

welcome to lecture number 14  
uh getting near the end uh certainly  
very near the end of the western  
tradition  
so today is mostly in fact exclusively  
going to be thorough  
we're going to be i mentioned this last  
time looking at him  
in terms of well other things we've done  
in the course  
in terms of pastoral local descriptive  
you know monism that sort of thing  
and the reason for this as i mentioned  
before but it's really worth repeating  
as a sort of preface to this particular  
lecture  
is to see that many of the things that  
we might think of as  
innovations on thoreau's part as as  
characteristic of modern environmental  
thinking and in the way there  
there are both of those things but  
thoreau nonetheless is coming from a  
long tradition  
and he's aware of the tradition which  
makes him a particularly good person to  
synthesize it together but in a way that  
that's what he's  
doing more is is um synthesizing earlier  
thinking  
and that's important it's he's also  
important because  
boy he's a lot like us you know so when  
you look  
at other things that we've looked at and  
let's take for example you know the  
notion of nature  
with the greeks yeah that's that's a  
different notion of nature  
than than we usually have you know being  
more temporal than spatial  
but with thoreau so many of the things  
that he talks about and we're going to

see today when he makes a critique of  
consumerism  
that's that's a very modern looking  
thing so  
we can use zero to help us better  
understand our own ideas regarding some  
things  
related to the environment but it's  
worth noting  
that you know it's easy to be critical  
of  
thoreau it's it's actually almost too  
easy at least in a  
couple of regards so first you know he  
talks about  
being out in at walden pond like it's  
some incredibly  
wilderness area you might think that  
he's way up in alaska or something  
but he's not he's a mile out of his  
hometown  
and the area he lived is very well  
it's not wilderness in fact it's all  
been clear-cut you know long before him  
and the forest there is sort of a new  
growth forest coming back and all  
so yeah that's don't when you read him  
if you haven't started already  
you know don't buy into that it's good  
to bracket it off  
and also you know thoreau is not  
way out there in the sense that he's all  
alone sort of a hermit out in the middle  
of nowhere  
because he's not out in the middle of  
nowhere he's close to town he visits  
town all the time  
he certainly went in every sunday night  
for dinner and his mom's house  
and certainly you know people visit him  
visit them pretty much every day  
so yeah um and  
and the thirdly the the project

he if you read walden we'll talk about  
this  
in the the work the book walden the  
experience at walden pond takes place in  
the course of  
year thoreau did that so he could have  
like one year's worth of seasons to talk  
about  
but he actually spent two years there  
but still it's not a great deal of time  
so if he thought this was the way to  
live  
then you know why didn't he live there  
for his life but  
instead he just has a little experiment  
there we'll talk about that because it  
really is just an experiment there  
trying to figure something out on his  
part  
um you have to bracket all that off if  
you're going to  
appreciate throughout and i hope you do  
because there's a lot to appreciate  
in him and you know we'll talk about  
what each of those things mean that he's  
done  
but but also um we'll see what he has  
for us in the 21st century  
and he still does it may be different  
than what you might initially think it  
was going to be  
but okay let's just jump right in  
so here with our prezi notice that we  
are  
way up here so we're within 150 years  
roughly  
uh i guess more like 165 years now  
of the 21st century of where we are  
lecture 14. so notice the things that we  
have here  
we can talk about local descriptive we  
can talk about consumerism  
ecocentric biocentric monism being a

genus loki  
and so forth so these are all things  
we're revisiting now and  
we'll be familiar with so  
i wanted to live deep and to suck out  
all the marrow of life  
to live as sturdy and a spartan-like and  
to put a route to all that was not life  
to cut a broad swath and shave clothes  
and to drive life into a corner  
and reduce it to its lowest terms so  
you know what's his project well that's  
his project  
he now what's interesting about this and  
and i'll throw it out right now  
as a way of thinking about the row or  
something to keep reminding ourselves up  
um wilderness isn't really  
talked about there you know he's talking  
about  
living a minimalist kind of life getting  
rid of all extraneous things and finding  
out just what life is  
he does it in this sort of  
semi-wilderness backdrop  
but on the other hand a question which  
i'll pose at the end and i  
i think it's really a central one for  
thoreau is you know  
do you need to do this in a  
semi-wilderness or wilderness setting to  
work in other words  
can you can you you know live deep and  
deep and suck the marrow out of life  
anywhere at any time and that matters  
because you know thoreau is also going  
to be suggesting this sort of minimalist  
lifestyle  
and that's something that isn't  
necessarily  
only you know to be lived in the  
wilderness setting it doesn't it doesn't  
matter at all if you do that but but

we'll talk about this but  
that's rose project so  
walden um walden  
as a text is interesting in so far as  
it's hard to  
to pin down just what it is and i note  
here it really is part autobiography  
part non-fiction and part novel  
many novels are highly autobiographical  
and  
thoreau does that here so it's  
autobiography  
but he changes details and i know that  
you know it's not two years  
but a one year experience he also  
takes things and modifies them and  
and how do we know that he does modifies  
actual experiences  
that he had and how do we know that he  
does that  
well for example um  
well because yeah um he has a journal  
that he keeps at the time and the  
journal is still available  
you can you can get it and if you look  
at the journal and you compare the  
journal to  
what he recounted in walden things are a  
little different  
for example in the journal he happens to  
note that there was a mouse in his cabin  
and he notes that the mouse you know he  
talks about  
the mouse being there well that  
experience shows up in walden that mouse  
shows up  
in the novel but he changes it and he  
plays like a little game of peek-a-boo  
as the mouse and it's this very kind of  
moving interesting moment but that's not  
what really happened if his journal was  
to believe  
be believed so i mentioned that because

it'd be easy to read this like a guy's journal and in the way that's how he's selling it to us but on the other hand we know that it's not really an accurate journal at all and he's doing things and including you know compressing it into one year so that he can talk about these chains of seasons and all it's also for a novel particularly like non-fiction in that he breaks into what seemed like at times more like um like essays so some of the chapters really seem like you know non-fiction essays so it's an interesting experiment really um in in in a way of writing literature and and arguably it all works you know i mean it's it's good that i think that he can press it on to one year because it does you know send a message with that and you know the little scenes that he embellishes and all he does for a reason and you know he's really trying to talk about his relationship with other animals and other life by way of the mouse experience and i think that's useful too and of course the the sort of autobiography the non-fiction essays are i think essential to the work as well um it's interesting to note and i have to see if i can compress this here well i'll just move of course uh walden was not well received in its time

um we know that because  
thoreau i think he had 100 copies of it  
printed and he literally couldn't give  
most of them away so  
but what will happen is um  
it gets read throughout the 19th for the  
the remainder of the 19th and 20th  
century people  
like george eliot the writer read it and  
all but  
really it's a hundred years after its  
publication  
in the 1960s and 70s that throw  
an interest in thoreau explodes and it's  
the whole 60th generation  
that roy loves the route the the  
so-called back to the land  
movement thoreau actually plays an  
important part of that  
i remember um being a child um  
while having first read throw in my roy  
teens i  
then remember going to a bookstore and  
seeing a book that was actually  
a book about how to live thoreau's life  
of course  
walden is a book about how to live the  
life that thorough luna and walden and a  
pretty good one  
but this one actually told you how to  
build thoreau's cabin and had  
specific instructions dimensions and  
everything else  
so people actually were trying to do  
that in the um  
1960s and 70s some of them on their own  
like with zero but you know with  
communes out in  
semi wilderness areas and all yeah  
back to the land movement was a thing  
and thoreau was a cornerstone for those  
those folks

[Music]

you may have read the book into the wild  
and  
into the wild also inspired a film the  
sean penn film  
um and you know it's an interesting  
reference to thoreau in so far as if  
you've read the book and i won't i won't  
be a spoiler here and tell you how it  
ends  
but if you believe  
that nature is that wilderness is in  
sort of a pastoral way an inviting place  
and that our  
basic you know nature is to have a um  
harmonious relationship with nature and  
if you know if we just went back to  
nature it would welcome us  
in the pastoral way like you know loving  
mother taking care of us  
well okay no spoiler here but that's not  
how that novel ends  
so have you read into the wild i  
i i find this an interesting question  
because i ask students and  
you often far more have read it than i  
would have suspected and it's because  
they read it in high school it's  
required in high school apparently in  
some places it's  
an interesting read and some people i  
could have actually read and asked and a  
good question to ask have you  
have you read walden apparently that's  
read in high school as well so for many  
of you you may be revisiting this text  
hopefully  
because of the background you have in  
revisiting it you'll  
you'll you'll see more than you saw  
before when you're at it  
so walden brings together many of the  
themes that we've covered this term  
thoreau being a harvard undergrad and



he's in his late 20s here  
he's read a great deal and maybe he  
didn't read  
emilia landrieu's the description of  
kokomo i doubt he would have read that  
but i think most of the works he's read  
and you know because he graduated from  
harvard at that time he probably had  
greek he did have greek and latin  
so he's very very aware of the western  
tradition  
and his literary forms he will reference  
things like ben johnson's depends hearst  
right in walden so he's really  
in a great position to understand the  
the tradition that that now you better  
understand as virtue of having having  
read  
so much um thoreau  
if you so you know if you think about  
him in that way he's sort of  
um kind of like a renaissance thinker  
insofar as he really  
is referencing the past and he's  
bringing the past forward in a new way  
but on the other way he is sort of an  
early modern thinker but in this case a  
modern thinker  
it's it's real modernity here you know  
he's you know  
um because it contains a very modern  
perspective on the environment  
and it's very much like our own  
we have inherited thoreau's view of  
nature  
so in other words we didn't inherit and  
we didn't read him but we didn't inherit  
john evelyn's view of nature from the  
17th century even when i mentioned in  
passing  
was the guy who was trying to cross who  
did cross the swiss alps  
but he found it really harrowing and

dangerous and he didn't appreciate it at all and to him nature was scary and and horrible well we didn't inherit that view of wilderness we inherited it to rose view of wilderness which is like you know shelley's view of mont blanc you know it's it's incredibly uh um wonderful nature and it's important and if you want to you know become rejuvenated and you know there's no better way of doing that than going out to nature and experiencing it the way the road does so again these these ideas sort of predate thoreau in the same way that you know renaissance thinking predated the renaissance but he brings them in in into focus in a way that is kind of spot-on when it comes to our modern view of the environment so thoreau can be seen as a really important guy because he he literally transitions all this past thinking that we've encountered into the environmental present and and again just to make explicit here it does not arise you know throws thinking in a vacuum but it's the conclusion of centuries of development and evolution of western thinking toward the environment and that's why he's such a touchstone and in many ways this course could have you know started with daryl because he does express so much but you know i want you to know the history of all this so you can see the significance of it and we'll we'll talk about that in a particular in

a range of particular ways right now  
so uh walden as local descriptive  
so you'll recall of course that we  
talked to about john denham  
and beginning the sort of loco trade  
local descriptive tradition that has you  
know  
um come come into modernity roy it's  
it's very  
it's still widely widely used by people  
who want to  
to convey what an environment is like  
he is here highly descriptive of a  
particular locale  
and that locale is of course walden pond  
by the way you  
you know with all these works um  
you would even before you you open them  
up  
you you have a clue that their local  
description going back to denim  
coopers hill it's about a place it's  
describing a place  
and and it's named for it it's cooper's  
hill mont  
blanc it's named for a place walden  
is named for a place so it's almost you  
know  
smacking you in the face to begin with  
this is going to be  
an extensive description of a place but  
you know compared to to cooper's hill or  
mont blanc this is  
huge by comparison and as a consequence  
there's going to be a lot more dis  
description there but i note here you  
know pens hurst upon appleton house  
they're they're all doing the same  
they're all describing a locale  
and naming themselves as the description  
of locale  
you pull this down a little whoa that is  
surely not what i wanted to do

walden is loco descriptive  
of course but it's doing it further  
because of the level of description  
we haven't had levels of description  
like this before  
so again remember we were we were  
charting the evolution  
of this approach and not a lot of  
description  
in depends harris if you remember so you  
know the the partridge over there  
the pheasant over there look at that  
broad beach tree that was it  
but here we have and i won't  
go through it all but here we have if i  
can make it work  
so you can see it um  
really intense description that goes on  
and on  
about it and  
um yeah i uh  
you know i'm tempted to read it but i  
won't because you had the video so but  
do read it  
and and i think that's what tarot wanted  
you to do too  
you know i i happen to really like um  
listening to books you know audible  
books and all  
but it's it's something else to to read  
something and to have the description  
sort of emerge in your mind as you're  
reading it  
and i think thoreau wants you to have an  
experience  
a sort of direct experience of walden  
so yeah these are longer descriptions  
for walden they're gonna have to reframe  
them each but that's okay  
um walden is not just describing  
in walt and throws not just describing  
the place  
in visual terms he does that and he does

that an enormous amount of that  
that's for sure but he also does things  
like  
talk about particular sounds and  
one would be the whistle of the  
locomotive you know penetrating the  
woods  
and what's that sound like like the  
scream of a hawk  
sailing over some farmer's field  
informing me that many restless city  
merchants are arriving  
and at night you know the distant  
rumbling of wagons over bridges  
thoreau ruler is taking the  
locodescriptive project to its logical  
conclusion  
and we'll see that you know it's not  
only the way it looks it's the way it  
sounds it's the way it smells is  
everything  
he wants you to experience walden pond  
and he and why does you know you want to  
do it well because you're not going to  
visit it  
you know he has to do it same with  
milton's description of eden you know  
can't go to eden so you're going to have  
to rely on these descriptions  
but beyond that he has enormous power  
here  
any author and we've noted this before  
has enormous power who's doing this but  
thoreau really you know wields that  
power expertly and extensively  
because he gets to moderate your  
experience of walden pond  
and in a more general way he gets to  
moderate your experience of nature  
you see nature hear nature feel nature  
through thoreau and make no mistake  
thoreau wants you to like nature throw  
wants you to love nature throw wants you

to think that nature is essential  
for your being this is incredibly  
important right because  
he is posturing he's suggesting how we  
should be postured  
toward nature and and that's incredibly  
important because when we get to rachel  
carson  
you know she's going to argue for the  
you know the sort of saving of nature  
preservation of nature from the  
indiscriminate use of  
pesticides which you rightly call  
bioscience but we would never  
buy into carson's project if we didn't  
care about nature first i mean why would  
you  
try to save something that doesn't seem  
very important at all  
well to thoreau it's super important and  
he's going to  
through these descriptions um you know  
convince you that it's incredibly  
important as well  
so it sounds  
he uses onomatopoeia which is  
you know a way of trying to make a sound  
like you hear so you know the screech  
owls take up the strain  
like morning women or ancient  
which is supposedly like  
um the screech of an owl  
he notes here as he does you know in  
different places this is truly  
ben johnsonian so it's truly like  
depends hearst here  
uh what he's talking about it's a nice  
nod to um  
john cena johnson doesn't do any  
onomatopoeia or anything like that  
but it is interesting that the row is  
really  
like pushing the project thinking okay i

can describe these sounds but what can i  
do even more  
i'll try to actually make the sounds  
with words with you know putting  
together you know  
vowels and different different  
things to make it sound the way it can  
so the syllables  
all sort of form together and make this  
sound  
so walden is a critique of consumerism  
and this is one i think is really  
important  
and and um i've argued this is one of  
the  
real lasting contributions of sorel  
and and i would argue more important  
than  
um this notion of extolling wilderness  
as wonderful and beautiful yes that's  
important  
but you know if if you want to read  
walden as a how-to manual  
i don't i don't think it's that useful  
or it's even kind of dangerous to read  
it as  
a um how to to live your life someplace  
in other words to go out into a  
wilderness or semi-wilderness area  
and live a semi-hermit existence  
yeah again in the 60s people did that  
but  
but the real contribution that derose  
makes  
i think well can be summed up in in in  
two words that he famously makes here  
and it's an imperative to to us it's  
telling us to do something  
and it's even great because it's two  
words but it's really just one repeat it  
simplify simplify simplify your life  
if we all do that environmentally you  
know especially

those of us who are like thoreau you  
know in the wealthy developed world  
um we could bring our co2 and other  
greenhouse gas emissions down to  
to the levels that you know cop 21  
the paris agreement set and and we could  
actually  
tackle climate change how can you do it  
two words simplify simplify  
okay um  
modern critique of consumerism is in the  
spirit of  
both ben johnson and and denim throw  
famously says and by the way there  
aren't there are any number of famous  
quotes from wall and you could  
um you could write them down if you want  
or if you're reading on a kindle edition  
i'm sure that they've been  
you know kindle does that thing where  
you can see that a lot of people have  
highlighted it  
anyhow the massive men live lives of  
quiet desperation  
and why did they do that well you know  
in addition to being local descriptive  
cooper's hill also had this great  
critique of consumerism which i think is  
is also a wonderful quote their vast  
desires  
but make their wants the more so in  
other words we just keep wanting and  
wanting and wanting we want  
more and more and more and what do we  
want by the way is  
you know not things we  
in in this sense and it's probably true  
you know things that people applying for  
are necessarily like more  
friendship more valuable experiences but  
more stuff  
and bigger stuff you know bigger houses  
more cars more clothes more consumer



electronics

stuff that's what we want and we live a life of quiet desperation because we work hard to get all that

by the way thoreau has a um a really simple solution to all this in his era a five-day work week hadn't really happened yet so

most people work six days and they did for most of western history um during christianity anyhow because it was sort of mandated in the bible the work

week in that issue i did a six day work week and he got a seventh day off the the sabbath thoreau wants to turn that on its end

and he says well you know i really need so very little and life really requires so little to make it work

his goal was to work one day a week and then to have six days off um and you know what a great idea because

you know they're there's so much that we um so much of our time is spent working for things

and we lose a lot of life because of it we just don't you don't get to live and enjoy it the way that thoreau wanted to in english 23 i go into detail into this example but i'll just tell you

that the average american works generally one day a week to own a car it's aside from your house the biggest purchase that people make and

you know we keep purchasing again and again and they're not cheap and talk about why we're you know convinced or even coerced into owning a car

but just think about that for a minute  
if you didn't have a car  
you know every weekend could be a  
three-day weekend  
and thoreau would argue well let's start  
going through it and he's going to do  
that here  
if we start jettisoning stuff you know  
right and left  
we're going to you know ultimately get  
down to you just have to work one day a  
week so every weekend would be  
a six day weekend and that's the project  
yeah do you believe this  
we're gonna again in english 23 talk  
about it then  
in great detail and you know you're  
already getting some indication of it  
with the films like the  
true cost and all um do we live  
lives of quiet desperation in other  
words are we unhappy working long hours  
um jobs that we don't necessarily like  
just to get stuff that doesn't make us  
happy and that's  
that's thoreau's argument and in the in  
in in countries like the united states  
we really do that a lot so in other  
countries like denmark for example it's  
very different they have  
they work five-day weeks for sure but  
they work 30-hour weeks and they have  
incredibly long vacations and and a  
whole range of uh  
things that make life nicer in the way  
that's the roman  
although they don't have nearly as much  
disposable income as we do  
um you know because a lot of people like  
20 of americans work 60 hours  
a week so we have you know we have more  
money to buy more stuff  
but you know there they're trying to

strike a balance  
between having time to live life and  
um having lots and lots and lots of  
stuff  
yep the economy chapter of walden  
follows denim pretty directly so for  
cooper's hill you know i  
see the city i would be london in a  
thicker cloud of business  
than of smoke and that's saying  
something right because we said in  
denim's time  
you know the air pollution problem the  
smog over london is huge  
where men like ants toil to prevent  
imaginary wants  
all in vain uh so first off that image  
of  
ants to like we're like ants toiling and  
all that's you might think that's a  
pretty modern thing  
throw in others use it but um it's older  
denim uses it too and what are we doing  
we're working to prevent  
imaginary wants in other words  
and even in denim's time which is  
striking because we're you know over 350  
years ago 370 years ago or so  
um we're told by advertisers that we  
need stuff  
that we want need these things and once  
we have them they'll make us happy  
well those are imaginary ones you don't  
actually  
need them i mean you may need to have  
a piece of clothing on to protect you  
from the weather but you certainly don't  
need  
all to fulfill all the you know the  
needs of clothing that the fashion  
industry tells you and all  
and it's all in vain according to denim  
that we do that

because we're never going to satisfy it  
it's like it's like  
it's like a bottomless hole you can keep  
throwing more clothes into it but you'll  
never be satisfied  
the difference with thoreau is that he  
actually takes this  
seriously in other words he says that's  
right  
and i'm going to act on it now i am  
going to change my life  
because i believe this is a correct  
assessment of the human condition  
especially in capitalist modernity and i  
am going to  
ignore it and live my life the way i  
want to  
it's fascinating in that sense so you  
can see this critique of consumerism  
not new with walden but but it is  
carried to to a new  
level here um  
zero is going to  
take it to his logical conclusion in in  
a sense in that he's going to say well  
okay let's talk about clothing you know  
what do you actually  
need clothing and and how much of it do  
you need  
and and do you always for example need  
new clothes thoreau says no  
so and he's going to do it with  
everything and he's going to look at  
food he's going to consider  
you know vegetarianism it's going to be  
the first time we've actually seen it  
directly brought up in the west  
but you know people are doing it and  
thoreau is is there  
with it and it's not only that he's  
doing it  
but he's in doing it he's establishing a  
model

that we can follow so this is not just  
him recounting it but him recounting it  
for us the reader to try to convince  
us to follow him in making these kind of  
changes  
the thing that's interesting about  
thoreau  
is you know you can look back to ben  
johnson saying get a smaller house or  
you can look at denim saying you know  
you're not going to  
to beat this consumer thing so you might  
as well you know  
try to get rid of it jettison it but  
thoreau's approach to it  
sounds remarkably modern  
so you know clothes have always been  
this issue but thoreau attacks the  
modern  
fashion industry which even in you know  
1840s was centered in paris so the head  
monkey  
at paris puts on a traveler's cap so  
that would be like the  
the the really unfashionable modern hat  
that year that everybody wants  
and all the monkeys in america do the  
same so  
the idea here is that we're aping these  
things um  
and you know why are we doing it we're  
doing it because we really need a good  
warm hat or something  
now we're doing it because we're  
encouraged to  
to emulate this and the fashion industry  
wants us to emulate these trends because  
we wouldn't buy their clothes otherwise  
we wouldn't  
nearly need nearly as much if it wasn't  
for that  
so what then are closed factories about  
and this sounds like a very modern

phrase right so the man  
um you know has less to do with that  
mankind in other words human beings may  
be well and honestly clad  
than to ensure that the corporations  
may be enriched  
well that's a modern sounding phrase  
thoreau has identified  
the problem here it's the corporations  
these corporations these big  
corporations  
at the time are all about one thing  
profit  
they want to be enriched they don't care  
if you're well clad they don't care if  
you're well dressed they don't care if  
you have  
clothes that last i mean that's not what  
it's about the project for them  
is about you know separating you from  
your money  
and that's really what they care about  
they don't care about giving you a good  
product i mean they'll give you a good  
product if they think they need to  
to separate you from your money but what  
they really want to do  
is get your money and they don't really  
care about us  
um thoreau it's a funny phrase but  
i think there's something true to it  
beware of all enterprises that require  
new clothes actually  
when we get to the buddhism section  
you'll see that there are traditions  
that actually celebrate old clothes  
and worn out clothes more than new  
clothes  
and that's that's a striking thought in  
the west because we're encouraged to get  
things and  
have them always looking new so you have  
a business suit and you know you get

a snag in the in the middle of the jacket and you have to throw the whole thing away because you know it has to look new no one wants to walk around with a with a you know worn part of their jacket and yet that's exactly what you'll you'll find in in certain places like the buddhist interpretation of the japanese type of buddhism that we're going to look at we'll look at buddhism more generally but well i'm kind of getting ahead of myself we'll see that when we get there thoreau also focuses on our literal dwellings so you know we had this modest house celebrated in penzhurst thoreau takes that to his logical conclusion and says you know what what could be the smallest thing that you could live in and you get something about the size of a one-person tent six feet by three feet uh like a tent with a few holes to let air in um that's that's thoreau i mean it's it's he doesn't do that but while he gives that example and it's a good one here is because he's thinking what is the absolute minimum that i can get by with in life that's the question that we need to ask again and again what's the minimal amount and you can see why modern minimalism is going to come out of this thinking thoreau doesn't you know decide on that he goes for something a little larger but you know remember this example

because that's the way  
thoreau thinks he's going to constantly  
say what's the minimum that i  
actually need he may not go that far  
but he he is you know thinking it  
through  
at every turn and if you think about it  
it's not a bad  
project to do in life in general to  
always ask that question  
environmentally it certainly will have a  
big significance  
he is  
seeming kind of radical here but it's  
the case that in a pon appleton house  
that andrew marvel had already made the  
same suggestion  
and that is you know um why should of  
all things man  
unruled such unproportioned dwellings  
build in other words  
why do we build these big houses as  
human beings  
when you know all the animals their  
their  
dens are expressed by their lent in  
other words look at a bird's nest it's  
as big as  
the bird it's no bigger you wouldn't  
have a bird's nest that's  
five or ten times wider than the bird  
and all  
i mean look at all the energy that a  
bird would have to use  
to make that and it wouldn't be a very  
good you know nest anyhow  
and that's according to both  
um andrew marvel and this is again from  
pawnee appleton house  
um that's  
it's a great metaphor for the problem  
here in other words  
that's a ridiculous idea a bird with a



nest ten times bigger than it needs  
why is it any less ridiculous that we  
have these houses and dwellings that are  
ten times bigger than we need  
they're not serving us well and look at  
all the energy that's wasted in building  
them  
but again not new with thoreau we've  
already seen it  
with johnson so this is thoreau's cabin  
so actually this is um i'm going to show  
you throws cabin in in  
18 um in 1945 when yeah  
this what we're looking at here is a  
reproduction of thoreau's cabin  
this was built pretty recently uh a few  
decades ago  
um at walden pond it's actually right at  
a um  
a parking lot so you can get out when  
you get out your car you can see it and  
you'll see the inside of it as well  
but  
this is the rose cabin from 1945 in the  
sense that  
um people weren't quite sure you know  
people were had red walden  
and they knew about thoreau's project  
and they knew where he did  
and all but no one knew exactly where  
because by  
mid 20th century you know the cabin had  
been taken down there was nothing left  
but an amateur archaeologist went and  
looked for where the cabin  
had been looked for its foundation  
actually read walden to be able to sort  
of act like a detective and figuring out  
where it would have been in relation to  
the pond  
and found it and right and then  
as a consequence this little shrine has  
been set up

and actually kind of is a pilgrimage site i i mentioned uh last time that you know over a million people a year go to walden pond but right near this kind of off to one side you can't see it like right over here if i'm remembering correctly is a pretty large pile of like little pebbles and every year people bring a little pebble when they come or pick one up around here and they put it in that pile it's sort of a way of i don't know what like offering respect to thoreau so yeah that's what it that's you know that would have worked when tarot was living there would probably look pretty similar to this this is the inside and you know if you have read it already you know about the three chairs and of course there's a fireplace there where he does cooking in his bed and over here is a writing desk over here is a writing desk so pretty cozy all you really need and this is throws the reproduction of thoreau's cabin in the winter and you can see that fireplace chimney in the back and then this is a um a little outbuilding to keep his as wood dry which he would have needed to do and this is what it would have looked like in 1945 if you had been at that site looking out and it's a good it's a good way to think about um walter pond because today was so much you know tourist

activity there and all  
you know it's kind of getting trampled  
down them all but this is kind of like  
what thoreau would have lived  
oh and um here's what i was telling you  
about this is  
the the stone some of the big stones but  
most of them little that have been  
um piled there in respect for thoreau  
so regarding consumerism two questions  
remain i think  
important ones you know are his  
lifestyle prescriptions only valid in  
aurora or wilderness setting  
if you read walden especially if you  
read him the way he was read by  
then you know the 60s generation the  
answer to that is  
yes you know you have to do exactly what  
he did and you know  
reject society and go out and live in a  
in a wilderness  
area well i don't i don't know that  
that's true  
and i'm throwing the question out here  
you know could you  
do what he's did in a in an urban  
environment well that's the project of  
minimalism and minimalist that's the  
idea  
they're asking themselves minimalists  
ask themselves the same question thoreau  
did you know what's the minimum that you  
really need  
and you know how can you do it um and  
you could see this with something like  
micro apartments or if you're familiar  
with the  
tiny house movement where they they  
really  
people who who elect to have dwellings  
like this are doing exactly what the  
road did

and it actually turns out to be about the same size so um ordinance are being written in in cities like new york and portland and san francisco and elsewhere to allow micro apartments that are about the size of thoreau's cabin some of them are larger like twice as large but keep in mind these are designed for two people and keep in mind that they have you know full kitchens and bathrooms which the road didn't and if you've seen tiny houses you know the tiny house movement you know some of them are like exactly the size of thoreau's um cabin so so yeah people are are doing what thoreau suggesting of course you can do with something like fashion or vegetarianism and you know you don't have to go anywhere in particular different to do it but then the other question is do you need to take these prescriptions you know to the extreme that the road does even thoreau doesn't right so you know yes he could have lived in a cabin the size of a one-person tent but he doesn't he he pulls back a little and you could well pull back from thoreau here from environmental point of view you know anything that you did would probably be great so for example in terms of dwellings houses you know the average american home now is is 2500 square feet more than 2500 square feet and a significant portion of houses now like twenty percent are technically see it's a twenty

percent i think it's twenty percent um  
um if you take english 23 i'll tell you  
exactly  
um or mcmansions which are like above  
four thousand square feet  
but if you don't if you're looking at 4  
000 square feet compared to the rows 150  
square feet  
i mean these are you know it's not just  
like it's not it's not like it's 10  
times  
larger or even 20 times larger it's like  
it's 25 times larger  
well you know maybe you could meet the  
row in the middle  
somewhere that maybe you could decide  
that a house  
well the average american home right  
after the second world war and before  
was about a thousand square feet so it  
is you know and  
now the average american home is 2500  
feet  
and the you know an average mansion is  
over four thousand feet  
this is like the you know the fourth of  
the size of a mansion and whole families  
lived there perfectly fine  
thousand square feet is a lot bigger  
than thoreau's cabin but if you think  
about it if you know  
everyone who bought a mcmansion decided  
to buy a you know thousand square foot  
house their climate footprint all  
other things being equal would be  
one-fourth with respect to housing  
so it can be a um  
you know it's throw can be a good  
example  
of you know how far you can take it but  
not everyone has to take  
it as far as thoreau did  
throw is eco-centric we've talked a lot

about anthropocentrism  
um both pencils and description of kukum  
were anthropocentric  
so you know you remember in lanier's  
poem the environment is seen as you know  
willing to die for the women who are  
leaving there  
and um and then johnson the the  
animals and plants are willing to serve  
so the fish literally jump  
out of the stream into the hands of a  
fisherman so that they can be eaten yeah  
that's  
that's can't be more anthropocentric  
than that  
um so thoreau is and we've seen you know  
in the tradition  
of you know depends harrison cook them  
walden is  
but it's different in this regard  
this book is not centered on the text  
speaker  
so walden pond and the area surrounding  
it are not just there for the benefit of  
a sole human being  
and throws very clear about this all  
life there is equally served so  
walden is you know talk about this  
directly you know does it succeed at  
being you know eco-centric or biocentric  
centered on all the life there  
um i don't know if it succeeds at and i  
want to raise  
leave you with that question but it's  
certainly a big move in that direction  
um cyril's speaker and and this is  
important to  
recall right it's the person who's  
narrating it and we  
get to know and sort of talking to us in  
the work  
is not necessarily henry david thoreau  
in the same way that you know he

modified different  
details of his life for the the novel  
or whatever it is he is also  
not necessarily the speaker but the  
speaker is  
certainly informed by sorel but just  
don't you know make the mistake to think  
that that is sorelle  
yeah um thoreau what's so important here  
and you can see from an environmental  
point of view  
is that he reimagines the relationship  
that human beings have to the planet  
for you know we saw the danger of this  
with the hebrew testament of the bible  
with genesis  
we see it through the early modern  
period with amelia lanier and ben  
johnson and all  
that you know we imagine that the the  
planet is here just for us  
and and you know that's a fair  
interpretation of genesis because you  
know people will interpret that it  
says just that but thoreau you know  
have none of that he believes that this  
place doesn't have to be centered  
on us that you know all life can  
exist there in harmony together  
yes we are part of life on the planet  
and our needs have to be met  
but the planet you know is not centered  
just on us  
so compared to everything that we've  
read  
before this is far more egocentric  
even than the romantic poets at least  
what we've read like  
uh michael the pastoral poem by  
wordsworth or  
uh mont blanc because you know  
um the text is highly highly eco-centric  
and and

you could argue and this is the kind of thing that when critical attention was given to thoreau from like the 1960s on um and through the 1990s with the emergence of of true eco-critics that thoreau is maybe you know the most you know biocentric ecocentric of all works that have appeared so far as descriptions you know in the environment is is you know so lush that you know walden is not i mean well we're talking a minute directly it is centered around a person it's so it's in that sense it's anthropocentric but it's just more biocentric than we've that we've seen and the you know the descriptions are are so much about the place it's been argued that the environment is so well represented here through the lush descriptions that it's almost a character and in fact you know one part in walden you know the narrator starts talking to walden pond first describing it i see by its face so here we're definitely anthropomorphic right it's being described like a human being the same reflections of god same reflection of god so wait paul's on that from what you now know having read genesis it is human beings who are made in the image of god nothing else is made in the image of god nothing else is made



like human beings because we have a separate creation narrative in genesis you know the earth brings forth human beings but god loved us so much he fashioned us with his own hands um in his reflection but now you know it won and punts and we're not even talking about an animal or a plan here but by the feature of the environment itself you know that is visited by the same reflection of god that's remarkable because it's saying you know it's it's yes we are in the image of god but so is this place and i can almost say walden is it you so he's actually you know talking to this feature of the environment as if it were a human being walden is is not unlike a close friend and by walden he means the pond there but he means everything and and well we'll see some people argued for a while there that throw actually coined the word ecology he didn't it was coined in the same era by him by ernest tegel as you now know but he still has this idea of a deeply enmeshed ecosystem where everything is connected and living together and walden is perhaps the greatest expression of that walden is itself like this character um it is a milestone environmental text for this reason you know no other text prior to walden it was as eco-centric here and and nobody you know before him imagine

a feature in the environment quite this way like a character so a watershed event here from an environmental point of view and when you think about it in the west a remarkable change of of this anthropocentrism that has guided us from from the very you know beginnings of the west as we've seen and which of course you know dismayed lynn white jr and others so much but here we're now shifting and shifting dramatically so yeah it's a big deal i think so we can see this in the visual arts you know thoreau's error moved away in general from anthropocentrism so always it's good to keep this in context so it's not that thoreau is this great genius who who did all this by himself it was happening in his era so you remember we had this haunted unicorn year 1500 at the beginning of the early modern period in england human beings dominate this scene right they're huge there's a tree here but it's you know mostly allegorical and it's not very you know accurate in any sense but we had claude lorraine and by his era 1650s a little before paradise lost you're getting something that's looking a lot like a photograph so sort of photographic realism happening throws era human beings become even tinier so we we saw this one i gave it to you at the um

in the first lecture these are the  
people  
in this scene you know if you were to  
you know digitize this and to see how  
many pixels these people what is  
digitized  
see how many pixels these people are  
occupying  
it's a small percentage like single  
digit percentage of the whole  
scene and you know the notion here  
and i'll give you another one this is  
thomas calls the  
fall of the catter skill this is in  
thoreau's era also  
this is northern uh um  
upstate in new york uh there's a person  
here  
i don't know if you can if you can see  
him maybe i can  
bring this person up  
yeah see if i can zoom in further  
no probably not but anyhow person there  
you can see  
uh tiny person so imagine  
visually this as walden if walden were a  
painting this is what it would be  
it would be all about the place it would  
be lushly showing you the place  
and human presence being incredibly  
minimal by comparison  
but what you would walk away from after  
viewing it after reading walden is  
an enjoyment of this place and saying  
wow that's that's an amazing place  
there's the question does the human  
presence still dominate the scene  
so you know we had to wander among the  
sea of clouds  
the person here is is centered perfectly  
on it all you know even the mountains  
themselves are sort of like  
pointing blank black block block to the

guy

so you know does it still dominate the scene

how would this work in walden well uh note that the word i appears

um you know two dozen times in the opening four paragraphs of walden you start reading it i'm not sure if you noticed it or even annoyed you

um thoreau's doing that thoreau's doing that arguably and critics have argued doing it

intentionally to to let you know that that's where he starts he was all about him in the beginning he was trying to figure out his life what he wanted to do by the time we get to the end that eye sort of fades away it's not really there at all anymore

and i think that's the rose project he wants to see himself

sort of almost like fading into the background

fading into walt and that person who's who walked in there was all about that person all about him and his project but then you know it really

is just him left but it does raise a question

does he succeed in that is he really like

you know the wanderer among the sea of clouds is he really

all about him and that's important because it

it it raises the question of how ecocentric or biocentric this work is but also it raises the bigger question about

the presence that we should have on the planet should we try to fade into the ecosystem and be just you know part of this great symphony of life

going on or should we  
you know dominate the scene well in the  
21st century we do dominate the scene  
but it does raise a question is walden  
ecocentric or anthropocentric clearly  
it's a milestone ecocentric text there's  
no doubt about that  
um but you know it's also  
in a personal way an anthropocentric  
text and that's why it does resemble a  
journal and it is a  
it's a story about a person and a  
person's life  
so yeah i just want to  
raise that question for you to think  
about  
because the stakes are pretty high  
because it does raise the question of  
how we should  
should live on this planet um fading  
into it or  
dominating it would be the two extremes  
and i think  
you know when we think of  
anthropocentrism we think of dominating  
lynn white jr certainly  
we think of egocentrism we think of  
fading into the backdrop  
but okay so  
i don't know more on this yeah  
that's the question is anthropocentrism  
in fact  
unavoidable for human beings um  
you know walden makes clear that even a  
highly eco-centric perspective is shot  
through with human interest  
pure ecocentrism you know is not  
possible even for thoreau and throw  
by putting that i into those first four  
paragraphs to such a degree  
he wants to make you aware of that in  
other words  
yes i went out and lived in the

wilderness

as as best i could but even this  
doesn't get me away from the eye and you  
can't

fully escape into it when we get to  
buddhism by the way you're going to see  
well you're going to see a different  
perspective on it the suggestion that  
you can

fade into it but we're not there yet  
you know the problem with ecocentrism  
if you if you take it to its logical  
conclusion and again the row  
took it pretty far out there but not to  
its logical conclusion

um you can come up with a pretty radical  
perspective so

in 1990 a co-founder and environmental  
organization earth first this is dave  
foreman

called human beings a cancer on the  
earth

and he actually went further by  
suggesting that we should consider the  
voluntary

extinction not of any particular animal  
species

but voluntary well it is a particular  
animal species

the voluntary extinction of the human  
race he thought that was the solution  
so people have looked at something like  
that and said well this

you know you're talking about it you're  
eradicating people and you're  
blaming certain groups of people this is  
kind of like you know the extermination  
that we see in nazi germany  
and you know they also called certain  
people cancer and decided to sort of cut  
them off the body of the  
healthy people yeah um

that's a very extreme argument and it's

an unfair one in ways i mean  
the nazi experience and what happened  
there i mean  
yeah people draw parallels to that to  
all sorts of things and  
i i think it's it's it's unfair to the  
experience of what happened in the  
holocaust and the people there  
so it's it's problematic but i mentioned  
it because it was an argument that was  
advanced and these  
two arguments here first they forming  
saying that we should  
voluntarily you know bring about the  
extinction of our species  
and people being critical of that but  
you can see that is the end game if you  
follow  
you know ecocentrism that you know sort  
of get rid of human beings all together  
or reduce this down to sort of um  
you know incredibly small population  
that would not benefit by any  
human technology or so so  
honestly you know that's of course  
impractical  
what we really need to do is find ways  
of  
fitting into to the planet now and in  
english 23 we take that up in more  
detail but  
i just wanted to be aware of this  
situation um  
in the 21st century it is pretty much  
impossible we control  
85 percent of the planet's land mass  
directly control  
it and you know everything on the planet  
now is sort of brought into  
into the human world and there for human  
use  
so the eye you know in the beginning of  
walden

well that's that dominates the planet  
now that i  
we are we are everywhere so the question  
is  
you know unless we want to eradicate our  
species  
how do we you know live as  
eco-centrally  
as possible in that  
world even though we control so much of  
it it's it's a huge question  
i you know i don't purport to have the  
answer here  
um monism let me pull  
the road down here a little um  
thoreau you can see the quote here from  
thoreau  
and then the one from um paradise lost  
which is here so  
i'll let you read those you can pause  
the  
video to read them and i'll bring up  
here all you have to know from  
from this section here is that  
milton imagined human existence like a  
plant  
yes we have two aspects to milton you  
know  
spirit and and flesh mind and body  
but they are connected but like a plant  
so we're part of the earth's remember  
that whole thing we did with  
metaphysical and physical  
and that part is like the roots you know  
human beings are like a plant our roots  
are the  
earthy part and the part reaching up  
away from the  
um the ground reaching up into the  
heavens that's the  
the you know spiritual aspect of us  
throw having red milton of course picks  
up the



the whole idea here and likes it  
and this is not just an image this is a  
deconstruction of western  
dualism because neither are these guys  
both of these guys first think  
that there is a spiritual and a physical  
aspect of human beings they're buying  
into  
the tradition in that sense but they do  
not think that the spirit and flesh  
or mind body however you want to look at  
it are disconnected they are connected  
they are intimately connected you cannot  
you know if you think about this image  
and why it's such a good one  
if you try to do what metaphysical  
thinkers were doing and  
pull free of the earth these guys argue  
well yeah you'll surely die if you do  
that and this is  
this is what happens exactly happens to  
milton's eve  
because your roots are what sustains you  
yes the you know the leaves and the  
branches may reach toward the heavens  
and you need that  
too you know the light of the sun or in  
the  
image that milton has basically the  
light of god  
but you you also need your roots to be  
in the ground you'll you'll just  
fall which is what happens to eve you'll  
collapse  
and you know it's meant to be  
a rethinking of dualism and  
just you know the main idea here is that  
there are they're both thoroughly  
manus so this is an axis mundi  
i'll see if i can't pull this into frame  
for you  
this is an ancient idea it goes back to  
gilgamesh's time and then

some and here it is here's our line  
between the physical and metaphysical  
that we had back i think it was lecture  
five  
and above here is remember we talked  
about in that lecture human beings are  
dualistic  
and we sort of straddle the line but  
here we are that's our spirit  
that's our flesh you know body mind  
they are one thing all for a healthy  
human being  
you have to be like this according to  
thoreau and  
and milton you have to be connected you  
have to not renounce your physical  
part and you have to not renounce your  
um spiritual part you are  
connected you are an amalgam of spirit  
flesh  
mind body  
so you would perhaps not be surprised  
that thoreau then  
talks about the body and not in a bad  
way so  
you know for certain metaphysical  
thinkers certain christian thinkers the  
body and its functions are bad  
you know eating is potentially a  
temptation and a problem sex is  
potentially a temptation in the problem  
milton gets right to talking about all  
these things you know  
um and it's not  
surprising at all that when he talks  
about you know what constitutes the good  
life and always going to talk about  
these sorts of things so  
he largely advocates vegetarianism  
and he actually thinks that eventually  
it's the  
the destiny of the human race to  
become vegetarian that everyone will

stop eating  
meat yeah and he argues here that you  
know  
we find animal food you know  
repugnant is not the effect of  
experience but as an instinct  
so thoreau's argument here is that  
actually our instinct our nature would  
be to avoid  
animal food we would be we should be  
repulsed by it that's who we are  
according to thoreau  
and you know it's only because we've  
been sort of you know inculcated  
into it by way of culture that we do we  
buy into doing this at all  
but again thoreau is not being  
theoretical here  
the rose is actually advocating for  
vegetarianism as the proper  
lifestyle so as with you know  
taking ben johnson's idea of having a  
small house but actually  
acting on it or sir john denham's idea  
of being critical or vegetarian but  
actually acting on his throat is  
actually acting on it here  
and um you know he's not eschewing  
eating as something that's unimportant  
to human beings because we're so  
spiritual and always saying well this is  
important and let's let's talk about it  
which he does he's also a proponent of  
of eating locally you may know  
that the average maybe i mentioned it  
before i always throw these  
sort of facts out that the average fruit  
or vegetable travels 1500 miles before  
reaching your table  
that's pretty amazing you know in a  
state like idaho  
which is known for its potatoes in idaho  
most of the potatoes that people eat

aren't grown in idaho yeah a lot of them  
are but but over half  
aren't um and you know  
thoreau will talk about this and you  
know  
in walden he is particularly critical of  
things like  
imported foodstuffs that can travel  
great distances like tea  
and all he will be critical of things  
like tropical fruits like oranges and  
bananas  
because they have to travel so far  
thoreau believes that you should eat  
everything in its own season  
when it's there in fact um in  
the last work that he was writing and  
this  
wasn't finished which is about wild  
fruit when he dies and all  
he he celebrates local foods especially  
fruits and berries and  
all that and wild fruits and berries  
like huckleberry  
it's like half the book is about the  
huckleberry actually and why  
you should go out and and and eat it  
just at its moment of perfect ripeness  
and eat it out in the  
the you know area where it's grown this  
is all incredibly important to thoreau  
so he is going to be intimating here  
um something like the um slow food  
movement  
that's currently you know exist in  
places and all over the planet not  
really but  
sort of originated in california and  
italy and elsewhere and  
certainly here in california we take it  
pretty seriously because we have a  
pretty nice climate with  
a lot of seasons but thoreau is really

um  
about eating locally as um  
as as being important so again you can  
see where the row is just  
you know so modern in certain ways  
throw us genus loki  
going back to the beginning of the  
course so remember  
in the um epic of gilgamesh we have home  
baba who's there to protect the cedar  
bar  
forest from whom from human beings i  
mean in theory  
gina sloki did protect places from maybe  
other animals and all too but  
principally their prohibition there to  
protect  
places from human beings  
and you really see it spelled out  
clearly in  
the epic of gilgamesh because gilgamesh  
is this credibly um arrogant guy  
who wants things for his own you know  
his dream of being great um and that's  
why the prohibition is there  
to protect places from from people like  
that from people  
more generally and so  
the early modern period was interesting  
in this regard because we see  
human beings first taking on the role of  
genus loki or being seen  
as or sort of the prescription that they  
should be a genus loki so that  
homosocial group of women that cook them  
you know who worry about what's going to  
happen if the um  
the place is if they leave the place who  
will take care of it who will be  
the protector of the place eve is the  
protector of  
eden and yet she she unfortunately  
for a moment lapses and and gives up

that role  
so the early modern period  
begins you see human beings beginning to  
take on the role or  
suggesting that human beings should be  
taking on the role of genius loki so it's  
not entirely new with the realm  
but the narrator walden is clearly a  
genus loki  
he is the protector of walden pond so  
imagine you know you're going to  
this place this forest way back in  
gilgamesh who would you encounter there  
protecting it  
who cares about that place and all the  
life there  
that would be hombaba you go to this  
place  
you know walden pond who's there  
protecting it and caring about that life  
that's henry david thoreau  
so the suggestion is made here  
because thoreau is taking on the job of  
protecting the place  
that this should be the job of human  
beings that we  
should take on the protection of place  
so doing and and again this is  
different from the project of you know  
sort of being anti-consumerist but this  
has to do with thoreau being in this  
semi-wilderness area  
he's really suggesting that human beings  
need to be  
the new genus loki that this is what  
environmentalists  
are environmentalists are the new genus  
loki  
as i suggest here so first it flips it  
off  
right because now you have human beings  
taking on the role of being the genus  
loki

um and this is you know  
thoreau that genus loki of this book is  
not a monster  
the way he's the way hombaba is  
described in gilgamesh  
and you know he is seen as being  
this most admirable person of people  
because he's taking on the job of  
protecting this place  
and that scene is of great value  
this is a modern idea in this sense we  
could see the beginning of it you know  
with the million lanyard but here  
it's full-blown and modern and it's  
establishing what an environmentalist is  
and and well what a what a change we've  
had from the beginning of the term  
but this is the new environmental this  
is the new genus loki the new protector  
of place  
are environmentalists people  
curious do you think of yourself as an  
environmentalist uh  
you know um sometimes people  
think of that and say well you know i'm  
not environmentalists my life's not  
devoted to  
to it it'd be unfair for to call myself  
an environmentalist when  
have spent you know their days and night  
doing nothing but being a genus loki  
protecting her place  
i don't really think of it that way i  
think if you um if you really care about  
the environment and you try to live in a  
way that is  
you know sensitive to the environment  
biocentric as much as possible that  
makes you an environmentalist so  
i think of myself as an environmentalist  
so i'm just curious if you do too  
and i think i think the key to that  
probably

would be to do what the road does and  
that is try to enact  
the things that you find important about  
protecting the planet  
but just curious what you thought  
is pastoral uh walter necessarily in the  
pastoral tradition has no doubt about it  
you know and and  
thoreau of course probably read  
theocratis and virgil in the original he  
certainly did read them  
certainly he's familiar with the  
romantic poets at the time  
um and it's you know the book  
is a celebration of a place it's in the  
pastoral tradition in that sense for  
sure  
and of course thoreau is fully aware of  
pastor i remember we had that quote from  
him  
that you know um pastor was to view  
uh the pasture from the pallor or living  
room window  
so he he knows it's an urban form he  
knows it all he's very conscious of it  
and so he can be like catherine phillips  
or like horace and um and play with the  
tradition but he's clearly in it that's  
for sure  
um i did want to ask this question you  
know  
are you enjoying walnut um  
yeah i don't know many people find wald  
in a transitional book and i'm not  
saying you have to and i'm not saying  
there's something wrong with you if you  
don't  
it's just that challenge issue  
that's what he's that's the purpose of  
this book he's challenging you  
to rethink your life in in very definite  
very specific ways and in big ways how  
you live your life



in other words he's saying really asking  
you a question  
stop right now stop and think for a  
moment are you living  
the life that you want to live what  
would the life that you want to live  
be like in that sense walden is and i  
sometimes refer to this way as an  
experiment  
and in a way it it kind of explains why  
thoreau just spent  
two years doing this in other words he  
decided to take two years of his life  
to figure out how best to live his life  
and to do it he just you know he  
pulled away from everything else he went  
out in the middle of this place to have  
time to think  
and to have time to experiment with what  
he really needed and and what really  
mattered to him  
and and to try to figure it all out  
in that sense it's it's an incredibly  
moving work and it does sort of you know  
challenge us to  
to judge the same you may not take up the  
challenge you may find thoreau  
irritating um that speaker of tyros  
who's you know narrating the whole thing  
um can be a little  
annoying at times um people have  
have argued um that he is and i i think  
it's right  
but i'm just curious you know if you're  
more put off by it than influenced by it  
um i don't know and and again it's  
nothing wrong if  
if this book hasn't changed your life  
although we have a large class i think  
for a few people  
it just might we'll see here's a problem  
with thoreau  
and it's another one that's worth noting

and that is um well walden pond i mentioned it's in you know eastern massachusetts not too far from cambridge or boston but also 15 miles north of walden pond that's a lot closer than either cambridge or boston to walton pond it was low massachusetts you can still visit there today because lowell massachusetts was the largest industrial area in the united states the biggest industrial area in the united states at the time it's the closest thing that america had to an industrial city like manchester um and we're right in the middle of the so-called industrial revolution you know what role was like manchester was a huge textile facility people were making textiles there are huge factories if you go there today you can go into the building and you can hear it's like deafening sound of these dozens of machines working these are automated looms and it's just astonishing so thoreau is at ground zero really of technological modernity and what does he do instead of focusing on it he could have written a book not titled you know walden or life in the woods it could have been entitled you know lol or life in the industrial city and he could have taken us inside of that world in fact um charles dickens the very same year that walden has published 1854 charles dickens writes a great novel called hard times

and he just he does just that he takes us into this imaginary city coke town coke as you may know as a product of coal so it's almost like calling the the city coal town you know it's the it's what like london was the big smoke is all about air pollution and it's all about life inside of the factories and and it's you know he's influenced by blake and all so you have children working their children dying in the factories it's a horrible horrible life but thoreau doesn't talk about any of that in a thoroughly pastoral way you know he sees the problem he understands it but he turns away and imagines a simpler life yeah so the big question is with thoreau and and this is the the real one not just that he you know he calls it wilderness when it's not and he you know he only lives there for two years and the fact that it's you know it's kind of a cop-out because he goes home for his mom's dinner once a week but the bigger issue here is thoreau is not facing technological modernity head-on even now it's it's literally a day's walk from walden pond to get to law instead he imagines this simpler the simpler life you know um and and i put here and it's it's ironically in the process hastening its destruction you know as i've argued if um in a book not in this class um but if everyone took the rose lead it would have been you know an environmental nightmare and

i say that with great confidence because  
it was  
starting at thoreau's period there's an  
incredible  
urban expansion it happens in thoreau's  
time but then it  
it really gets blown after the second  
world war  
where people leave the city because they  
imagine this simpler  
more natural more pastoral life out in  
the countryside  
and they go there and they build  
suburbia and  
and they take all the problems of the  
city with them and the suburban sprawl  
that we've been experiencing in the  
united states for 150 years which has  
actually been an international movement  
for nearly that long  
has been an environmental disaster i  
mean it would have been far better if we  
stayed in the cities  
and done just what thoreau isn't doing  
address  
the problems of the cities because city  
life being  
more compact and all is far more  
environmentally  
sound what i mean by that is you know  
people living in cities  
like thoreau live in much smaller houses  
generally  
people don't actually you don't often  
have things like cars moving around  
so is even though it sounds kind of  
contradictory and we explored this in  
english 23  
uh the climate crisis what it is and  
what each of us can do about it  
also known as climate crisis 101. um we  
explore how  
people living in cities often have

carbon footprints that are half or even less than people living in the suburbs often a lot less and certainly if you live out in a um you know a mcmansion and have you know multiple suvs and drive them a lot yeah it's a problem but anyhow thoreau you know um is not like you know edward bertinski who squarely looks at the problem he says look this is you know this is what we're doing to the world just you know come with me and i want to show you what factory life is like and that's the opening scene of manufactured landscapes i will show you what factory life is like in china that's what he's saying charles dickens said come with me i will show you what factory life is like in manchester ciro says come with me we don't want to look at that let's go let's go out to the the closest wilderness we can find yeah you can see why it's a problem it carries twofold danger though right first we risk ignoring and doing something about the environmental difficulties so instead of addressing the problems head on we run we don't do anything but in running away from them you often bring the problems with you so even this you know depends harrison's about this a suburban expansion you know we go out to these places and johnson was worried about independence because what happened at the time was people brought all that the problems with them and ultimately you know i won't say destroyed those areas but they

they significantly modified them in a way that was not environmentally good by any means a loss of habitat and a range of other problems with human beings as they came so you can see a real danger there with walden and the pastoral impulse so let's conclude walden there are some questions i want to leave you with um and they're worth thinking about because you know thoreau really does want to get us thinking about our relationship to the planet and and that's that's new with thoreau and you know with all the other critiques you can make of thoreau and problems you may have with them and all that's certainly a good thing to do right i mean what thoreau is doing stopping and trying to figure out the best way to live and in a very modern sense the best way to live environmentally or the way we generally express that how might we live sustainably on this planet how might i individually live sustainably what would that be like how could i go about it and throw his argument by the way we'll see this come back with buddhism and by the way thoreau is very influenced by a range of eastern traditions including buddhism but the argument goes even further because suros says not only would this be better for the planet more sustainable it's a better life it's a life that will make you happier

far happier  
but anyhow there are questions that  
remain  
are his lifestyle prescriptions and i've  
thrown this out only valid  
in a wilderness setting could you live  
this project of simplify  
simplify smaller less  
things less stuff more you know focused  
on what really matters in life  
could you do that somewhere in the  
middle of a city for example  
or for that matter a suburb i  
been kind of suggesting and well  
minimalists have suggested i'm kind of a  
minimalist so i guess i've been  
suggesting too  
it's been suggested by someone that you  
know  
um you could actually do this  
that minimalist you know it's a movement  
minimalism as a movement  
you know doesn't say first find the  
closest wilderness  
it doesn't say that at all it's wherever  
you are  
right now see think about do what  
thoreau did  
and think about what's the minimal that  
you really need in life  
or approach data from our environmental  
perspective because it often dovetails  
quite nicely  
what's the most sustainable way of  
living  
does that have to be done in a  
wilderness location not kind of  
answering this question i guess sorry i  
meant it to be a question you'd think  
really hard about but  
i'm kind of answering it um i don't  
think he has to be in a wilderness  
setting

and then the other question that we've raised do you have to take it to the extreme degree and again even tarot doesn't he doesn't live in a cabin the size of you know just big enough to lie down in um so what that means is of course that it's kind of a sliding scale and as i suggest in english 23 um otherwise known as climate crisis 101 you know take something like like uh like diet like eating yes the the end game i suppose in that would be something like veganism and i i should tell you i was i was a vegan for five years but only moved away to something more like we would call climatarianism or sometimes flexitarianism and that's simply the idea that yeah you don't have to be totally hardcore about something like this it's it's perfectly fine to be somewhere in the middle um and this matters because the climate footprint of of eating is is pretty darn significant but it doesn't mean that you know every now and again you can't have a piece of cheese or something because if you think about it if if everyone moved more in the direction of a largely plant-based diet it would have profound implications for the planet and everyone being incredibly hardcore like thoreau sometimes suggests probably is not going to work in other words it wasn't sustainable for thoreau i mean he was able to do it for a couple years but he didn't



he didn't live a life like that i would argue  
you know many things don't get me wrong  
people can live a life as a vegan perfectly fine and perfectly healthy i would add  
but it doesn't mean that you um you know you have to do that  
that if everyone just you know moved in that direction we could reduce the climate footprint for  
uh for food systems across the planet you know you cut it in half or a quarter let alone bring it down to like a tenth where it could be if we want to  
pretty much all largely plant-based but again you don't have to it can just be uh  
somewhere in the middle you know um is this  
even possible so yeah yeah it is possible to be a vegan for a lifetime not all that is possible but you know could  
could most people could most families do something like this and it is noteworthy to throw it's just an individual person doing it not there aren't children involved  
there aren't elderly people involved you know people who have different needs than he does in general  
so you know um it's not a question of you know do you have to take it to the extreme degree that he does  
but in this case i'm asking you know is it even possible for most people for for a lifetime to do it  
um but but if you're in fairness to thoreau though i don't know that he's suggesting it is or saying that you know this is the way it has to be  
he is he's it's an experiment to see

what  
what the minimum was like and then once  
he does that of course he can pull back  
with something more um more reasonable  
yeah so what i'm talking about here  
actually is this danger that i said you  
know if everyone moved out to the  
countryside which we did  
to suburban expansion then we would  
bring all the problems with this  
pastoral has been taken up by things  
like  
suv ads and if you ever watched an suv  
ad  
i'm actually thinking about the video  
ones now you know  
you see the suv barreling out into the  
middle  
of nowhere no one's around and they most  
importantly you're not on a road because  
these things can take you off off-road  
hence they're off-road vehicles no in a  
sense  
you know um but that is the pastoral  
impulse right i mean it's kind of like  
imagine  
thoreau riding that you know he's just  
been to lowell massachusetts and seen  
problems with technological modernity  
and he got into that thing and he  
barrels out of you know away from lowell  
as fast as he can to the closest  
wilderness he can find  
well suvs those ads are like  
great because they actually showed the  
destruction of the place by  
driving out in the middle of nowhere and  
you're not seeing all the little  
you know animals or whatever they're  
gonna get plowed over by this vehicle  
and you know the ruts in the road and  
everything else  
so um pastoral

has become potentially a disturbing  
it's pastoral has been used in  
disturbing ways as an art form by  
something like you know SUV  
manufacturers because we have this  
desire that we want to get away from it  
all we want to get away  
and we think you know nature is the  
place where we're free from all that  
you know you can see if you've ever been  
to a place like Yosemite in the summer  
time where there's  
actual traffic jams backed up on  
the road to get into the place that this  
is potentially a problem  
so um yeah i just want to draw attention  
to that  
and and that's the problem right so it's  
[Music]  
Walden Pond i mentioned those seven  
parking lots and the million  
plus people who visited every year you  
know  
what if they just didn't visit but what  
if all those people came out to Walden  
Pond  
and places even to do just what the road  
did to start chopping down trees and  
building cabins well  
given the fact that we have seven and  
three quarter billion people on the  
planet right now  
that just wouldn't work um it would you  
know it would do  
you know would destroy the place you  
know very very quickly  
and arguably in a pretty you know quick  
time frame that's what has happened with  
suburban sprawl  
as well so in a way  
the pastoral impulse this idea to turn  
away from the city and its problems and  
to go to somewhere simpler

has that carries that problem with it  
that you carry your problems with you  
and you ultimately could bring about the  
destruction of the place which is why  
it sounds um kind of contradictory at  
first  
but well there's a wonderful book called  
triumph of the city and  
maybe i'll talk about it further when we  
get to rachel carson but  
um he has a wonderful quote in there and  
the quote is a simple one you can almost  
you know write it down and hang it up on  
your wall  
and that is if you love nature  
stay away from it so that's something  
that thoreau didn't do  
that's something that people in the sub  
urbs aren't doing  
that's something that you know people  
who fled  
the cities for the dream of a simpler  
life and wound up short of that in  
suburbia  
they didn't do it either but if you love  
nature  
stay away from it if you love nature  
don't move out to the country  
if you love nature stay in the city live  
a more sustainable life  
and you can visit it or hey you know you  
can bring nature into the city which is  
um a project that has been happening for  
over 400 years now begins in  
shakespeare's time of the inner urban  
park and you know the  
great like triumph of it would a great  
example would be something like  
uh central park in new york where it's  
not  
wilderness sort of surrounding a city  
kind of like a donut or a bagel or  
something

but in fact it's it's it's the the city  
is the the donut and the that center  
uh of it where the donut hole is that's  
this that's the park  
itself where people can in a very  
controlled way  
and experience nature but without going  
outside and trampling it down  
so yeah  
yeah how does he compare we've been  
calling the anti-pastoral  
of of um edward batinski so what i mean  
by that is  
thoreau clearly is celebrating  
countryside and drawing attention to how  
beautiful it is  
but of course he's ignoring problems  
environmental problems  
edward bertinski you know he takes us to  
ground zero those environmental problems  
you know does just one approach better  
and  
so let me rephrase that okay  
you want to we've talked earlier in the  
class about developing an environmental  
consciousness so you've got an  
environmental consciousness for whatever  
reason i suspect many of you already do  
maybe in a really big way now you are  
the artist  
whether you're a writer or painter or  
whatever you have to communicate that  
you want to communicate that to others  
so that they too get this environmental  
consciousness and you know be better for  
the planet  
how do you do that do you do it by a  
celebration  
of of nature of wilderness like thoreau  
or like probably what you imagined  
before this class nature writing would  
be  
by you know writing nature poetry or

something or doing beautiful  
like some of the paintings we've seen  
you know um like claude lorraine  
beautiful landscapes that's one approach  
or do you like edward bertinski take us  
to ground  
zero of the destruction of nature and  
the planet  
um places you know where environmental  
devastation is just you know rapid  
which would be more effective  
um i can tell you that  
a change has been taking place in the  
last 100 years or so  
and you can see it even with someone  
like charles dickens  
the same year that walden has published  
who actually want to take us to the  
problem areas who want to take us inside  
and see it  
and one of the advantages of this  
approach  
too and you see it with something like  
the film the true cost  
is that it also makes you aware that  
it's not only the planet  
or animals or plants or or you know  
mountain tops that are getting removed  
but human the human cost is there too so  
there are huge  
social justice issues involved as well  
and that's just you know  
useful to be able to think about all all  
of these together  
environmental and human things too and  
as a consequence  
pastoral is still alive and well and  
people are writing it and people are  
celebrating  
wilderness and semi-wilderness areas and  
all  
that's true but what we really have  
let me just pull out of here

we really have now  
or a range of artists and bertinski as  
an example  
who really want to just sort of smack  
you in the face  
sorry for that violent image but who  
really want to just you know  
get you put in your face the problem to  
show you the problem so that you don't  
turn away from it  
a film like the true cost does that it's  
it's meant to take you there  
it's meant it does what thoreau didn't  
do  
throw could have taken us into the  
factories at law massachusetts  
but he didn't true cost takes you into  
the factories across the planet now and  
so does a film like manufactured  
landscapes  
um these are all you know  
doing a kind of anti-pastoral you know  
because they they they can make an  
assumption and  
we have thoreau in par to thank for that  
assumption  
and that is well you probably care about  
the environment you as a 21st century  
person in the developed world probably  
care about it and why do you care about  
it  
well for the last 400 years a range of  
writers and artists have been trying to  
convince us to care about it  
and thoreau sort of pulls it all  
together and the whole range of  
environmentalists have been convincing  
you  
to care about it so if you care about it  
then what do you do  
well these writers you know they want to  
take you  
right into the problem and show it to

you you know just  
pull the veil away and show you and show  
you the problems  
what's so clever is with what you're  
doing so in other words uh edward  
batinski takes people to like the um  
you know factories um in places like  
bangladesh and  
china so you can actually see what's  
happening  
but really it's not about i mentioned  
the lecture back  
it's not about china it's not about  
bangladesh it's about what we are doing  
what we are requiring to be done  
for us in other words we require those  
factories to be built to make the stuff  
that we want it's all for us so they're  
doing what thoreau is doing they're  
looking at  
you know what it is we need to live  
and thoreau is trying to figure out in a  
very sustainable way that what that  
could be  
but these projects are often designed  
and designed to show you  
just how unsustainable your way your  
your way of life is  
you may not know it going to your local  
you know fast  
you know fashion outlet or online to  
your favorite site  
you know you may not realize the  
consequences of it you may not  
think about what you're you know the  
kind of life that is best  
but these folks want to show you the  
problem with it but but in that sense  
you know it's  
it's it's similar to thoreau right where  
there's pastor roy and i pastor all the  
way we've been talking about it  
in the sense that you know the the main



thing  
that that these artists want to do and i  
mean artists broadly including writers  
and all  
is they want you to confront  
you they want you to confront your life  
and think about what your life is and  
what would be the best life  
and and you know throw the argument is  
and again we'll see this with buddhism  
this will be a better life if you do  
abandoning all these things that you're  
so  
so connected to like you know  
clothing and maybe animal products that  
you're eating and things you know  
abandoning all that what will make you  
happier but it's going to be better for  
the planet too  
it's going to be better for everyone too  
so it's it's a win-win thing  
and unfortunately you know they need to  
do this because  
by this argument you know 21st century  
life in the developed world is kind of a  
lose-lose  
kind of thing you know they're losing i  
think you just keep adding blues  
there you lose lose lose lose you know  
we lose the pain that loses  
loses in terms of you know social  
justice other people  
lose you know it's just just bad  
anyhow thoreau wants to get you to think  
about that so i hope  
that you know in reading him you've  
you've thought about it or if you  
you've just listened to me talk and  
you're you're ready to plow into sorel i  
i hope you'll um  
you will think about it it's it's it's a  
great project to  
to just stop and think about your life

and how you live it and i think most of us are so busy living our lives that we don't stop to think about it and again i'm kind of setting up buddhism here because we're not far from it now we get to buddhism we'll see that's sort of a central idea that you just stop and think about it but uh but hey we saw it with thoreau and um and you can do it too okay so i'll end on that note and next time we jump into the 20th century and rachel carson's wonderful work silent spring okay