

Informative synthesis: environmentalism

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



Every day our environment is ravaged by emissions, littered on by billions of people, and carelessly treated with unlimited resources. Environmentalists like Bill McKibben, scholar at Middlebury College and author of the article “The Challenge to Environmentalism,” believe that “the relationship between people and the natural world has been largely taken for granted for most of human history” (500).

Although environmentalism to some people means driving less, establishing solar panels, recycling and more; Kate Zernike, reporter for the New York Times and author of “Green, Greener, Greenest,” informs us about college campuses taking shortcuts in claiming they’re “environmentally friendly.” There are environmentalists and deans attempting to make a difference in our environment, but Michael Pollan – a professor of science and environmental journalism at the University of California – asks the question, why bother with trying to cure climate change?

Our environment is an important aspect of human lives, and should be taken care of like our own children. Our concepts of environmentalism, the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life, and our battle with climate change and environmentalism economically are all factors of a hazardous home we will soon live in. Environmentalism is considered “a hollow concept,” argues Zernike, through the purchasing of offsets she believes it’s “the environmental equivalent of paying someone to eat broccoli so you can keep eating ice cream” (505).

Offsets are credits sold by companies, specifically green companies to invest in planting trees or renewable energy. What Zernike means by this is it’s not ethically permissible to give someone money to help the environment while

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you personally continue to pollute it, especially when that money given to the company doesn't always go towards funding the struggle for carbon neutrality. Pollan agrees with Zernike's argument, the infinite cycle of repairing what we're damaging, keeping us at a standstill for carbon neutrality and climate change for years to come.

Pollan knows that “halfway around the world their lives my evil twin . . . who's itching to replace every last pound of CO₂ I'm trying not to emit” (509). Although Pollan doesn't argue about offsets, he provides an example of double effect environmentally; that if walking to work increases your appetite and causes you to consume more meat or milk as a result, walking might actually emit more carbon than driving. McKibben on the other hand looks at the more general picture of environmentalism, how humans have had effected the environment we currently live within and around.

McKibben doesn't disagree with Zernike and Pollan on environmentalism, he believes the relations we have with nature have been taken for granted. McKibben doesn't even call environmentalism in that name itself, instead personally renaming as the Global Warming Movement. McKibben argues that people believe wilderness is less important than community. Environmentalists today prioritize building windmills over protecting our wildlife from their blades.

These small choices we make will be the difference in how our world will be perceived in the future. After taking into consideration of the billions of people on our planet, we come to realize how large of an impact the way we live has on our world. Our daily life too many environmentalists are considered a virus to earth as a whole. McKibben argues that “we had a
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great effect on particular places around us [such as] our fields and forests” (500). Cutting down forests changes hydrological cycles, environmental patterns, and habitat patterns.

Although deforestation is a priority to prevent, Zernike is focusing on changing the concepts of our lives to improve our environment. After claiming that going green is good for a college campus’s public image, Zernike tells us about the efforts students make in revolutionizing the way students learn, consume, and sleep. Although changes such as installing windmills, evolving trash bins to composts, and using biodegradable eating utensils are significant efforts to change the way we live, Michael Pollan argues that this all doesn’t matter.

Pollan continues to assess his argument that attempting to cure climate change is irrational, he tells us that “ the ‘ big problem’ is nothing more or less than the sum total of countless everyday choices, most made by us, most made by desires, needs, and preferences” (510). Everyone making these innumerable amount of choices against our environment suddenly expects laws and money to take action to fix it, Pollan argues that “ it is no less accurate to say that laws and money cannot do enough, it will also take profound changes in the way we live,” changes that cannot be made by legislation or technology(510).

Our economy cannot support replacing our carbon footprint. Pollan argues that we look to our leaders and money to save us from the situation we’ve gotten ourselves into. Cheap energy, which Pollan argues made specialization possible, gave us climate change, The mentality of specialization is causing people to believe and wait for a new technology to

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emerge and solve our problem of climate change. Kate Zernike explains to us college campuses have begun hiring specialized sustainability coordinators to increase their green rating and environmental efficiency.

Although sustainability coordinators have a “ timetable for becoming carbon neutral . . . 12. 5 million was spent to make the buildings within the campus more efficient” (506). Bill Mckibben believes that “ the economy can’t do the job anymore, in part because the excessive consumption is precisely what drives the environmental crisis we find ourselves in” (502). Mckibben also argues that the farmers market is the fastest growing part of thefoodeconomy in America, because it provides more economically sensible and healthy food.

Whether environmentalists like Bill Mckibben think the concepts of the environmental movement should be changed to the global warming movement, revolutionizing our concepts of living and daily life by going green and making our buildings more efficient like Kate Zernike, and explaining to us how all these attempts to save the world from global warming doesn’t matter like Michael Pollan. In order to combat our problem with climate change we need the cooperation of the billions of people that inhabit our world.