

MAKE NATURE SCARY AGAIN

A walking tour through nature for those who hate it



- ☀ **Guided tour**
- ☀ **Multiple locations**
- ☀ **Guaranteed feelings**
- ☀ **Friendly tour guide**
- ☀ **Many reasons to hate nature**
- ☀ **Nice polemics, strong rhetorics**

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By Eef Veldkamp

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0. Welcome

This is a tour through nature for those who hate nature. Above all, there are so many reasons to hate it. To give an example from our friend Slavoj Žižek, who argues that “Nature is not a balanced totality that we humans disturbed. Nature is a big series of unimaginable catastrophes [...] we profit from them”.¹ Nature is an endless continuation of disasters, often to our advantage, sometimes of our making. Or as Baudrillard has it, who scales up the same point just a little bit more: “the universe is not dialectical – it is devoted to the extremes, not to balance; to radical antagonism, not reconciliation or synthesis.”² I believe that you, our dear confidante, can think of one or two reasons why we should turn to aversion for nature as well. However, I feel the need add that the most sensible reason amongst all to hate nature are indeed those who expressively love it,

those whom turn to a moralising speech of connectedness and holism and love whilst looking at you with their crooked eyes filled with superiority. As Zizek adds, love means to choose something above all else, and therefore reject so much more. Love makes you blind, love is evil, love is destruction, nature is catastrophe and ironically the most 'loving' relationship we could ever have to nature is to hate it, to leave it be in its own entropy, to ignore its endless destruction, and thereby accept it wholly.

1. *Entering nature*

Did you know that nobody has even entered nature, precisely because nobody has ever left it? Just to supply you with an example – that works for rational beings such as you with arguments that sound somewhat spiritual. Nobody and neither you can precisely point to where you enter a forest, transverse a pass, step into a sea or climb a mountain all of which are just stupendous categories that tie phenomenon in a straightjacket. You wonder when you might say you have entered the forest? Is the criterium 3 trees per square meter, or perhaps 5, or does it have more to do with bushes and undergrowth? Does forest from not-forest demarcate by that eerie smell of ground so wet that it boils with fungi, or the fact of a certain number of centimetres of dead leaves amassed? Should you measure the interval between trunks, or rather count them, and if so, should those be

horizontally ordered or vertically? Should we refocus to contextualisation and look at that which calls the forest its habitat? Or should we de-essentialise and look at what a forest *does*, turning to its effects. As if a forest is that which is walked by hikers. Or should we look at what causes forest, and realise that it thereby cannot be something in which you and others partake? Does a dead tree account to the concept of forest, where does the concept start and stop? Is forest that which takes away horizon, that does not allow vision beyond a certain focal point? Should we regard forest in terms of optics and aesthetic evaluations? Above all, “aesthetics is how a thing withdraws from their physical properties”.³ Is forest there in which you register phenomenon within yourself you cannot designate to any anonymous space? Or does it perhaps have to do with all these suggested things? Does the proto- or perhaps even pseudo-forest make place for the true and real one as “land spanning more than 0.5

hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ.”⁴ As the United Nations do believe. They add that “It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use”.⁵ The United Nations have decided, perhaps noting the same discrepancies as you do now, to define it anew with regular interval – as much as you do too – based mostly on international affairs, economical welfare and geopolitics? And what do they conclude: it *nevertheless* is to reside outside of the realm of utility, it cannot be its effects, it is not what we cultivate, but this is ludicrous. If there is something we cultivate it is the forest, however we mainly do so not by ploughing, lumbering, firing and replanting, but through how we decadently use the concept to pursue all else that we do; how we use it as the negation for anything not-forest – whatever that may mean. Obviously, a forest is not a thing that can be grasped as much as any