

**PSCI365/ENST 365**  
**ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS**  
**Micro-essay #4**

Write a 750-900 word essay on the following topic. Your essay is due in the Google folder by 4pm On WEDNESDAY April 24. Be sure to single space, use a title that captures the gist of your argument, define terms carefully, and include at least one claim-objection-rejoinder sequence.

Martha Nussbaum argues that “the wild” is a romantic dream (224) and deeply problematic in its “yearning for violence” (250). In her view, the false lure of an untouched nature should not be allowed to alter an assessment of the capabilities of wild animals. They, too, are subject to pain and suffering; if it can be avoided, it should be—even if it requires human intervention into “natural” settings. Nussbaum ultimately follows Bentham: pain is an evil and should be eliminated where it can be.

Nathan Kowalsky argues that we should view “wild animals as valuable in their own right and thus [... we should take] the wild order of nature as good” (267). In his view, all moral extensionist approaches, including Nussbaum’s, are centered on a comparison with the human subject and grow from a stance of “agrarian human sedentism” (256), which makes it impossible to value wild animals as different but worthy. Thus, it disrespects predators and prey alike to try to reform or correct predators in order to prevent the suffering of prey.

Ed Yong emphasizes the distinction between nociception and pain: “nociception says, “Get away.” Pain says,... “and don’t go back”” (129). Pain requires an evolutionary investment in neurons, which may not be worth the cost for many animals like insects. However, big and bigger brain creatures learn to use the signal pain sends. Thus, Yong argues, pain is a part of natural selection, subject to variation, and different in all animals (130). Yet Yong also criticizes the attachment to “wilderness” for blinding us to the immense world we share (353); he argues that human-caused suffering tied to “sensory pollution” (352) should be curtailed as a matter of respect for other animals’ *umwelten*.

Given Yong’s summary of the subtle and varied empirical facts about pain, who has the better normative view, Nussbaum or Kowalsky?

**Which view allows environmental ethicists properly to respect nonhuman animals?**