

Beautifully Sustainable

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A picture hangs in an art gallery to be admired by everyone. The sun descends over the ocean on a pink sky. A girl on a cosmetic advertisement puts on the newest lipstick. What comes to mind when thinking about the word *beauty*? In our society today, the word *beauty* is used for a variety of different objects and scenarios. However, what is truly beautiful? We try to create newer and better and prettier designer clothes, makeup, buildings, homes, and more. The problem, however, is that the more we attempt to create something aesthetically pleasing to the eye, the more we tend to exploit our natural world and resources. What many people might not realize is that beauty occurs naturally in our world. In reality, to create a more beautiful world, we need to learn to be sustainable so that we can preserve the world's simple beauty. To bring about beauty in our world and to create a more aesthetically pleasing environment to live in, we must first learn how to have a relationship with nature as well as experience ourselves as a part of nature. Only when we see ourselves as a part of the natural environment will we stop acting in our own self-interest and start creating a more sustainable and beautiful world, rather than creating fake beauty that involves exploitation.

First, we must learn how to live with nature instead of pitting ourselves against it. As Richard Burke (2011) said, there are six main types of relationships we can have with nature. Burke (2011) claims that one essential feature of our relationships with nature is that we should worship nature rather than to try to control it. The mistake we make when we try to control nature is that we underestimate its power. Our attempts to try to control nature lead to exploitation, which only diminishes the natural beauty of the world. By learning to live with

nature, we also learn how to experience ourselves as a part of nature. Ernst Schumacher (2011) says that this experience is crucial in understanding nature. Schumacher (2011) insists that we need to realize that we are not separate from nature, but instead, we are a part of nature.

While Schumacher (2011) clearly believes that we need to view ourselves as a part of nature, Thomas Hobbes (1651) believes that this claim contradicts a fundamental characteristic of our human nature, which is to act out of our own self-interest. Hobbes (1651) would argue that because we tend to act only in ways that augment our own well being, we should take a step back from sustainability and sustainable living. Furthermore, Daniel Quinn (1992) sees Hobbes' view in action in the widespread attitude that we humans consider ourselves to be superior to every other creature on Earth and that we view ourselves as "the end product of creation...the creature for whom all the rest was made" (p. 122). These attitudes suggest that we are too self-absorbed and egocentric to care about the environment. On the other hand, a healthier approach would be to consider the importance of having a relationship with nature of which we are a part. If we can see ourselves as part of nature, then working for nature is also in our self-interest; in this way, we can learn to become more sustainable, not just for the environment, but for our own well being.

Once we realize that planning to live more sustainably is not just helpful to the environment but also helpful to humans, specifically ourselves, change can start to take place, and we can start to develop tactics for sustainable living. As Joel Salatin (2011) says, permaculture is the best and easiest way to mimic nature's way of surviving and thriving. Permaculture also minimizes the amount of work a farmer needs to do. Simple ideas that

Salatin (2011) uses, such as allowing animals to break up the soil before planting or growing a grapevine on the porch to provide a convenient snack, occur naturally without much effort from humans. Farmers interested in sustainability might start off with small scale permaculture projects, but eventually, once the logical and simple benefits of permaculture become obvious, larger projects will be put into place. Humans will finally learn that sustainable practices can help both the environment and themselves. Moreover, the result of living sustainably does not just involve more logical ways of living and an overall better lifestyle for both humans and the environment; it also will naturally create a more aesthetically pleasing environment for us to live in. Because we will be surrounded by nature in every part of our lives, we will be able to see the natural beauty that our environment has to offer. No longer will we view only beaches and mountains and flowers as beautiful. We will also see other types of complementary beauty, such as environmentally friendly buildings or filtering systems that enable rain-gardens to thrive. Instead of trying to create manmade beauty by exploiting our natural resources, we need to develop sustainable practices that will allow us to work with natural phenomena to create an aesthetically pleasing and beautiful environment to live in.

We need to realize that nature itself is aesthetically pleasing and that we can better achieve a beautiful society by using sustainable practices, like permaculture, instead of trying to attain beauty by exploiting our natural resources. In order to create this more sustainable and beautiful world, we must first change our relationship with nature by learning to live with nature instead of against it. Similarly, we need to understand that if we view ourselves as a part of nature rather than as a separate or superior entity, then living sustainably will work in our own self-interest. These new ideas of sustainable living will result in not only a more

environmentally friendly world, but also a more beautiful world, filled with diversity and natural aesthetics, instead of the fake beauty we often try to create through exploitation of nature.

References

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