

In a 2011 speech to the German Bundestag, Pope Benedict discussed our obligation to act in harmony with nature, and said, “[T]here is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.”

This same principle also governs our relationship with the natural world. While we can use the creation for our good, we "cannot manipulate [it] at will," Pope Benedict says, for "matter is not just raw material for us to shape at will, but . . . the earth has a dignity of its own and . . . we must follow its directives."