

Human-Environment Perspectives Which Do You Hold?

- There are several perspectives that we humans have about the environment.
- These are quite important with respect to how we think about the environment and our beliefs about how the environment will react to the human activities that occur.
- Sometimes these are called “nature myths,” or the stories we believe about the environment.
- Examine the four views presented here and think about your own. Which view, or a combination of these, do you hold?

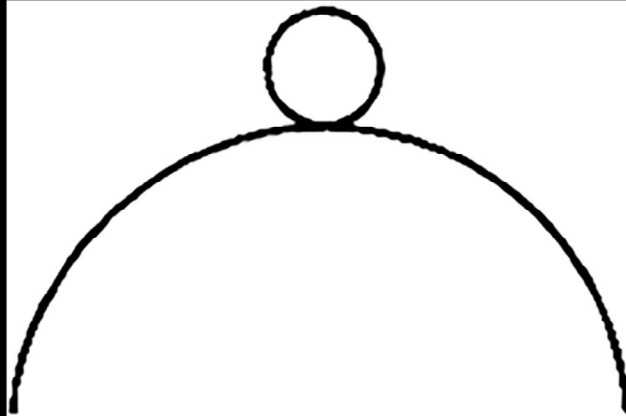
Fatalists Nature Capricious



Douglas M. 1992. A Credible Biosphere. In M. Douglas (ed), *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, 255-70.
Meyer W. B. and B. L. Turner II. 1995. The Earth Transformed: Trends, Trajectories, and Patterns. In R. J. Johnston, P. J. Taylor, and M. J. Watts (eds). *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 302-315.

- This view is represented by a ball on a flat plain, and the ball represents human activity while the line is the plane.
- This view is held by fatalists who see the environment as inherently capricious.
- The least push results in random and unpredictable movement across the plain.
- Humans do not impact the environment so much as the environment impacts humans.
- Humans are the inevitable victims of an environment over which they have little or no control.

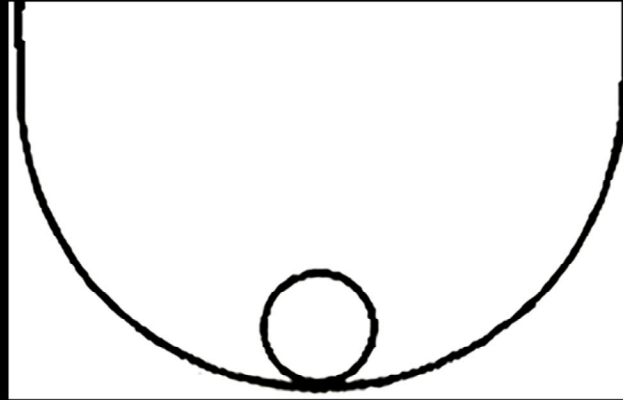
Communards Nature Fragile



Douglas M. 1992. A Credible Biosphere. In M. Douglas (ed), *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, 255-70.
Meyer W. B. and B. L. Turner II. 1995. The Earth Transformed: Trends, Trajectories, and Patterns. In R. J. Johnston, P. J. Taylor, and M. J. Watts (eds). *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 302-315.

- This view is that of communards who see the environment as fragile.
- The environment is ephemeral.
- The least shock can have disastrous results from which the fragile environment never recovers.
- Human beings can even be seen as an intrusion or a parasite.
- Humans are to tread lightly, if at all, upon the environment.

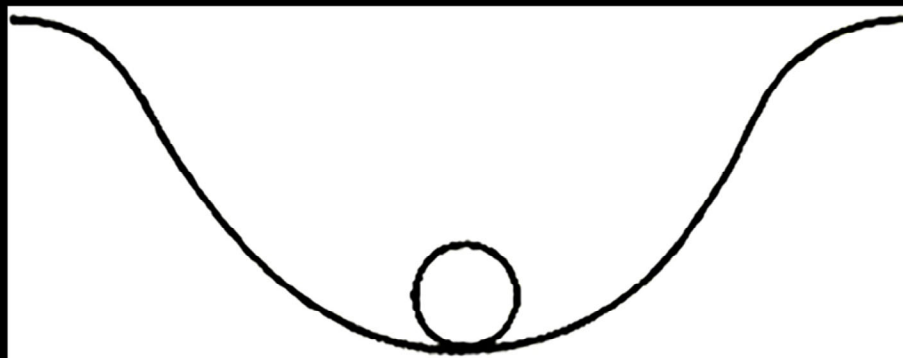
Entrepreneurial Expansionists Nature Unbounded Resilience



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Meyer W. B. and B. L. Turner II. 1995. The Earth Transformed: Trends, Trajectories, and Patterns. In R. J. Johnston, P. J. Taylor, and M. J. Watts (eds). *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 302-315.

- This view is held by entrepreneurial expansionists who see the environment as robust, bountiful, and with unbounded resilience.
- Whatever shocks may be encountered, be they natural or human produced, the environment will withstand and overcome them.
- There is little need for restraint on human activity and the environment is to be exploited in an unbounded way for humanity's benefit.

Hierarchists Nature Robust within Limits



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Meyer W. B. and B. L. Turner II. 1995. The Earth Transformed: Trends, Trajectories, and Patterns. In R. J. Johnston, P. J. Taylor, and M. J. Watts (eds). *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 302-315.

- This is the view of the hierarchists who view the environment as robust within limits but vulnerable when pressed too far.
- Prediction, control, and careful management of environmental resources is needed.
- The precautionary principle is important, so that if any human action has a suspected risk of causing harm, the proof of it not being harmful falls on those wishing to take the action.



Why this Matters



Authors
<https://quotefancy.com/robert-a-heinlein-quotes>



Earth is fragile, Pope tells astronauts
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-space-idUSKBN1CV2VE>

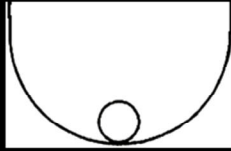


Books
<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/audiobook/the-fragile-earth-1>



Blogs
<http://www.sustainablearlington.org/index.php/sa-bbg>

- Why does this matter? Because people act on these perspectives.
- People in the real world hold the view that the earth is fragile, that the environment is fragile.
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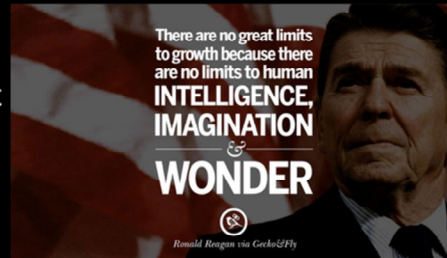
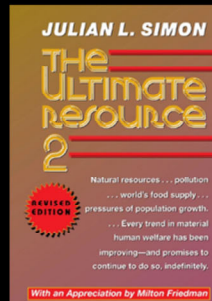


Why this Matters

The Earth's Resources Are Limited, but Human Ingenuity is Infinite

Provided we maintain sound economic policies, worrying about humans depleting resources amounts to unfounded hysteria

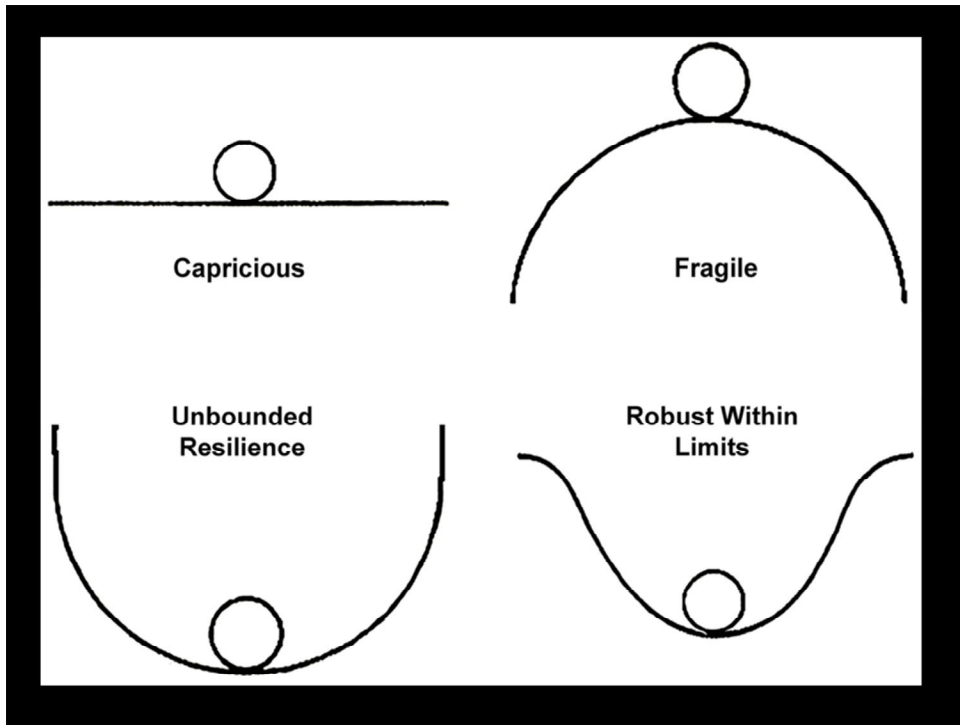
<https://www.cato.org/commentary/earths-resources-are-limited-human-ingenuity-infinite>



<https://www.geckoandfly.com/19878/35-ronald-reagan-quotes-on-welfare-liberalism-government-and-politics/>

- Natural resources are becoming more abundant.
 - Simon argued that we were not running out of food, water, oil, trees, clean air, or any other natural resource because throughout the course of human history the price of natural resources had been declining.
 - Simon's central point was that "natural resources are not finite in any serious way, they are created by the intellect of man, an always renewable resource."
- <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691003818/the-ultimate-resource-2>

- People also hold the view that the environment is boundlessly resilient – that humans can do whatever we want with the environment.



- So, which do you most associate with?