise of the mind has always been and always will be the attempted linkage of the sciences and humanities. The ongoing fragmentation of knowledge and resulting chaos in philosophy are not reflections of the real world but artifacts of scholarship. The propositions of original Enlightenment are increasingly favored by objective evidence, especially from the natural sciences.7

Wilson is conservative in thinking. He believes in truth, a real world, human mind power, and the preeminence of the sciences. For him, the
astonishing feats of the mind are not finally the result of the metaphysical intuition, faith, grace, or Platonic reminiscence but, rather are the achievements of the human brain.

The fragmentation of the knowledge opposes any sort of coherent management of the problems of the mankind. The divide between the sciences and the humanities prevents a clear view of the world as it really is.

Human faculties are not creations from above. They are the outcome of the human interaction with nature. They are based on material processes. Species can survive in congenial environments. Sociobiology regards social customs and behaviors as offshoots of our biological needs. According to Wilson, natural selection is being more and more influenced by social, psychological, and intellectual developments. Natural selection is the part of a reciprocal relationship.

Edward Wilson explains in his ecological manifesto, *The Diversity of Life*, human beings need rainforests, earth’s microorganisms, and the variety of creatures in order to survive on this particular planet, Earth. Human nature took millions of years to develop. Ecology has made us the species we are. Religion possesses strength to the extent that it codifies and puts into permanent form the highest values of humanity consistent with the empirical knowledge. Wilson concludes his book with the expression of the need of humankind to come to terms with the earth. His central claim is that we have been produced out of the materials of the earth and can never cut ourselves loose from our earthly underpinnings, no matter how sublime our thoughts.

Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer, is a prolific poet who has written poems, fiction, and essays on ecological themes. He loathes present global economy for its downright disregard of cultural and natural foundation of human life. He is an eminent cultural guide
through his creative works, The *Unsettling of America* and *A Continuous Harmony*. Berry has done excellent writing in and for wilderness.

Our perspectives are shaped by our needs. Ancient nomadic desert population’s perspectives were shaped by their own needs. Berry rightly complaints that applied science allied itself with corporate capitalism. Farming and farmers are being destroyed by the global economy. Faceless and exploitative corporations have taken over farmers and farmlands. Contemporary corporate forces have been destroying institutions, customs and habitats of one’s formative years. Wilson criticizes academic professions for their narrow-mindedness, self-interest, and radical ignorance of the ecological roots of all earthly existence.

Chapter sixteen, “The New Darwinism in the Humanities” describes human civilisation and culture. Mammals did not emerge until about two hundred million years ago. Reasonably familiar looking animals entered the scene only a mere sixty-five million years ago, after the end of the dinosaurs. *Homo sapiens* took over fifty to a hundred thousand years ago. Hunter-gatherer phase of hominids lasted for millions of years until only ten thousand years ago. The advent of farming introduced the settled communities we regard as civilisation, which transformed human life in every conceivable way, setting off a rapid and conscious development of the arts and sciences.

Hominid brain took billions of years to evolve. Human mind cannot be separate from its material origins. It is not a magical self-sustaining faculty. Our very material limitations enable us to be the creatures we are.

Steven Pinker affords a rich account of the foundations of Darwinian interventions in *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. 
Emile Durkheim expressed a sentiment whose influence shaped the social sciences for almost a century:

Collective representations, emotions, and tendencies are caused not by certain states of the consciousness of individuals but by the conditions in which the social group, in its totality, is placed. Such actions can, of course materialize only if the individual natures are not resistant to them; but these individual natures are merely the indeterminate material that the social factor molds and transforms” (Cosmides and Tooby).

Pinker gives a fatal blow to the dying orthodox notion of the blank slate. Pinker and E. O. Wilson are science thinkers. They have mastered the basics of contemporary human culture. The matter of “beauty” in the arts is a complex term.

Carrol’s magnum opus, *Evolution and Literary Theory* is a powerful attack against post-structuralism and textualism and their leading exponents, Derrida, Foucault, and their many disciples. Textualism is the belief that knowledge of the world is only knowledge of the text only. In such a universe of discourse, one opinion is as good as another. Everything becomes indeterminate.

Carrol expressed the view that, “the subject matter of literature is human experience.” Product of culture and rhetoric have influence human world. Human world is made of ground up. Fiction deals with the personal interactions constituted primarily by combinations of motives. Post-structuralism had kept aside the material foundations of human life. Human nature is derived from the material base. Carrol interconnects literature with evolution and ecology. He explicates in “The Ecology of Victorian Fiction” the relation between the organism and the environment in which the animal is living:
No organism can be understood except in its interactive relations with its total environment. An organism is never an isolated thing. By definition and in brute reality the world that an organism inhabits is part of the organism. The organism carries that world embedded and moulded [sic] into every inmost fold of its physiology, its anatomy, and its psyche ... The felt quality of experience within a natural world is one of those fundamental conditions of experience. It should also be one of the fundamental categories of literary analysis. (302)⁹

Darwinian adaptationism and ecology has produced the discipline of behavioral ecology. The insights of behavioral ecology have great power on the creation and interpretation of literary works. The Darwinians believe that the core of our being is given. Human nature is expressible in innumerable ways.

Culture has a great force. It influences the growth and development of the human beings largely. All life forms are dependent on nature for their survival. We must reconnect ourselves to nature.

Chapter seventeen “Ecocriticism’s Big Bang” is about the origin and development of the literary theory - ecocriticism. The genre of ecocriticism appeared in the 1990s. For centuries from Virgil’s Georgic to John Clare, Thoreau, Rachel Carson, sensitive people had actually realized that their life is placed in the nature.


Ecocriticism brought together writers who write about nature. Ecocriticism includes ecology of cities, environmental racism, environmental law, capitalism and colonial exploitation. Ecocriticism
acknowledges the explanatory power of evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology.

Human beings live in an environment. They are semi-independent of the environment in which they live. They are harming environment with pollution, toxics, erosion, and water usage. The environment makes the person. Fromm describes clearly human life in the context of nature: A man and a woman eat food from the earth that becomes their bodies and sperm cells and eggs. A fertilized egg, fed by more plants and animals, keeps dividing, turning into specialized body parts, including a brain, that are wholly derived from the plants and animals and the earth, sunlight, water, air, etc., that generate them (the nature of being human p. 190).

The fetus becomes a baby who becomes a person. The substance of a person is generated from the earth. The person is the environment and the environment is the person. Human beings work hard to get their livelihood. Human brain is a fantastically complex machine made of hundreds of billions of neurons that produce the sense of consciousness, sight, smell, touch, hearing, and self. Neuroscientists tell us that environment produces the desires, actions and attitudes among the human beings.

We are subject to the environment. Nature influences physical and psychological condition of the people. The period in which there was nothing outside the text has passed. Real world begins to seem very real indeed.

Glen A. Love introduces ecocriticism effectively in Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology and the Environment. He provides enormously wide and deep knowledge of ecocriticism and Darwinian sciences. He describes the connection of humanity to the planet. He suggests the implications of biology both for literature and life. He has
given new meaning to diversity. He interweaves the connections between nature and humanity. He has provided extensive reflections on Leo Marx, Raymond Williams, Virgil and Theocritus, Lawrence Buell, Joseph Meeker, C. P. Snow and others. Practical Ecocriticism is an ideal book; Love has been highly persuasive and skilled in establishing close relationship between humanity and nature.

Chapter eighteen in the book is entitled as “Overcoming the Oversoul: Emerson’s Evolutionary Existentialism.” Emerson expressed a profound sense of nature, challenge and promise of mental emancipation. His first book *Nature* was published in 1838. Morality had been the major theme of the book. German idealism and romantic subjectivism influenced him greatly. He asked to reconcile the materialism and spiritual values. He perceived human beings as completely woven into the material web of life. He saw human life as moral despite its radical materiality.

In recent years the distinction between nature and nurture has been gradually eroded. Matt Ridley’s *Nature via Nurture*, Daniel Dennett’s *Freedom Evolves*, William Calvin’s *A Brain for All Seasons*, Pinker, and E. O. Wilson gradually arrive at the conclusion that genes switch on and off depending on environment, and physical and mental states of the mind. Peter Singer and Roderick Nash have expressed the importance of the widening circle of human empathy. Nature and culture develop human nature.

The part three of the book is about the concept of consciousness. Chapter twenty is given the title, “Muses, Spooks, Neurons and the Rhetoric of “Freedom.” Creativity seems magical, implausible, and involuntary. The chapter twenty deals about the issues of the stream of consciousness. Experts report that there are at least 50 billion neurons. One fifty billion may be storing the data of our lives. Without
motivations there would not be any behaviour at all. Neurons are “brain cells” which establish body-mind interaction. The billions of brain cells interact by means of their thread-like dendrites and axons to produce one million billion connections known as synapses. An electrochemical transmission takes place across these synapses triggered by stimulation from anywhere in the body and from different areas of the brain. Daniel M. Wegner in *The Illusion of Conscious Will* tells a great deal about conscious.

The fact is, each of us acts in response to an unwieldy assortment of mental events, only a few of which may be easily brought to mind and understood as conscious intentions that cause our action (Wegner, 145).

The nature of neuronal storage is an unsolved mystery. Brain is not the storehouse of representational materials. The neuronal storage of the brain is like a digital compact disc. Codes exist in the consciousness to produce scene. Neuroscientists opine that consciousness is produced ad hoc over and over again each microsecond by some of the million billion synapses.

Wegner tells about the action and memory: Actions and their meanings are stored separately in memory. Otherwise, we would always know exactly what we intend and never suffer the embarrassment of walking into a room and wondering what it was we wanted there (Wegner, 166).

Writer like everyone else is socially constructed. The author is constructed by billions of involuntary neurons with a vast prehistory, constantly reformulated by culture. The time and place one lives, one’s parents, one’s education, one’s temperament, bodily states and infirmities, desires, tastes, traumas, joys form one’s life. One’s ability to
follow instruction depends on the contents and dispositions of one’s mental storage facility. Creative writer is a passive agent of neuronal storage, energy and organization. Virtual self cannot create anything.

People are trapped in constant paradigms not by their choice but compulsion. The self cannot initiate a thing because self is an effect. Self is like a character on the movie screen. We are changing all the time, growing, learning. Self does not generate the change. Something cannot exist out of chain of causes. We change and influence behaviour of other people. People are changed unwittingly. People are changed by rhetoric, muses or spooks, narrative generating neurons. People are unpredictable, despite all their character defining predictability. Because we can never know the ultimate springs of their behaviour. Biochemistry is imprinted in a preconscious way. Human behaviour is a form of rhetorical music. We are pretty brilliant robots.

Chapter Twenty One “John Searle and His Ghosts” deals with human consciousness. Cognitive neuroscientists such as Gerald Edelman and Walter Freeman have given highly technical maps of the brain showing neurons, electrochemical forces, inputs and outputs, recursive transmission paths. Descartes tried and failed to bridge the mind/body divide. John Searle writes strikingly lucid prose. He deals with the three main problems of contemporary philosophy of mind: consciousness, free will, and the self. He has given final blow to the age old positions of dualism and materialism that he regards as obsolete.

According to Searle consciousness is produced from the same materials as everything else – physical micro particles of various types. He identified its unique characteristics. Understanding is one of the important functions of the consciousness. Behaviour of the neurons forms the consciousness. Subjective first person can experience
subjective consciousness. Action of neurons determines the total state mental state of an individual.

Searle has taken a worthwhile survey of historical positions. He is aware of developments in the neurosciences. He has given an elaborate account of human consciousness.

Chapter Twenty Two is entitled, “Daniel Dennett and the Brick Wall of Consciousness.” Daniel Dennett has written classic books on human consciousness, *Consciousness Explained* (1991) and *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* (1995). The books deal with the matters of self, consciousness and free will. The human brain involves nearly 100 billion neurons. These are a variety of fine, threadlike long brain cells. They link to brain internal organs of the body. Within the brain these neurons connect with each other via synapses across which neural impulses send electrochemical messages. Harold Fromm said that the sheer number of connections is greater than the number of stars in the universe. The network is the place where the performance of the body is registered. All forms of psychological experience takes place, cerebration, emotion arise in this network of neurons.

There is no stable existing behind all the neuronal flux of your brain. There is not coherent narrative in the human consciousness. Signals vie like sperm cells to get to consciousness. Winners get entry into the line of the stream of consciousness. Without a centre the self is virtual. Life is produced from nonlife. Our consciousness is produced from multitudes of unconscious firings. Pandemonium of neuronal activity generates our behaviour and thoughts. Consciousness is ultimately composed of material particles that are electrochemical firings.

David Chalmers, author of *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* opposed the view that consciousness is not
something over and above electrochemical firings. He does not believe that materialism can answer the question of consciousness. According to him the problem of consciousness is the problem of experience. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing. Experience depends on the physical features of the world.

According to Chalmers, there is something about consciousness over and above data processing. Consciousness is not a mystery. It is a physical, biological phenomenon. Chalmers explains consciousness: “It seems to many people that consciousness is a mystery, the most wonderful magic show imaginable, an unending series of specific effects that defy explanation. I think that they are mistaken: consciousness is a physical, biological phenomenon-like metabolism or reproduction” (Sweet Dreams, 57). Chalmers’ magnum opus of 1996, *The Conscious Mind*, describes consciousness.

Chapter Twenty-Three, “The Crumbling Mortar of Social Construction” emphasises the elements which construct society. Steven Pinker demolished the quaint notion of the human mind as a blank slate. Any society constructs customs or machinery, motivated by the human biological programme. Culture constructs society. Culture can alter the bodies and psyches up to a point. The alterations are always shaped and limited by the human nature they are addressing. The human nature can change over time through natural selection. Culture is always at the service of the human nature. Ideologies and thinking can only form what is there, not what is not there. Bodies and brains in the society are directed by the nature.

Fromm concludes the book *The Nature of Being Human: From Environmentalism to Consciousness* by explaining the effects of the environment on body and consciousness in, “My Life as a Robot.” Toxic substances, pollution, the quality of soil in which food is grown,
living near highways, chlordane, PCBs, DDT, global warming, lead in paint and dishes are more than casually related to one's physical and mental condition. The environment of the planet has evolved us. Neuro scientists and cognitive scientists have claimed that a network of billions of synapses are a self-directing system, that produces us as already mapped out but seemingly flexible psychological beings. We are sometimes bemused by the tragic-comic illusion of autonomy. One cannot understand oneself without a perception. There is nothing to consciousness that is not physical. Myriad elements of the environment are woven into physical being of every person. Nature influences our feelings and how do we exist.

There is the distinction between a robot and a human being. Human beings can ponder or reflect. We feel a consciousness within us. The material of reflection can come from what is already stored in neurons of an individual. It cannot come directly from outside. We can engage in spiritual activity.

Every person has a powerful influence on other people. We can refine the influence through our knowledge of human nature, social expressions, sensitivity, intelligence, and awareness with regard to human behaviour. Human nature has been subject to change for millions of years. Institutions protect the civilized life. Criminals should not be forgiven if they endanger the very existence of society through their deceitful activities.

We should join together to create world in which plants or animals can live together harmoniously.
References


