

## WHAT IS NATURE OR NATURAL?

\*\* This question(s) may seem easy to answer, but it really depends on who you ask, in what context, in relation to other topics of discussion, the culture/society they live, etc.

May actually be 2 different questions to many people.

1) What is "Nature"?

2) What is "Natural"?

- \* To some "Nature" *is everything there is* on this planet or in the universe; every living organism, every rock, every molecule of matter that exists, is a part of "Nature".
- \* Others may describe "Nature" as only the 'things' in a forest, or jungle, or in the ocean ..., and not include a city landscape, or the areas or 'things' in a building.

Can an object made by humans (a schoolhouse, a car, a smartphone) be natural?

So again, what is "Nature"?

OR

What is "Natural" vs "Unnatural"?

What is "Natural" vs "Human-made"?

Can an object or an activity really be "Unnatural"?

Isn't a car or a laptop computer or medicines or farm chemicals made from materials found in Nature? Are we (humans) a **part of Nature** or, **better than Nature**, **separate from Nature** or **somewhere in-between**.

\* Many would argue that Humans are not a part of "Nature"; we are separate and also better than "Nature, that we are here to control 'Nature', and that Human activities are not "Natural".

\* Building a road, or a house, or a city, or polluting a river or the air, are these "Unnatural" or "Natural" acts?

EX: The building of a dam to slow or stop the flow of a stream or river, and create a body of water behind it that wasn't there before.

**Is this "Natural" (a part of Nature) or is it "Unnatural" (not a part of Nature)?**

\* consider the scenario below:

(Scene: the sight of a dam being built along a stream.)

"That's one of the best dams we have ever built. Strong, sturdy and in just the right location. This will make a fine lake for our purposes."

(The scene is an ant hill some 20 yards from the stream.)

Soldier ant: "Sir, we need to issue a flood warning. The stream has left its banks and the water is headed this way."

Ant Captain: "Alert the workers to prepare to move the colony."

(A few minutes later.)

Soldier ant: "Sir, the water is rising faster. What should we do?"

Ant Captain: "Get everything out. Hurry. Get to the lifeboats. Women and children first."

Soldier ant: "Sir, the water is flooding the tunnels."

Ant Captain: "The heck with the women and children, get the eggs out!"

Ant General: "No, no. Get the Queen out! Get the Queen!"

(Meanwhile at the house of the Mouse family, 100 yards upstream from the dam, Junior comes running in all out of breath.)

Junior: "Daddy, Daddy. The stream is flooding."

Father mouse: "What the ...? It hasn't rained in 5 days."

Junior: "I think it was that big monster I saw. He was building something across the stream."

Father mouse: "Damn."

Junior: "Yes, that's what it was."

Father mouse: "I'll bet it was one of those @#\*% beavers. They move in and right away start changing everything and mess it up. We ought to get rid of them. Maybe I'll just go over and gnaw their legs off."

\*\* for discussion: Do humans get upset or cry "Unnatural" when a beaver builds a dam and displaces dozens of animals?

NOOOOOOOOOO!

OR If the inundation caused by the pond drowns poor, defenseless trees, flowers, and other vegetation?

NOOOOOOOOOO!

That's okay because that's "Natural". BUT, let humans put up a dam, and all hell breaks loose.

\* Another idea: a bird's nest vs a human's house

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EX: