

Hiking Trails Towards Civilization:

Escaping the spectacle of Nature and Shattering the Civil Lens

By: N/A

I have spent quite a while through the paths of nature walks and hiking trails, with a backpack full of protein bars, trail mix, water bottles, rain coats etc. In hopes that I might, even just momentarily, leave behind the gears of civilization. Saying hi to countless people as I walk up a poorly kept rocky path nearing the top of the hike, so that I can finally witness this breathtaking view I've heard so much about. All of this so that I can "enjoy nature". However I never enjoy it. It always feels like such a pain in the neck, to drive up to the trail on your day off, hope to god you find parking, fill out a form for a hiking permit, pass by people blasting loud shitty music, follow a predetermined path, signs saying no camping, and for what? So at the end you can see some view that never leads up to the hype just to walk back down? This is not nature. The whole reason I even came out here was to try and escape the hustle and bustle of advanced techno civilization, however with seeing this I can hardly tell between the trees and a skyscraper.

Hiking is a spectacle of nature, a safe mediated image without substance; a lie. The spectacle of nature is packaged and sold to you like any other ideological commodity, this plastic nature does not subvert civilization, but rather becomes an extension of it, populated, safe, clean, pretty, predetermined, predictable, and so on. This is in polar opposite to the adventures wilderness of real nature that stands in confident rebellion against civilized minds. All one needs to realize this is to see the frustration in people at a just slightly more rugged path than they're used to, when the trail is "ill kempt" or as I like to call it, "natural", when it's slightly too hot or too cold for them, or when their expensive patagonia jacket gets dirty, and they step in mud with their brand new hiking boots, as if they expected the forest ground to be made of sidewalk. If this is your reaction to nature, then you do not in fact want nature, you want the idea of nature, sold in "crunchy/granola" aesthetics to superficially "fulfill" the need for adventure. They want cleanly paved paths beside pretty trees with a 4 bar cell reception and a cafe at the end.

So what is the point of this? The point is to move beyond hiking for our reconnection with nature and as a step towards further rewilding. To stop limiting ourselves to a pathed nature walk as our method of stepping away from the gears of techno industrial civilization. For as much time I've spent on the trails I found out about from a book I got at REI, I've spent equal time wandering the forest without a path, no people to pass, no park rangers, or signs telling me I can't camp, if I wish to set up camp right where I stand I'm able to. The freedom of being alone in the woods is one of the most liberating feelings I've ever felt, if I decide I wish to build a small shelter I can do that, if I want to climb a tree I can do that, if I want to pick berries or forage for other plants I can do that, no view point to see at the summit, only the intoxicating beauty of a horizon of trees without end. In wild nature, if only for a moment I've truly escaped civilization.

However, to just spend time in the deep forest alone may decivilize your environment, however this still fails to decivilize your mind. This is because we're still viewing nature through the lens of civilization. We view nature as a negative force, a lack of civilization, we think of it as

the absolute, when in reality its the opposite, walk around downtown and realize this used to be grass and trees, civilization is the lack of nature. The very dichotomy of human/civilization and animal/nature only exists in the civil lens. The need for order, monatinay, predictability, hierarchy, and uniformity is what perpetuates this civil lens, the "evil chaos" of nature then servs as a boogie man, only to be engaged with in small amounts and always through the spectacle. Spontaneity is the negation of civilization, it is completely unable to ever hold chaos, thus civilization raises a mass ideology opposing any form of wild, purly from the fact that if it didnt, it would die.

If we can begin to start acting on our spontaneity and unfettered desire, destroy the dichotomy of human and wilderness, and finally get off the hiking trails and into the forest to rewild, we may begin to dismantle the gears in our head, as well as our environment.