22 The Great New Wilderness Debate: An Overview

MICHAEL NELSON

Michael Nelson is a professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin at Sevens Point and a leading environmental thinker. He is (with Baird Callicott) the editor of *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (1998). He is preparing a second volume of this work. In this essay Nelson sets forth the charges that the received concept *wilderness* is an inadequate, confused notion. He then considers the responses to these charges by environmentalists like Gary Snyder, Dave Foreman, David Rothenberg, and others, concluding that whereas no solution to the debate is apparent, the debate is salutary in that it is helping to clarify the issues surrounding the conception.

The anthology, *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (TGNWD) that I edited in 1998 with Baird Callicott is an attempt to represent the essence of a debate that began in academia in the early 1990s: a debate over the concept of wilderness—a concept that is "alleged to be ethnocentric, androcentric, phallagocentric, unscientific, unphilosophic, impolitic, outmoded, even genocidal."[1] A list of such dreadful assertions, of course, depends on evidence that there is a concept of wilderness that has been historically molded, a concept which in turn serves as a model for our current and collective idea of wilderness—a concept that we refer to as the "received view of wilderness."

We assert, then, that the concept of wilderness is a social construct. Hence, we deny the realism of the concept—that "wilderness" has an existence beyond that which we socially create for it—and that it is this social construct that is flawed. The idea of a social construction of wilderness is often a difficult notion to embrace from within a culture where the idea is generally agreed upon, but it is far easier to glimpse when we see how it is that others from distinct cultural backgrounds construe wilderness (or completely fail to construe it in the first place). As Nepalese scholar Pramod Parajuli points out,

> I cannot bifurcate "nature" from "culture" or the "domesticated" from the "wild." It seems to me that mainstream notions of wild and wilderness are primarily a product of the industrial economy and Cartesian reality.[2]

We contend that this received view portrays wilderness as the highest manifestation of that which is considered natural, as that which sits in starkest contrast with that which is human or the product of human agency. This view crystallized over the first part of the 20th century, when the early wilderness battles in the United States were fought. It then appropriately found its way into the single most important piece of wilderness legislation in the world, the U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964, where wilderness is defined (both conceptually and legally): "...in contrast to those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape,...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (Public Law 88-577). In all fairness, this definition is not absolutely human exclusive: "Dominate" is not the same as "present,"

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"untrammeled" is not the same as "untouched," and "does not remain" is not the same as "is not allowed" or "has never been." But wilderness certainly does not have to be human exclusive to be set up in opposition to humans. Let us consider the criticisms of this received view of wilderness in groupings.

FROM ETHNOCENTRIC TO GENOCIDAL TO IMPOLITIC

"Wilderness," unlike many of the words for the things within a wilderness area, is not readily translatable into a wide variety of languages. This linguistic lack forms, in part, the first critique of the received view—that it is ethnocentric (emanating from one culture and inappropriately applied to other cultures). I am told that there is no word for "wilderness" in Japanese, Chinese, or even many European languages. It is an English word that we find, obviously enough, in English-speaking places such as Britain, the United States, and Australia. Interestingly, however, it does not seem to be a word that we find in the languages of the aboriginal inhabitants of those lands. In fact, it has been ridiculed by American Indians such as Chief Luther Standing Bear, who writes,

> Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people. To us it was tame.... Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us... was it "wild" for us, [did] the "Wild West" begin."[3]

Likewise, Australian aborigines claim that they have no word or concept for wilderness, and I have no reason to doubt them.[4] Hence, to the extent that we universalize a concept to all cultures that seems to be particular to one or a few, we are being ethnocentric.

But the ethnocentrism of "wilderness" is far more insidious than that. It has been suggested that reference to the lands of Australia and North America as wilderness has allowed for, enforced, and justified the historic eradication of American and Australian first peoples on the basis that these were essentially *terra nullis*, empty lands, devoid of humans, open for immediate occupancy. Of course they were not empty. But the die was already cast, the landscape already socially constructed as "wilderness." The testament to the power of the idea of wilderness came when these European settlers were faced with the choice of rethinking "wilderness," or at least the (mis)application of the idea in these contexts or forcing the idea to fit by categorizing the human occupants of the land as nonhuman wildlife. The sport hunting of Australian aborigines and the common North American frontier slogan, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian," indicate the choice often made. The idea of wilderness, among other things to be sure, served as a tool for genocide in these cases. And perhaps it still does.

A number of examples of the importation of the North American concept of wilderness correlate with the removal of tribal peoples from their homeland: from the African Ik of the Kidepo Valley in Uganda, to the Juwesi San of the Kalahari Bushmen in Namibia, to the various wilderness sanctuaries in India. After all, the *U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964* asserts that wilderness is land "without permanent improvements *or human habitation*" (Public Law 88-577, emphasis added).

ANDROCENTRISM AND PHALLAGOCENTRISM

It has been alleged that the perpetuation of the received view of wilderness is a perpetuation of male-centeredness, the idea that wilderness is macho. The early American framers of this received view clearly thought so. Theodore Roosevelt considered wilderness adventures as a means to shape and sharpen our American character—to keep us rugged and manly: Wilderness promoted a lacking "vigorous manliness." Bob Marshall saw wilderness adventure as providing Williams James's "moral equivalent to war." And Northwoods nature writer Sigurd Olson imagined wilderness travel as "the virile, masculine type of experience men need

today." Some have asserted that the received view of wilderness, and any importation of it, still carries with it this objectionable type of androcentrism. As Marvin Henberg phrases the objection,

> Theodore Roosevelt, for instance, thought of the wilds as a proving ground for virility, male camaraderie, and the honing of a warrior caste. Such a view is less than palatable in these decades of deep ecology and ecofeminism. Why virility and aggressiveness over placidity and nurture?[5]

UNSCIENTIFIC, UNPHILOSOPHIC, OUTMODED

It has been suggested that the wilderness idea presents a problem for restoration ecologists. The received view evolved in an era when pre-European-contact American Indian and Australian aboriginie populations and impacts were thought to be minimal to nonexistent. Although the population numbers and the amount and extent of their impact are hotly debated, we do know that past inhabitants of North America, for instance, were active managers of their landscapes and that the so-called wilderness experienced by the new Euro-Americans was often the result of a combination of pathogenic-induced population decimation and a European preconception of, and lack of familiarity with, the North American landscape. But the goal of wilderness management, set by the incredibly influential Leopold Report of 1963, is often taken to be the preservation, or restoration, of landscapes to "the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man." Hence, the "wilderness" state of North America was in many ways *artificial*— the product of profound, direct and indirect human intervention, and, therefore, by definition, not wilderness at all. We are here, then, brought up short by the paradoxical requirement that to fulfill our restoration mandate we must first of all ignore pre-European impact and, secondly, that we must actively manage (trammel) the landscapes that are supposed to remain untrammeled in order to restore them.

The received view of wilderness is also alleged to be informed by the now outmoded climax community model of nature, the idea that without any significant impact by humans, nature remains in a steady state. Rear-looking attempts to recreate a certain state (pre-European in the United States, for example) perpetuate this now outmoded ecological paradigm, a paradigm currently replaced by a disturbance model. Of course it is easy to understand why this is so: The ideal of wilderness preservation developed at the same time as the ecological modeling of nature went from the Clementsian superorganismic model of nature to an Eltonian economic model of nature to a Tanslian ecosystemic model of nature. All these models, however different, perpetuate the idea of nature as moving toward an integration and maturation if left alone by humans. The way to properly tend nature, given an interest in doing so, was to leave nature alone. However, the current disturbance model of ecology—a model that prompts in many ways the critique of wilderness—asserts that various scales of disturbance and discord are the normal background "harmony" in nature. This ecological model sheds a fundamentally different light on our received view of wilderness and hence on our ideas about wilderness preservation. It is sometimes suggested that our contemporary received view of wilderness is therefore ecologically outmoded.

Finally, it is alleged that characterizing wilderness in opposition to humans and their works also perpetuates the false dualism between humans and nature. And, if values are attached to those ends of the spectrum (wilderness = good, human by default = bad), then we also invoke a false value dualism, the result of which is the condemnation of human interactions, even ecological restoration, because it is perpetuated by humans. Again, our philosophical assumptions lead us to troubling scientific and management assumptions. Wilderness proponent Dave Foreman admits this human separateness when he says, "Many kinds of wilderness foes especially bristle at this barring of human habitation. I believe this lack of long-lasting settlement is key to wil-der-ness [self-willed land]."[6]

Indeed they do bristle. In fact, this "unpeopling" of the landscape may be that which

most upsets those outside of the United States. Brazilian professor Antonio Carlos Diegues recently wrote that

> A North American model . . . which dichotomizes "people" and "parks" has spread rapidly throughout the world. Because this approach has been adopted rather uncritically by the countries of the Third World, its effects have been devastating for the traditional populations.[7]

Another Third-World scholar comments that

> For a majority of people who eke out their livelihoods from nature's economy, the widely held ideas that nature can be preserved in wilderness and that wilderness is what is untouched by humans are simply untenable.[8]

This dualism also presents problems for environmental ethics. I continue to be disturbed by what has now become an explicit attempt by some environmental thinkers to separate humans from nature, to say that we are not just different in degree from the nonhuman world but different in kind. Although I can only speculate on the origins of such affirmation, and although I am unsure of the scientific soundness of a human/nature dualism, my main concern as an ethicist is with the moral implications of such a split.[9]

I adhere to the Land Ethic of Aldo Leopold as not only the most reasonable starting point for the development of an environmental ethic but also as a helpful field guide to understanding the very essence of human ethical obligations and the nature of ethical entailment in the abstract. According to this line of thought, a shared sense of social community is an absolute necessity for a prompting of our moral sentiments and the resulting ethical obligation that those sentiments provoke. The lack of this social inclusion results in the inability to extend directly our moral sentiments, and hence ethical inclusion, to those outside of this realm. For example, the intentional dehumanization of those against whom we would go to war makes it much easier to pull a trigger or drop a bomb because they become viewed as separate or "others," no longer members of either our human social or human ethical community. On the other hand, it is the recognition of similarity and social membership that has driven such ethically inclusive movements as civil rights, women's suffrage, and animal liberation. Given an historical assessment of our ethical development, I am fearful of any attempt at making a human/nature dichotomy, of making nature "other." I do not believe that we are ethically well served by it. In fact, I think that such divisiveness threatens the environmental ethical progress we have made. In short, if Aldo Leopold is correct, if an appropriate moral relationship between humans and the nonhuman world depends on our seeing ourselves as *part* of an inclusive biotic community, then anything that severs that community, that serves to conceptually separate humans from nature, stands forever in the way of a satisfactory environmental ethic.

However, in the Western concept of wilderness, and to the degree that this concept has been imported elsewhere, it seems to me that there is a strong attempt to envision wilderness as the epitome of that which is natural, employing natural to mean that which is not a product of human agency or that which is apart from humans.

Many of the reactions to the big Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness blowdown in Northern Minnesota in 1999 serve as a nice example. The blowdown itself was viewed by many as a natural process and not threatening to the wilderness quality of the area because it was not the product of human agency, whereas the move to clear portages and camp sites by utilizing chain saws met with heated resistance in some quarters.[10]

Admittedly I have only glossed over the critiques offered against the received view of wilderness. Each of these deserves far more attention than I have given it here. Next I will gloss over a taxonomy of responses to the critique presented by traditional wilderness defenders. Essentially there are four types of responses to the critique for the received view of wilderness (RVW).

DENY THE EXISTENCE OF THE RVW—AT LEAST THE "RECEIVED" PART

First, there are those who have denied the "received" part of the expression—the claim that wilderness is a social construct—and have asserted instead a philosophy of realism with

regard to wilderness. "Naturalness exists out there," "wilderness areas are for real," says Dave Foreman." Nature as seen from the Kitkitdizze is no 'social construction'" asserts nature poet Gary Snyder. Some wilderness defenders deny the significance of the name "wilderness," claiming that because what the word refers to has an existence apart from humans—including human linguistics—and that the name is merely a benign placeholder for the thing to which it refers: a rose smelling as sweet by any other name as it were. The names of common plants and animals (fern, fox, or fawn) might indeed be innocuous and unproblematic English references for things that actually exist in the world. But "wilderness" is not one of these words. It is no mere benign descriptor. The feminist movement has made us keenly aware that names can frame, color, allow for, or sanction certain types of uses and abuses. Words like "babe," "chick," and even "lady" are rightly rejected by feminists as inappropriate labels for women because of the unacceptable social constructs that accompany them ("babes" and "chicks" are sexual objects; "ladies" are inherently delicate models of virtue). "Wilderness" clearly comes with baggage as well. For Colonial Puritans it carried a negative value; it was the house of the devil, whereas its opposite, humans and human intervention, was good. Wilderness was therefore to be transformed and civilized; such work was viewed as Godly. At the turn of the twentieth century neo-Calvinists flipped the value of nature; nature was now the handiwork of God and therefore good. Humans, at the opposite end of the spectrum, were assigned the opposite value—bad, or unworthy.[11] The human/nature dualism and changing value associations are part of the meaning of wilderness. In the early and mid-1900s the movement to preserve areas of wilderness was motivated primarily by the preservation of recreational opportunities; wilderness had a purely anthropocentric and instrumental value. More recently, of course, wilderness areas have come to be seen as set-asides for threatened species, standards of land health, and scientific study areas; the value of wilderness has become more nonanthropocentric, with gestures toward intrinsic value made by some. We have clearly socially construed and reconstrued "wilderness" over the years. So, if "wilderness" is socially constructed, we need to think carefully about what connotations and history we inevitably evoke when we use the term. We need to ask whether those associations can be disentangled from the term.

There is also a bizarre metaphysical confusion lurking here. Gary Snyder assumes that to assert that a concept is a social construction is at the same time to deny the existence of that to which the concept is applied. Along these same lines, I have personally observed far more than one person attempt to dismiss the idea of wilderness as a social contruction by saying something to the effect that, "I bet if we dropped you social constructivists in the middle of the Bob Marshall wilderness area with no supplies you wouldn't think it was unreal." Snyder's remedy for social constructivism is somewhat similar: "I'd say take these dubious professors out for a walk, show them a bit of the passing ecosystem show, and maybe get them to help clean up a creek."[12] I will not comment on the inappropriately brash and completely mistaken assumption that those who engage in such conceptual analysis do not care for or act to protect various places in nature, however socially construed. The shared assumption here, of course, is that no one with direct experiences of the places we call wilderness could deny the existence of it, or fail to value it for its own sake. The reply is obvious. Merely because one asserts that "wilderness" is a social construct does not mean that one denies the existence of the places that the term is applied to. The feminist assertion that "babe," "chick," and "lady" are merely socially constructed does not deny the existence of those whom we so label.

ADMIT AN RVW—"IT'S JUST THAT WE HAVE IT WRONG"

As noted above, Dave Foreman often defends a wilderness realism and denies the existence of the received/social constructivist possibility of wilderness. At least sometimes he does. In a recent essay he seems to admit the historical (or social) construction of wilderness but argues that we have gone beyond this outdated view

and that we have redefined or reconstructed wilderness. "This Real Wilderness Idea," Foreman asserts, "is very different from The Received Wilderness Idea invented and then lambasted by Baird Callicott, Bill Cronon and other Deconstructionists."[13] Currently wilderness is valued because of its importance for such things as the preservation of biological diversity, scientific study, and measures of land health, as well as for recreational values, according to Foreman. In other words, we have matured, and our maturation has come with an enriched valuation of wilderness, a new received view. Fair enough. Foreman may be right. He certainly is to some degree. But his very own rendition of the history of his wilderness idea is still a social construction. He just asserts we can and have transcended more narrowly conceived instrumental values, whereas Callicott and Cronon seem to argue that we have not, and perhaps cannot, go beyond them.

ADMIT THE RVW—DENY THE CRITIQUES

Some have admitted, at least provisionally, the existence of the received view of wilderness but have attempted to get around the critiques, usually by simply rejecting them outright.

For example, although I am not aware of any direct attempt to do this, one could just reject the claim that the received view is so much male-centered *machismo*. One could either attempt to do so by simply denying the evidence—the impact of the words and ideas of Theodore Roosevelt, Bob Marshall, and Sigurd Olson on the received view—or by denying the persistence of this attitude, arguing that it is no longer present in our views of wilderness—that it has been replaced.

Some have dealt directly with the charge of ethnocentrism. Although again I am not aware of anyone directly denying or somehow explaining away the terrible outcomes of importing North American-style wilderness to Africa and India, Dave Foreman has alleged that folks such as Ramachandra Guha, who offer a Third-World critique of the received view, "are suffering from Third World jingoism." Foreman asserts that "wilderness is a victim of chronic anti-Americanism" and is, in his own words, "racist."[14] Foreman, David Orr, Holmes Rolston, Gary Snyder, Tom Vale, and others have also attempted to minimize—or at least have asserted that the wilderness critique has inappropriately maximized—the impact that pre-European North Americans had on the North American landscape in an attempt to avoid the charge of ethnocentrism. In a recent review to *TGNWD,* environmental philosopher David Rothenberg even went so far as to claim "that the notion of wilderness has supporters all over the world" and therefore that "wilderness has a place in the environmental philosophies of all cultures," even though, as he admits, "many cultures do not have a word for wilderness, [but] when they think about what it means, they know what to do with it."[15]

Many have asserted, without much argument unfortunately, that wilderness does *not* perpetuate the human/nature dualism. However, they have gone on to discuss wilderness in exactly those terms: as "self-willed" land, meaning "apart from humans"; "the arena of evolution," implying a strange notion that evolution is somehow corrupted or nonexistent outside of wilderness areas in the human-dominated areas; embracing the idea that humans and human actions are the corrupting influences on wilderness by continually casting the discussions in these very terms. "At some point, land quits being mostly dominated by humans; at some other point, land begins to be controlled primarily by the forces of Nature. There is a wide gray area in between, where human and natural forces both have some sway. After natural forces become dominant, the land is self-willed."[16]

I will admit that the one place where I see some of the best and most heartening responses to the critique of wilderness is in the area of scientific assumptions. Wilderness defenders—from Reed Noss to Michael Soulé to Dave Foreman at times—very nicely dynamize the scientific assumptions of wilderness. They have really attempted to take into account the most modern ecological paradigms of change in their reconceptualization of wilderness. They have, for the most part, even rid themselves of the metaphors of climax community models and the rhetoric of pristine and untouched wilderness.

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION, NAME CALLING, RAW ASSERTIONS, DAMNING ANALOGIES

The last attempt to respond to the critique deserves little attention here. Essentially it amounts to name calling. Wilderness critics are called "wilderness foes," "anticonservationists," "antinature intellectuals," "faddish philosophers who will soon be forgotten," "high-paid intellectual types... trying to knock Nature, knock the people who value Nature, and still come out smelling smart and progressive." Also, disturbing analogies have been drawn: "the high end of the wise-use movement," playing into the bureaucrats' hands," just another part of the overall "war against nature." For example, the philosopher Socrates once asserted that he could learn nothing from nature; Callicott and Nelson are philosophers; therefore, they must believe that as well. Although these responses are interesting (even somewhat entertaining) in that they demonstrate the power of ideas and conceptual analysis (the power of philosophy), they are not arguments; they are merely emotive and vituperative diatribes.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Thus far we seem to have two possible solutions.

The first is to jettison the word "wilderness" and all the baggage it carries. Many formerly called "zoos" are now often referred to by such titles as "animal sanctuaries" because it was thought that the word "zoo" was inevitably associated with connotations that zookeepers wanted to do without—venues for animal gawking, for human entertainment, the value of which was wholly anthropocentric—whereas the term "animal sanctuary" contained a very different connotation and value structure. An animal sanctuary is first and foremost for the animals, where animal gawking may be allowed, but only if it is compatible with the primary value. Likewise, Baird Callicott has proposed that the term "wilderness" is inevitably and of necessity coupled with unattractive and inappropriate baggage and should therefore be replaced by the term "biodiversity reserve."[17] This solution seems to suggest that the term and concept "wilderness" is too far gone—that it cannot be rethought.

Others have asserted that the concept of wilderness can be rethought, can be salvaged, and that we can therefore still utilize the term. In fact, they argue that we are already moving beyond the received view, already reconceptualizing it.[18]

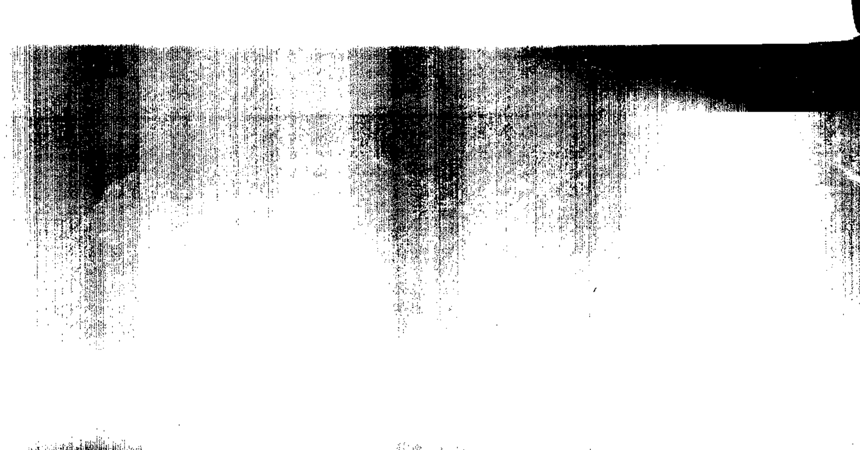
Of course, given the dynamism of the human imagination, and given the fact that we have historically construed and reconstrued wilderness, it seems perfectly reasonable to think that such a rethinking is possible. Perhaps the salvation for wilderness lies somehow, then, in the human mind.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

So, "What's next?" I am often asked. To be honest, I am not sure. I am not sure that jumping ahead to "What's next?" is not tantamount to "draining the bath water before the baby is bathed" (to mutilate a metaphor). That is to say, one might argue that the debate needs to brew a bit longer before the "What's next?" question can be properly addressed. That being said, I would like to offer some very rough and very preliminary comments on what might happen next. Please note that my intellectual timidity here is dictated not by an unwillingness to say something substantive but rather by an honest assessment of an incomplete discussion.

First of all, I am struck and surprised by the amount, persistence, and level of response that has been generated by the critique of the concept of wilderness. In short, it has been hot and heavy. Certainly, conceptual analysis is provocative![19] This debate proves it. However, the benefit of conceptual analysis has not yet been made lucid enough.

I think we need to more clearly articulate the nature of the criticism of the concept of wilderness; to explain the character and attributes of conceptual analysis; to show why conceptual analysis is important, even crucial, and how it is the wilderness proponents' ally; and hopefully to begin to bridge some of the gaps that seem to have appeared between those wilderness



advocates engaging in the conceptual analysis of wilderness and those wilderness advocates who see such an analysis as not only a threat but also a heresy.

For example, I am concerned about many of the responses to this debate that I have thus far encountered. David Orr's attempt to lump responsible criticisms of the concept of wilderness by those such as Cronon and Callicott with the nearly delusional rantings against wilderness by Marilynne Robinson is irresponsible.[20] Dave Foreman's and Gary Snyder's matching of environmentalists who engage in the analysis of concepts such as wilderness with the perversely named Wise-Use movement as all part of the same antinature, antiwilderness conspiracy, or as merely different fronts on "the war against nature," is simply wrongheaded.

Although I am not withdrawing the criticisms of the received view of wilderness that have been leveled elsewhere, I do think that the critics have sometimes failed to make it clear why conceptual analysis is warranted, why it is not a threat, and how it might serve the wilderness advocate.

In short, I think the fruits of this debate over the concept of wilderness will help us clarify our thinking and make us better prepared to defend the concept against the true enemies of wilderness areas—those who wish to do away with places referred to as "wilderness." Yes, the critique is claiming that the emperor has no clothes (or at least that the emperor's clothes don't fit), but its proponents are exposing the emperor for the sake of reclothing him or, in other words, for the emperor's own good. The real enemy of wilderness is not only exposing the emperor but also attempting to depose him as well.

Some have argued that there is nothing wrong with the concept of wilderness or the arguments for wilderness preservation, but these are people who already consider themselves advocates of wilderness. If there is one thing students of philosophy learn early on it is that the strength of an argument is not to be measured by how persuasive it is to those who already tend to agree with the argument's conclusion, but rather on what sort of force it has against dissenters, those who disagree with the conclusions. *And the dissenters are not persuaded.* Wouldn't it be wonderful to have an argument that swayed some of these dissenters (or at least some of the fence-sitters)? The hope in this debate seems to me to lie in recognition of the power and benefit of, and a commitment to, conceptual analysis. We desperately need to recognize the conceptual shortcomings of our current received view of wilderness and to forge better definitions and conceptualizations of wilderness. Only in this manner can we present a more unified and carefully thought out front against those who would attempt to undo that which so many of our environmentally minded ancestors accomplished.

NOTES

1. Callicott and Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate (TGNWD)* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 2.
2. From "How Can Four Trees Make a Jungle?" in David Rothenberg and Marta Ulvaeus, eds., *The World and the Wild: Expanding Wilderness Conservation Beyond Its American Roots* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), p. 5.
3. From "Indian Wisdom" in *TGNWD*, p. 201.
4. See Fabienne Bayet's essay "Overturning the Doctrine: Indigenous People and Wilderness—Being Aboriginal in the Environmental Movement," in *TGNWD*.
5. From "Wilderness, Myth, and American Character," in *TGNWD*, p. 504.
6. "The Real Wilderness Idea," in David N. Col, et al., eds., *Wilderness Science in a Time of Change, Vol. 1,* USDA, USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Proceedings RMRS-P-15-Vol-1, September, 2000, p. 34.
7. "Recycled Rain Forest Myths," in *The World and the Wild,* p. 157.
8. Ibid., p. 13.
9. Consider, for example, the attempt to replace "integrity and stability" as a worthy aim of ecosystem management with "wildness" as found in "Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness" by Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop, *Environmental Ethics* Spring 1999 (21:1), pp. 3–21. The authors define "wildness" by stating that "something is wild in a certain respect to the extent that it is *not humanized* in that respect" (p. 12, emphasis in the original).

10. Evidence of a popular expression of a predisturbance ecological model came by way of a very common expression that the BWCA was now ruined.
11. The most dramatic representation of this is the difference between Calvinist minister Daniel Muir and his nuturalist son John Muir. Both separated humans from nature but assigned opposing values to the ends of the spectrum. For Daniel, turning the wilderness into the agricultural land was to do God's handiwork, whereas for John leaving certain instances of nature untouched was to protect God's handiwork.
12. "Nature as Seen from the Kitkitdizze Is No 'Social Construction'," *Wild Earth,* Winter 1996/97, p. 9.
13. "The Real Wilderness Idea," p. 33.
14. In *TGNWD,* p. 399.
15. In *Environmental Ethics,* Summer 2000 (22:2), p. 202. Indeed, many of the Third-World voices in Rothenberg's own anthology, *The World and the Wild,* are very clear about what the first world can do with its idea of wilderness.
16. Foreman, "The Real Wilderness Idea," p. 34.
17. "Should Wilderness Areas Become Biodiversity Reserves?," *TGNWD,* pp. 585–94.
18. See, for instance, Mark Woods, *Rethinking Wilderness,* forthcoming from Broadview Press.
19. In fact, one of the critics of the received view of wilderness has even received a death threat over this debate.
20. "The Not-So-Great Wilderness Debate... Continued," *Wild Earth,* Summer 1999, pp. 74–80.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that Nelson thinks the concept "wilderness" is a social construction? How does he respond to charges that labeling the concept is tantamount to a denial of that which we name "wilderness"? How significant is Nelson's critique here? Isn't every word and concept a social construction in that, as language, it arises out of social existence?
2. Examine the definition of "wilderness" embodied in the *U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964* (mentioned at the beginning of this essay as embodying the "received view of wilderness"—RVW): "in contrast to those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape,... an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Evaluate this definition. Is it a good one? Why don't Nelson and other critics accept it as sufficient for a working definition?
3. Discuss the criticisms of the received view of wilderness (RVW) and Nelson's responses to them. With whom do you agree more—the critics or the proponents of RVW?