**EARLY EUROPEAN-AMERICAN VIEWS OF NATURE**

**Puritans**
- Dissenting strain of Protestantism that developed in the late 1500s associated with Calvinism, although it was not a separate denomination.
- God is supreme authority individually and socially, as understood through the Bible.
- Settled in New England area in early 1600s, coming from a landscape that had long been under close and relatively reliable human cultivation by “civilized Christians.”
- Nature in the “new world” was radically different than what was found in England.
- Nature is “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men.” (William Bradford, 1620)
- Puritans interpreted nature in Biblical terms, with themselves as part of a biblical story.
- They responded with hard work and sober frugality that resulted in the ability to create a usable garden out of the demonic wilderness.

**Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) as a transitional figure.
- A Puritan minister who emphasized personal religious experience and was a catalyst for the “Great Awakening” in New England.
- He was also schooled in Enlightenment philosophy.
- By the time of Edwards, Puritans had gained significant control over nature, which now seemed more benign and reliable.
- Forests had been destroyed at a tremendous pace, and there were relatively few dangers from Native Americans.
- Edwards articulated a growing recognition of the beauty of nature.
- For Edwards, God is of supreme religious value and above this world, which is but a shadow of the Creator (similar to Plato).
- But (unlike Plato) nature is linked with God: “spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadows of being, they must be so much the more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties. This beauty is peculiar to natural things, it surpassing the art of man.”
- Such a view is a direct link to the Transcendental Movement of the 1800s.

**Enlightenment in America**
- The founders of the American republic were Enlightenment thinkers, e.g., Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. They sought to base a new nation not on religion and monarchy but reason and individual liberty (at least for white male property owners).
- The early scientists of the U.S. were engaged in an Enlightenment project of discovering new species and locating them in the taxonomy of Carl Linnaeus (1707-78).

**Romanticism in the U.S.**
- Romanticism sought a consciousness of nature that was not objective and abstract but intuitive, emotional, and aesthetic.
- Personal experience and the imagination rather than rational truth about it was valued the highest (some similarity to Jonathan Edwards).
- Both Romanticism and Enlightenment prized individual liberty and emancipation from authoritarian government and tradition.
- The major American form of Romanticism was Transcendentalism.