

From the Ground Up: Dark Green Religion and the Environmental Future'

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Green and Dark Green Religion

Green religion as I use the term is a broad umbrella for every type of religious environmentalism, both those with deep roots in Western and Asian cultures, and more recent innovations that are emerging in the age of ecology. The types of religious environmentalism where practitioners and scholars affiliated with the world's most prevalent religious traditions seek to reveal and promote their putatively environmentally friendly dimensions, or develop such dimensions where they are believed to be missing or anemic, is not my present focus. This contemporary impulse to foster environmentally friendly religious ethics provides a backdrop for the exploration of the emergence, diffusion, characteristics, and types of a subset of green religion that I call *dark green religion*.

By dark green religion, I mean religion that considers nature to be sacred, imbued with intrinsic value, and worthy of reverent care. Dark green religion considers nonhuman species to have worth, regardless of their usefulness to human beings. Such religion expresses and promotes an ethics of kinship between human beings and other life forms. I use the title, "From the Ground Up," to focus on the intellectual roots of such spirituality by examining dark green religion within what I call *the environmentalist milieu*, namely, the contexts wherein environmentally concerned officials, movements, and individuals connect with and reciprocally influence one another.²

In recent decades, debates within the environmentalist milieu have raged over the relationships between religions, cultures, and the earth's living systems. Some assert that religious perceptions and beliefs have always been closely associated with natural phenomena, and that many religions originated in the worship of nature.³ Others purport to find links between religious types and the specific natural habitats that they claim gave rise to them.⁴ Still others take a decidedly reductionistic approach, asserting that religion is a byproduct of evolutionary processes.⁵ Others have concluded, to the contrary, that religious beliefs and practices, including some forms of ritualizing, evolved in ecologically adaptive ways.⁶ Such adaptive-functionalists provide a theoretical basis for the idea that religion can or does contribute to environmentally sustainable communities.

Better known are those who blame specific religions, or religion in general, for promoting worldviews that lead to environmental destruction.⁷ Such criticisms and the responses they precipitate have led to a scholarly field most commonly called "religion and ecology." Using resources from existing religions, the field has been characterized by efforts to recover ideas that can be used to promote environmentally responsible attitudes and behavior. This work has been undertaken by religious thinkers, leaders, and practitioners, as well as by scholars who focus on specific traditions in an effort to help them become more environmentally friendly. The most impressive example of this scholarly enterprise was a series of conferences (and subsequently a book series) that unfolded between 1996 and 2004 on "Religions of the World and Ecology" organized by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, then professors in Bucknell's Religious Studies department. The Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) at Harvard University hosted the conferences with additional support from many other environmental, religious, and animal welfare groups, and the books were published by the CSWR and distributed by Harvard University Press.⁸

Put simply, the ferment has centered on how and under what circumstances religion can be "green." In other words, does it or can it assume forms that promote environmental sustainability?

Much evidence suggests a negative answer. Despite occasional and increasing expressions of environmental concern by practitioners of the world's major religious traditions, most of these traditions view their environmental responsibilities as, at most, one of a variety of ethical responsibilities. Clearly, *environmental* duties receive far less attention than what are considered to be *religious* duties and other, more pressing, ethical ob-

ligations. Nevertheless, diverse forms of green religion are emerging and going global in dramatic if nascent ways. Although both green religion and dark green religion have deep historical antecedents,⁹ the growing strength and contemporary novelties make it possible to consider them both as new religious movements.

Nature as sacred is not new

Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy*, and Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, all analyze important aspects of what can be called nature-as-sacred religions, namely, religions that consider nature itself to be inherently sacred, not only worthy of respect or reverence because it was created by a divine being. In different ways, these scholars illustrate that such religions have deep roots in longstanding organic and esoteric traditions in Western culture but note, however, that as scientific and ecological paradigms have shifted, so too have the forms of such spirituality.¹⁰

These and other scholars have analyzed the early and dramatic revival of such nature religions, often tracing this revival to eighteenth-century European romanticism, which influenced nature-related religious thinking in North America, which in turn reinforced and strengthened such movements in Europe.¹¹ Worster and Buell are among those scholars who have exposed the roots of what could be called the biocentric turn in ecological science and literature, namely, the turn toward values professing that nature has intrinsic or inherent value.

As Buell has shown, Henry David Thoreau is often regarded as a patron saint for such spirituality in America, casting a long shadow and influencing virtually all of the twentieth-century's most important environmentalist thinkers, including John Muir, John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold, Rachael Carson, Wendell Berry, Edward Abbey, Gary Snyder, and James Lovelock.¹² Indeed, both Thoreau and these progeny have assumed iconic status within the pantheon of saints favored among those who participate in contemporary nature religion.¹³

Four Types of Dark Green Religion

Here I will provide a few examples of four types of dark green spirituality that have been emerging since the first Earth Day. Just as "map is not territory," typological constructions are not meant to be exhaustively descriptive. Their boundaries are permeable and fluid. The key question is whether they have explanatory and heuristic power.¹⁴

The first two types of dark green religion I consider to be forms of Animism, one supernaturalistic and the other naturalistic. The third and

fourth types I label Gaian Earth Religion, which similarly appears in two forms, one supernaturalistic the other naturalistic.¹⁵ I use the expression Gaian Earth Religion as shorthand for holistic and organicist world views. The supernaturalistic form of Gaian Earth Religion I call “Gaian Spirituality,” and the naturalistic form I label “Gaian Naturalism.” All four of the above-mentioned types have fluid boundaries. They represent tendencies rather than uncomplicated, static, or rigid clusters of individuals and movements.

Animism is a term that most fundamentally reflects a perception that spiritual intelligences, or life-forces, animate natural entities and living things. Animistic perception is often accompanied by ethical beliefs about the kinds of relationships people have or should have with such beings or forces, or conversely, what behaviors should be avoided with regard to them. Animism may also involve communication or even communion with such intelligences or life forces. Such a worldview usually enjoins respect if not reverence for and veneration of such intelligences and forces.¹⁶

I parse my words carefully when speaking of spiritual intelligences or life forces. By using the term, *spiritual intelligences*, I seek to capture the beliefs of those for whom there is an immaterial, supernatural dimension to the Animistic perception. By the term, *life forces*, I refer to those who are agnostic or skeptical that any immaterial dimension underlies the life forces they perceive and with whom they seek understanding and connection. In both cases, Animism, as I configure the term, involves a shared perception that beings or entities in nature have their own integrity, ways of being, and even intelligence. With such Animism, we can, at least by conjecture and imagination, and sometimes through ritualized action and other practices, come to some understanding of these other life forces.¹⁷

Gaian Earth Religion, as I configure this construction, stands firmly in the organicist tradition, and takes the biosphere (or the universe) as a whole, and the complex internal relations of its constitutive parts and energetic systems, as the fundamental focus or object of understanding and respect.¹⁸ Moreover, such a perspective takes the whole, usually as understood scientifically, but not always exclusively so, as a model. It thus defies the naturalistic fallacy argument in ethics, the assertion that one cannot logically derive value from fact, offering nature itself as sacred and thereby, at least implicitly, asserting that it contains both facts and values.

What I label *Gaian Spirituality* is avowedly supernaturalistic, perceiving the superorganism, whether the biosphere or the entire universe, to be an expression or part of God, or Brahman, or the Great Mystery, or

by whatever name is used to symbolize the divine cosmos. This form is more likely to draw on deviant or nonmainstream or nonconsensus science for data to reinforce its generally pantheistic or panentheistic and holistic metaphysics. It is more open to interpretations commonly found in subcultures referred to as “New Age.”

The form I call *Gaian Naturalism* represents a skeptical stance toward any supernaturalistic metaphysics. Its claims are more likely to be restricted to the scientific mainstream as a basis for understanding and promoting a holistic metaphysics. Yet, its proponents express awe and wonder when faced with the complexity and mysteries of life and the universe, relying on religious language and metaphors of the sacred, albeit not always self-consciously, when confessing feelings of belonging and connection to the energy and life systems in which they participate, live, and study.

Examples of Dark Green Religion

Exemplars of spiritual animism and Gaian spirituality include three thinkers whose spiritual paths involve serious encounters with Buddhism: Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, and John Seed. All three also identify with deep ecology.

Gary Snyder is best known as a “beat” poet and one of the architects of bioregionalism, a social philosophy and branch of environmentalism that seeks to decentralize political decision-making processes so that they take place within the contours of differing ecological regions.¹⁹ In an interview with me in 1993, Snyder called himself a “Buddhist-Animist,” meaning that he thinks that the world is full of spiritual intelligences. Most children and many indigenous peoples who live close to nature have similar perceptions, Snyder asserted, but for those who live in degraded habitats divorced from nature, such perceptivity is easily lost and must be self-consciously rekindled.

Snyder’s solution is to encourage a bioregional “reinhabitation” of particular places: by going “back to the land” people can recover their ability to hear nature’s multivocal, sacred voices. Snyder and others in his intentional community, located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains for a generation, have drawn upon many traditions in their experimentations with nature-related ritual.²⁰

Joanna Macy and John Seed have followed a kindred religious path, but unlike Snyder, they have labored to spread globally the ritual processes they developed to reconnect people to the earth and its inhabitants. Their best known ritual is the Council of All Beings, which has inspired further experimentation with nature-focused ritualizing. The “sacred intention”

of these rituals is to reawaken lost understandings of spiritual realities, which they believe animate nature in its many expressions.²¹

The experience participants have during the Council varies. Some report being possessed by and speaking for the spirits of nonhuman entities. This kind of experience seems to fit into what I call spiritual animism. During the Council other participants speak for DNA or energy pulses permeating the universe or of the pain felt by Gaia from mining or the polluting of her waters, an experience that seems to fit what I call Gaian spirituality. In both cases the participants have what most would consider to be a *religious* experience.

Speaking for a nonhuman life form is for other Council participants more an act of moral imagination than an experience of being called by a spiritual intelligence or a feeling of connection to a divine universe. For them, the Council is ritualized performance art in which participants act out what they surmise it must feel like for the earth, or some earthly entity, which is being badly mistreated by human beings. This understanding, depending on the form of expression, might be aptly labeled naturalistic animism or Gaian naturalism.

While naturalistic animism involves disbelief that some parallel spiritual world animates nonhuman natural entities, it nevertheless affirms an experience of kinship with and ethical concern for nonhuman life, and sometimes a felt communion with it.

According to Donald Worster, this felt kinship and the biocentric ethics that often accompanies it can be grounded in evolutionary theory and was expressed by Charles Darwin himself:

If we choose to let conjecture run wild, then animals, our fellow brethren in pain, diseases, death, suffering and famine—our slaves in the most laborious works, our companions in our amusements—they may partake [of] our origin in one common ancestor—we may be all netted together.²²

Darwin believed that this kinship ethic can be deduced through reflection on an awareness of a common ancestor and kinship with other animals who suffer and face challenges, as do we. This is a form of empathetic moral imagination from which understanding and communion arise. Animism understood in this way can be entirely independent of metaphysical speculation or supernaturalistic assumptions.

Through interviews with both radical and pragmatic environmentalists, and in a wide range of environmental literatures, examples of such feel-

ings and perceptions can be found, usually among those who endorse evolutionary theory's supposition of a common ancestor. Some ethologists, for example, articulate such a view. Naturalistic animism, indeed, is not uncommon among those who study primates, elephants, and other animals, especially mammals. For example, Katy Payne, an acoustic biologist, has scrutinized elephant communication, concluding that human-elephant communication is possible for attentive humans.²³ Increasing numbers of scientists are also finding communicative and affective similarities among humans and other animals.²⁴

The biologist/ethologist Marc Bekoff is a well-known proponent of such naturalistic animism, speaking and publishing widely, including recently in *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart*.²⁵ The famous primatologist, Jane Goodall, wrote the forward to this book and subsequently coauthored with him *The Ten Trusts: What We Must Do to Care for the Animals We Love*. In a section entitled "the power of eyes," Goodall recalled a story about a chimpanzee named JoJo who was orphaned young and had grown unfamiliar with chimpanzee ways after living alone and growing into adulthood in a cage. When eventually taken to a zoo enclosure, JoJo was threatened by more aggressive chimpanzees from whom he fled in terror, falling into a water-filled moat, where he began to drown. A visitor, at the risk of his own life, ignored the threatening chimpanzees, jumped into the enclosure, and pulled JoJo out of the water. According to Goodall, when asked what made him do it, the visitor answered, "I happened to look into his eyes, and it was like looking into the eyes of a man. And the message was, 'Won't *anybody* help me?'" Goodall commented,

I have seen that appeal for help in the eyes of so many suffering creatures . . . All around us, all around the world, suffering individuals look toward us with a plea in their eyes, asking us for help.

And if we dare to look into those eyes, then we shall feel their suffering in our hearts. More and more people have seen that appeal and felt it in their hearts. All around the world there is an awakening of understanding and compassion, an understanding that reaches out to help the suffering animals in their vanishing homelands. . . . Together we can bring change to the world, gradually replacing fear and hatred with compassion and love. Love for all living beings.²⁶

Earlier in *The Ten Trusts*, Goodall and Bekoff wrote that our obligation is to open our minds in humility to animals and learn from them. Through their books and lectures Goodall and Bekoff are indeed promoting an awareness and openness to an empathetic interspecies understanding.

Goodall has become the world's foremost missionary promoting naturalistic animism, although she also believes in reincarnation and God, at least as understood in some pantheistic sense.²⁷ In worldwide lecture tours, she promotes her animistic nature spirituality empowered by her designation as a United Nations Ambassador for Peace in 2002. She is not, however, the only one whose nature-related spirituality has been shaped by felt understandings and communication with nonhuman beings, developed through ordinary observational capacities rather than gained by mystical religious epiphany.²⁸

L. Freeman House provides another example of both spiritual and naturalistic animism. As a friend of Snyder's and a fellow pioneer of bioregional spirituality and politics, House was part of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement in Northern California. While living there in a remote coastal valley in Northern California, House became involved with and felt closely connected to salmon, whose populations had declined dramatically in many Pacific watersheds due to dam building, logging, and erosion. He and the other settlers who had arrived in this watershed during the 1960s labored to protect and bring the salmon back to viable populations. In a remarkable 1974 essay entitled "Totem Salmon," he described the cultural, spiritual, and material significance of salmon to the indigenous people of the North Pacific Rim where aboriginal peoples had ceremonies to ensure that the salmon would take no offence when caught. Such practices, he averred, were based on:

. . . [the] notion that conscious spirit resides in all plants and animals. [Therefore,] the Salmon is always perceived as a person living a life similar to that of the people who catch it. Therefore, before it is safe to eat any plant or animal it is necessary to assure the creature that *there is no desire to offend*. Thus the ceremonies . . . have the practical effect of assuring the continuity of both species, salmon and human.²⁹

House shared the animistic spirituality that he believed characterizes the indigenous peoples he had studied.³⁰ He also signaled the possibility of a *naturalistic* animism when he argued that the salmon speak to humans *practically* about appropriate lifeways. To paraphrase: salmon speak

to humans, if only by their disappearance.³¹ Such communication may be considered naturalistic animism.

It is useful to look at others who might be considered in a similar light. The environmental philosopher Paul Taylor, for example, argued in an important 1986 book that all beings who are “subjects of a life” have interests that ought to be respected,³² and the animal rights philosopher, Tom Regan, whose writings inspired such activists, grounded his theories in his own affective and personal connection with sentient animals.³³ Regan has even invented a spiritual practice by urging animal rights activists to select a “totem animal,” based on ones they could have helped at some point but failed, suggesting that they draw on that animal’s strength whenever their passion wanes for the animal rights cause. Perhaps this also could be considered to be a form of naturalistic animism, for it involves a belief that one can empathetically understand the feelings and protect the interests of nonhuman animals.³⁴

The American ecologist Aldo Leopold provides an example of a bridge between naturalistic animism and Gaian spirituality. In 1949 Leopold’s posthumously published essay entitled “Thinking Like a Mountain” was published in *A Sand County Almanac*, subsequently becoming a well-known sacred story to many environmentalists.³⁵ The essay described an epiphany Leopold had after he and his comrades shot a she-wolf and he looked into her eyes while she was dying. Although he had once helped exterminate the species with both pen and gun, through that eye-to-eye contact he realized that the wolf had value for her own sake and value also to the mountain (a metaphor for nature herself), that superseded human interests. There are many similar examples wherein a callous killing has led to connection, understanding, and communion between a human and nonhuman being, leading to a life dedicated to animal or environmental activism.

Leopold’s awakening involved more than simply appreciating the value of an individual animal or its species, however, it contributed decisively to his ethical holism. Leopold stood firmly in the organic tradition in a way that regarded the natural world as sacred. That regard was enhanced by the ecological science prevalent during his time:

The land is one organism The outstanding discovery of the twentieth century is . . . the complexity of the land organism. If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not.³⁶

Possibly, in our intuitive perceptions, which may be truer than our science and less impeded by words than our philosophies, we realize the indivisibility of the earth—its soil, mountains, rivers, forests, climate, plants, and animals, and respect it collectively not only as a useful servant but as a living being, vastly less alive than ourselves in degree, but vastly greater than ourselves in time and space. . . .³⁷

Curt Meine's biography of Leopold recorded Leopold's deep spiritual connection to the earth's living systems, along with his profound sense of their sacredness, noting that late in Leopold's life his youngest daughter, Estella, asked him directly about his belief in God. She later recalled,

He replied that he believed there was a mystical supreme power that guided the universe but to him this power was not a personalized God. It was more akin to the laws of nature. He thought organized religion was all right for many people, but he did not partake of it himself, having left that behind him a long time ago. His religion came from nature, he said.³⁸

With regard to the value of and possibility of communication with animals, there was naturalistic animism in Leopold's thinking. With regard to his holistic view of ecological systems and of the universe as a whole, Leopold's perceptions seem to reflect Gaian spirituality.

It was James Lovelock, of course, who resurrected Gaia and inserted the ancient Greek god of the earth into contemporary environmental discourse. Articulating the now famous "Gaia theory," Lovelock argued that the biosphere should be understood as a self-regulating organism that maintains the conditions necessary for the various individual species and organisms that constitute it.³⁹ When published in 1979 he understood the theory in purely scientific terms, and as such, it well represented what I call Gaian naturalism. Lovelock was surprised that the majority of the mail he received expressed interest in the theory's spiritual or religious dimensions. A portion of that response clearly sought to understand Gaia, the earth system organism, as a spiritual system or being, taking the theory more as a Gaian spirituality trope than Lovelock, who has staunchly maintained his agnosticism regarding metaphysical matters. Yet, he clearly enjoyed and appreciated, even if with some bemusement, those who refer to the Gaian system in explicitly religious terms. A good example of his

sentiments can be found when, in 2001, he reflected on a speech given by President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic.

When he was awarded the Freedom Medal of the United States . . . [Havel] reminded us that science had replaced religion as the authoritative source of knowledge about life and the cosmos but that modern reductionist science offers no moral guidance. He went on to say that recent holistic science did offer something to fill this moral void. He offered Gaia as something to which we could be accountable. If we could revere our planet with the same respect and love that we gave in the past to God, it would benefit us as well as the Earth. Perhaps those who have faith might see this as God's will also.⁴⁰

Here, in a subtle way, Lovelock expressed his appreciation for and an affinity with Havel, who found a reverence for the earth through the holistic science represented by the Gaia theory, apparently having left behind traditional theism. Lovelock also signaled, to use the terms of discourse in the current analysis, that there is room for agreement among Gaian naturalists, traditional theists who revere an earth they believe God created, and devotees of Gaian spirituality, namely, those who consider the earth organism itself as sacred or divine. And in an essay reflecting on his own "Gaian Pilgrimage" and entitled after it, Lovelock expressed his deep feelings of belonging to and reverence for the earth's living systems.⁴¹

Lovelock's fusion of Gaia as both worthy of reverence and reverent care, with an acknowledgement of her mortality, may require some effort to fit into definitions of religion that require a belief in immortal divine beings. But it is a wonderful example of the newer forms of religious production I call Gaian naturalism.⁴² The felt sense of connection and belonging expressed by Lovelock is commonly expressed by many environmentalists, whether they are traditionally religious or self-consciously atheistic or agnostic.⁴³ Combined with the environmental concern that is found in the above quotation, as well as in another work, *Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet*, we see why Lovelock's thinking could be considered an example of dark green religion.⁴⁴

There are other thinkers and social movements like Lovelock's, that could be included as good examples of Gaian naturalism, among them the World Pantheist Movement (WPM). Originally named the Society for Scientific Pantheism, in 2006, the group's website began with an epigraph attributed to Albert Einstein:

A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude; in this sense, and this alone, I am a deeply religious man.⁴⁵

The website continued:

Is Nature your spiritual home? Do you feel a deep sense of peace and belonging and wonder in the midst of nature, in a forest, by the ocean, or on a mountain top? Are you speechless with awe when you look up at the sky on a clear moonless night and see the Milky Way strewn with stars as thick as sand on a beach?

The next section asked, “Why do we need a spirituality of nature?” and answered, “Most people have a sense that there is something greater than the self or than the human race. The WPM’s naturalistic reverence for nature can satisfy this need, without sacrificing logic or respect for evidence and science.”

The site also encouraged social and environmental action, urging visitors to endorse the Earth Charter and fight global warming and economic inequality.⁴⁶ Moreover, it listed as “honorary members,” a number of individuals who could also be considered exemplars of Gaian Naturalism, including Lovelock; Dr. David Suzuki, the noted Canadian science newscaster; Carl Sagan, the late astrophysicist and television celebrity who promoted widely a sense of wonder for the universe; and Ursula Goodenough, a professor of biology at Washington University in St. Louis, and an effective proponent of scientific, “religious naturalism.”

Conclusion ~ A Dark Green Religious Future?

For more than a generation some scholars closely affiliated with the world’s dominant religious traditions, at least those considered as “world religions,” have labored to turn them in more environmentally friendly directions. This has often involved an expanded understanding of nature as sacred, or at least, a belief that protecting nature is a religious duty.

My analytic focus here, however, has been on “dark green religion,” a form of nature-related spirituality that shares the impulse toward envi-

ronmental concern but that also considers nature and its denizens sacred in and of themselves. With such religion, ethical obligations to nature are direct rather than only arising indirectly as a means to promote human well-being. Such nature spirituality is decreasingly tethered and sometimes entirely independent of the world's major religious traditions.⁴⁷

Many additional examples of each type of dark green religion could be provided, as well as of those individuals and movements that cross the fluid lines between these types. Such religion is beginning to exercise influence in critically important sectors of the global environmental intelligentsia. It may even contribute eventually to the emergence of a new, civic earth religion.⁴⁸

If the trope of "dark green religion," and the fourfold typology outlined here have heuristic value, then the reader acquainted with environmental literature, movements, and politics will be able to fashion their own apt examples. As these new forms of nature religion spread globally and increase in influence, the examples will multiply, and their significance in global environmental politics will intensify.

In Donald K. Swearer, *Ecology and the Environment: Perspectives from the Humanities*, (Center for the Study of World Religions/Harvard University Press, 2008, 89-107).

NOTES

1. An in-depth analysis based on the framework introduced in this article will be published as *Dark Green Religion* by the University of California Press in 2009.
2. This phrase was inspired by and adapted from Colin Campbell's notion of the "cultic milieu," by which he meant the Western countercultures in which socially deviant, countercultural knowledges, both spiritual and scientific/quasi-scientific, are brought together by their carriers and proponents, to incubate and cross-fertilize. The milieu is remarkably receptive to the ideas of the others in resistance to the cultural mainstream. His 1972 article, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," is reprinted in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööv (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira/Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 12–25.
3. For especially influential examples, see the work of Max Müller in Jon Stone, ed., *The Essential Max Müller* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002) and Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A History of Myth and Religion* (London: Chancellor Press, 1994).
4. John Snarey, "The Natural Environment's Impact on Religious Ethics: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35, no. 2 (1996): 85–96.
5. For a good introduction to such discussions see Herbert Burhenn, "Ecological Approaches to the Study of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 9, no. 2 (1997): 111–26; and Gustavo Benavides, "Ecology and Religion," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron Taylor (London & New York: Continuum International, 2005), 1:548–54.
6. For example, see Roy Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968) and J. Stephen Lansing, *Priests and Programmers: Technologies of Power in the Engineered Landscape of Bali* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).
7. Most famously, Lynn White, Jr. but as influential within the environmental milieu has been Paul Shepard, who traces environmental decline to agricultures including salvation religions, an argument well summarized in *Coming Home to the Pleistocene* (San Francisco: Island Press, 1998); for Asian and indigenous religions who, as some have suggested, provide more fertile ground for environmental ethics than Abrahamic religions, see J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, ed., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). For strong challenges to assertions of the environmental beneficence of Asian and indigenous traditions, see Yi Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies Between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples From Europe and China," *The Canadian Geographer* 12 (1968): 176–91; Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland, *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach* (London: Curzon Press, 1995); Ian Harris, "Buddhist Environmental Ethics," *Religion* 25 (1995): 199–211; and Shepard Kretch, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999). For an em-

- pirical study to test Lynn White's thesis, see James Proctor and Evan Berry, "Social Science on Religion and Nature" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2:1571–76.
8. For a broader overview of the emergence of the religion and ecology field, see Bron Taylor, "Religious Studies and Environmental Concern," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2:1373–79. Also available at <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Taylor--ReligiousStudiesEnviConcern.pdf>.
 9. Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Catherine L. Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990); Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).
 10. Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought From Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1996).
 11. For a starting point, see Joan Steigerwald, "Romanticism in European History" (2:1419–22) and Tilar J. Mazzeo, "Romanticism—American" (2:1424–26), in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. For an analysis focused on North America, see Bron Taylor, "Religion and Environmentalism in North America and Beyond," *Oxford Handbook on Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford.: Oxford University Press, 2006).
 12. Buell speaks of the "personification of nature" used by some environmentalist writers, but does not seem to connect this to animistic spiritual perception, nor does he mention theorists such as Stewart Guthrie who in, *Faces in the Clouds: a New Theory of Religion* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), view animistic personification as the root of religion.
 13. "The terms, *nature religion* or the plural, *nature religions*, are most commonly used as proxies for religious perceptions and practices that, despite substantial diversity, are characterized by a reverence for nature and consider nature sacred The term, *nature religion*, which began to be employed regularly within religious subcultures the time of the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, increasingly is used to represent and debate such 'nature-as-sacred' religion in both popular and scholarly venues." From Bron Taylor, "Ecology and Nature Religions," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (New York: MacMillan, 2005), 4:2661–66.
 14. The expression "map is not the territory" was coined by Eric Bell, popularized by Alfred Korzybski, and borrowed by J. Z. Smith as the title of his important book, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
 15. Some scholars insist that belief in a nonmaterial divine being or beings is an

essential characteristic of religion, a view that I challenge in “Exploring Religion, Nature, and Culture.” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2007): 5-24, also at [http://www.religionandnature.com/journal/sample/Taylor--JSRNC\(1-1\).pdf](http://www.religionandnature.com/journal/sample/Taylor--JSRNC(1-1).pdf).

16. The suggestion that animism involves the worship of natural entities is often a projection based upon Western religious assumptions that have more to do with how humans relate to high god(s) than how they relate to spiritual intelligences in nature. Veneration or “profound respect or reverence” (www.dictionary.com) is a word that involves less Western projection. When it comes to animism, veneration is a more common posture than worship, as I understand the phenomena that the term seeks to capture.
17. Some scholars eschew the word animism, given its genesis as a term invented to distinguish, they say, superior monotheistic religions from inferior, primitive, African ones. For a useful introduction to the term, animism, see David Chidester, “Animism” (1:78–81) and Graham Harvey, “Animism: A Contemporary Perspective” (1:81–83) in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. See also Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
18. By “organicism” I mean not only the belief that the biosphere and universe are analogous to a biological organism, but also, that this organism is somehow sacred and worthy of reverence. Taken together, the books by Glacken and Worster (see note 10 above) provide a comprehensive survey of organicism in Western history.
19. For perhaps the earliest countercultural statement, see Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1969). For an early manifesto, see Raymond Dasmann and Peter Berg, “Reinhabiting California,” in *Reinhabiting a Separate Country*, ed. Peter Berg (San Francisco: Planet Drum, 1978), 217–20. For an analysis of the movement, see Bron Taylor, “Bioregionalism: An Ethics of Loyalty to Place,” *Landscape Journal* 19, nos. 1–2 (2000): 50–72.
20. These quotes come from my interview with Gary Snyder, 1 June 1993, Davis, California.
21. See the following entries: Joanna Macy, “Council of All Beings” (1:425–29), Craig S. Strobel, “Macy, Joanna” (2:1019–20); John Seed, “Re-Earthing” (2:1354–58); and Bron Taylor, “Snyder, Gary—and the Invention of Bioregional Spirituality and Politics” (2:1562–567) in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. See also the discussion of the Council in B. Taylor, “Earth First!’s Religious Radicalism,” in *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Key Chapple (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 185–209.
22. From Charles Darwin’s ‘Notebooks on Transmutation,’ quoted by Donald Worster in *Nature’s Economy*, 180 (see footnote 10).
23. See Katy Payne, *Silent Thunder: In the Presence of Elephants* (New York: Penguin, 1999).
24. See Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen, and Gordon Burghardt, ed. *The Cognitive Ani-*

- mal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).
25. Mark Bekoff and Jane Goodall, *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
 26. See Jane Goodall and Marc Bekoff, *The Ten Trusts: What We Must Do to Care for the Animals We Love* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2003), 169–71. See also Goodall's *Reason for Hope* (New York: Warner, 1999), 250, for another story about JoJo.
 27. For passages with variously animistic and theistic dimensions, in which she expresses eclectic religious beliefs in a way common today, see Goodall, *Reason for Hope*, 11, 39, 72–73, 172–73, 199–200, 251, 266–69. In these passages, she clearly expresses what I have called “spiritualities of connection” to the earth, as well as a mystical Mother Earth spirituality (at 251) and belief in reincarnation (at 264).
 28. Many more examples of people being moved by and connected to nonhuman beings by a perception of communication through eye contact could be noted. For another example of human/animal contact, see Paul Watson, *Seal Wars: Twenty-Five Years on the Front Lines with the Harp Seals* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Firefly Books, 2002), 78. For an example from a famous nature photographer, see the introduction in Frans Lanting, *Eye to Eye: Intimate Encounters with the Animal World*, ed. Christine Eckstrom (Köln, Germany: Taschen, 1997), 14–15.
 29. See Freeman House, “Totem Salmon,” in Van Andruss, Christopher Plant, Judith Plant, and Eleanor Wright, ed., *Home!: A Bioregional Reader* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1990), 65–72.
 30. This was clear during a 3 June 1993 interview I had with House in Petrolia, California, in which he noted approvingly, “Further, the spirits of plants and animals were considered immortal.”
 31. House concluded that salmon are also telling us, among other things, “let’s get serious about this business of coevolution.” See House, “To Learn the Things We Need to Know: Engaging the Particulars of the Planet’s Recovery,” in *Home!: A Bioregional Reader*, 111–20. Later House published a book about his community’s efforts to save the salmon entitled *Totem Salmon: Life Lessons from Another Species* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).
 32. Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).
 33. Tom Regan and Peter Singer are the two chief proponents, respectively, of an animal rights and an animal liberationist perspective. See Tom Regan and Peter Singer, ed., *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989). For Regan’s classic see *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
 34. Tom Regan, interview with the author, 14 February 2003, Fresno, California. For another type of naturalistic animism, see Cleve Backster, *Primary Perception: Biocommunication with Plants, Living Foods and Human Cells* (Anza, Calif.: White Rose Millennium Press, 2003).

35. Rick McIntyre, ed., *War against the Wolf: America's Campaign to Exterminate the Wolf* (Osceola, Wis.: Voyageur Press, 1995), 187–91, cf. 321–27. (Editor's note: see also Zimmerman's essay in this volume.)
36. For the original, see Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays from Round River* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949); this quote is from "Essays from Round River," which appears only in the enlarged edition but not the original one (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), 190.
37. See Susan Flader and J. Baird Callicott, ed., *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 95.
38. Curt Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 506.
39. James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look At Life on Earth*, rev. ed. (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Lovelock published his most complete articulation of the theory in *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* (New York: Norton, 1988).
40. James Lovelock, "Gaian Pilgrimage," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 1: 685.
41. *Ibid.*, 683–85.
42. Others include, J. Baird Callicott "Natural History as Natural Religion," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2:1164–69. Of course, such spirituality is not entirely new, as Ursula Goodenough shows in "Religious Naturalism," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2:1371–73. See also Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For examples that sometimes flirt with theism, see Loyal Rue, *Everybody's Story: Wising Up to the Epic of Evolution* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); and Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era: A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992).
43. For other references on nature religions and the difficulties that inhere to deciding how to define them, see Bron Taylor, "Ecology and Nature Religions," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 2005), 4:2661–66; "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I): From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism," *Religion* 31, no. 2 (2001): 175–93; and "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II): From Deep Ecology to Scientific Paganism," *Religion* 31, no. 3 (2001): 225–45.
44. James Lovelock, *Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet* (New York: Harmony, 1991). His most recent book provides further evidence for my argument: see Lovelock's *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
45. All passages attributed to the World Pantheist Movement website were accessed in February 2006 at www.pantheism.net; see also Paul Harrison, "World Pantheist Movement" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 2:1769–70. For additional examples, see David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the*

Elders: Honoring Sacred Native Visions of Nature (New York: Bantam, 1992), especially 227, where the authors quote a statement issued in the early 1990s by a group of prominent scientists (including Stephen Jay Gould, Hans Bethe, Stephen Schneider, Carl Sagan, and Peter Raven) proclaiming, "As scientists many of us have had profound personal experiences of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment should be infused with a vision of the sacred."

46. For the Earth Charter's religiously plural construction of nature as worthy of reverent care, see Steven C. Rockefeller, "Earth Charter," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 1:516–18, and for the document and supportive website, see www.earthcharter.org.
47. If animistic perceptions and religiosities are themselves world religions, as proponents such as Gary Snyder suggest, then what we mean by "world religions" needs revision. I am not convinced that this is necessary, for while animistic perceptions and spirituality are longstanding and widespread, even in the modern world and in new ways, if I am correct in my own observations and analysis, they are nevertheless largely local phenomena. There is, therefore, no analytic advantage in insisting that they be considered "world religions."
48. See Bron Taylor, "A Green Future for Religion?" *Futures Journal* 36, no. 9 (2004): 991–1008.