

The Settling Effect of Nature

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For years now scientists have been pleading with governments, corporations, and individuals to change their habits in order to protect the environment. These pleas were loud and clear in the weeks following Australia's wildfires, but they have since been drowned out by news related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Human death rates have overshadowed Mother Earth. She exists literally and figuratively outside of the human world. Though we are completely dependent on natural elements such as trees, pollinators, and rain, they possess scientific mysteries outside of our comprehension. I believe this mysteriousness is part of the reason why people are reluctant to change their habits for the environment's sake. The average person (myself included) does not understand the science behind why wildfires are occurring at such an increasing rate. What the average person does understand is nature's settling effect. Seeking solace from troubling headlines, people have turned to the outdoors for comfort. It is one of the few places where we are still allowed, where it is still safe (assuming social distancing is followed). Whereas nature's separation from the human world normally exists as a barrier, it is now a balm. We are reminded there is a world outside of COVID-19, and despite the constant setbacks it faces, it is still bursting with life. Spring's life gives way to human hope. Speaking to this hope is a diary entry written by Sylvia Plath, where she describes an experience with the outdoors:

From this experience also, a faith arises to carry back to a human world of small lusts and deceitful pettiness. A faith, naïve and child-like perhaps, born as it is from the infinite simplicity of nature. It is a feeling that no matter what the ideas or conduct of others, there is a unique rightness and beauty to life which can be shared in openness, in wind and sunlight, with a fellow human being who believes in the same basic principles.

The "basic principle" by which most people are leading their lives is stopping the spread of COVID-19. The disease has connected us with what we UUs call our common humanity. We are all depending on one another. This

inter-connectedness is felt when we experience the "unique rightness and beauty to life" possessed by nature. If possible, the next time you are feeling overwhelmed by COVID-19, put your head out the window and breath in nature's uniting splendor, and then as thank you to the environment, turn off your AC.

Plath, Sylvia, and Karen V. Kukil. *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000. Print.

Popova, Maria. "19-Year-Old Sylvia Plath on the Transcendent Splendor of Nature." *Brain Pickings*, www.brainpickings.org/2014/06/12/sylvia-plath-journals-nature/. Accessed 17 Apr. 2020.