

would come first. But unfortunately, searching for alternatives never becomes a high priority, because treating trees and wildlife with respect is very low in the scale of value in most people's minds — except when it hits their pocketbooks, when they suddenly see the damaging effects of upsetting some specific ecosystem. And most sad of all, the moral issue, in its broadest perspective, is never really understood, even though it has been with us for centuries.

Modern man, in his pride and arrogance, has lost his perspective of who he is in relation to the universe, to all things around him. In "Desiderata," that wonderful series of 17th century statements found outside a Baltimore Church, one sentence consoles many by saying, "You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here." Today, the focus has to be reversed: We have to remind ourselves that the trees have a right to be here.

Great writers have always

pointed out the importance of respecting all forms of otherness in the world. Shakespeare wrote that there is *nothing* that exists "but to the earth some special good doth give." The word "special" is significant. Handicapped people are sometimes called "special." So are the things in nature.

Unfortunately, only occasionally do some of us experience the otherness of nature, and show respect and humility before it — perhaps only after some violent natural disaster, or on the rare occasion that we really look at the stars on a clear night, or on that once-in-a-lifetime trip when we look down the Grand Canyon.

But our true moral health depends on having a proper view of ourselves in relation to the universe. For there is a hidden carry-over to unconscious habits of thought. Disrespecting otherness in nature, we will disrespect and exploit people too.

Observing the wonder of a living, harmonious ecosystem, what

Wordsworth called, "Nature's holy pain," we should indeed lament with him "What man has made of man." Perhaps if we could hear more often in nature, as Wordsworth did, "The still sad music of humanity . . . of ample power / To chasten and subdue," We would come to respect each other more.

I respectfully suggest that a larger, broader, more truly moral perspective be adopted in addressing environmental issues, and that equal attention be paid to *all* the moral imperatives involved.

If enough *value* had been accorded the "environmental" consideration, the state would never have chosen Corson's Brook Woods in the first place, and would certainly now, instead of expending so much energy to justify and hold onto a prematurely arrived at decision, find a less sensitive alternate site, and accept the city's request to make this one part of our Greenbelt.

(The writer, a teacher, is a resident of Willowbrook.)