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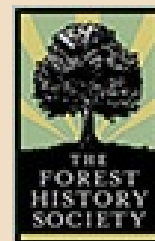
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Abstract

The atomic scientists' intense fascination with nature helped them to produce the knowledge necessary to create the bomb. These physicists, chemists, and mathematicians believed that nature should be reduced to its essential parts, observed, explained in terms of laws, and manipulated for human purposes. Their relationship to nature, however, included more than just this instrumental mentality and method, which alone were insufficient to yield scientific insights. Walking, hiking, and mountain climbing loosened the scientists' minds and helped them to think about atoms and subatomic particles. More important, the scientists' deep feelings about nature—curiosity and emotions generally known as wonder—inspired them to undertake the research that eventually informed their Manhattan Project work. By describing a little-known side of the bomb, this essay advances a recent scholarly trend toward studies of the hidden or unexpected environmental features of America's atomic project.

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