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Naess, Arne (1912–)

In a lecture in Bucharest in 1972 the Norwegian philosopher Arne Dekke Eide Naess made the now famous distinction between the shallow ecology movement and the deep, long-range ecology movement. He has since remained one of the major international voices of deep ecology. Naess originally gained his reputation in philosophy from work in semantics, but he has also published several books on Gandhi, and on Spinoza, skepticism and philosophy of science. Naess identified, on the one hand, a shallow ecology movement that fought against pollution and resource depletion for anthropocentric reasons. Pollution and resource depletion were wrong because they threatened human health and affluence. The deep ecology movement, on the other hand, favors some form of biocentric egalitarianism as a guideline for environmental action. This distinction between anthropocentric and biocentric environmentalism is at the heart of deep ecology. Deep ecology therefore is a critique of a commonly held doctrine that the natural world has value only insofar as it is useful to humans.

Naess' main eco-philosophical work was published in 1989 as *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, which was based on the Norwegian *økologi, samfunn og livsstil*, issued in 1976. Naess has also contributed to the development of environmental philosophy in numerous articles and speeches and through action. The political program of deep ecology was formulated in the Deep Ecology Platform formulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1985.

Because deep ecology questioned a dominating cultural paradigm, that of excessive anthropocentrism, it could claim to rely on a deeper level of argumentation than shallow ecology, that is, on the level of religion and philosophy. A worldview that can support the deep ecology platform is called an ecosophy, a term coined by Naess. A variety of religions and philosophies can have this function, but many are probably too anthropocentric. Naess' personal ecosophy is called Ecosophy T. T stands for his mountain cottage, Tvergastein, and points to the personal nature of ecosophies. Naess himself ascribes the origin of central values of his ecosophy to important childhood experiences. He used to spend hours at the age of four observing the ecosystem on the coastline, and at the age of eight he became attached to a particular mountain. What he calls shore-life philosophy values "richness, diversity, multiplicity, equivalence, equivalidity,

egalitarianism, peacefulness, cheerfulness" and also skepticism (Naess 1983: 211). The mountain became for him a symbol of a "benevolent, equiminded, strong 'father'" (Naess 1983: 212). The love of this mountain "reduced the need for anything supernatural," and he learned to value austerity, toughness, distance and aloofness (Naess 1983: 213).

Early on, Naess came under the influence of the ethics of nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi, and the Gandhian influence on Ecosophy T is significant. Naess' ecological views are based on childhood experiences but they are shaped by, and a continuation and further development of, his Gandhian beliefs. The key concept of Naess' ecosophy is self-realization. Self-realization is the ultimate norm of his eco-philosophical system. According to Ecosophy T, all living beings are capable of self-realization. The concept of self-realization in Naess' philosophy has developed from his lifelong engagement with the philosophy of Gandhi. In one of his many books on Gandhi, Naess explains that, according to Gandhi, self-realization was the final goal of life. This was attained by a gradual perfection. All that humans do, say and think should have this self-realization as its goal. Gandhi also believed in the unity of life. To explain the central concept of self-realization and the mature experience of oneness in diversity in his ecological writings, Naess quotes the famous Hindu text Bhagavadgita, verse 6.29. Bhagavadgita was Gandhi's most sacred book, a source of wisdom he turned to whenever he needed to solve ethical dilemmas. Naess' use of the Bhagavadgita has to be understood in this Gandhian context. Verse 6.29 describes the yogin who "sees himself as in all beings and all beings in himself" (or "self" according to Naess) and who "sees the same everywhere." Bhagavadgita 6.29 sums up, according to Naess, the maximum of self-realization. It expresses the idea that all is connected to everything else and therefore that the self-realization of any living being is part of the self-realization of each one of us.

The ecosophy of Arne Naess as it is presented in his writings draws on the close connection between non-violence (*ahimsa*), the philosophy of oneness (*advaita*) and the goal of self-realization (*moksha*) in the religious thought of Gandhi. Naess understands the Bhagavadgita to say that solidarity with all beings and nonviolence depends on widening one's identification and that to see the greater self means to expand one's identification to include all living beings as one's self.

Naess finds the same doctrine of self-realization and unity of life expressed also in the philosophy of Spinoza. According to Spinoza's philosophy, every living being tries to realize its potential, its power or essence. Unity of nature means that everything is connected to everything else and that therefore the self-realization of one living being is part of the self-realization of all other beings. Naess uses Gandhian concepts to exemplify the similarity between Spinoza's philosophy and Gandhian thought. Naess argues that "adherence to Spinoza's system is consistent with being a *karma-yogi*" (Naess 1980: 323). *Karma-yogi* is here a concept borrowed from Gandhi. Vivekananda, who was a great influence on how Hinduism was received in the West, held that the Hindu ascetics should perform social service (*seva*). This new ideal he called *karma-yoga*. Gandhi was a foremost practitioner of this new ideal. He made social service a necessity for self-realization. Ecosophy T combines twentieth-century reinterpretations of Hindu asceticism by Gandhi and Vivekananda, the philosophy of Spinoza, and a belief in the world as the ultimate concern typical of religious environmentalism. This philosophy is further blended with traditional and twentieth-century Norwegian attitudes to nature and the outdoors, and the concept of solidarity with the weaker segments of society that is at the foundation of the Scandinavian welfare state system.

Gandhi lived before environmentalism and the environment was not his main concern. He is nevertheless recognized as the father of the environmental movement in India. Gandhi's famous statement that "the Earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed," is a slogan for contemporary environmentalism. Gandhi is more than any other, probably, the father of the father of deep ecology. But in spite of the close relationship between the ecosophy of Arne Naess and Gandhi, the Indian environmentalist Ramachandra Guha has argued that the concerns of deep ecology are foreign to, harmful to or, at best, irrelevant to the people of India. Guha argues that in India the deep ecology idea of wilderness and natural parks is a threat to people living in the wilderness areas and that environmentalism in poor countries needs to be anthropocentric in order to address the gruesome living conditions of the urban slums and the many human tragedies caused by poverty. Naess argues that Guha misrepresents deep ecology (Witoszek and Brennan 1999). Naess actually defends weak anthropocentrism; Ecosophy T is a critique only of excessive anthropocentrism, a point often misunderstood by followers of deep ecology. Ecosophy questions the wisdom of emulating the economic growth and development path of rich countries and argues that alternative ways, such as Gandhi's vision of India as a village-based economy, still need to be explored.

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- See also: Ahimsa; Bhagavadgita; Biocentric Religion – A Call for; Council of All Beings; Deep Ecology; Deep Ecology Institute; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Ecosophy T; Environmental Ethics; Frilufsliv; Gandhi, Mohandas; Hinduism; Left Biocentrism; Mountaineering; Radical Environmentalism; Re-Earthing; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; Rock Climbing; Seed, John; Spinoza, Baruch; Yoga and Ecology.

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) – See Amte, Baba; India.

Naropa University

Naropa University (formerly the Naropa Institute) is a private, non-sectarian, accredited university inspired by

its Buddhist heritage to integrate contemplative learning, intellectual rigor, and active engagement with the world. It offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and certificate programs through on-campus and online courses, study-abroad programs, and continuing education workshops. Its academic programs include degrees in Buddhism and other religions, environmental studies, Transpersonal Counseling Psychology, education, writing and poetics, and fine arts, and offers certificates in ecopsychology, and other areas.

Naropa University was founded in 1974 by Chogyam Trungpa, a Tibetan scholar and meditation teacher. Born in Tibet in 1940, Trungpa Rinpoche was a lineage holder in both the Kagyu and Nyingma Buddhist traditions. In 1959, he escaped the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Later, he studied comparative religion, philosophy, and fine arts at Oxford University. A scholar and artist as well as meditation master, he became widely recognized as a teacher of Buddhism in the West. With the founding of the Naropa Institute, he realized his vision of creating a university that would combine contemplative studies with traditional Western scholastic and artistic disciplines. Since the death of Trungpa in 1987, Naropa University has continued to grow and integrate teachings from a variety of spiritual wisdom traditions. Joining intellect and intuition in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and respect for different contemplative traditions has become the University's ongoing inspiration.

At the core of Naropa's contemplative learning approach is the cultivation of awareness through intellectual, artistic, body-centered, and meditative disciplines. In the view of contemplative learning, such awareness provides the basis for continued development of openness, communication, intellect, creativity, and intuition. These qualities, in turn, are the foundation for building and deepening a community of learners and for service to the world. While it has been inspired by Buddhist traditions, Naropa University seeks to remain true to its founder's vision as a setting in which diverse views can come together in an environment of respect and authentic dialogue.

Naropa University's vision and orientation is evident in its programs in environmental leadership, ecopsychology, and wilderness studies. These programs are grounded in a core principle of both ecology and many spiritual wisdom traditions, which exemplify the nonduality of interconnection. They integrate academic inquiry, spiritual wisdom, contemplative practice, and skilled engagement. Both during their educational programs and after, students practice critical and creative thinking, meditative disciplines, and active service in the world. Many of these programs also integrate intensive wilderness experiences. The aim of these programs is to promote wise, just, effective, and compassionate action in a number of arenas, including environmental policy, environmental restora-

tion, community development (understood as an aspect of environmental restoration), horticulture, wilderness therapy, and ecotherapy.

John Davis

See also: Buddhism – Tibetan; Ecopsychology; Transpersonal Psychology; Wilderness Rites of Passage.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1933–)

Hossein Nasr (b. Tehran, Iran; "Seyyed" is an honorific title designating a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) is widely considered to be one of the most significant contemporary Iranian philosophers. Muslim in background but educated in both Iran and the United States, Nasr is a proponent of the perennial philosophy associated with Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt and Rene Guenon, in which timeless truths are seen as being expressed in a variety of historical cultural and philosophical traditions. His work thus blends traditional Islamic with modern Western approaches.

Nasr was among the first scholars to draw attention to the spiritual dimensions of the environmental crisis, and the first contemporary Muslim to do so. He first introduced his perspective in a 1965 essay, going on to develop it in a series of lectures at the University of Chicago the following year, several months prior to Lynn White, Jr.'s famous address before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (published in *Science* as "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"). While Nasr agrees with White that the desacralization of nature in Enlightenment Europe laid the groundwork by which the dominating tendencies of the modern technological worldview would be justified, he argues that in Islam science never lost its sacred character. Nasr goes on to point out that much of the contemporary Muslim world is no longer "Muslim" in the traditional sense, implicitly suggesting that environmental degradation is a Western product that has been subsequently exported to other cultures.

Widely cited by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, Nasr's thought has provided the foundation for much of the current discussion on Islam and the environment. As such, he is considered by many as the "founding father" of contemporary Islamic environmentalism.

Richard C. Foltz

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See also: Islam; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; White, Lynn - Thesis of.

National Council of Churches, Eco-Justice Working Group (USA)

The Eco-Justice Working Group (EJWG) of the National Council of Churches (NCC) provides a mechanism for NCC-member Protestant and Orthodox denominations to work together on issues affecting care of the Earth. The Group began in 1983 when the Joint Strategy and Action Coalition (JSAC) merged into the NCC. The Responsible Lifestyle Task Force of JSAC, which had begun work on issues of energy, organic food and food sufficiency with the participation of American Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans, formed the core for the EJWG.

Early discussion in the group and a report from the United Church of Christ formulated the term environmental justice, denoting the impact on poor and minority communities in regards to environmental issues. Environmental justice includes a broader set of social and economic issues than the word environmental used alone.

In 1986 the EJWG sponsored a seminal conference at Stony Point, New York. The "Eco-Justice Agenda: Loving the Earth and People" brought together 150 people including denominational representatives, clergy, lay and a wide variety of community groups. The conference was a major turning point for increased activity that included a wider justice agenda with environmental issues. Discussions that began at the conference sparked denominations to take action that included the adoption of policy statements. Concerns from community groups at the conference led to a reorganization in 1988 that included full participation by a wide variety of groups not affiliated directly with a religious group. The wider membership continued until the late 1990s when another reorganization brought in Orthodox participation, but excluded community groups. Stories of environmental poisoning in local communities told at the conference led to the production of an early video on the topic, *For Our Children*.

In 1992 several representatives from the EJWG participated in the United Nations' conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, leading to increased awareness of eco-justice in congregations. From 1985 until 1995 the EJWG published the *EJWG*, a journal of eco-justice, in cooperation with the Eco-Justice Project

at Cornell. Its articles provide a good summary of major eco-justice issues of the day.

The production of resources and the generation of program ideas to help local congregations focus on ecological issues has been a major part of the work of the EJWG in recent years. Present programs include the Environmental Justice Covenant Program and the Interfaith Global Climate Change Program. A biennial national conference held in 1997, 1999 and 2001 brought together persons working on the local level. The EJWG also sponsors a resource center where a wide variety of materials are available for local congregations.

The EJWG is a partner in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. The other partners are: The U.S. Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. As part of the Partnership, the group produced *God's Earth: Our Home*, Shantilal Bhagat (Eco-Justice Work Group, NCC, 1995) as a resource for local congregations.

J. Andy Smith, III

See also: World Council of Churches and Ecumenical Thought.

National Parks and Monuments (United States)

Travelers in the hundreds of millions make the national parks and monuments spread across the modern American map focal points of their annual journeys. By 2002 these public centers of recreation, education and inspiration numbered more than 350 and covered some 84 million acres. During the last several decades they have been exported abroad as a conservation ideal, but threatened continually at home by conflicts over their meaning and purpose, as well as over more mundane concerns such as funding, boundaries and maintenance. Frequently heralded as sacred places and deployed globally as evocative images of a unique American nature and history through works of art and the mass media, the national parks and monuments remain embedded deep within the nation's culture.

Prior to war with Mexico in 1846, Americans more cultivated than the ones who French traveler Alexis de Tocqueville found hacking down Ohio River valley forests in 1831 - or those who Emerson in *Nature* (1836) chastised as blind to the beauty of their own fields and farms - voiced a frequent note of doom as they reflected on the nation's prospects. The sweeping floods of early nineteenth-century religious and social reform had tangled together conflicting cultural anxieties over matters of race, capital, technology, the body, and women's role in

society. These anxieties, as historian Robert Abzug has shown, also centered around competing views of what was sacred, and what profane, to a people bent on constructing a distinctly new nation. In the midst of the continent's rapid transformation, Emerson's poetic sort of American – if few others, initially – found in the vanishing form of landscape “something more dear and connate than in streets or villages” (1836: 13), and thus came to seek in wilderness a sacred antidote to the young republic's many ills.

Although Americans turned forests into woodlots at a remarkable rate, by the 1830s those who saw in still-uncivilized land something greater than profit or utility were sufficient in number to support the preservation from resource development of various natural prominences – such as New York's Niagara Falls or Kentucky's Mammoth Cave – and to embrace scenic wilderness travel as a form of cultural education and spiritual renewal. Nevertheless, as is evident in such paintings as Thomas Cole's “The Oxbow” (1836) – with its stormy change on the horizon – and most especially in his five-panel “The Course of Empire” (1834–1836), the wilderness available to eastern travelers often proved melancholic in inspiration, and they worried along with Cole that an empire devoted to nature could not help but decay over the ages. By far a better painter than poet, Cole still gave this melancholy a pointed gloss, writing “Each hill and every valley is become / An altar unto Mammon, and the gods / Of man's idolatry – its victims we” (in Hughes 1997: 146). To be expected, perhaps, eastern efforts at preservation quickly succumbed to commercial impulses, so much so that Tocqueville in 1831 was urging that friends hurry to Niagara Falls, since he wouldn't “give the Americans ten years to establish a saw or flour mill at the base of the cataract” (in Runte 1987: 6).

Western lands obtained from Mexico under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) thus offered America's cultural elite a distinct solution to the vexing problem of the new nation's identity. For those who, with Cole, felt a post-revolutionary inadequacy in relation to Europe, no amount of light irradiating an eastern scene, nor the steady bragging of politicians Jefferson and Jackson or novelist James Fenimore Cooper about the virtues of the eastern countryside, could obscure what America lacked: a storied past, an aristocratic imprint on the land and spirit of the people, great cathedrals connecting the generations to heaven and Earth, and the Alps.

In the west, description also outran the reality of the landscape, but the landscape ran close enough. Journalist Horace Greeley, for instance, traveling in the Sierra Nevada in 1859, wrote his eastern readers, after a walk among the Mariposa Grove sequoias, that they were “of substantial size when David danced before the ark, when Solomon laid the foundations of the Temple, when Theseus ruled in Athens, when Aeneas fled from the

burning wreck of vanquished Troy” (Greeley 1860: 311–12). No matter their precise age, the giant sequoias did constitute a living antiquity – one would not even need to read to absorb their wisdom of ages. The western scale of nature's architecture provided sources of culture and the sacred that Europeans themselves would envy. At times, Americans were even able to acknowledge the antiquity of the west's first people, as when they flocked in the late 1830s and 1840s to see George Catlin's traveling “Indian Gallery” of portraits from the upper Missouri – his Mandans, Arikaras and Pawnees so vivid in their ceremonial garments and paint that they looked at times realer than real, and rather similar in pose to noble Romans.

The raw western topography – all granite peaks, basalt outcrops, red oxide soils and sedimentary gashes – seemed specially made for those who sought a visual and natural embodiment of powerful, nation-forming divinity at work, an embodiment that easily surpassed the achievements of European culture and the sublimity of its landscape. Admittedly, no one besides George Catlin imagined that the complex of tribes, herds and open spaces might be significant as whole: “a *nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the freshness of nature's beauty” (in Chittenden 1895: 78). Instead, what seemed most worth preserving were nature's monumental artifacts. The earliest parks – Yosemite, which Congress granted to the state of California in 1864, and Yellowstone, established as the first truly national park in 1872 – were both preserved because the landscape contained gigantic wonders, challenges to the American imagination, whether orthodox, scientific or aesthetic, and natural testimonies to Providential purpose. Each park seemed to call forth different poetic impulses from their proponents and publicists – Yosemite most often glossed as “nature's cathedral,” and Yellowstone (“Colter's Hell,” originally) framed less comfortably as a “wonderland” of the grotesque. In both cases, however, Americans could find in the extravagant creations of wild nature confirmation of their world-historical destiny.

American proponents of national parks drew on available social and cultural resources in order to persuade the public and Congress that preservation was in the national interest. Their strategic efforts helped Americans define national parks as sacred environments, and created the paradigmatic practices of veneration and recreation that have since been employed within them.

Common to the presentation of Yosemite and Yellowstone as centers of sublime nature was the reliance upon both verbal and visual prompters, as early interpreters made use of traditional religious language and the Romantic practice of landscape painting to promote interest among Easterners and Europeans. Lafayette Bunnell, physician to the Mariposa Battalion – the white militia that first came upon the Yosemite Valley while chasing Tenaya's band of Ahwaneechee Miwoks in 1851 –

enthused on his first descent into the secret valley while worrying about his scalp: "If my hair is now required, I can depart in peace, for I have here seen the power and glory of a Supreme being, the majesty of His handy-work is in that 'Testimony of the Rocks'" (Bunnell 1880: 56). With less regard to orthodoxy: "Granite is great, and the Yo-Semite is its prophet," wrote Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King in 1861 (in Sears 1989: 127), several years before John Muir himself began placing the template of gospel metaphor over his mystical wanderings through California's mountains.

Muir was perhaps at heart a pagan pantheist. "We are now in the mountains, and they in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us," he wrote of his first view of the high country approaching Yosemite (Muir 1911: 20). Nevertheless, he drew incessantly on biblical religion to marshal support for the preservation of Yosemite (1890), Mt. Rainier (1899), Glacier (1910) and other western parks, and styled himself as the gospel of beauty's John the Baptist. To the "business-tangled," so "burdened with duty that only weeks can be got out of the heavy-laden year," he preached seemingly-easy sermons. A month in wilderness, such as at Montana's Lake MacDonald, and "never more will time seem short or long, and cares never again fall heavily on you, but kindly and gently as gifts from heaven" (Muir 1901: 17, 19).

Visual art played a crucial role in disseminating iconic presentations of the early parks' overwhelming and varied landscapes. Thomas Ayres went into Yosemite with San Francisco editor – and shortly thereafter Yosemite innkeeper – James Mason Hutchings in 1855, four years after its discovery by whites. Within less than a decade, painters such as Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Hill, and photographers Carleton Watkins and Eadward Muybridge, were exhibiting to audiences as far from California as New York and London. Yellowstone's most famous artists, Thomas Moran and photographer William Henry Jackson, accompanied F.V. Hayden – director of the U.S. Geological Survey – on the first scientific expedition into Yellowstone, in 1870. The work of these artists, widely viewed in exhibits and in the press, emphasized a transcendent – and at times imaginary – landscape absent the human presence, and certainly absent the evidence of Civil War carnage that had recently so weighted the landscape familiar to Americans back east.

Not all subscribed to the sublime notion that God was granite, however. Mark Twain, for instance, poked at Bierstadt's 1867 "The Domes of the Yosemite," saying that while the various components of the picture looked natural enough, the atmosphere was "altogether too gorgeous," more "the atmosphere of Kingdom-Come than California" (in Anderson 1990: 91). Working-class squatters and homesteaders, as well as tribal members living near the parks, were also particularly uninterested

in public administration and religious veneration of country that held necessities of survival. The only reason for Indians even to be in Yellowstone, wrote Superintendent Philetus Norris in 1878, was "for the purposes of plunder, or of concealment after bloody raids upon the ranchmen, pilgrims, or tourists" (in Jacoby 2001: 90).

Others failed to accept that nature was best understood in Romantic terms. Muir's evangel that preserved wilderness as "full of charming company, full of God's thoughts . . ." (Muir 1901: 78) sounded a false note to some, such as Truman Everts – Yellowstone survivor of 39-days' separation from the 1870 Washburn party. For Everts, who relayed his experience to readers of *Scribners* in 1871, the terror of wilderness, especially as part of a divine order, was only too real. Forced by circumstance to endure as much of nature's rawness as Muir chose to, Everts could only gloss the harrow of his experience with a Ben Franklin-ish admonition. "Put your trust in Heaven. Help yourself and God will help you" (Everts 1871: 11).

Parks might have remained the preserve of cultural elites under the influence of Muir, but for his use of publisher Robert Underwood Johnson's *The Century* to spread his message, and but for the interests of the railroads, who were early supporters of both Yellowstone and Yosemite. To underscore the irony – Muir was adamant in seeing the parks as antidotes to capitalist civilization. They would preserve divine nature from forces bent on its destruction in the name of profit. On the other hand, railroads such as the Northern Pacific took on the task of promoting Yellowstone with all the sophistication and resources of a modern advertising campaign. A wide range of brochures, lecture tours and artwork portrayed an American future in which rail-accessible nature functioned just as Muir hoped wild nature would, to restore the souls of citizens. Northern Pacific director Colgate Hoyt confessed a vision for his railroad, in 1878: a West filled with homes, wheat-fields and cattle.

And I thanked God that right in the middle of all this noise and wrestless [sic] life of millions a wise Government had forever set apart that marvelous region as a National Park . . . where the worn, the sick, and jaded could even find rest, and refreshment, and opportunity to study the Master's hand in nature (in Magoc 1999: 21).

Another NP executive, Olin Dunbar Wheeler, played up the importance of scenic wilderness to a democratic populace by linking Yellowstone's redemptive promise with that of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah:

the common run of humanity, the *hoi polloi*, will see a vision – a picture that causes them to stand in awe and silence, and caring less as to the why and wherefore of such amazing results, "shall see of the

travail of their souls and be satisfied" (in Magoc 1999: 102).

Although Muir certainly took opportunity to lambaste the railroads in *Our National Parks*, he also had to acknowledge that the mobility they provided made possible for others their own mystical immersions in nature.

Thus from their inception national parks as nature's emblems of high national purpose, or as wild antidotes to the baseness of capitalist civilization, were not only dependent upon capitalist energies, but were also embodiments of capitalist achievement. This irony complicates any effort to understand the preservationist impulse in American conservation by means of easy distinctions drawn between public and private, or sacred and secular intentions regarding wilderness. Although – as Tocqueville's 1831 reaction to Niagara Falls demonstrates – Romantic devotees of wild nature have long complained about the inappropriate reach of commercial culture into sacred sites supposedly preserved from just that sort of reach, the outrage of a Muir, Thoreau, or a Cole, let alone a European aristocrat like Tocqueville, is not evidence of a broader public consensus. In opening the parks up to Wheeler's *hoi polloi* – the democratic masses – park creators had to contend with the broad range of readings Americans brought to the term "sacred."

Perhaps the best way to assess the religious role of the national parks in American life is to follow the lead of historian Lawrence Moore, who in *Selling God: Religion in the Marketplace of American Culture* (1994) captured the peculiar dynamic between sacred (religion) and profane (economy) that permeates American history – including the history of American conservation. For Moore, the religious and the economic are not contradictory impulses. As he shows, commercial culture emerged in the nineteenth century largely through the agency of Protestant religious leaders attempting to retain control of a society reinventing itself. Crucial features of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American economic life: the rise of consumption, the growth of leisure, the birth of advertising and mass media, all carried sacred meanings and practices for the majority of Americans, and all affected their use and appreciation of the parks. Furthermore, the capitalist culture that so dominated post-Civil War American life gained its sway by absorbing those movements or values that first appeared as countercultural alternatives. For Moore then, the Protestant ethic that really triumphed was not one of work alone, but also of play.

By the early twentieth century administration of the parks was piecemeal, but development of the infrastructure to sustain travelers within America's "Playgrounds for the People" was in full surge. Rail lines, hotels and inns, some – such as Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn (1903) – quite regal, and – most fatefully – roads, were all constructed under private leases or with inadequate Con-

gressional appropriations. In 1916, Congress authorized the Interior Department to create the National Park Service (NPS), to coordinate administration at all parks and national monuments – which first were established under the 1906 Antiquities Act, as well as battlefields and other historic sites administered originally by the War Department. The Park Service Organic Act mandated that the NPS "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein" and "provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations" (in Runte 1987: 104). The latitude of this mandate appears in a 1916 proposal regarding Yellowstone from the first NPS director, Stephen T. Mather. "Golf links, tennis courts, swimming pools and other equipment for outdoor pastime and exercise should be provided by concessions, and the park should be extensively advertised as a place to spend the summer instead of five or six days of hurried sight seeing" (in Ise 1961: 198). As many have noted, the service has often struggled to balance "conserve the scenery" with "provide for the enjoyment." Nevertheless, reading them as opposites stems from overlooking how deeply the democratic and sacred pursuit of leisure has shaped all aspects of modern American life.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes and ritualizes that pursuit more than the automobile, which was first permitted at Mount Rainier in 1908 and in Yosemite in 1913, where within five years it was bringing in five times as many visitors as the recently completed railroad, which itself, according to one correspondent, was chastised by "the athletic rich" as degenerating the valley into "a mere picnic-ground with dancing platforms, beery choruses and couples contorting in the two-step" (in Runte 1987: 156). The railroad did remain an elite institution though, while the automobile exploded across the national parks by the 1920s.

Early proponents of roads through the parks emphasized the automobile's role in instilling an appropriate American spirit in travelers, as *The American Motorist* in "A Motorist's Creed" put it in 1917:

I believe that travel, familiarity with the sights and scenes of other parts of the country, first hand knowledge of how my fellow-men live, is of inestimable value to me and will do more to make me patriotic and public spirited than daily intimacy with the Declaration of Independence (in Shaffer 2001: 1917).

Groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution lobbied relentlessly for the construction of highways linking sights of historic or scenic interest, in the process providing a high-brow justification for auto travel as a necessary ritual for inculcating patriotic spirit and civic virtue. Others emphasized the fun of free-wheeling travel

to the parks, as “sagebrushing” – automobile camping – brought waves of independent visitors, each prepared to “cut loose from all effeteness” and let “his adventurous, pioneering spirit riot here in the mountain air” (in Runte 1987: 157).

In either case, twentieth-century parks visitors took on the role of pilgrims inherited from early wonder-struck travelers, but augmented this with a recapturing of the true American spirit. The auto tourist used modern technology not simply to witness the divine stamp on the Grand Canyon or Crater Lake, but to claim the purifying effects of immersion in the frontier experience – which historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 had said was defining of the American character – as his or her own. Thus while Americans across the board responded to automotive technology as a mythical power, in the national parks, as sacred preserves of a nearly vanished era, they were able to use the automobile to propel themselves into the primordial past, and to return home inspired in ways that would assist them in creating the urban, industrial future.

For campers this reimmersion in Paradise or Eden meant a temporary life of physical exertion on a par with that of their ancestors, which reformers such as President Theodore Roosevelt, Boy Scouts of America founders Ernest Thompson Seton and William D. West, or organizations such as the Young Man’s Christian Association (YMCA), had for some time been urging on urban Americans as their bodies’ and even spirits’ means of redemption from the debilitating effects of office and factory life. Campers slept under the stars or in canvas tents, cooked over open fires, endured primitive means of sanitation, as well as exercised on steep mountain trails or swam in bracing waters. Some parks proponents, such as U.S. Geological Survey chief topographer Robert Marshall, even saw the parks as martial training ground for modern warriors, where young men could

forget something of the rush and jam of modern life . . . and build up their bodies by being next to nature. Then, should there be a general call to arms, the dwellers of the city canyons will be able to meet the physical needs of a strenuous field service (in Runte 1987: 96).

As a symbolically powerful means of personal freedom, and as the provider of ritualized immersion in nature, automobiles had a drastic effect on the parks. By 1919 nearly 98,000 were reported to have passed through park boundaries. Even in the early years, some foresaw with alarm their ultimate impact, though officials such as NPS Director Stephen Mather regarded their presence as inevitable and positive, claiming in 1924 that auto touring eroded “sectional prejudice through the bringing together of tourists from all sections of the country.” Only through

the “the medium of an automobile, and camping out in the open” could “people learn what America is” (in Shaffer 2001: 119). British ambassador to the U.S. and lover of Yosemite, James Bryce, however, cautioned as early as 1912 that

If Adam had known what harm the serpent was going to work, he would have tried to prevent him from finding lodgment in Eden; and if you were to realize what the result of the automobile will be in that incomparable valley, you will keep it out (in Runte 1987: 159).

Even during the Depression, visitation continued to climb dramatically, declining briefly during World War II, with only one to two percent of visitors relying upon public transportation. In the aftermath of the war – with union jobs turning the two-week vacation into an American right – park use doubled every ten to fifteen years, a trend continuing through the 1990s. In these decades the system as a whole also expanded, more than tripling in acreage between 1960 and the century’s end. At the same time, debates over the purpose of the national parks also increased, often in terms consistent with the contradiction inherited from the Park Service’s original 1916 mandate: enjoyment versus preservation – each functioning for its devotees as a principle for constructing the parks as sacred environments. The most notable of these debates was the one surrounding Mission 66, the Eisenhower-era infusion of capital into park infrastructures, already overburdened in 1955 by twice as many visitors than the system could accommodate. The resulting construction of visitor centers, campgrounds and improved roads – enthusiastically supported by the American Automobile Association – seemed to post-war preservationists proof that the NPS gave priority to providing for visitor enjoyment. For naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch, Mission 66 placed a fundamental value on technology over nature. Instead of “valuing the automobile because it may take one to a national park, the park comes to be valued because it is a place the automobile may be used to reach” (in Runte 1987: 175).

Preservationist concerns over Mission 66, and even more long-standing management choices, received an influential voice in 1963, when the research team of zoologist A. Starker Leopold (son of Aldo Leopold) released their *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, a scathing survey of ecological situation in the parks. The officially commissioned report urged the NPS to adopt an environmentally based management philosophy, informed by scientific principles regarding biotic communities, habitat, and plant succession, and to restore park environments to their pre-nineteenth-century conditions. Given the shifts in cultural values that occurred in the 1960s, preservationist goals finally found significant

NPS support. Over the next 25 years park management moved often toward an ecological model, as seen in the prescribed- and let-burn policies adopted first for Yosemite sequoias and then in the fire-based plant communities of other parks, in the reintroduction of predators, and in the development of such concepts as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Though these policies, and their advocacy by environmentalists, were framed in scientific language, they also invoked Muir-like expressions of how to understand the sacred within the national parks.

Unfortunately for wilderness preservationists, long-range ecological management policies had a difficult time surviving when Americans rejected the 1960s resurgence of Romanticism with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981. The urge to privatize based on increasing distrust of federal bureaucracy and to focus on facilities over habitat increasingly shaped executive branch goals for the NPS. Perhaps the most fitting symbol of the era is the 1988 Yellowstone fire – which engulfed some 40 percent of the park in what *Time* called an “environmental Armageddon” (Magoc 1999: 174), and about which many Americans expressed their sense that environmentalists had defiled the “crown jewel” of the nation’s parks through their misguided let-burn policies. Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop catalyzed this anti-bureaucrat sentiment by angrily calling for Park Service director William Penn Mott’s resignation.

In the same years the NPS found itself in the middle of the widely spread culture wars, as its historic battlefields were subjected to competing efforts to commemorate ground “hallowed,” as President Lincoln put it, by the shedding of blood. At Gettysburg, the Little Big Horn, Pearl Harbor and many other parks’ various parties challenged the nation’s legacy on race, westward expansion, the conduct of its wars, or the presence of commercial interests at such sites. Others, such as veterans groups, military reenactors, and Custer buffs, objected to the historical “revisionism” they saw influencing shifts in Park Service site management and interpretation. Just as American wilderness sparked apparently competing conceptions of the sacred within park boundaries, American history yielded lasting conflicts over appropriate commemoration of significant events, a limitless possible “affront to the living as well as the dead,” as columnist George F. Will complained regarding construction of Gettysburg’s observation tower (in Linenthal 1993: 115). In the 1990s, concerns over desecration of historic grounds culminated in controversy surrounding Walt Disney Corporation’s plans to build an American history theme park in rural Virginia, near Manassass, Antietam and several other Civil War battlefields.

Common to the parks as a whole has been the desire to retain the unsullied past, whether in the wonder-evoking beauty of the natural landscape or in the sense of historical immediacy that led a young General George S.

Patton in 1909 to recall a Gettysburg sunset moment at the site of Pickett’s charge when “I could almost see them coming, growing fewer and fewer while around and behind me stood calmly the very cannons which had so punished them” (in Linenthal 1993: 117). The “objective of every national park and monument” claimed Leopold in his 1963 report, should be the creation of a “reasonable illusion of primitive America” (Leopold et al. 1963). What makes these “reasonable illusions” of virgin land or the presence of the past obtainable – what gives them value and form, is the culture of leisure consumption that has so shaped American society over the last century. Parks are simply one more option available to those engaged in leisure pursuits, as a 1995 issue of *Glamour* suggested: “Everyone should see Manhattan, the Grand Canyon, Walt Disney World . . . Yellowstone National Park, Beverly Hills . . .” (in Magoc 1999: 168). Whether one sees Mt. Rainier on a brief pass through the park on the way to somewhere else, stays several days at the volcano’s base in a motor home, pumps up the road on a touring bike, or camps near the summit in a four-season tent, the park functions as a set of nature-options available for consumers to enjoy. And whether consumption entails a rejection of the search for sacred, or its transformation, it has certainly taken on the forms and language of traditional American religion.

Although some commentators have argued that contemporary tourist experience has abandoned the sacred visions of nature and nation sought by earlier generations of travelers, the intensity of conflict over the meanings, means of administration, and practices of the sacred available at national parks, and their steady increase in use, suggests that they do still retain a great hold on American imaginations as democratic hallmarks of both nature and nationhood.

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- See also: Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites; Disney Worlds at War; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Holy Land in Native North America; G-O Road; Krutch, Joseph Wood; Law, Religion, and Native American Lands; Marshall, Robert; Miwok People; Muir, John; Nature Religion in the United States; Pinchot, Gifford; The Sacred and the Modern World; Sacred Geography in Native North America; Sierra Club; Wilderness Society; Wise Use Movement; World Heritage Sites and Religion in Japan.

National Religious Partnership for the Environment

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) advocates for the environment within national Christian and Jewish organizations and through individual congregations in the United States. An "umbrella" organization, NRPE has four component groups, the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group (EJWC), the eco-justice program at the United States

Catholic Conference (USCC), the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). Their purpose is to promote environmental causes in church and temple teaching, in management practices, and in public policy. They argue for religious protection of the environment as part of reverence for God and God's works, an outlook some participants have labeled environmental stewardship (invoking the fiscal stewardship that has long been part of church process).

NRPE grew out of ideas formulated in the 1960s and 1970s by numerous commentators, some religious, some not. Professor Lynn White's 1967 paper on ecology and Christianity, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," was a starting point cited by many involved. Others tried to integrate ideas from Eastern thinking, particularly Zen Buddhism, or from Celtic and other "minority" traditions in Christianity. Early leaders in this movement included California State Senator Tom Hayden, members of the Lindisfarne Association, Dr. James Parks Morton (now-retired Dean of St. John the Divine Cathedral (Episcopalian), New York City), Catholic priest Thomas Berry, and evangelical professor of biology, Dr. Calvin DeWitt. These figures and others pressured religious authorities to take up environmental issues and tried to get ordinary Americans to think religiously about environmental issues. By the early 1980s, a number of religious environmental organizations had formed, most notably the Eco-Justice Working Committee of the National Council of Churches.

NRPE emerged to coordinate official religious environmentalism in the US during the years 1991–1993. It was not founded (as has often been claimed) as a result of the 1990 exchange of "official" letters between clerics and scientists on the global environmental "crisis" organized by James Parks Morton, Paul Gorman, and, surprisingly, the outspoken atheist scientist Carl Sagan. The letter exchange marked instead a turning point after which church and temple hierarchies publicly recognized the crisis. Much of the credit goes to Gorman, then a staff member working for Morton at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, now director of the organization. The component groups were at different levels of development. Gorman organized them under one umbrella using the carrot of funding. Initial and subsequent funding came from liberal foundations such as Ford and Pew. The NRPE agreed to disseminate money on an equal basis to each component group.

The NRPE quickly organized and disseminated information to congregations that represented each group's understanding of the relevant Jewish and Christian teachings on justice, social ethics, and the creation. In the mid-1990s, over 125,000 literature packets were distributed to churches and temples. Numerous conferences and other kinds of meetings were held. The NRPE's teachings

carried extra authority stemming from the proclamations of church leaders, including Pope John Paul II, the respective NCC synods, presbyteries, and general meetings, and the four Jewish rabbinical seminaries.

Official recognition would be more difficult for the EEN, which aims to influence the evangelical-fundamentalist religious bloc. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity in America comprises smaller church organizations and individual churches without any particularly national group that could offer official endorsement. The EEN made up for this with advocacy and public relations, particularly their *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of the Creation*, supported by Billy Graham's magazine *Christianity Today*. Also noteworthy was the 1996 congressional lobbying in support of the Endangered Species Act reauthorization, for which conservative representatives and senators, particularly those influenced or supported by the New Christian Right, were unprepared. EEN and other religious groups demonstrated that conservative Christians did not speak with one voice on the issue. The ESA was successfully reauthorized.

All four NRPE member groups have held educational meetings and conferences, reinforcing the effect of their information packets on congregational leaders and clerics with face-to-face discussion of the various issues involved. Among the issues discussed has been climate change, ozone depletion, loss of species, natural resource policy, development policy for the South, and so on. Thousands of small environmental groups and many local projects have been started by individual churches as a result. NRPE ran a TV advertisement campaign in support of the Kyoto Accords on climate-change policy. In 2003, NRPE leaders pointedly asked Detroit automobile manufacturers, "What would Jesus drive?" and began a television campaign to press the question.

A conservative backlash, led by vociferous elements of what was known as the "Wise Use" movement, has attempted to delegitimize the movement, specifically targeting the new organizations in the press. An opposition group, the Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship, was formed for this purpose. The writings and speeches of some opposition leaders have included derogatory language; many can be dismissed as polemical and provocative. One exception might be a more principled opposition that is found within the evangelical-fundamentalist community itself, led by professors at evangelical-fundamentalist colleges and universities. This opposition from "Wise Users" and academics is marginalized to the libertarian right and the evangelical-fundamentalist bloc and has little or no penetration within mainstream U.S. churches and temples. Recent news articles, however, suggest some influence within the presidential administration of George W. Bush and in the U.S. Congress.

How far can the new U.S. religious environmental

movement led by NRPE really go? Some of the answers to this question obviously require the use of quantitative social science technique, work that has yet to be conducted. A movement that successfully recruits American Jewish and Christian congregations would be a considerable addition to the secular environmental movement, but there is little evidence to suggest that this recruitment has or will take place. While the thousands of "green" congregations and associated environmental groups now in existence certainly denote successful organizing within the churches, environmental thinking has not become a way of life for those congregation members not directly involved, and is certainly not a major factor in voting behavior for the great majority of American Christian and Jews touched by the movement.

NRPE is thus not an arm of secular environmentalism, but rather a different kind of movement, perhaps, its leaders argue, more analogous to nineteenth-century church concerns with slavery, or twentieth-century concerns with civil rights and the war in Vietnam. The movements for abolition, civil rights, and to end the Vietnam War were elevated to public prominence first by direct action, the work of more extreme activists, before mainstream religions were willing to get involved. When they did, a revision of ordinary morality took place in the churches, which allowed mainstream politicians outside the activist cause to embrace the aims of the movement without losing votes. This may be the pathway that allows this movement to succeed.

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Native American Church - See Peyote.

SP Native American Languages (North America)

Indigenous peoples of the continent now called North America have suffered enormous losses under the processes of colonial assault and exploitation: the loss of population at the rate of 90 percent for most areas through the interplay of disease and genocide; the theft of the land and its resources, and destruction of animal species and plant habitats; the loss of traditional lifeways through aggressive assimilationist policies, including the loss of ceremonial vitality through systematic and legal proscription via government agencies and church institutions. All of these have been devastating for indigenous nations. Yet the greatest loss is perhaps only now coming into full effect. After withstanding an intensive siege throughout recent centuries the indigenous languages are now quickly falling silent in rapid succession. With them the indigenous cultures, religions, and the environments they inhabit are, once again, and in some ways more so than ever, in peril. The intricate knowledge of local ecosystems and the complex relations to the environment that grow out of indigenous languages are now jeopardized.

Whereas as much as half the world's known languages were lost over the previous 500 years of colonial expansion, the losses are now accelerating dramatically. The next twenty years could witness the demise of half of the world's approximately 6700 languages. A century from now, at present rates of loss, as much as 90 percent of human linguistic diversity will succumb to silence. Globally, one language disappears on average every two weeks according to the United Nation's education and science arm, UNESCO. Of course, the great majority of these endangered and disappearing languages are carried by indigenous peoples. Within the present area of the United States, over 73 percent of the remaining indigenous languages are spoken only by the grandparents' generation. Numbers such as these give stark clarity to the extremely limited time for addressing the global language crisis. And the magnitude of the loss of language for an indigenous heritage must be measured by the immense value of language to a multitude of diverse and rich cultures in their complex relations to their living environment. As Chris Jocks, a Mohawk scholar from Kanawake in southeastern Canada, has written:

There is no way to decide which is more devastating: the loss of practical knowledge in such realms as history, natural science, and social organization; the loss of stories and jokes and all the richness of human experience they carry; the loss of skills of perception trained by Indigenous linguistic structures; or the loss of depth in our relationships with Other-than-human beings (Jocks 1999: 219).

To appreciate the difficulties involved in keeping alive the linguistic and cultural heritage of indigenous nations requires an understanding of the genocidal assault they have sustained. Waves of physical decimation were followed by generations of systematic cultural genocide in which enormous resources were expended in efforts to break traditional continuity between the culture-rich elders and the youth who were taken out of their homes and sent to government and church boarding schools and later public education facilities. The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, which divided lands previously held in common by native nations into individual holdings, was devastating to indigenous languages. It led to the isolation of the remaining indigenous-language speakers in many communities, leaving them separated by miles of rural countryside.

Land Loss and Language Loss

This link between land and language loss represents more than just another indicator of the social and economic assault on traditional communities. For indigenous peoples the deep life-connection between their languages and their land are real and powerful. Grounded in the conviction that knowing the Earth's own language is essential for sustaining life, Jeanette Armstrong of the Okanagan in British Columbia has insisted:

The language spoken by the land, which is interpreted by the Okanagan into words, carries parts of its ongoing reality. The land as language surrounds us completely, just like the physical reality of it surrounds us. Within that vast speaking, both externally and internally, we as human beings are an inextricable part – though a minute part – of the land language.

In this sense, all indigenous peoples' languages are generated by a precise geography and arise from it. Over time and many generations of their people, it is their distinctive interaction with a precise geography which forms the way indigenous language is shaped and subsequently how the world is viewed, approached, and expressed verbally by its speakers (1998: 178–9).

Indigenous languages intertwine with the living environment at many levels. The languages connect an intricate web of complex relations between land, climate, plants, ceremonies, social structures, and living history in particular landscapes. For many communities certain classes of stories are only to be uttered during designated seasons of the year. Snow should be on the mountains for the Diné of Arizona and New Mexico to relate bear stories. The utterance of indigenous speech is understood to effect the physical world. Traditional Kiowas of the southern plains rise early to pray the sun up. Traditional hunters of

the northeast utter ceremonial words of thanksgiving in order to ensure a relationship of reciprocity and a continued supply of game animals. Careful sensibilities of observation are carried in the languages. For the Micmac of Newfoundland and Labrador, names ascribed to trees change from season to season as the sound of the wind blowing through them shifts over time (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 16). Even the sense of the physical self is mediated by the landscape and articulated through language. For Wintu speakers of northern California, the “right” arm is not identified according to an orientation taken from the center of the individual human body. Instead, it is spoken of in terms of the person’s orientation to the surrounding land, so that the “west arm” and the “east arm” could both refer to the same right arm as one changes directions within the landscape (in Hinton 1994: 58).

A complex cultural interplay between geography and indigenous language can also be expressed within a society. The language of the Western Apache in the American southwest situates them within a landscape and traditional history through the naming of the land, which acts as a guide to appropriate moral and social behaviors. This is a cultural world born by a language in which storytellers are hunters using stories about the names in the land to stalk their fellow community members. As Lewis Benson expressed it:

I think of that mountain called *Tséé Ligai Dah Sidilé* (White Rocks Lie Above In A Compact Cluster) as if it were my maternal grandmother. I recall stories of how it once was at that mountain. The stories told to me were like arrows. Elsewhere, hearing that mountain’s name, I see it. Its name is like a picture. Stories go to work on you like arrows. Stories make you live right. Stories make you replace yourself (Basso 1996: 38).

Endangered Languages, Endangered Species

Scholarly attention to linkages between species endangerment and patterns of language loss among indigenous peoples took shape in the early 1990s – including the terminology of language endangerment itself. The academic discussion was spurred by an article from Michael Krauss. He classified those languages that were no longer being learned by children in the home as moribund, a condition beyond endangerment, “for, unless the course is somehow dramatically reversed, they are already doomed to extinction, like species lacking reproductive capacity” (Krause 1992: 4). He provided viability statistics for Alaska, where only 2 of 20 languages are being learned by children, leaving 90 percent of the languages moribund. For the entire USA and Canada he listed over 80 percent of the 187 indigenous languages as already moribund with no natural means of reproducing themselves. Even

Navajo, which had over 100,000 speakers a generation ago, he concluded, had “an uncertain future” (Krause 1992: 7). The situation remained uncertain in 2004; only about 30 percent of Navajo children began their formal education speaking Navajo. The patterns of language retention among other indigenous nations suggests that all indigenous languages within the boundaries of Canada and the U.S.A. are endangered.

Krauss went on to compare the pattern of global language loss to that of endangered and threatened mammal and bird species, where the percentages considered to be in danger of extinction were much lower. He contrasted the lack of attention to indigenous language endangerment to the greater levels of public concern for endangered species and argued for increased valuing of human languages:

Any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius, as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism. Should we mourn the loss of Eyak or Ubykh any less than the loss of the panda or California condor? (Krause 1992: 8).

Scholarly interest in relationships between language and natural environments has expanded and includes some aspects of the new sub-field, ecolinguistics. In 1996 the non-governmental organization Terralingua was founded to preserve linguistic diversity and explore connections between linguistic and biological diversity. Though some scholars remain dismissive of connections between language loss and environmental degradation – the majority working in this area hold that there is a strong correlation between ecosystem decline and the erosion of indigenous cultures and their religions – and that the vitality of languages is an especially important variable.

The most compelling discussion to date has been presented by Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, who contend that the connections of indigenous peoples to environments are intense, ancient and unique. They demonstrate the remarkable overlap between regions with high concentrations of biological and linguistic diversity, and they argue that losses for both domains are due to the same underlying causes, namely, powerful forces controlled by social elites. Their expansive discussion of “biolinguistic diversity” foregrounds the detailed classification systems demonstrated by many indigenous languages, which provide “verbal botanics” useful for categorizing the natural environment. They argue that indigenous languages offer potentially rich contributions to scientific theories and to such problems as land management, marine technology, plant cultivation, and animal husbandry. They offer a sophisticated theory of the “ecology of language” where a language is understood to be enmeshed within a social and a geographical matrix that can be valuable to the project of sustainable development:

There is now widespread agreement that the problem of sustainable development is more likely to be solved if indigenous systems of knowledge and languages are valued and brought into play . . . Delicate tropical environments [for example] must be managed with care and skill. It is indigenous peoples who have the relevant practical knowledge, since they have been successfully making a living in them for hundreds of generations. Much of this detailed knowledge about local ecosystems is encoded in indigenous languages and rapidly being lost (Nettle and Romaine 2000: 166).

Indeed, the demise of any indigenous language represents a double loss. At a primary level, language loss severely jeopardizes the irreplaceable storehouse of richly detailed knowledge of plants, soils, terrains, sacred loci in the land, animal behaviors, and patterns of fish, bird, and insect life. Such knowledge has been developed and refined for thousands of years and integrated within a gendered human society in relation to the larger cosmos, seasons, and spirit worlds. Beyond this loss of knowledge associated with particular plants and local environments, which have been meshed with superb technologies, sophisticated medicinal practices, and elaborate social structures and religious traditions, the very process of indigenous knowledge development has been arrested.

Beginning in the waning years of the twentieth century, native nations took up the challenge to revitalize their languages. By so doing they endeavor to keep alive their unique and fertile epistemologies and thus their languages' essential role in the ceremonial life of their communities, as well as in promoting ecological knowledge and environmentally sustainable lifeways.

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See also: Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Yuchi Culture and the Euchee Language Project.

Native American Spirituality

Native American spirituality is a hybrid form of religion that is clearly different from the highly specific beliefs and rituals that identify particular tribal religions and distinguish them from one another. Native American spirituality is a pan-Indian phenomenon involving native peoples from many different tribes. It is also a religious movement that thousands of people without any native ancestry identify with. Because of its syncretic character and fairly recent origin, Native American spirituality is sometimes regarded as inauthentic. However, most scholars of religion recognize that living religions are always changing and subject to reinterpretation and reinvention. From that perspective, Native American spirituality is as "authentic" as many other forms of religious life.

Native American spirituality first emerged in the nineteenth century as native people from different cultures found new areas of common ground, and as reverence for nature developed as an important force within both native and Euro-American cultures. Native religious leaders and non-native admirers alike pointed to an underlying spirituality of nature characteristic of all Native American cultures. This emphasis on a common nature spirituality underlying different native religions contributed to cooperation among native groups and challenged Western tendencies to view native religions as forms of heathenism that ought to be left behind if not actively suppressed. During the late twentieth century, respect for Native American spirituality became widespread as part of a general increase in ecological sensitivity throughout American religious life.

The historical development of Native American spirituality can be described in terms of an evolving conversation between Native Americans and Westerners about religious respect for the Earth. In the early nineteenth century, the Shawnee leader Tecumseh referred to the Earth as his mother in an effort to explain to a U.S. Army officer his resistance to the seizure of Indian lands and his understanding of the difference between instrumental Western ideas about land and native ideas about the spiritual powers inherent in local environments and forces. Later in the century, the Sahaptin leader Smoholla described the Earth as the mother of mankind and spoke against forcing native groups in the northwest basin to plow arid land for farming with figures of speech that

pictured plowing the Earth as tearing a mother's bosom and digging under her skin for bones. The eloquence of these Indian leaders caught hold among Euro-Americans drawn to Romantic ideas about nature as a source of religious inspiration as well as among Native Americans struggling to define the strength and beauty of their traditions in the context of Euro-American colonization. Eager to recast Romantic ideas into an American idiom, American writers and artists such as Henry David Thoreau, George Catlin, and Edward Westin portrayed the Indian's relationship to the Earth as a powerful symbol of human virtue, simplicity, and purity. In the twentieth century, under the influence of European ideas about primitive religions as an antidote to the alienation from nature associated with Western civilization, both Indians and whites looked back to traditional native cultures as repositories of ancient wisdom and vitality. In the context of this search for the recovery of spiritual meaning, Mother Earth became a full-fledged goddess revered by neo-pagans of Euro-American ancestry as well as by many Native Americans themselves.

The Oglala holy man Black Elk and his interpreters played important roles in the development of Native American spirituality in the twentieth century. John Neihardt's popular recounting of Black Elk's visions and life journey in *Black Elk Speaks* countered any idea that native religions were simple. It also confirmed Romantic belief in the fundamental opposition between native reverence for nature and Western commercialism and greed. As the original transcripts of Black Elk's story show, Niehardt exaggerated Black Elk's sense of despair about the survival of native cultures.

In the 1960s, *Black Elk Speaks* served as an important source of religious education for participants in the American Indian Movement, many of whom had grown up in urban environments without much traditional religion. Because many of these Indian readers had ancestral ties to groups other than Sioux, *Black Elk Speaks* contributed to the development of a pan-Indian spirituality, grounded to a considerable extent in Sioux beliefs as Black Elk and his interpreters reconstructed them.

Black Elk also figured importantly in the thought of people without native ancestry who wanted to incorporate Native American beliefs about spiritual forces within nature as part of their own religions. Hyemhyosts Storm, Jamake Highwater, Sun Bear and several other New Age writers caused controversy and resentment by claiming Native American identity and promoting themselves as teachers of Native American spirituality; others inspired by native reverence for nature made no such claims.

Black Elk's ideas about nature appealed to many Christians seeking environmentally sensitive interpretations of their own religious tradition. The discovery that Black Elk had been a Roman Catholic catechist as well as an Oglala holy man contributed to Christian appropriation

of his ideas, and Black Elk himself viewed native spirituality as a needed supplement to Christianity. In identifying the rituals of the sacred pipe as seven rites in which divine presence became manifest in nature, he reconstructed Sioux religious practice in a way that paralleled and enhanced the sacraments of the Catholic Church. Black Elk's conceptualization of Native American spirituality, along with his respect for Christianity, helped inspire the greening of American Christian thought in the late twentieth century and increased interest in and respect for Native American spirituality.

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- See also: American Indians as "First Ecologists"; Black Elk; Black Mesa; Cosmology; Holy Land in Native North America; Indigenous Religions and Cultural Borrowing; Mother Earth; Nature Religion in the United States; Religious Environmentalist Paradigm; Romanticism and Indigenous People; Plastic Medicine Men; Seattle (Sealth), Chief; Snyder, Gary.

Natural History and Indigenous Worldviews

Beliefs about the relationship between humans and the natural environment are expressed through worldviews. A worldview is a mechanism *system or complex of ideas* through which the world makes cultural sense. As deeply seated belief systems, worldviews illuminate the ecological priorities and concepts of various peoples.

All traditional societies that have managed resources well over time have done so in part through religion and worldview – by the use of cultural symbols that reinforce particular management strategies. Many of these religious beliefs and cultural practices, while seeming unscientific, are based in part on long and careful observation of nature.

Natural history is the integrated study of the relationships between the biological, the physical, and the sensual (personal). It integrates keen observation of the natural

world with an acknowledgement – indeed, an affirmation – that humans are sentient beings. Hence, natural history mixes the scientific perspective with elegant, heartfelt and intelligent responses to science. It mixes the social sciences and humanities with ecology, and it entails a breaking down of the normative barriers between the scientific and the poetic. It blends tradition with innovation and engages us in informed discussions of conservation efforts to reveal useful approaches to our environmental crises. Natural history personalizes science and enlivens it with meaning; a naturalist is one who has the eyes of a scientist and the vision of a poet; one who confronts evocative ideas, and is respectful of both facts and mysteries. By taking an ecological approach to the study of worldviews, we can gain greater understanding of critical interactions between humans and the natural world.

Worldviews are situated in the landscape, and indigenous cosmologies function as storehouses of critical knowledge of the natural world. At the heart of research on worldviews and natural history is an exploration of creation stories and how they inform and explain cultural understanding of the more-than-human world. Such research strives to result in ethnographic information and theoretical explication of some cultural understandings of ecological relations.

Mythologies provide explanation as to why the physical world is the way it is. The Cahuilla people of the Sonoran Desert in southern California, as one example among thousands, have elaborate myths detailing how the landscape of their territory came to be. In Cahuilla stories, Coyote is held in esteem because he is said to have brought mesquite seeds down from the mountains. Mesquite seedpods were a staple food for traditional Cahuilla, and continue to be an important plant, and because of Coyote's actions Cahuilla held coyotes sacred and never killed them. The Cahuilla version of how mesquite colonized the arid valleys is likely a literal one; because coyotes feed on mesquite beans but do not digest the seeds, it is likely that the plant was spread from the higher elevations to the lowlands in coyote scat.

All traditional societies have myths that explain why things are the ways they are. Ingeniously encoded in these symbolic systems are often profound understandings of ecological relationships. Indigenous worldviews, as explicated through myths, are often extremely sophisticated and of considerable practical value.

Numerous scholars have overlooked the ecological dimension of cosmologies or worldviews, while writing at length about native understandings of “supernatural” entities. We can attribute much of this oversight to a modern worldview that holds that natural world is largely determinate and mechanical, and that that which is regarded as mysterious, powerful, and beyond human ken must therefore be of some other, non-physical realm

above nature (i.e., supernatural). But in oral indigenous cultures, the physical world itself is the dwelling place of the gods, of the numinous powers that can sustain or extinguish life.

Worldviews reflect, among other things, attitudes toward nature. These attitudes are expressed through conceptions, uses, and manipulations of the land. Aspects of cultural ecology are expressed through belief systems, and investigations of the intersection between the external world and cultural constructions of that world are providing fruitful insights into the relationship between nature and the human mind.

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SP Natural History as Natural Religion

In my opinion, the seminal document that spawned the academic exploration of environmental ethics – and dialectically, the greening of religion, as I latterly explain – was “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” by Lynn White, Jr., published in *Science* in 1967. I was especially primed to resonate with its message. I grew up in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee, the son of a poor artist, struggling to raise a family and find time to paint on an instructor's salary in a municipally funded art school. He took me to the Unitarian Church – there was then only one in Memphis – because it offered freedom of belief and welcomed everyone from Enlightenment-style deists to Emersonian Transcendentalists to Theosophists, which was my father's peculiar and ardent persuasion. All my classmates seemed to be Southern Baptists and I was, in their opinion, a

damned (literally) infidel – worse even than a Catholic – the object of pity, ridicule, and contempt. Thus my childhood and teenage relationship to the only Christianity I then knew was problematic at best and painful at worst. The weekend Unitarian-youth community was my refuge from weekday religious persecution and social ostracism. When I was a highschooler I wanted to become a Unitarian minister (and shortly found what I was truly called to do in my first philosophy course during my sophomore year of college). So, when I read “Historical Roots” as a young philosophy instructor, I was very ready to believe that the ultimate blame for our ecologic crisis lay at the doorstep of Christianity.

In retrospect, that claim is of course both jejune and cavalier. Its lurid brashness, however, obscured another, far more general claim worthy of serious consideration. It must have registered on me back then – the late 1960s – only subliminally because it was fully a quarter-century later that I began consciously to ponder critically its significance. Four or five times throughout the infamous article, White reiterates the claim that what we do depends on what we think, and thus that if we are to effect any lasting changes in what we do in and to the natural environment, we must first effect fundamental changes in our environmental attitudes and values. This then became for me personally a mandate and an agenda – and, I dare say, it was for many of the other “pioneers” (as we are sometimes called, though the irony is not lost on me) of environmental philosophy. Only we philosophers and theologians (for White had also equated “beliefs about our nature and destiny” with “religion”) could save the world from destruction by the juggernaut of “modern technology,” which, in White’s opinion, was forged in the crucible of Western Medieval Christendom. And Christianity, according to White, “is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (with the minor exception, he curiously notes, of “perhaps” Zoroastrianism). That was the mandate. The agenda was twofold.

First, raise for critical attention the rest of the intellectual legacy of the West from the new perspective of environmental crisis. White himself portrayed Greek and other forms of European paganism as nature-friendly, but the Olympic religion of ancient Greece (and copycat Rome) was long dead – whether nature-friendly or not is of course moot. The Greco-Roman legacy that shaped modern Western civilization is the legacy of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy and proto-science, the legacy of Plato and Aristotle, of Democritus and Lucretius. A virtual cottage industry of critical environmental philosophy sprang up almost overnight. In addition to Plato and Aristotle, Descartes was routinely hacked and flayed, as were a number of other historically influential thinkers in the Western canon.

Second – and much more ambitious, if not utterly hubristic – think up a new nature-friendly philosophy

(and perhaps a sympatico new religion) and somehow infuse it into the cultural ether, so as to transform popular consciousness in the West. How preposterous! But that’s how it all started and, amazingly, the project is still ongoing and, indeed, gaining momentum and enjoying some modest success. But it is a tricky business. Just how do you go about thinking up a new nature-friendly philosophy (and religion)? Not from scratch; to be convincing such a philosophy must have continuity with the past and must seem inevitably to flow – however dialectically and revolutionarily – from the past into the present and future with the force of a historic tide. Just as futile as starting from scratch, some environmental philosophers were at first inclined to take a neglected past philosophy off the historical shelf, burnish it up, and try to sell it anew. If we all became Heracliteans, Spinozists, Whiteheadians, Heideggerians . . . our ecologic crisis could be overcome. This approach to phase two of the environmental philosophy agenda, set by White, was perhaps presaged by his own suggestion – which he quickly and wisely rejected as culturally unrealistic – that if we all became Zen Buddhists our ecologic crisis could be overcome.

I myself proceeded with this forward-looking and creative – as opposed to backward-looking and critical – phase-two agenda of environmental philosophy on the basis of an interesting and portentous relationship of cognitive domains in the two most profoundly dialectical and revolutionary moments in the intellectual history of the West. Natural philosophy is first philosophy; it precedes and appears to precipitate changes in moral philosophy.

During the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., in ancient Greece, the first philosophers, the PreSocratics, mainly asked and boldly answered questions about nature. What is the stuff of which the world is composed? What forces move that stuff around? What are the laws of nature which govern those motions or otherwise give order to the world? The most elegant and persuasive answers to these questions were provided by the atomists. In the late fifth century, natural philosophy (along with other emergent phenomena, such as urbanization and democratization) had created an ethical and social crisis that diverted a considerable portion of the intellectual capital of philosophers into moral and political questions. The nearly universal moral and political philosophy of the time (Socrates seems to have been the only notable dissenter) was the generic social contract theory – each “sophist” playing a specific variation on this common theme. At the core of social contract theory is egoism and enlightened self-interest. The individual human agent is, as it were, a social atom. The inertial motions of the physical atoms cause them to collide chaotically with one another in Euclidian physical space; analogously the desires and aversions that move the social atoms cause them to collide chaotically with one another in the amoral and pre-political “state of nature”

(or Euclidian social space). And, although here the analogy is imperfect, just as (perhaps God-ordained) natural laws govern the behavior of the physical atoms, so ethico-political laws were humanly ordained to govern the behavior of the social atoms – to bring them into a political order, and to reduce the hurtful and destructive collisions among them that occur in the emptiness of pre-contract social space.

Following the lead of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle rejected atomism (in natural philosophy) and the social contract theory (in moral philosophy) in favor of teleology (in both domains of philosophy, natural and moral). Their influence lingered over Western thought for more than a thousand years. The Modern “scientific revolution” initiated by Copernicus and completed by Newton revived atomism in Western natural philosophy. And, lo and behold, that was followed, as night follows day, by the revival of the social contract theory in Western moral philosophy, most notably by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacque Rousseau. In the early twentieth century a second scientific revolution occurred. And although contemporary physicists still blithely talk about “particles,” the ancient and Modern classical atom, conceived by Democritus and Newton as a solid matter-mathematical corpuscle that fills a tiny volume of space, is as dead an idea in contemporary natural philosophy (now coincident with the high theoretical end of the natural sciences) as is the idea of phlogiston. In its place we have what? Quarks? Super strings? I’m not sure anyone yet knows, but it seems that the ultimate stuff of the world is more energetic than material and more internally related (or systemic) and mutually defining than externally related and reductive.

Correlative to – or at least coincident with – the emergence of the new physics at the dawn of the last century was the emergence of ecology. Ecology, too, offered a picture of middle-sized organic nature – the scale at which we human beings live between the micro-scale of dancing electrons and photons and the macro-scale of fleeing galaxies and black holes – that is material to be sure, but organized systemically by the flux of solar energy. And the living components of ecosystems also seem to be internally related and mutually defining; certainly they are mutually dependent.

Here we have the makings of a new worldview, a new natural philosophy. If the historical pattern that has characterized Western thought from the beginning holds through the current revolutionary era – change in moral philosophy following, after about a century’s lag time, change in natural philosophy – what will the moral philosophy of the twenty-first century be like? We shall have to wait and see how it fully and unpredictably unfolds. I think, however, that contemporary environmental ethics, which developed exponentially over the last quarter of the twentieth century, is the harbinger of things

to come – to the extent that it is informed by ecology and evolutionary biology. I myself have followed the lead of the person who seemed clearly to grasp all these things before anyone else, Aldo Leopold.

Leopold even anticipated White’s blaming the Judeo-Christian worldview for our contemporary environmental malaise – a dubious distinction. In the foreword to his *chef d’oeuvre*, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold writes “Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic sense of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” The Whitean despotic reading of the biblical worldview surfaces again in *Sand County’s* climactic essay, “The Land Ethic”: “Abraham knew exactly what the land was for: it was to drip milk and honey into Abraham’s mouth.”

Opposed to this caricature of the Judeo-Christian worldview is the evolutionary-ecological worldview, the representation and implications of which is the principal burden of the *Almanac*. From an evolutionary point of view, *Homo sapiens* is just another animal – the most recent and perhaps the most complex and sophisticated of evolution’s random mammalian experiments, but just another animal nevertheless. We are therefore a part of nature, not set apart – for better or worse – from nature, from an evolutionary point of view. From an ecological point of view the human economy is but a small and utterly dependent subset of the economy of nature; and the human community is embedded in the larger biotic community.

The stage is thus set for the derivation of the land ethic. Darwin himself, in the *Descent of Man*, had explained how ethics could have arisen among *Homo sapiens* through natural selection. Human beings are quintessentially social animals. Primitive human societies could not have endured if the internecine competition among their members were untempered and if their members were disinclined to cooperate in provisioning and defending themselves. Individuals who were incapable of social integration and cooperation were expelled from society to fend for themselves as solitaries. Lacking the increased efficiency of cooperative gathering, hunting, and defense, they quickly succumbed to starvation or predation. Thus their anti-social tendencies were winnowed from the human gene pool. When the naturally selected social instincts and sympathies were augmented by acute intelligence, vivid imagination, and true language, ethics proper eventually evolved. As Darwin writes, “No tribe could hold together if murder, robbery, treachery, were common; consequently such crimes are branded with everlasting infamy, but excite no such sentiment beyond these bounds.” From a Darwinian point of view, ethics is, as it were, the glue that holds human societies together.

Next Darwin envisioned a gradual evolution of human

societies and the ethics correlative to them by the controversial process of group selection. Larger, better organized groups of *Homo sapiens* would out-compete smaller, less well-organized groups in the now collective or corporate struggle for existence. Clans thus merged into tribes, tribes into national confederacies, these eventually merged to form nation-states, and now – under our very noses – supranational entities, such as Europe and NAFTA are evolving, loosely integrated by transportation and communications technologies and very loosely governed by such multinational parliaments as the United Nations. Corresponding to each of these stages in social evolution is a corresponding stage in ethical evolution. Corresponding to the nation-stage stage of social evolution is the emergent virtue of patriotism. Corresponding to the emergence of the global village is the declaration of universal human rights. As Darwin summarized it, “As man advances in civilisation, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him.” Darwin even anticipated the present stage of ethico-social evolution: “This point being once reached there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies being extended to all the nations and races.”

To cook up the land ethic, Leopold simply took over this Darwinian recipe for the origin and development of ethics, correlative to the origin and development of society or community, and added an ecological ingredient. Ecology represents plants and animals that live together on a landscape (or in a waterscape) as members of a “biotic community.” The British ecologist, Charles Elton, a friend of Leopold’s, had most vividly portrayed the biotic community as an economic analog of human society. Just as we have division of labor and specialization in the human economy – doctors, lawyers, butchers, bakers, candlestick makers – so in the economy of nature, evolution has sorted producers, consumers, and decomposers of the biotic community into myriads of professions or niches. If, following Darwin, our response to perceived community membership is an extension of our social instincts and sympathies – an extension in some modified form of our ethics – then general recognition of the existence of a biotic community should be followed by a land ethic. As Leopold succinctly put it, “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.” Ecology, Leopold goes on to note, “simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.” The upshot is “a land ethic [that] changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it.” At the heart of such an ethic is “respect for . . . fellow-members and also for the community as such.”

Elton had characterized ecology as “scientific natural history.” In addition to a land ethic, Leopold also derived spiritual sustenance from ecology and evolutionary biology. One might fairly say that *A Sand County Almanac* is a book of scripture for a new religion of natural history. Certainly the rhetorical devices of *Sand County* are markedly biblical. Its second most famous essay, “Thinking Like A Mountain” records a road-to-Damascus-like experience. In it Leopold and his Forest-Service comrades kill a she-wolf and arrive in time to watch a “fierce green fire dying” in her eyes. Leopold “saw something new . . . in those eyes – something known only to her and to the mountain.” This knowledge forms the foundation of an inevitable question, but a question that Leopold’s artistic sensibility requires him to leave his readers, whether consciously or subconsciously, to ask for themselves on behalf of the dying wolf: “Why persecutest thou me?”

In other passages, the contours of Leopold’s religion of natural history are more explicit. “Marshland Elegy” is about evolutionary time. “A sense of time lies thick and heavy on such a place” as a crane marsh. Here he confronts directly what seems to many to be one of two main obstacles to the theory of evolution being taken as a spiritual, indeed a religious resource.

An endless caravan of generations has built of its own bones this bridge into the future, this habitat where the oncoming host [a word loaded with religious significance] again may live and breed and die. To what end? Out on the bog a crane, gulping some luckless frog, springs his ungainly hulk into the air and flails the morning sun with mighty wings. The tamaracks re-echo his bugled certitude. He seems to know.

I once argued with another Leopold scholar about the meaning of this passage. He thought that Leopold was actually stating that the answer to this question was for the crane to *know* and for us to find out. But I think that Leopold is challenging – in his typically ironic, understated style – the importance of the question itself. Evolution is resolutely anti-teleological. There is no end, goal, or purpose at which it aims; hence to this and the related questions, “Why are we here?” and “What is the meaning of life?” the answers are “For no reason,” and “There is none,” respectively. If, to live fully and robustly in the present, cranes need no answers to such questions, then why should we? Further, because evolution *per se* may have no goal does not imply that we cannot select lofty ends to give transcendent meaning to our personal and communal lives.

The other obstacle to a religion of natural history thrown up by the theory of evolution is the apparent cosmic demotion of humanity from a form of being created in the image of God – “half animal, half angel,” in

John Muir's turn of phrase – to simply and utterly an animal. Leopold confronts this obstacle indirectly throughout the whole of *Sand County*, in which human-kind's animal and plant fellow members of the biotic community are portrayed with affection and respect for their dignity and particular virtues. More directly confronting it in "On a Monument to the Pigeon," Leopold writes:

It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution.

The use of "odyssey" here suggests once more an ateleological voyage and "only" addresses the present point. Should "this new knowledge" be an occasion for depression and spiritual despair? Not at all, "it should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with other creatures; a wish to live and let live . . ." After all, being "lord man" – I echo Muir again – is a lonely job. And given what we learn about many of our fellow-voyagers in the odyssey of evolution from all that we have read in the *Almanac*, far from being debased, we are gladdened and ennobled by our kinship with them. And this new knowledge should also have given us, finally and most importantly, "a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise." What a paltry world, temporally speaking, we have inherited from the Judeo-Christian tradition, one only some 6000 years old. Think about it! From the point of view of the theory of evolution, life has been metamorphosing and colonizing and transforming Earth for 3.5 billion years. We are its latest manifestation and carry within our DNA the genetic legacy of this immense journey.

In "On a Monument to the Pigeon," Leopold, despite all this, agrees with traditional Judeo-Christian belief that human beings occupy a privileged place in the cosmos. The pigeon in this essay is the extinct passenger pigeon and the monument mourns its demise. "Had the funeral been ours," Leopold soberly reflects, "the pigeons would hardly have mourned us. In this fact, rather than Mr. Dupont's nylons or Mr. Vannevar Bush's bombs, lies objective evidence of our superiority over the beasts." We are superior to other creatures, Leopold ironically suggests, not because we have the technological power to fulfill the biblical injunction to subdue them and the Earth itself, but because we have the moral capacity to include them within the compass of our ethics.

Meanwhile, Lynn White seems to have presented environmentally concerned members of the Judeo-Christian community with a hard choice: their environmentalism or their religion. In White's own words, the choice is "to find a new religion" – such as the then-popular Zen Buddhism – "or rethink our old one."

Choosing the latter is by far the more realistic, not to mention the more palatable course. White himself recommends the (heretical?) theology of Saint Francis of Assisi as a start for rethinking our old religion. And in the last sentence of his article, he proposes that Francis be named the patron saint of ecologists, which, as I recall, Pope John Paul has now done. However, the actual response was not to make Christianity over in the mold of Francis' theology – official designation of Francis the patron saint of ecologists notwithstanding. Rather, it was to challenge White's reading of the Bible and, from a more plausible alternative reading, to develop an environmental ethic out of the same biblical resources that White had lambasted. The result is what I call the Judeo-Christian Stewardship Environmental Ethic.

Here are its basic elements. In several passages in Genesis prior to those (1:26–28) that White had focused on exclusively, God declares his daily acts of creation to be good. That can be read as declaring that the creation has intrinsic value, in the jargon of secular environmental ethics. Moreover, what is declared good (or in possession of intrinsic value) are various wholes, not individuals – species not specimens, whales not Moby Dick or the one that swallowed Jonah. In the jargon of secular environmental ethics, the Judeo-Christian Stewardship Environmental Ethic is thus holistic. And the good (or intrinsically valuable) creation in Genesis is represented as bringing forth abundantly and teeming with life – fishes in the sea; fowl in the firmament; and cattle, creeping things, and other beasts of the field being fruitful and multiplying, *each after its kind*. We may, therefore, in good conscience harvest the surplus and live on the usufruct of the creation as long as we preserve a fitting abundance of each kind. Then in chapter of 2 of Genesis (ignoring the fact that there we find another and substantially different and independent account of creation) key passages indicate that man (for exegetical purposes represented by Adam) is put into the Garden of Eden (which we may construe to represent the whole creation) to dress and keep it – that is, to be its steward. Now with these passages as book ends, we return to those that White made seem so damning environmentally. We may interpret man's created exclusively in the image of God as bestowing unique responsibility as well as unique privilege. And we may interpret God's giving man "dominion" over the Earth as a mandate for responsible management – that is, stewardship – not as a mandate for despotic exploitation and destruction. Now, finally, the Fall, described in Genesis 2, is invoked to mute God's command in Genesis 1 to go forth and subdue the Earth. Whatever stewardly thing God meant by that, fallen man has perverted and deprived it.

Thus did White dialectically spawn the greening of religion. If so powerful and so persuasive (to believers in its premises, for example, that God exists and created the world) an environmental ethic could be teased out of the

very texts that White had made seem so environmentally anathematic, surely environmental ethics could be teased out of the sacred texts of other religions. Judaism is already covered, because the texts in question belong to the Hebrew Bible. Islam is in the same Abrahamic family of religions, and, sure enough, various passages of the Qur'an can be given a stewardship spin. Hinduism and Buddhism share the concept of *ahimsa*, or non-injury to all living beings. In the Chinese traditions of Confucianism and Taoism, we find such nature-friendly concepts as *fengshui*, *wu wei*, and the injunction to follow the *Dao*, or way of nature. Common to American Indian and other indigenous worldviews is a sense of embeddedness in and dependence on an animate and communicative nature – which people must respect, in order to continue to be blessed by its generosity of spirit.

It would be nice to think that the current greening of these and many other religions were a spontaneous and wonderfully coincidental process. But the greening-of-religions phenomenon is, in my opinion, a response to and an implicit affirmation of the more scientific evolutionary and ecological worldview so elegantly and attractively expressed by Aldo Leopold. If it weren't for ecology we would not be aware that we have an "ecologic crisis." If it weren't for the theory of evolution we would be both blind and indifferent to the reduction in global biodiversity. The world's newly green religions thus tacitly orbit around the evolutionary-ecological worldview. I myself consider most religions – especially the Abrahamic family of religions – to be grounded in primitive superstition and ignorance. (In "Monument to the Pigeon," Leopold says that such ideas as God creating man in his own image "arose from the simple necessity of whistling in the dark.") I am, however, immensely grateful for the greening-of-religions phenomenon and have modestly contributed to its development. The religious potential of natural history that Leopold so beautifully tapped but only scarcely explored is perhaps centuries away from its full actualization. But while a true – that is, an epistemically sound and scientifically compatible – religion gestates, people now have to be reached where they are with some kind of environmental ethic. And for most people, their religion seems to be among the most compelling of motives. If the popular traditional religions can be marshaled to achieve a better fit between global human civilization and the natural environment in which it is embedded, I shall not worry their green apologists, expositors, and theologians with logical and philosophical quibbles.

J. Baird Callicott

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SP Natural Law and Natural Rights

The natural law is not a single or simple theory. It is rather a dynamic and diverse tradition, with both philosophical and religiously grounded expressions. Prominent among the historical variety of versions are those of Cicero, Seneca, Aquinas, Hooker, Grotius, Locke, and Blackstone. While embraced in Christian thought by most Catholic and at least some Protestant ethicists, versions of the natural law can also be found among thinkers in other religious traditions, including Confucianism, Judaism, and Islam. The natural law has been used both to condemn and to commend democracy, imperialism, slavery, and gender equality, as well as to sanctify and to vilify some cultural institutions. This diversity reflects how, despite aspirations to moral universalism, particular theories, like all human constructs, are shaped in part by ideological assumptions, religious values, and cultural contexts.

The natural law is not "law" in the sense of socially enacted or declared legal codes, usually called positive

law. Nor is it “law” in the sense of the order known to physics, such as the law of gravity or other “laws of nature.” Rather, it is “law” in the sense of a rational order of moral norms and obligations – a presumed “higher” standard that has often provided a basis for challenging and reforming cultural conventions and positive laws.

Similarly, the natural law is not “natural” in the sense of being instinctive or self-evident standards – even though many in the tradition have asserted that humans, as rational and relational beings, appear to have innate moral capacities and inclinations, which can be culturally cultivated or corrupted. Instead, “natural” means that moral values and norms are discerned in “nature,” specifically the human condition. They are also rooted in, rather than externally imposed upon, that condition. Moreover, these values and norms are discovered through “natural” reasoning capacities, without benefit of privileged revelations. In Christian history, the “natural” was often contrasted with the “supernatural.” The “two books” of morality were the “natural” and the “divine” or “revealed” law. The natural was accessible to all rational beings, and the divine – usually clarifying, confirming, and completing the natural – was known mainly through scripture. The two are still seen as complements in some Christian circles, but as alternative, even competing, methods in some inter-religious epistemological controversies.

Natural law affirms a universal moral order. This order is not necessarily built into the structure of the universe, though it is in most religious interpretations. But it is at least built into the essential constitution of humans as rational and relational beings. Against moral relativism, natural law proponents argue that moral norms are factual claims about the human condition and can be evaluated as objectively true or false. Moreover, in the form of ethical naturalism, which characterizes most, but not all, modern interpretations, natural law ethics depends on empirical data to justify what humans ought to be and to do, in view of the values and virtues, rights and responsibilities, principles and practices that contribute to the well-being of our kind – and one can add, other kinds of creatures – in relationships. Respecting the natural law then is not “following nature” in the imitative manner of Social Darwinists, but rather practicing the norms of our nature, the conditions necessary for interdependent flourishing.

The mainstream of the natural law tradition, especially since the Enlightenment, has followed a rational-experiential method. Experience is usually defined broadly so that nothing, in theory, is excluded as irrelevant data for ethical reflection (though, in fact, moral conclusions were often deductions from philosophical or theological assumptions about human nature). Reason is not an autonomous source of moral truth in this approach. Instead, moral reasoning is critical reflection on the givenness of experience in search of the norms of our

nature. These norms are discovered only gradually and imperfectly through the trials and errors of historical experience. Such discovery depends on receptivity to the fullness of cultural wisdom, including all the empirical disciplines from psychology to ecology, as well as religious insights.

Ironically, however, most natural law theorists have ignored the bulk of nature. Like the rest of Western philosophy and theology, natural law ethics has been predominantly anthropocentric and dualistic, focusing exclusively on human interests and segregating humanity from the rest of nature. It has generally been oblivious to the fact that humans are not only social but also ecological animals, and must, therefore, reflect and act on questions of the good and rightness in our ecological relationships. Viable versions of the natural law, some environmental critics contend, depend on giving due consideration not only to human experience and values but also to the whole of biotic experience and values.

One of the great values of the natural law tradition to its religious supporters is that it can be interpreted as compatible with important affirmations of faith and yet simultaneously independent of these affirmations. In these views, the natural law reflects the moral character of the Ultimate. It is part of the rational, moral order of the universe and humanity’s moral constitution, as created by God. The human capacity for moral reasoning, moreover, is often seen as a dimension of the image of God. The natural law is not an alternative to revelation in this view; it is divine revelation – a natural revelation, open to all rational beings, and, therefore, a “common grace” of God. Still, the viability of the natural law as a universal moral claim depends on logical independence from particular confessions of faith. It must be open in principle to all, whatever their ultimate commitments. In the midst of moral diversity, from imperial Rome to contemporary globalization, the prospect of universal norms universally accessible has always been one of the natural law’s primary appeals. The tradition represents an abiding aspiration, and increasingly a practical necessity, for some shared standards of global ethics to enable the world’s citizens to confront global social and ecological problems in global solidarity.

On the normative substance of the natural law, the tradition has covered a wide spectrum of views. Interpretations of this law have ranged from precise precepts to general principles, like the Golden Rule, and have included a variety of virtues and values, dues and duties. One of the enduring elements from this tradition, however, is the concept of *natural rights*.

These rights are “natural” in the sense that they allegedly inhere in human nature, applying equally and universally to human beings in respect for their intrinsic value. They exist as moral facts independent of, though demanding embodiment in, positive law. Moreover, they

are discernible and defensible by reason reflecting on human experience, apart from any special revelations. The term human, rather than natural, rights is more common today, partly to suggest that such claims can be justified on grounds other than the natural law. The two terms, however, are usually synonyms.

Natural or human rights are specifications of just dues. They are strong moral claims for the imperative conditions of human well-being in community. They are not usually absolute; but they can be overridden only for compelling cause and only to the extent necessary for a fuller and fairer balance of rights. Though classical interpretations generally had a narrow range of rights, some modern versions of natural rights embrace a breadth of provisions, including the following categories: basic economic needs, physical security, religious and moral autonomy, educational and cultural development, environmental sustainability and integrity, equal political participation in shaping the common good, legal ground rules for fair and equal treatment, and the common good as a right in itself to a caring, collaborative order and as the precondition of all other rights. Which rights ought to be recognized has been an important but implicit political question, because rights logically define our social responsibilities in justice to one another, locally and globally.

Environmental rights are a newly emerging category of moral entitlements, prompted by diverse forms of environmental degradation. Since humans are not only social but also ecological animals, one of the essential conditions of human well-being is ecological integrity. In an interdependent biosphere, the sustainability of socio-economic systems depends on the sustainability of ecosystems. Indeed, the possibility of realizing every other natural right, environmental advocates argue, depends on the realization of environmental rights. These claims include the right to protections of the soils, air, water, and atmosphere from various forms of pollution; the right to the preservation of biodiversity in healthy habitats; and the right to governmental regulations ensuring the fair and frugal use of environmental goods.

But environmental rights for humans are not sufficient, according to some critics of the natural law tradition's almost exclusively humanistic focus. For those committed to redefining responsible human relationships with the rest of the planet's biota, and grounding those responsible relationships not only in utility and generosity but also in distributive justice, the moral claims of other life forms on the human community should be considered as part of the natural law and as a demand for fair treatment from moral agents. Most rights theorists acknowledge that some human rights must be restricted to protect the same or other moral claims of other parties in situations of conflicting claims. Thus, if other life forms – as individuals, populations, and species – are goods for themselves or otherwise moral claimants, then limits on the exercise of

some human rights are warranted to respect the imperative conditions for the well-being of these life forms. Given current threats to biodiversity, advocates argue, the moral claims of other species for healthy habitats and fair shares of planetary goods demand limits on economic production and human reproduction.

Natural rights are sometimes criticized as impositions of Western values on other cultures. Some expressions may be. Rights proponents must constantly struggle to avoid universalizing cultural relativities. But this grievance is increasingly hard to sustain in most cases in the light of strong international support for these claims, notably in the United Nations covenants. It is a striking fact that oppressive governments regularly condemn human rights as an alien idea, while oppressed peoples commonly appeal to these rights as the central moral standards in their struggles.

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- See also: Book of Nature; Christianity (9) – Christianity's Ecological Reformation; Environmental Ethics.

Natural Law Party

The Natural Law Party was founded in 1992 as an alternative American political party. Dr. John Hagelin has been the party's candidate for the presidency in each election since 1992.

This party bases its platform on the idea of "natural law" which is described as "the order, the intelligence of

the universe.” According to Dr. Hagelin, science has shown us that the laws of nature are the orderly principles governing life throughout the physical universe. When people violate these laws, problems such as disease, pollution, and poor quality of life result. The NLP describes a program for bringing modern life into harmony with the laws of nature, using scientific and medical studies as evidence for many of its ideas.

The party takes a strong environmental position. It argues that U.S. dependence on fossil fuels causes greater harm than benefit. The harm comes not only from pollution, which leads to health problems and creates an unpleasant living environment, but also from the waste of money and loss of lives in global conflicts centered on fuel resources. To solve this problem, the party advocates research and development of renewable fuel technologies and increasing energy efficiency. This does not mean giving up the present standard of living, but actually raising it through developing technologies that are in harmony with nature. It also requires educational programs that promote “pollution-free” behavior.

Education is a major focus for the NLP. This is not just a matter of basic school skills, but the broader idea that people must be given the ability to see how their individual lives fit into the natural order so they can make wise choices. Education must enlighten people so that they will want to live in accord with natural law. This will, of course, lead to better care of the environment. It may also lead to better care of the self, greater harmony in families, a more orderly society and, eventually, global peace. Behavior that is in accord with natural law should not create problems for society or the environment.

To teach this awareness, the NLP advocates Transcendental Meditation. This is not prayer directed outward to a god, but a turning inward to find the inner self which is part of the whole unified cosmos. With this awareness of unity, people see themselves as part of society and the world, rather than selfish individuals. The party cites medical studies that show TM practitioners handle stress better and thus are healthier, less prone to violence, and happier in their lives.

The NLP considers stress the primary cause of many world problems. Stress causes drug use, crime, health problems like hypertension, and even wars. Several studies have shown that meditation reduces stress. The party argues that teaching meditation in schools can help children handle life so that they avoid bad habits, teaching it in prisons can reduce crime, and teaching it to the military can help alleviate global tensions. The latter idea is based on the TM theory that if a small percentage of a population meditates, it has an affect on the stress levels of the larger community. This concept is supported by research published in peer-reviewed articles in respected venues such as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Thus, a group of people could be sent into a high-tension area to

meditate and bring the people into harmony with natural law.

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See also: Hundredth Monkey; Transcendental Meditation.

Nature Fakers Controversy

At first glance, the Nature Fakers Controversy was a light-hearted literary debate over whether or not wild animals can reason and teach their young to hunt and avoid traps, or a fox can ride a sheep across a field to avoid pursuing hounds. On a deeper level, it embodied an increasingly urbanized United States public’s efforts to reconcile Darwinian, humanitarian and Edenic visions of nature and wildlife.

The controversy spanned four years of magazine and newspaper articles, book prefaces and a full editorial page of the *New York Times*. John Burroughs, America’s preeminent literary naturalist, began the debate in 1903 with an *Atlantic Monthly* article accusing a number of prominent nature writers of what he called “sham natural history.” Ernest Thompson Seton, William J. Long, Charles G.D. Roberts and others, he claimed, fabricated and overly dramatized the lives of wild animals in order to sell books to a burgeoning, lucrative national market of gullible nature lovers.

These writers were practitioners of a new genre, the realistic wild animal story. Such stories presented events from the perspective of their animal protagonists. This was a radical shift in perspective, one that emphasized non-anthropocentrism. A fox hunt, for example, is a very different story when viewed from the point of view of the fox, rather than the hunter. Inevitably, the authors often read their own expectations and biases into the minds and behaviors of their animal heroes. The psychology of the day tended to explain behavior in terms of either reason or instinct, with little ground in between. Facing such options, the authors accused of nature faking granted their subject the gift of reason.

Seton and Roberts did not defend themselves publicly and emerged relatively unscathed. Long, however,

mounted a vigorous defense and became the lightning rod of the debate. A Connecticut Congregationalist minister whom some accused of Unitarian tendencies, Long received his Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg in 1897. He was no stranger to controversy. He attended Andover Theological Seminary shortly after it had been attacked for teaching “higher criticism” of the Bible. In 1898, Long became pastor of the North Avenue Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. However, the Cambridge Council refused to ordain him because of his liberal theology, which included a belief in universal salvation. This drew national attention in Congregational circles. Long resigned after serving only two months, but was praised for his religious conviction and integrity.

Long was an experienced woodsman and close observer of nature. Although he often misinterpreted what he saw, he did not intentionally fabricate his natural history “facts.” His vigorous defense of himself and his books, while principled and philosophically sophisticated, was misguided by his poor understanding of inductive science. Long rejected Darwinism and scientific rationalism, arguing that animals experience no struggle for survival. He believed that all minds, be they human or not, are reflections of the Creator’s. Thus, he relied on empathy as the key to understanding animal psychology.

John Burroughs’ existential view of nature had no place for a God, although he felt a deep emotional bond with nature. Many of those accused of nature faking, on the other hand, viewed nature in spiritual terms. For example, Ernest Thompson Seton, who later became a founder of the Boy Scouts of America, rejected Christianity and adopted a Native American-styled pantheism. William J. Long argued that animals are capable of religious experience. His *Brier-Patch Philosophy* (1906), an unsung classic in animal-rights literature, is one of the fullest statements of Long’s views.

Finally, in 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt publicly spoke out against Long. He was especially upset that books written by Long and other fakers were used in the public schools. He shifted the focus of debate from errant writers to irresponsible publishers and school committees. In response, they paid greater attention to the accuracy of nature books. Following Roosevelt’s attack, Long turned to writing books about American and English literature. Nevertheless, his publisher and fellow Congregationalist Edwin Ginn, a proponent of world peace and opponent of hunting, kept his books in print for years.

The controversy helped to set standards of accuracy for nature writers, while it also underscored the American public’s discomfort with “cold science” and eagerness for an emotionally and spiritually satisfying vision of the natural world.

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See also: Burroughs, John; Indian Guides; Native American Spirituality; Scouting.

Nature Religion

The term “nature religion” was introduced into contemporary discourses of the study of religion by Catherine Albanese’s *Nature Religion in America* (1990). Albanese uses the term to interpret a wide variety of phenomena not previously considered in terms of religion. However, subsequent to her study, the academic use of the term has been largely confined to research into contemporary Paganism and New Age spiritualities, notably in the collection *Nature Religion Today* (Pearson, Roberts and Samuel 1998). It is appropriate to restore Albanese’s broader understanding of the term, since the term has a more general currency historically and geographically, appearing not only in contemporary Paganism before Albanese’s work, but also in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Like Robert Bellah’s notion of civil religion, Albanese’s idea of nature religion can help make visible practices in popular culture and political activity of all religions as religious expressions, and thus broaden the understanding of religion beyond its most identifiable institutional expressions, and help religionists more easily to understand religious activities that do not easily correspond to categories of study derived from religious institutions like churches and scriptures.

Albanese does not explicitly define “nature religion” in *Nature Religion in America*, but indicates that she uses the term as a construct to describe a religion or type of religion found in the United States, which takes nature as its sacred center. She describes it as a religion, in the singular, but also says that it occurs in variants as nature religions. What the variants have in common is that in these phenomena, nature is the symbolic center. Albanese describes a chronological development of major variants of nature religion in North America. Forms and movements discussed include Algonquian spirituality and Native American traditions more broadly, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritanism, Freemasonry, Gaia consciousness, conservation and preservation movements, as well as Emersonian idealism, ecofeminism and feminist spirituality, and various New Age phenomena.

Albanese's work is indispensable in its extension of the purview of religion beyond what is considered religion proper in the academic study of religion. It facilitates, for example, the study of phenomena within environmentalism as religious activity, as in Bron Taylor's research on practitioners of deep ecology and bioregionalism. Closer to the study of religion proper, Albanese's use of the term "nature religion" enables examination of nature-oriented non-institutional religion on its own terms.

The term "nature religion" has probably been adopted most readily in the study of contemporary Paganism because it already had some currency within the groups Margot Adler began researching in 1972, for her study of North American Paganism *Drawing Down the Moon* (1979). Adler's first use of the term in print equates "contemporary nature religions" with "Neo-Pagans," without comment or explanation of the term. In the groups Adler studied, practitioners of contemporary Paganism already regarded themselves as practitioners of nature religion or nature religions, which they conceived as ancient European shamanistic religion, devoted to variants of a Mother Earth goddess and/or various other gods and goddesses of nature, making no distinctions between the spiritual and the material world.

Adler cites two published references to nature religion preceding the publication of her study. In 1974, Frederick Adams published an article called "Feraferia for Beginners" in *Earth Religion News*, in which he refers to the need to look to the "original root-systems of Nature Religion" for inspiration and education (Adams 1974: 51). Adler also cites Tim Zell's use of the term in the early 1970s. In an undated Church of All Worlds tract, "An Old Religion for a New Age, Neo-Paganism," Adler reports, Zell distinguished between "philosophical religions" and "natural religions." These natural religions Zell identified with indigenous, folk, and Pagan religions that evolve naturally, in contrast to what he saw as the artificially constructed philosophical religions.

Zell made the distinction between natural and philosophical religion at least as early as 1972, using "Pagan" and "natural religion" to refer to folk, indigenous, and non-institutionalized religion, in an article titled "Paganism & Neo-Paganism: The Old Religion & the New," published in *Green Egg*. Zell's polarization of natural and philosophical religion strikingly parallels Hegel's use of these terms, but follows the Romantics' valuation of the natural over the philosophical.

Hegel, Schlegel, Schelling, and their early nineteenth-century contemporaries in Germany, were in agreement that all peoples had a common origin in a first religion and culture, but Hegel disagreed with Schlegel and Schelling in that he identified the original religion as primitive, savage and evil, whereas they felt it expressed a state of innocence, a golden age. In *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel calls this first religion "nature religion."

For Hegel, nature religion is crude and simple, the lowest form of religion, in which Spirit is perceived in nature, rather than transcendent of nature as in philosophical religion, epitomized by Christianity. Hegel indicates that nature religion continues to influence the "higher" forms of religion, through belief in magic, citing the practice of witchcraft within Christianity.

Ideas of "nature religion," "natural religion," and "religion of nature" were circulating in German thought in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Kant, for example, argued that there are two kinds of religion: the religion of nature, and the religion of ethics. Schelling believed that the first religion of humanity was the best, a natural religion. In a 1796 letter to Hegel, Schelling suggested that a new religion was necessary, one that did not reject mythology in favour of reason. In his novel *Lucinde*, Friedrich Schlegel identifies this new religion with "the old religion" of nature. Schlegel champions a religion of nature, of the imagination, and of poetry, as a religion that prizes women and the ideal feminine, passivity, and the natural as opposed to the artificial, especially in terms of social norms. For Schlegel, this religion of nature is the primordial religion, the religion of the Garden before the Fall, a religion of innocence, without shame. It is polytheistic in a sense familiar to contemporary Pagans, as the god/desses do not definitively either "really exist" or exist only in the imagination. There is no equivocal distinction between the two in this expression of nature religion, because, in Schlegel's terms, the imagination is the faculty humans have for perceiving divinity.

In the German Idealist, and Romantic traditions to an extent, nature religion was contrasted with Christianity, as everything that Christianity was held not to include. Albanese, however, instructs that nature religion should not be taken simply as the opposite of the "Judeo-Christian religions of history." Nature religion is not opposite to the religions of history or of ethics, but is a type of religion that can be found within the practices of Christianity and other mainstream religions as well as marginal traditions. Albanese's understanding of nature religion is vital for its implicit recognition that any religion can be expressive of nature religion, not only indigenous and contemporary Pagan religion. Expanding the use of the term beyond its expression in North America, nature religion can then be applied to any religion.

Using the term "nature religion" in the singular is appropriate for applying the concept to various religious traditions, since it suggests that nature religion is a type of religion or tendency to be found within and running across different religions. To use the term in the singular indicates that nature religion is not restricted to one group of religions in opposition to another group of religions that are not nature religion. While the use of the plural "nature religions" may aim to be inclusive, it suggests that some religions are never expressive of nature religion, or

categorically cannot be expressive of it. To use the term in the singular allows it to be applied to any religious group, on the basis of criteria that are not dependent on any particular religion.

Nature religion can be distinguished from other religion on the basis of its understanding of transcendence. Nature religion can then be constructed as a type of religion in which nature is the milieu of the sacred, and within which the idea of transcendence of nature is unimportant or irrelevant to religious practice. By this definition, not only contemporary Paganism and indigenous traditions, but practices and beliefs of any religion can be expressive of nature religion. This definition recognizes that a religion can be expressive of nature religion without being exhaustively defined by nature religion. For example, not all contemporary Pagan religious traditions are expressive of nature religion by this definition, since some posit divinity transcendent of nature, as in the panentheism of Gus diZerega (2001).

Transcendence, in nature religion, tends to be lateral rather than vertical. Spirits and deities are of this world rather than beyond it, and can be contacted through the natural world. Nature religion is this-worldly religion. Contemporary expressions of nature religion are often explicitly this-worldly, with the hope that a valuation of this world and none beyond it will encourage us to respect and preserve it. In nature religion it is more often culture than nature that is transcended. This is to be expected in phenomenon that are often seen as countercultural, as are many of the phenomenon of nature religion, such as the Christian folk singers discussed by Albanese, and modern British witchcraft as described by Ronald Hutton (1999).

The usefulness of the term "nature religion" lies in the broadness of its applicability. It is limited in being applied only to the United States, or only to contemporary Pagan religious traditions. It is useful to look at wider social and cultural developments in terms of nature religion, and to look for expressions of nature religion in mainline religious traditions, such as creation spirituality in Christianity, and Thich Nhat Hanh's practices in engaged Buddhism, and to look for this-worldly expressions of mainstream traditions. However, it remains to be seen how useful the term might be in understanding indigenous traditions. There have been no in-depth studies of specific groups or spiritual traditions in indigenous cultures in terms of nature religion, probably in part because "nature religion" is yet another Western category, but also because it is a relatively new area of research in the study of religion.

Barbara Jane Davy

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See also: Bioregionalism; Bioregionalism and the North American Bioregional Congress; Celestine Prophecy; Deep Ecology; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Nature Religion in the United States; Paganism (various); Radical Environmentalism; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; Romanticism (various); Snyder, Gary.

Nature Religion in the United States

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What does it mean to speak of nature religion? For a general audience in the Western and English-speaking world, probably the first reference that comes to mind is land-based and environmental. Nature means grass and trees, panoramas and vistas, mountains and lakes and oceans. So nature religion means beliefs and practices that involve turning to God in nature or to a nature that is God. For a smaller, largely self-identified group in the same Western and English-speaking world, nature religion signals Goddess more than God, and nature is the principal trope for a religiosity that calls itself pagan or, alternately, neo-pagan. To invoke nature religion becomes a way to call attention to one's pagan/neo-pagan spirituality and, also, group commitment. For still others who have a familiarity with Western religious and theological history, the term nature religion is teasingly close to two others – natural religion and natural theology.

These last are designations that arose in an eighteenth-century Enlightenment context under the guiding star of deism. For the Enlightenment, natural religion made sense in contradistinction to supernatural religion – the revealed religion of Christianity based on the inspired word of scripture. Natural religion therefore meant the religion of reason alone; or, in tandem with human reason, the religion that looked to nature as its holy book of inspiration. It ranked inferior or superior to Christianity, depending on prior belief commitment and point of view. Still more, if it was counted superior, it was thought to be grounded in the essential order of the universe and of all things. In a distinctly Christian understanding, natural theology became the system of religious thought constituting knowledge of God and divine things that one could obtain by reason alone. It was suspect and generally rejected in Protestant theological circles of Reformation provenance (because of their view of the fallen nature of humanity) but more warmly received by Roman Catholics and, later, by liberal Protestants.

In light of all of the above, what other way or ways can there be to invoke nature religion, and that in a United States historical context? The answer to this question (or, really, set of questions) leads as far back as the early coalescence of the culture that later came to flourish in the United States, and it leads, too, through a multiple canon of religious meanings, ranging from Idealist philosophical statements that show clear marks of European influence to popular cultural practices that have come together in new ways in our own time. The answer leads us, too, to an extremely fragile world – a world that is deconstructing itself even as it comes to be.

As an Idealist philosophical statement at its broadest, consider the definition announced by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) in his Transcendentalist manifesto *Nature*:

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE.

Here Emerson invoked “both nature and art” to define nature, and then he went on to explain that the term had both a “common” and a “philosophical import.” “*Nature*, in the common sense,” he wrote, “refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. *Art* is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture.” Yet of this latter – of “art” – Emerson was dismissive. Human operations collectively considered were “so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result” (Emerson: 1971, 8). Many, of course, would be less speedy to relegate human constructions to a cosmic recycle bin. Yet in the space between Emerson's two definitions – his “philosophical” sense and his “common” one, there stands an American definitional and historical territory that may fruitfully be explored under the rubric of nature religion.

Since the rubric is distinctly nature *religion* and not simply nature *theology*, let it be clear that any American historical survey must move beyond beliefs regarding nature, however reverent and profound. Rather, the rubric must encompass cultural practice that is intimately connected with belief both in condensed symbolic settings (i.e., in ritual and devotional situations) and in more broad-gauged and general ones (i.e., in everyday behaviors that act out ethical stances and convictions). It helps to remember, too, that to engage in such an American historical survey of nature religion is hardly a minor exercise or an add-on from the point of view of the Western religious tradition. With theology or religious thought as its strong suit, this tradition has placed nature near the top of its short list of major categories by which to make sense of religion. God and humanity comprise the first two categories. Nature, however culturally diffuse and evanescent, forms the third.

Shaped then by an Emersonian space between philosophy and common usage and a Western religious space, in which nature counts for major consideration, what does a hypothetical cultural narrative regarding nature religion in the United States look like? We are back, in effect, at a more reflective version of the initial question: how do we speak with definitional and historical inclusiveness of nature religion in the United States? How do we name and narrate nature religion? And, again, what are the limits of such speaking? How, in other words, do we construct a past that may be useful in the twenty-first century? The beginning of an answer and a narrative may

be found in the seventeenth century – in the time when the different players who would assume leading roles initiated the series of contacts and exchanges that produced the dominant culture of the land.

Among these players, Anglo-Protestants assumed hegemonic importance in terms of a public and religiously inspired culture, but their views and behaviors were affected subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) by other groups with whom they shared space. Numbered among them were Native Americans and native Africans, English and French Catholics, continental European immigrants of both Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds in general, even a small community of Jews when the Dutch New Amsterdam colony became New York. Of all of these groups, it was Native Americans (or American Indians) who engaged in the series of cultural attitudes and activities that could be most clearly linked to nature religion. Working on the bases of accounts that must be pieced together from hostile English sources, from archeologically derived remnants, and from narratives collected as much as several centuries later, the general lines of an encompassing religion of nature may be sketched. Ironically, this religion of nature was never identified as such by native Indian peoples: in Indian cultural circles and communities there was no abstract “nature” to which or whom to relate. To say this another way, both word and abstraction are Western European designations for referents named and understood differently among Native Americans and also among others. Yet considered generally and collectively Native American beliefs and practices point to sacred objects and subjects residing in, or manifest as, aspects of the material world that Europeans have called nature.

With spatially oriented and environmentally shaped perception, Native Americans have honored their kinship with sacred Persons – e.g., thunder grandfathers, spider grandmothers, corn mothers, and the like – who represent (and, for them, are) the powers of nature. They have elaborated etiquettes of relationship with these Beings, for instance, when killing game and/or harvesting crops. Indians have noted their own placement on land-based terrains by paying acute attention to directional points in ritual practice and by according symbolic and theological import to the directions (for example, seeing the east as associated with sunrise, the color yellow, and new life and growth, while the west was linked to sunset, darkness, and death). Although Indians have certainly been aware of the vicissitudes of the seasons and the uncertainties of the weather, overall they have found a harmony in nature that, historically, they chose to imitate in practical ways. This meant everything from taking cues from nature in the construction of housing and bodily adornment to living out convictions that Western Europeans would regard as ethical directives.

When Africans entered what Europeans claimed was the “new world” in the early seventeenth century as

indentured servants or – very quickly the norm – as slaves, they, too, brought nature-based forms of religiosity with them. West African tribes, from whom blacks had been forcibly separated, revered their ancestors but, also, revered Persons who came out of nature – again, without a generalized overarching concept of the same. While exception must be made for a significant number of Muslims among these native Africans, the local religions of West Africa tended to support theological visions of distant creator deities but also of other spirit powers and gods who were seen as close at hand. These nearer sacred beings embodied the elements of nature and could come intimately close to the bodies of devotees in rituals of trance and possession. They functioned at the center of religious life and tied their devotees to a sense of self and environment alive and holy.

Among Roman Catholics both from England and the Continent, nature occupied a relatively prominent place in theology and ritual practice as well. By the thirteenth century, scholasticism had reached new clarity in the work of Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274) and had articulated a comprehensive understanding of natural law, based on older Greek categories but reordering them in Christian terms. Nature here was not only land-based but encompassed, too, the orderly pattern of the heavens and the stars as well as the inner and mysterious workings of animal (including human) and vegetable bodies. Moreover, nature stood at the core of cultural practice within the Church both in a natural-law ethic that arose from the scholastic category and in a sacramental system culminating in the mysteries of the Eucharist. In this sacramental understanding, pieces of the material world became force-filled conduits for spiritual power, so that as representational signs they themselves were transmuted into the sacredness they signified. In the most graphic illustration of the proposition, the bread and wine of the Eucharistic sacrificial meal at the Mass became, for medieval and modern Catholics, the actual physical body of Jesus the Lord. Nature was exalted, indeed, as it became the body of God.

Nor was the religious importance of the material world lost on the small Jewish community residing on American shores. Jewish religious practice, in fact, privileged natural categories and sites. Much more than in versions of Christianity, for example, the home functioned at the center of Jewish ritual life – to the degree that it stood beside the synagogue as sacred space. The liturgy of Shabbat, or the Sabbath, took place in the home and featured agricultural products transmuted into food and family fare, in a ritual that accorded women places of ritual honor and also clearly connected natural life and products to transcendent sacred meanings. Jewish religiosity put its premium on the embodied spirituality of ritual and of ethical directives for life in this world, in relation to human communities. Jewish notions of the afterlife, by

contrast, came off as vague and trailing – afterthoughts and underthoughts in Jewish theological explication. That there were no ordained Jewish rabbis and few synagogues in the Atlantic colonies only emphasized these general tendencies in Jewish belief and practice.

What did all of this mean for Anglo-Protestants in the British North Atlantic colonies? On arrival, literate New England Puritans alternately feared the wild country of their new landscape as a wilderness in which their souls and spirits would be tested and, by contrast, celebrated it as a garden of God's good, especially when planted in new Puritan towns. Meanwhile, in the common culture that elites shared with others, English country tradition already supported a world of cunning women and men who used the products of nature in magical practices that existed alongside of and, sometimes, intermixed with Protestant church ritual. If colonial libraries can be taken as evidence, alongside these cultural manifestations an elite magical and metaphysically oriented tradition, influenced by continental Hermeticism that had been subsumed into Paracelsan, Rosicrucian, and Jewish Kabbalistic forms, flourished in early America.

Although we know all too little regarding the interactions of the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture with Indians and blacks as well as with Catholics and Jews, we gain brief and provocative glimpses as, for example, in the much-recorded Salem witchcraft epidemic of 1692. Here Tituba, a female Caribbean slave from Barbados of African or, more probably, South American Arawak Indian ancestry, stood accused of corrupting a group of young Puritan girls by introducing them to pagan practices of sorcery. In a well-known narrative, this was only the beginning of a series of “discoveries” of practicing witches in and around Salem. The communication of cultural practice, of which Tituba stood accused, must have occurred many times over in the informal connections and exchanges between Anglo-Protestant elites and their servants. In her book *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, 1987), Mechal Sobel explored the process for whites and blacks in eighteenth-century Virginia, demonstrating the subtle ways that blacks helped to shape white planter culture, as for example in attitudes toward space and the natural world. Meanwhile, among elites themselves of different religious backgrounds, there was often more social interaction than might at first be expected. In her doctoral dissertation “Early Modern English Women, Families, and Religion in the New World” (University of Rochester, 1997), for instance, Debra Meyers has documented the culture of intermarriage between Catholics and Arminianized (stressing free will) Anglicans in the Maryland colony from 1634 to 1713, and she has also shown the parallel track that Quakers followed compared to these first two groups. For all three, when “nature” meant human nature it could be more or less trusted given the prior work of

Christ, so that these groups tended to support more egalitarian family structures and downplayed patriarchy and hierarchy in general.

Examples such as these, of course, add up only to tantalizing suggestions of what common sense already argues. At any rate, by the late eighteenth century and the time of the American Revolution, nature became explicitly linked by elites who were establishing the new political culture with their expansive republican venture. They understood nature in at least three senses, and each of the ways of signifying nature led to the patriotic ideology they promoted (suggesting already a nature religion in the process of unraveling?). First, nature meant “new-world” innocence – a freedom from the corruptions of old England that was symbolized in the purity of country living beside clear streams and fertile soil and also symbolized in the lack of social formalism and affectation among new Americans. Such new-world innocence brought with it a reinvigoration of the social and political project unlike what patriots viewed as the tired and effete political culture of old England with its stilted hierarchies and aristocracies.

This sense of collective freshness and vigor led to a second meaning of nature, which came with distinctly Enlightenment credentials. Akin to the affirmations that accompanied natural religion and deism, this meaning of nature pointed away from Earth and toward the heavenly bodies in order to make its point for the Earth. Nature now meant the law that turned sun and stars in their orbits, ordering the regular motion of the planetary bodies. Brought back to Earth, this universal law became the ground for all human rights and, among them especially, for political rights. Like the planets in their contained and lawful motions, the individual states that comprised the new United States would operate in their individual orbits but also cooperate in a grand symmetry of order and form. So, too, would individual human beings: nature pointed toward the egalitarian social and political patterns that were idealized in the “new order of the ages” the patriots aimed to create.

Finally, as a third meaning accompanying patriotic affirmations, nature signaled the growing practice of venerating a distinctly American landscape. Already in the late Puritan culture before the American Revolution, thoughtful religious leaders like Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Cotton Mather (1663–1728) had, in different ways, found God in nature. After the war, in prose and poetry that linked the republican experiment with, literally, the ground that supported and accommodated it, nature became a new aesthetic trope. The “spacious skies” of the young nation, the seeming boundlessness and expansiveness of its landscape, became the divine benediction on its political project. America as a place in nature was bigger and better than anything European because its political experiment was bigger and better. More than that,

American nature evoked the Kantian “sublime” as mediated through the writings of English philosopher Edmund Burke. In his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke had distinguished the sublime from the beautiful because of the capacity of the former to cause astonishment, awe, and even a species of horror. Americans felt the presence of hierophany in the landscapes they observed, as Thomas Jefferson when he gazed at Natural Bridge; and they acknowledged a sacred splendor in what they beheld – in ways that redounded to their new political system. America was physically grand and awesome, and so was its political project.

These estimates turned ugly by the Jacksonian era, as territorial aggrandizement became justified in terms of the grandeur of the political project. Cherokee Indians and others walked their trail of tears to make room for white farmers. By the middle of the nineteenth century, nature religion became the justification for manifest destiny, and imperialism rode strong on nature’s back. Earlier, however, even as Andrew Jackson was exporting Cherokee Indians to the Oklahoma Territory, the New England Transcendentalists were busy creating a thoroughly self-conscious and ethically high-minded endorsement of the religion of nature. (Emerson and his friends, for example, protested the forcible eviction of the Cherokees from Georgia and became stalwart anti-slavery advocates.) The Transcendental gospel itself was stated canonically in Emerson’s little book *Nature*, with its declaration of profound correspondences between nature and humanity. The Emersonian declaration was accomplished in the context of the combinative English Hermetic tradition that by then was emphasizing Neoplatonism, and in concert with a then-contemporary admiration of the work of the Swedish mystic and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). The new declaration was contained, too, in a decidedly literary consciousness, but a consciousness that pushed literature strongly into the realm of the religious. For Emerson and his followers, words were signs of natural facts, which were symbols of spiritual facts. And all nature was the symbol of the spiritual.

Emerson himself preached more than he practiced. But his younger friend Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) did both. He built his well-remembered cabin on Emerson’s land at Walden Pond outside of Concord, Massachusetts, and wrote his classic *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854) about his sojourn there. He also tramped the Maine woods, climbed local mountains like Mount Katahdin, and befriended Indian guides. Out of his experiences he pushed Emerson’s religio-philosophical convictions regarding self-reliance in still more radical (and expressive) directions that led him into active anti-slavery work shielding runaway slaves and into at least one night in jail. To be natural, for Thoreau, meant to keep one’s conscience free, to preserve the integrity of the self in face of the com-

promises that society – especially in organized political form – sought to impose. Thoreau’s fondness for South Asian Indian religious philosophy, when he discovered it in the late 1830s, grew out of his sympathy with Indian mystical notions of unity of Self and world. If, as the Indian texts affirmed, Atman (Self) really was Brahman (the all-power in the universe), if This was That, then Thoreau’s nature religion led to fellow beings and their rescue from inequity.

The Transcendentalist moment in American religious history enjoyed its heyday through the 1840s and 1850s. As an elite statement of a complex and many-faceted form of nature religion (at least in germ), it produced a lasting template for what might count as nature religion in the United States. Unlike the earlier folklorized occult and metaphysical religion of colonial America, Transcendental nature religion took religious ideas about human correspondences with an almighty Nature into new and more public directions. It acted, as it were, as a conduit from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century past into a nineteenth-century and later American future. In terms of nature religion itself, that future moved in at least three, and possibly four, major directions.

First, one major form of nature religion in the nation led out from the Transcendentalism of Emerson and, especially, Thoreau in the direction of environmentalism. The often-celebrated John Muir (1838–1914) carried writings by the two of them in his saddlebags, and he clearly revered them as spiritual mentors. Muir himself, who as a young boy had emigrated from Scotland with his family, left the family and the conventional life behind and trekked far and wide, eventually reaching California’s Sierra Nevada Mountains. There he felt that he had come home to nature and to himself, a “higher self” that directed him with inner wisdom and even mystical forms of intuition. In Muir’s own writings, it is clear that he worshipped a nature that was alive and sentient, resplendent with sacramental manifestations that fed his spirit to the point of inebriation. But Muir combined the earlier Transcendental veneration of the panorama of the land (Emerson) and the details of its construction and inhabitants (Thoreau) with a sense of social activism and public accountability. In this, he was not unlike Henry David Thoreau, but more than Thoreau, Muir’s cause became nature itself. That he founded the Sierra Club, the nation’s first environmental lobby, and that he worked at the forefront of the national-park movement that gave the United States Yosemite in 1890 are uncompromising statements to his moral conviction and its social enactment.

Muir had found a public rhetoric to connect private delight in wilderness and religious reverence for it with a domain of political practice. After him, and even alongside him, there were others, Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), Professor of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin, important among them. Leopold’s enormously

influential *Sand County Almanac* (1949) gave voice to a religious and ethical valuation of nature not tied to conventional Western biblical themes. In fact, turning self-consciously away from what he called an “Abrahamic concept of land,” Leopold called for a land ethic based on an affirmation of the land as a community in which humans were members. As community, the land was alive – not a mechanized and commodified other – and humans who understood its life could express love and regard for it, with its encompassing channels of energy that flowed in circuits bringing life and death to individuals.

Leopold’s work made a major impact on a then-emerging twentieth-century discourse in environmental ethics, and it also provided resources for the near-mystical spirituality of many who embraced a radical form of environmentalism by the later part of the century. His haunting vision of the dying green fire in the eyes of a mother wolf that as a young man he had hunted down became a catalytic sign and emblem of the death of nature at human hands. Between Leopold’s green fire, as it kept burning among those committed to radical action in movements like Earth First! and Greenpeace, and the more law-bound environmentalism of established lobbies like the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, twentieth-century environmentalism continued into the twenty-first. It became increasingly clear that the wellspring for the passion that drove public speech and action on behalf of the environment was in large part religious and ethical. Environmentalism, in short, had become one version of nature religion in the lingering shadow of American Transcendentalism.

The Transcendentalists functioned, however, as a switching station for a second form of American nature religion as well. The metaphysical nature religion of the past, encoded in a series of cultural practices that ranged from dowsing, to the casting of magical spells, to the pursuit of astrology, to a plethora of folk behaviors involving correspondences with nature still continued even as it was transformed. Based at least in part on the new religious language that Emerson and the other Transcendentalists helped to make familiar to Americans, this metaphysical form of nature religion was now shaped by more urbanizing and middle-class times, reaching out to embrace an Enlightenment rhetoric of reason and science. All the same, it still encompassed a rural and poorer past. And it encompassed, as well, a moral logic similar to the one that had compelled Thoreau and other Transcendentalists, including Emerson, in anti-slavery directions. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the results were visible in spiritualism, both in its practical and speculative varieties.

Spiritualism flourished in popular and what has become known as “phenomenal” (practical or spirit-manifesting) form after 1848, the year that two upstate New York girls, Kate and Maggie Fox, claimed that they

were in contact with a murdered peddler whose remains were buried in the cellar of the ramshackle house their family rented. Along with spiritualist phenomena and practice came elaborate theories of how its seeming miracles were produced: spirits, it turned out, were part of nature. They represented a more refined version of matter, and in certain situations (séances), with the aid of gifted professionals (mediums, who were usually but not always female), their material refinement was visible to grosser human eyes and senses.

The more speculative version of spiritualism, from its inception in 1847 – one year before the fabled communications of the Fox sisters – had from the first provided a self-conscious and sophisticated theology to explain spiritualist phenomena and manifestations. Under the banner of the “harmonial philosophy,” Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) and others supplied their own theoretical frame for the ghostly life of phenomenal spiritualists. They did so by means of Enlightenment thought that met and married a metaphysical theory of correspondence in the absence of Christianity. Davis, especially, became an important culture broker, bringing together a Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondence with the “magnetic” or mesmeric theory and practice of Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), based on the belief that there was a universal fluid with mysterious tides operating in all of space.

In effect, harmonialism linked these European concepts to an American popular culture shaped in part by notions of the power of Reason and Right inherited from public discourse in the context of the American Revolution and from a folklorized metaphysicalism that had been handed down. It linked the European concepts, too, to a popular culture shaped in part by the Transcendentalist discourse of correspondence – through the popular speaking tours of Emerson and others, the ubiquitous newspaper reports about them, and the stream of publications by them that kept coming. Harmonialism stressed reform and, in the name of nature, radically equalized the playing field between women and men, even as it also posited something like eternal progress. Always though, nature, not the supernature of Christianity, was God and goal.

Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow underline the significance of spiritualism for what followed, noting that as conventional religion became subject to a growing fear that it was “untenable,” spiritualism itself became a “historical hourglass” through the channel of which “the sands of witchcraft, popular ghost lore, mesmerism, Swedenborgianism, and scientism” poured, “then to disperse into Theosophy and parapsychology” (Kerr and Crow 1983: 4). And, it could be added for a century later in the 1970s, into the New Age movement. Theosophy arose as a spiritualist reform movement in 1875, the year after Russian immigrant Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) and American Colonel Henry S. Olcott (1832–1907) met at a

Vermont farm where they both had gone to investigate reported spiritualist phenomena. The Theosophical Society, which the two founded along with William Q. Judge (1851–1896) and others, announced its object in its bylaws as the collection and diffusion of knowledge concerning the laws of the universe. That in itself sounded scientific enough, except that the preamble to the document advanced the hope of going beyond science into ancient esoteric philosophy. Indeed, the religious character of the theosophical enterprise was clarified even further three years later when leaders of the society articulated two new goals in the context of their now-involvement with Asian religions. Theosophy aspired to promote universal “brotherhood” and to promote as well the study of comparative religions. Theosophists understood all three of their goals in light of an esoteric vision of the secrets of nature, the further reaches of which they were seeking to understand and to make productive in their lives.

It requires only a brief foray into the history of connection between the late nineteenth-century Theosophical Society and the century-later New Age movement to notice the line between earlier Theosophical teachers and later interpreters of the New Age. Moreover, clear lineages aside, the continuity of subject and theme between the two movements points to both as strongly linked and related expressions of the metaphysical form of nature religion. In a context that is linked to this, the small but growing neo-pagan movement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries needs to be noted here. In Wicca and related movements, nature – become personified in the Goddess and her consort – led her devotees into a religious world of both ritual ecstasy and ethical practice that looked to nature as law and guide. Significantly, for all of these movements, the secrets that humans would uncover in nature were secrets with practical application. None of the movements has aimed at knowledge for knowledge’s sake. Rather, all of them have looked to metaphysical knowledge of nature as a vehicle of power, as the source of cultural practice to repair and enhance lives. And nowhere did that practice become more urgent and insistent by the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century than in the domain of healing.

This last observation brings us to the third major form of nature religion that was advanced by and in the Transcendentalist milieu. In keeping with Emersonian claims for the powers of nature and, also, for the realized Self, nature religion came to stand for the physicality of the human body itself. Here, in one religious logic, matter remained subject to universal natural laws, the violations of which automatically brought disease and ill health and the observances of which, by contrast, guaranteed health and blessing. The often-repeated dictum “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise” was, in fact, a tenet of this version of nature religion. Or, at the same time and often for the same people, matter became

at once the plastic substance that could be shaped and changed by the power of Mind (with the American Vedanta of oneness proclaiming the ability of the Self to cure disease and attract wealth and blessing).

One version of the logic, therefore, leads to immersion in a series of healing practices that valorize natural law and its results. Thomsonian herbal healing, inherited Native American herbalisms, and related Euro-ethnic herbalisms, all of which preceded the Transcendentalists already expressed this form of conviction, and various forms of herbalism have continued from early America into our own times. Perhaps even more graphic in their physicality and their appeal to the laws of an almighty nature have been the late nineteenth-century modalities of osteopathy and chiropractic. Indeed, early osteopathy arose out of an Enlightenment discourse strongly inflected with mechanistic accents, so that the clockwork regularity of nature as expressed in the bones and their manipulation became testimonies to the God of Reason and Law. And chiropractic, for its part, explained its healing work in language about freeing a mysterious energy called Innate, blocked and trapped in the body through spinal misalignments and subluxations. All the same, both Andrew Taylor Still (1828–1917), the founder of osteopathy, and D.D. Palmer (1845–1913), the founder of chiropractic, knew spiritualism intimately, and they also spoke in an American colloquial style that reflected the ideology of the Enlightenment. Both, significantly, had been magnetic doctors, whose goal was the unblocking of the trapped energies of nature. But both, finally, embraced the optimistic and perfectionist style that Transcendentalism expressed and encouraged, and both, even in their emphasis on physicality, looked to the ultimate powers of Mind. Their century seemingly everywhere made similar connections. Healing modalities from the vegetarianism of Sylvester Graham to the hydrotherapy of a small army of water-cure advocates like Russell T. Trall and Mary Gove Nichols pointed to nature, but also led to speculations about “mind” and, as the late twentieth and twenty-first century would say, about consciousness.

Consciousness itself came to be increasingly understood as part of nature, as a mysterious energy that could be tapped, in effect, as a refined version of matter. Paradoxically, for many, nature was now functioning as a bridge to the immateriality of spirit. A classic paradigm for the situation, and for the new cultural practice of nature religion, exists in homeopathy. As formulated by German physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843), homeopathy, then as now, represented a form of what today would be called “energy medicine,” and that in a Western context. As Hahnemann experimented with his new healing modality, he constructed a theoretical frame to explain it based in part on the ancient notion of correspondence, which – as we have already seen – was alive and well in nineteenth-century metaphysical circles. Hahnemann’s

law of similars, as articulated in his *Organon* (1810), taught that a substance that produced somatic results in a healthy person that were similar to the disease symptoms in a sick individual was the very substance that could heal the disease. Like, in other words, cured like. However, “like” worked according to a second law, Hahnemann’s law of infinitesimals. The German doctor and his followers used increasingly greater dilutions or, as they said, “potentizations” of the substance that they were employing in order to heal. Indeed, the potentizations were so zealously executed – for example, up to one-thirtieth of one-millionth of a remedy – that in present-day terms not even a molecule of the original substance remained in the homeopathic medicine. What was it then that remained? An energy trace? An electromagnetic field? Some kind of spiritual signature that interacted with a disease? And how did the remedy actually work? Was it a mysterious spiritual vaccination that operated in a murky halfway land between matter and spirit, between body and cosmic Mind?

Whatever the answers to the theoretical questions, homeopathy developed a series of “provings” for its medicines and, also, an anecdotal trail to demonstrate claims that patients were getting better under homeopathic regimes. It began to gain a following in the United States from the 1830s and as the century progressed became almost the preferred healing modality in the nation, used by perhaps half of the population at a time when the heroic medicine of bleeding, blistering, and calomel, or chloride of mercury (a deadly poison) was the orthodox alternative. Especially important here, homeopathy helped to forge a path for Americans into increasingly “mental” forms of cure. In a tradition beginning with the one-time magnetic doctor Phineas P. Quimby (1802–1866), a self-conscious cadre of healers announced the power of Mind to cure the body – in an American melting pot in which homeopathy, spiritualism, Swedenborgianism, and mesmerism had been blended and stirred well.

Quimby, the clockmaker become mesmerist become mental healer, drew to himself the patients-turned-students who brought to Americans the new religious orientations of Christian Science and New Thought. Quimby, in his lifetime, had at least once invoked the term “Christian science” in the context of discussing his healing practice. But it was the chronically ill Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), so thoroughly dependent on his healing influence before his death, who discovered her independence from Quimby through a new emphasis on the Christian gospel, recited for her and others in the late nineteenth century in a different key. Under a platonized Christian rubric that denied the reality of matter, she taught that contact with divine truth and transformation by it could alter the ailing “appearance” of a sick individual; that is, could effect “healthy” changes in the

perceived matter of the body. But even as Eddy denied the reality of matter, she exalted nature as the place where Spirit resided. She thought of “man” as the body of God, and continued to identify natural with spiritual laws.

Among Quimby’s other patient-students, Warren Felt Evans and Julius and Annetta Dresser moved in a different direction from Eddy, and their form of interaction with the religion of nature came eventually to be known as New Thought. In a movement that greatly admired Emerson and that celebrated the metaphysical doctrine of correspondence, the power of mind to alter nature meant, not an idealism that denied matter, but – in the long shadow of Transcendentalist thinking and of the spiritualist-Swedenborgian-mesmerist model – a vision of mind as continuous with matter. The mental “image” or idea shared real space and time with the afflicted body and could change it for the better. Affirming health was key to *being* health. Conceptions such as this and the plethora of cultural practices that arose from them continued well past the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century heyday of Christian Science and New Thought. Under the banner of positive thinking and, later, of other versions of visualization and affirmation in the service of healing, the generalized American self-help movement spread widely, seemingly everywhere, into the twenty-first century. A flourishing New Thought movement became only the tip of the cultural iceberg. Popular bookstore sales told the greater story, and so did television talk shows, newspaper feature articles, and popular magazine subjects and sales. Always, mind and thought were (more powerful) parts of nature, and always they could change the embodied state of humans who only saw and practiced the connection. The body, the news was, could be well. And even if its grosser material failed to respond on a cellular level, gifts of spiritual and psychic integration and personal peace could, in their own ways, alter appearances. The nature of nature was, in the ultimate sense, bliss and joy.

The complex Transcendental model of nature religion had led, then, in three different directions, with lines and connections among them. Environmentalism, metaphysical religion, and the physical religion of healing the body had all taken cues from this elite nineteenth-century religious and cultural movement. But, arguably, a fourth direction remained for nature religion, and this direction returns us to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment world of old Europe and the new United States. This world that preceded the Transcendentalists was addressed by them in a new rhetoric and was subsequently transformed by later lineages of American philosophers. Ironically enough perhaps, then, this fourth major direction for the nature religion that followed the Transcendental moment in American religious history returns us to a world of natural religion and theology. In his *Emerson Handbook* (1953; reprint, New York, 1967), literary scholar Frederick Ives Carpenter long ago noticed the connection between

Emerson and the pragmatism of William James (1842–1910), and in *American Religious Thought: A History* (Chicago, 1973), so did religious studies scholar William A. Clebsch. Calling James “the American who would . . . refine Emerson’s new religious consciousness to the extent of making God essentially man’s deity and of making man at home with his humanity” (124), Clebsch read the pragmatic philosopher in ways that underlined that nature, as distinct from supernature, was James’ controlling concern. The historical connections were real: Emerson had known James’ father, the Swedenborgian theologian Henry James (1811–1882), and had even visited the James household. But the connections of thought and idea, for Clebsch (as for Carpenter), were central. As Emerson before him stressed the overriding importance of direct experience, in religion as in all of life, so, too, did James. With his corridor theory of truth, in which truth opened a route to a series of “rooms” filled with experiences and beliefs that enabled people to live successfully in an often chaotic and even catastrophic world, James hailed religion and its “overbeliefs” when they worked to support human projects and goals. In effect, therefore, the Jamesian stance toward religion saw it as a natural project. It was no accident that James had begun as a medical doctor, had moved from physiological to mental considerations, and had then steered his psychological concerns toward a version of natural religion.

Without James’ medical-psychological background, later pragmatic philosophers agreed about natural religion or – in the language invoked here – nature religion. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), a mathematician and scientist, who before James had used the term pragmatism and propounded an earlier version of the pragmatic philosophy, had been a supernaturalist. The same was clearly not the case, however, for the Spanish-born poet and philosopher George Santayana (1863–1952) who became James’ Harvard colleague. Even as he emphasized the rational and imaginative prowess of the mind, Santayana situated it squarely in the physicality of the body and spoke of “animal faith.” In his *Realms of Being* (1942; reprint, New York, 1972), he argued that the home of spirit lay in matter, for spirit “must be the spirit of some body, the consciousness of some natural life” (843). Meanwhile, John Dewey (1859–1952), who – as Sydney E. Ahlstrom reported in *Theology in America* (Indianapolis, 1967) – had once hailed Emerson as “the one citizen of the New World fit to have his name uttered in the same breath with that of Plato” (59) brought to his philosophy of instrumentalism a new and uncompromising statement of natural religion. With his conviction that truth was an evolutionary phenomenon and a tool for human labor, in his classic work *A Common Faith* (1934; reprint, New Haven, 1975). Dewey argued strenuously against supernaturalism and constructed in its stead a natural religion that, as Emerson and the earlier pragmatists had done,

worked to bring idealism down to Earth. Under the banner of the American democratic ideal, he thought that natural piety could “rest upon a just sense of nature as the whole of which we are parts, while it also recognizes that we are parts that are marked by intelligence and purpose” (25).

Evolutionary thinking became a still more explicit path into natural religion in the series of late nineteenth-century thinkers who took on the Darwinian manifesto. After the appearance of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) and its subsequent permeation of intellectual discourse, the theory of evolution through natural selection provided a frame for conceptions that privileged organicism and turned distinctly away from metaphysics. Liberal philosophers and theologians alike worked out intellectual strategies to come to terms with the new prestige of evolutionary science, and in so doing they resituated themselves in what distinctively looked like the world of nature religion. The philosopher, historian, and scientific popularizer John Fiske (1842–1901), as a leading example, was deeply impressed by English evolutionist Herbert Spencer who had promoted a popularization of the Darwinian thesis that totalized it to interpret human (social) history as well as the history of nature. Fiske’s *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874) argued subsequently for an immanent God who was manifest in the life of the phenomenal world. Nature, for Fiske, was the revelation of God that could be considered true, and for him the perfection of humankind was the goal of natural evolution. Others, however, articulated cosmologies that slid them into agnosticism, free thought, and the ideological humanism that came to be known, as in the Free Religious Association after 1867, as the “Religion of Humanity.”

With a self-conscious anti-Christian and antimetaphysical stance, members of the FRA, along with adherents to similar groups such as the Society for Ethical Culture and the National Liberal League, sounded in many ways like Enlightenment deists. America’s most famous freethinker Robert Ingersoll (1833–1899), the Congregational minister’s son who earned himself the epithet “the great agnostic,” turned the earlier Emersonian proposition that nature was all that was “not me” upside down. Nature meant human nature, and the religion of nature, including the landscape delights that surrounded humans and their built environments, ended in humankind. Yet even as he pronounced, in ringing terms, his rhetorical trinitities of “Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality,” of “Observation, Reason, and Experience,” and of “Man, Woman, and Child,” like nature religionists from Puritan times to the present, he could find the biblical book that lay outside the mind and in the environment, and he declared in favor of nature in sometimes lyrical terms.

The inclusion of Enlightenment-style natural religion and natural theology under the rubric of nature religion, of course, presents its share of difficulties. For one problem, religion on an Enlightenment model tends to

lack strong practical expression. Natural theology has mostly been the province of philosophers and theologians who have sought to clarify belief and thought. As cultural practice, it has been diffuse. We can point, for example, to only a few humanist and freethinking organizations that promote it in organizational terms, and – unlike other phenomena surveyed here (for example, environmentalism, magical practice, various healing modalities) – its symbolic expression in ordinary cultural life is hard to demonstrate. Thus, as *religion* it limps. For another problem, natural theology as an enterprise arises out of a negative characterization of the supernatural more than out of a positive preoccupation with nature itself. In other words, it comes trailing a long history of Christian ideology and antipathy to it. Yet the nod to the Enlightenment, with its natural religion and theology, has its compensating value for any survey of American nature religion. Its glaring weakness regarding institutional forms – its absence of nature “churches” – is only a stronger version of a glaring weakness that may be found repeatedly in this narrative. Cultural practice may be pointed to aplenty, but how and when does it stop being useful to describe it as religious? Where, in fact, does the definitional line end? Where does religion stop and something else begin?

The nod to the Enlightenment, however, has another value. It offers a useful caveat regarding the easy and exclusive identification of nature religion with benign landscapes and/or environmental activism. Like the other great theological terms that have haunted the Western mind – “God” and “man” – nature has no clearly visible boundaries. The history of nature religion, from the time of the seventeenth-century multicultural contact culture that later became the United States to our own time, is a contested history. Both the contest and the undervisibility of the boundaries argue for the wisdom of being content with the broad-gauged Transcendental model as an interpretive trope for making hypothetical sense of nature religion. Neither purely environmental, nor simply neo-pagan, Goddess-oriented, and/or metaphysical, nor primarily deistic and rationalistic in an Enlightenment anti-supernaturalistic framework, this model suggests that to invoke the rubric of nature religion encompasses all of the above and very much more.

Perhaps the concept itself makes the most sense in a political context, and this in the end may be the strongest argument for continuing to employ the term despite the fragility of the phenomenon. Put simply, nature religion is a *bon mot* that has arisen in the very multicultural late twentieth and early twenty-first century as a sounding center for civil discourse. It offers a “common” that can be shared – both as a concept and as a condition that all must deal with, whatever their multicultural pasts and presents. Contra a “civil religion” that looks to a Jewish-Christian biblical revelation and a European Enlightenment ideology – both of them the historic domain of a privileged

Anglo-Protestant leadership community – and contra a “public religion” that secularizes the terms of that discourse to offer a mediating ethical restatement of Christian and Enlightenment values, nature religion begins not with history but with what stands over against it. The “againstness” is there for all, as a something that must be seriously confronted, something requiring – demanding – response. Nature religion, as an idea and phenomenon, reiterates democratic values, to be sure, by acknowledging the essential similarity and equality of human experience embedded in the reality that constitutes nature. But it also acknowledges forces and factors that delimit the human project – aspects of life over which humans, literally, have no control and before which they must bow. Bowing, of course, is one central and important act of worship. Bowing can also promote acts of public and communal reconciliation.

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See also: Bioregionalism; Bioregionalism and the North American Bioregional Congress; Book of Nature; Celestine Prophecy; Deep Ecology; Deism; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Emerson, Ralph Waldo; Environmental Ethics; Greenpeace; Leopold, Aldo; Muir, John; Native American Spirituality; Nature Religion; New Age; Paganism (various); Radical Environmentalism; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; Romanticism (various); Sierra Club; Snyder, Gary; Thoreau, Henry David; Transcendentalism; Wicca; Wilderness Society.

Ndembu Religion (South-central Africa)

With *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* and subsequent ethnographies of the ritual life of the Ndembu of Zambia, British anthropologist Victor Turner embarked on what is still to this day one of the most innovative series of symbolic analyses in anthropology. Turner especially focused on rituals of initiation, divination, hunting and therapeutic rituals, and other religious processes in the context of the savannah cultures of South Central Africa. As indicated by the title of Turner's monograph which is itself taken from *Correspondances*, a poem on nature by Baudelaire, the natural environment plays a very important part in the lives and ritual cycles of the Ndembu.

The Ndembu of Northwest Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) are part of a larger Lunda-related cultural complex that spreads out over the southern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre), Angola and Zambia. This Lunda world has its core in *Kool*, the historical Lunda (Ruund) heartland in the province of Katanga, Congo. The Lunda, Ndembu, and other related groups, live in a varied environment of multiple micro-ecological niches: plateau soils of clay, sand plains and rolling hills of wooded savannah, grass plains, shrub lands, woodlands, and gallery forests that grow along the numerous streams and rivers. Nature, in its rich variety, is an omnipresent fact of Lunda life. It constitutes the environmental horizon of Lunda experience, it patterns the social activities, the practical knowledge and the gendered labor divisions that rhythm daily life; it structures the individual life cycle from birth to death; and it offers the raw material that is "good to think with" in the production of symbolic and practical knowledge that is generated in ritual activities. As such, the natural environment provides a topological, projective space, both structured by and structuring the way in which the Lunda perceive their own body, their social relations, and their relations with the surrounding environment and cosmos.

Animals, but to an even greater extent also trees, offer a

rich lived-in model to symbolize and signify essential Lunda notions of individual (gendered) health and social well-being, of the union and mediation of male and female in regenerative sexuality, of social reproduction through the creation and sustaining of kinship categories and lineage continuity, and of the political realities of the Lunda world. An example of the rich symbolism provided by trees among the Ndembu is offered in Turner's classic analysis of the "milk tree" (*mudyi* in Ndembu, *muwudi* in Lunda vernacular; Apocynaceae, *Dyplorrhynchus condilocarpon*). The milk tree, conspicuous for its white latex, plays a crucial role in girls' puberty ritual (*Nkang'a*). Ndembu women attribute several meanings to this tree: it stands for human breast milk and thus highlights the metaphorical patterning of the female body, symbolizing the nurturing bond between mother and child. Secondly, Ndembu women describe the milk tree as "the tree of a mother and her child," thus shifting the biological reference of breast-feeding to a wider social tie of profound significance in domestic relations and in the structure of the larger Ndembu community, namely the principle of matriliney (itself denoted by the word *ivumu*, womb) with its underlying notions of unity and inclusiveness. Beyond that, the milk tree also symbolizes the total system of interrelations between groups and persons that make up Ndembu society. At its highest level of abstraction, therefore, the milk tree stands for the unity and continuity of Ndembu society as a whole.

Trees, however, do not only signify female physical and social reproductive qualities. Among the Lunda, the central metaphor of the tree may also express masculinity and male life-giving powers through references to a tree's more vertical qualities of erectness, hardness, stiffness and rootedness (and its manifold associations with the rising sun, the rooster, the hunter's trap, the bow and other "masculine" features). In growing toward the status of senior elder, one becomes more tree-like, rooted in one place. The process of becoming an elder goes together with the acquiring of wisdom, exemplified by the qualities of erectness and immobility that are so typical of a tree. The tree-like immobility of the elder, most fully embodied by the royal title-holder, makes present the ideologically important unchanging continuity of the societal order, over and against the transformations of society as it is lived in everyday life. This is also one of the meanings implied by the invocations that Lunda ritual therapists make to the *kapwiiip* tree (Leguminosae, *Swartzia madagascariensis*). In addressing this shrub-like tree, considered to be "the elder of all trees" because of its "bridging" qualities between male and female, left and right, red and white, Lunda therapists address the unchanging fixed normality to which the tree – and the elder – testifies through its immobility. This is also the reason why the Lunda king, as ultimate elder, as living ancestor and as both father *and* mother to his people, is identified with

the *kapwiip* tree. In Lunda and Ndembu culture political title-holders, like this tree, are both root and fruit, male and female, phallus and womb, genitor and genitrix. As such, they also exemplify the structural tension which lies embedded in the complementary opposition between men and women, masculine and feminine, agnatic and uterine, virilocality and matrilineage, that underpins Lunda society as a whole. Therefore, the image of the tree, and the image of the elder as tree, is deeply political: through its similar capacity to bridge between the complementary oppositions that pervade Lunda society, the royal body, like trees, assures the interjoining of individual, social group, and cosmos and thereby maintains and perpetuates the ideal cultural order.

At the same time the image of the tree and, by extension, the land, becomes the means by which one's place in the social landscape is not only "rooted" in an ancestral space-time but also in a material historicity. The tree and, in particular, the *muyoomb* tree (Amnardiaceae, *Lennea welwichi*), planted as a living ancestral shrine in the center of villages, seems to be one of the Lunda's preferred means for the production of historically situated locality. Trees do not only convey meanings of immobility or qualities of bridging and joining. The tree simultaneously conveys the *combination* of the idea of a central and static nexus with images of interconnection, knotting, and hence, mobility (as spatialized in the pathways leading into and away from each village). Therefore, in a seeming paradox, the Lunda notion of "place" (*pool*), although drawing on a pool of meaning related to rootedness, fixity, bridging, tying, and knotting, allows for movement through space, as the centuries-long Lunda history of migration and conquest exemplifies. Although place and a sense of locality and belonging are strongly situated in socially and spatially defined communities, they are also in a sense transportable and repetitive. As such, locality can be moved through space, recreated, or repeated in different spaces by planting new *miyoomb* trees and thus creating or growing memory, history, and belonging. Physical and metaphorical roots can thus emerge out of any social and material landscape, thereby allowing the transformation of forest into village, turning the subjects of newly conquered, dominated space into localized (i.e., Lunda) subjects and rooting the present place into the ancestral past while tying it to Lunda history. Simultaneously, the image of the tree strongly suggests that the production of culture and history is underpinned by a history of natural rhythm and processes of gestation, germination, and growth.

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See also: Anthropologists; African Religions and Nature Conservation; Congo River Watershed; Nyau – A Closed Association (Central Africa); Pygmies (Mbuti foragers) and Bila Farmers of the Ituri Forest (Democratic Republic of the Congo); Ritual; Ritualizing and Anthropology; Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Neo-paganism and Ethnic Nationalism in Eastern Europe

Neo-paganism in Eastern Europe is based on a wide range of religious, cultural and political ideas and practices. In Russia it is represented by numerous, mainly urban, small-size ethnic Russian groups and cultural associations (in Moscow, the Moscow Slavic Pagan community, the "Russian Warriors," the Koliada Viatichei community, the Church of Nav', the Satja-Veda Aryan community; in St. Petersburg, the Union of Veneds, the Tezaurus Spiritual Union, the School of Wolves; and the Sviatogor Warrior Center in Kolomna, the Kaluga Slavic community in Kaluga, Jiva Temple of Ingliia in Omsk, the Tur pagan community in Izhevsk, among others). There are also neo-pagan communities and organizations among certain ethnically non-Russian peoples in republics within the Russian Federation: these include the "Oshmarii-Chimarii" community in the Mari El Republic, the "Udmurt Vos" community in Udmurtiia, the "Erzian Master" political

party in Mordovia, the “Chuvash National Religion” in Chuvashia, the Tengrianist movement in Tatarstan, and groups in the Komi Republic and Northern Ossetia-Alaniia. The Native Ukrainian National Faith (RUNvira) is a network of communities in Ukraine which competes with many other autonomous neo-pagan communities like “Pravoslavie” in Kyiv, the Community of the Pagan Faith in Kharkiv, and others. The “Latvju dievturu sadraudze” is an umbrella neo-pagan organization in Latvia, and the “Romuva” community in Lithuania. Several neo-pagan communities and cultural organizations are also known in Belarus.

In Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia, most neo-pagan groups represent a radical form of the associated ethnic nationalist movements. In contrast to their Central and West European counterparts, local neo-pagans are mainly concerned with revitalizing traditional folk cultures, languages and identities, which are threatened with disappearance due to Russification, globalization, or both processes. Hence, there is an emphasis on the notion of “cultural ecology,” an approach that takes as its primary value the maintenance of the “purity” of ethnic or national culture. East European neo-pagans (Lithuanians aside) aspire to develop ethnic nationalist self-awareness (“Russianness” among Russians, “Ukrainianness” in Ukraine, etc.) and to spread it to the general public through fiction, religious literature, the mass media, and school curricula. Well-educated urban intellectuals (poets, writers, linguists, folklorists, philosophers, archeologists, ethnographers) play a prominent role among the leadership of neo-pagan groups, systematizing folk beliefs and developing consistent religious teachings which can be presented as the primordial ethnic or national religions. They also introduce new religious rituals, establish their own sacred sites and sanctuaries, and serve the rites and holidays which they represent as old and authentic ones. Besides references to local historical sources which are usually scarce and fragmentary, East European neo-pagans borrow from Celtic, German and Scandinavian folk traditions, Zoroastrianism, Vedic traditions of ancient India, as well as occultism and Theosophy. Russian and Ukrainian neo-pagans highly appreciate the “Book of Vles” which they treat as an authentic pre-Christian Slavic chronicle. After a paleographic examination, the document has proved to be a fake. It was fabricated by Russian emigres (assumedly by the chemical engineer Yuri P. Miroliubov) in California in the early 1950s: they did their best to identify the Slavic ancestors with the pre-historic “Aryan” (i.e., Indo-European) pastoralists who roamed throughout the Eurasian steppe between Mongolia and the Carpathian Mountains led by the forefather Oryi, according to the “Book of Vles.”

A widespread component of contemporary East-European neo-pagan movements is their hostility toward universal cosmopolitan religions, which they accuse of

authoritarianism, intolerance toward cultural variability, anthropocentrism, and responsibility for the destruction of the natural environment and of traditional culture. Participation in a green movement, however, remains limited: neo-pagans are nationalists more than environmentalists, and they emphasize cultural survival most of all. There is still no major shift toward activity for the protection of the natural environment although such concern is sometimes expressed. Russian and Ukrainian neo-pagans often treat Christianity as an evil ideology introduced by “the Jews” to subjugate all peoples, and especially Russians and Ukrainians. Similarly, Finnish- and Turkic-speaking Chuvash neo-pagans in the Middle Volga River region view Russian Orthodoxy as an ideology of enslavement (the same attitude is expressed by the Tatar Tengrianists toward Islam). Yet, while rejecting Western Christianity, certain Russian neo-pagans are willing to reconcile themselves with Russian Orthodoxy, which they treat as a younger branch of the primordial Russian religion.

At the same time, neo-pagans have been influenced by the universal religions to the extent that some of them are seeking to develop ethnic monotheist traditions, such as Dievturiba in Latvia, RUNvira in Ukraine, or the Russian Religion developed by Viktor Kandyba in Russia. Others (such as Koliada Viatichei) retain polytheistic beliefs; but many reject local variability in an attempt to create a uniform ethnic faith (sometimes also monotheist, for example, in Chuvashia). This trend is especially evident in the Republics of the Middle Volga Region.

Sometimes a “cultural ecology” orientation is taken to an extreme, resulting in biological and cultural racisms such as the “Aryan ideology” popular among some ethnic Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Latvian groups. There is a close relationship between a neo-Nazi-like political extremism and this sort of neo-paganism which promotes “cultural ecology” at the expense of practical environmentalism and feminism, albeit an articulation of a “healthy way of life” and of harmony with nature is common to all the neo-pagan groups. Certain militant Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian neo-pagans have also established schools for “warrior training” where they teach wrestling and battle skills, both with and without traditional weapons (sword, battle-ax, shield, and the like).

Some of them are obviously in contact with and borrow a lot from the Nordic neo-pagans such as Odinists and Ásatrú people (Aryan identity, Arctic homeland, runic magic, et al.). Julius Evola’s and Herman Wirth’s ideas are also highly appreciated and adapted to the Russian environment by the radical neo-pagan Russian nationalists.

By contrast, the less nationalistic and more liberal the movement, the more it tends to promote feminism and environmentalism. The latter are especially characteristic for the Lithuanian neo-pagans, in part because ethnic Lithuanians make up a dominant majority in Lithuania

and see no threat to their culture and language from anywhere. Such nature-oriented values are shared by the Tezaurus Spiritual Union among ethnic Russians and, especially, by the Middle Volga Region neo-pagan movements. Harmony with nature and rejection of consumerism are central to the Koliada Viatichei faith, the teaching of Dobroslav (a form of Russian neo-paganism which is based on national socialism), the Ukrainian "Pravoslavia" movement, and some others. Certain movements focus mainly on human health and self-treatment; the Porfirii Ivanov's "Detka" teaching is the most popular of them comprising a few dozen thousand followers.

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- See also: Fascism; Heathenry – Ásatrú; Neo-Paganism in Ukraine; Odinism; Oshmarii-Chimarii (Mari El Republic, Russia); Paganism and Judaism; Paganism – A Jewish Perspective; Russian Mystical Philosophy.

Neo-Paganism in Ukraine

Though interest in pre-Christian religion can be found throughout the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras, modern neo-paganism, or contemporary Ukrainian "native faith," emerged in Ukraine in the aftermath of Gorbachevian *perestroika* and has undergone its most dramatic growth since the early and mid-1990s. Ukrainian *ridnovira* (literally, "native faith") includes such groups as *Pravoslavia* (Orthodoxy, or Right-worship), *Obiednannia Ridnoviriv Ukrainy* (Association of Ukrainian Native-Fathers), *Sobor Ridnoi Ukraïnskoï Viry* (Synod of the Native Ukrainian Faith), *Triitsia* (Trinity), *Perunova Rat'* (Perun's Host), *Ladovira*, and devotees of the goddess Berehynia. Many, though not all, of these identify themselves as *yazychnyky*, the term customarily used for pre-Christian animist and polytheist ("pagan" or "heathen") practices.

Ukrainian neo-paganism and native faith derive from several general sources, including 1) folkloristics,

ethnography, and the study of traditional music, arts, and medicine; 2) the study of Ukrainian prehistory, including speculations on prehistoric cosmology and astro-archeology, debates about the ethnocultural affiliation of the Trypillian, Scythian, and proto-Indo-European or "Aryan" archeological cultures, and writings on controversial texts such as the *Book of Veles*; and 3) the neo-pagan revivalism of émigré writers Volodymyr Shaian and Lev Sylenko. The majority of Ukrainian neo-pagans take their modern founder to be Lviv University Sanskritologist Volodymyr Shaian (1908–1974), author of *Faith of Our Ancestors*, who in the 1930s began advocating the revival of Ukrainian paganism and who worked toward that goal, with minimal success, in Britain and later Canada. Shaian saw Ukrainians, alongside other Slavs, as the central branch of the "Aryan race" and called for a "pan-Aryan renaissance" opposed to the Germanocentric Aryan theories informing Hitler's Reich. The best-known leader of contemporary Ukrainian neo-paganism is Halyna Lozko (*Volkhvynia Zoreslava*), a philologist, folklorist, and university lecturer in religious studies. Lozko and her associates founded the Svitovyd Center for the Rebirth of Ukrainian Culture, the School of the Native Faith (in 1995), the journal *Svaroh*, and, in 1998, the Native Faith Association of Ukraine (ORU). The ORU has been prominent in the effort to recognize the *Book of Veles* (*Velesova Knyha*) as an authentic pre-Christian text, despite its dismissal as a late-modern forgery by most scholars. Many neo-pagans claim the *Book of Veles* as their holy writ, seeing in it an ancient manual of hymns and prayers, myths, sermons, theological tracts, political invectives, and fragments of historical narrative covering the movements of the ancestors of the "Rusyches" or "Oriians" across vast territories between the Indian sub-continent and the Carpathian mountains over some fifteen centuries. The text's emphasis on ethnic or cultural identity amidst a world of enemies has arguably resulted in a deemphasis (for neo-pagans) of the ecological concerns that marked the upsurge of Ukrainian ethnic nationalism in the post-Chornobyl late 1980s. Neo-pagans such as Lozko see the assertion of Ukrainian ethnic identity as equal, if not greater, in importance to the preservation and defense of nature. The two are seen as inherently intertwined and equally threatened by economic and cultural globalization, cosmopolitan Westernization, and the legacies of "Sovietization," Russification, and several centuries of "Christianization." The ORU thus works to prevent the "ruination of the ethnosphere," which is seen as a necessary component of the Earth's biosphere.

A related stream of native faith is *RUNVira*, an acronym for the Native Ukrainian National Faith. *Runvists* consider themselves a "reformed" native faith, a transformation and completion of the original Ukrainian polytheism in favor of a scientifically grounded monotheism, or panentheistic monism, centered around

Dazhboh, an impersonal representation of the life-giving energy of the cosmos. Founded in North America by Lev Sylenko, a one-time member of Shaian's Order of the Knights of the Solar God, RUNVira takes as its bible Sylenko's 1427-page *Maha Vira*, which purports to be an 11,000-year history of Ukraine and a prophetic message for a new era. Small groups of *runvists* appeared in the 1960s and 1970s in Ukrainian émigré communities in North America, Britain, and Australia, and the "Oriiana" Temple of Mother Ukraine was established as the religion's center in New York State's Catskill mountains. The first RUNVira congregation in Ukraine was registered by Kyiv authorities in 1991, and by the end of the 1990s there were about fifty officially registered and at least another dozen unregistered RUNVira congregations across the country, ranging in size from a few families to over a hundred members. A split within the international RUNVira movement has resulted in the existence of rival associations of Ukrainian *runvists*, with some moving towards a more generic and eclectic form of Ukrainian native faith while others have retained a strict interpretation of the writings of the founder. Sylenko himself remains alive but in poor health in New York State.

An assortment of other nature-centered, cosmological, and theosophical movements overlap with the native faith milieu. These include the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic (*Ukraïns'ka Dukhovna Respublika*), founded by science-fiction writer and mystic Oles' Berdnyk; the followers of nature mystic and teacher Porfyrii Korniiiovych Ivanov, founder of a system of natural health and philosophy which has spread from rural eastern Ukraine to other parts of the former Soviet Union; a large but diffuse "Vedic" movement; and a range of writers and publications, sometimes called "Aryosophists," who have been propagating the (scientifically unsupported) theory that Ukrainians are the most direct descendants of prehistoric "Aryans."

Ukrainian neo-paganism and native faith finds its main base of adherents among nationally oriented ethnic Ukrainians of higher than average educational levels. Sociologists suggest there are over 90,000 Ukrainian neo-pagans and *ridnovirs* (or 0.2 percent of the population), though active community membership appears much smaller. There is a broader interest in topics related to paganism and Ukrainian prehistory, and in the revival of folk calendar customs connected to pre-Christian practices (such as the midwinter Koliada celebrations and mid-summer Kupala rites), which frequently take place within a Christian context but are now being reclaimed as pagan festivals. Membership in neo-pagan and native faith groups overlaps with that of folk and traditional musical revival groups, Cossack associations, traditional martial arts groups, and nationalist and ultra-nationalist political groups. Though environmental activism is rare among Ukrainian neo-pagans (as it is among Ukrainians more

generally), a concern for nature is often voiced as a primary motivating factor for the conversion to a native faith perspective. This concern manifests as a general desire to return to a time when people lived in direct relationship and harmony with nature, rooted in the land and in a sense of communal honor and self-respect, familial and community ritual, and responsibility toward one's ancestors.

Adrian Ivakhiv

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See also: Druids and Druidry; Fascism; Heathenry – Ásatrú; Odinism; Oshmarii-Chimarii (Mori El Republic, Russia); Neo-paganism and Ethnic Nationalism in Eastern Europe; Paganism (various); Russian Mystical Philosophy.

Neo-Wessex Archeology

Neo-Wessex (named after a region of southern England rich in Neolithic monuments) is a term used to distinguish a number of archeologists who advocate the interpretation and recovery of the mental states of past peoples, especially in relation to prehistoric ideas of place, or landscape. These archeologists consider the landscape within which prehistoric peoples once dwelt, along with the built monuments it contained, to have not only reflected those people's belief systems and social structures, but also to have played an active role in their ongoing creation and perpetuation. Influenced by the hermeneutics of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Hans-George Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, as well as by theoretical currents within archeology that attempt to interpret the past in ways transcending a purely materialistic framework, Neo-Wessex archeology emerged in the early 1990s advocating a more emphatic, less "scientific," approach to material culture. This interpretative approach, which includes attempting to "read" the past subjectively as well as actively engage with the cognitive (even experiential) states of prehistoric peoples, has resulted in a number of methodological experiments that are open to the recovery of past religious experience, meaning, and change.

This approach rests upon the assumption that the landscape in prehistory held a cognitive dimension, a collection of meanings (myths, rituals, normative precedents, etc.), which extended its value far beyond concerns with

land usage of a solely utilitarian or materialist nature. In addition, it is hypothesized that such an infused understanding of the surrounding world was the cognitive framework through which all of life's activities were played out, be they primarily environmental, biological, socio-political, or religious. Hence, this ritualistic understanding filtered and permeated each and every daily action. As the landscape was modified by human activity, through the creation of monuments, graves, paths, and places of habitation, etc., its form was molded to further reflect and reinforce the preexisting layers of meaning. However, such modifications to the surrounding landscape necessarily affected its cognitive reading, and therefore not only did the modified environment reflect extant social forms and belief systems, but over time it also came to exert additional new elements of its own. As the landscape changed and people developed new ways of interacting with their surroundings, the meanings it held for its inhabitants changed also and, in turn, these reinterpretations were projected back onto the lived geography.

One of the aims of the Neo-Wessex archeologists is the hermeneutical recovery of this process, arrived at through the examination of a prehistoric people's material remains, the ancient geography they existed within, and possible relationships between the two. The interpretive tools used to establish such elusive meaning extend far beyond the hard sciences and include generalized anthropological and humanistic principles, comparative ethno-historical evidence, and even personal emphatic insight. The imaginative hypotheses that are critically applied to the material culture thus have their own history, especially the comparative ethno-historical analogies all of which come from their own historical contexts. This is especially true of the founding premise that prehistoric space was mediated and ritualized space, existentially significant and permeating all other cultural and environmental relations, an idea appropriated partly from ethnographic research on the Australian Aborigines.

One result of this stress on the importance of systems of belief and perception in the interpretation of all aspects of past culture has been a growing awareness of the central part religion played in the worldview and actions of past peoples. It is the realization that for many traditional cultures social and spiritual meaning was contained within the lived landscape and permeated all experience that has caused purely environmental and economically functional explanations of why people acted and why culture changed to be deemed insufficient. Economy, biology, and politics are seen as having been indistinguishable from the essentially religious systems of meaning that encompassed them. Accordingly, the Neo-Wessex approach allows a reconciliation of the polarity between functional/environmental utility and systems of belief/ideology that archeologists have often been wont to

project backwards in time onto the cultures they study. Advocates of the new perspective attempt to free modern reconstructions of the past from just such an overly rationalistic bias based upon modern premises of secularization, materialism, and functionalism and to produce less limited, more imaginative visions of prehistoric culture: visions perhaps more true to how those people may have once perceived themselves.

The researchers following a Neo-Wessex approach to landscape are varied in both their focus and the degree to which they commit themselves to the rather abstract outline given above. The classic Neo-Wessex approach to landscape is provided by Christopher Tilley.

Julian Droogan

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- See also: Paleolithic Art; Paleolithic Religions; Stone Circles; Stonehenge; Trees – as Religious Architecture.

Nepal

A pervasive and misleading mythology about religion and nature in Nepal – and the interrelationship between the two – has developed in “Western” popular culture over the last three or four decades. This particular vision usually depicts Nepal as a natural and spiritual paradise, in which a profoundly devout people with deep spiritual links to nature live in blissful harmony with the surrounding near-pristine environment.

Whilst many Nepalese are indeed deeply religious and the beauty and power of their natural surroundings is ubiquitous, the realities of the situation are nonetheless typically very different to those sketched above. In many places deforestation and pollution have sorely degraded the environment, a circumstance that reflects ambivalence toward the natural world on the part of many Nepalese. This ambivalence is arguably also evident in certain of their core religious beliefs, and appears to have evolved from the often far from idyllic character of the Nepalese peoples' actual experience of nature.

Altitude and climate severely limit the scope for agriculture in much of the country, and although 90 percent of the population is estimated to be involved in agriculture, this is largely on a subsistence basis, with famine a constant specter for many. For mountain and hill dwellers freezing temperatures and avalanche are a genuine source of danger in the winter, whilst monsoon mud and landslide take an annual toll in the hillside villages. Although not as prone to dramatic cataclysm, the jungles of the Terai were – until recent massive chemical sprayings – malarial death-traps, and a variety of tropical diseases still take an alarming toll among the region's inhabitants.

Many Nepalese therefore experience the natural environment as a powerful and potentially hostile "other" with which they must make some accommodation to ensure their own survival. Whilst it remains a fundamentally alien realm, it is (with certain exceptions) perceived as available for human exploitation, provided appropriate ritual preconditions have been met.

This vision of the forces of nature as potentially inimical – yet still available for exploitation – has had the consequence of allowing significant environmental degradation. It is a perspective which is deeply ingrained in the folk religions of Nepal, and these in turn have had a considerable influence on the Hindu and Buddhist religions which have largely supplanted them.

The folk religions date from remote antiquity, and are probably a fusion of the beliefs of the original indigenous inhabitants with those of the Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan tribes who (many millennia apart) came as settlers to the region. Being preliterate cultures it is impossible to identify their beliefs with certainty, but available evidence suggests that they practiced a form of animism: that is they believed that every aspect of the phenomenal world, from crops, weather and mountains, to fertility and disease, was the consequence – or even the actual manifestation – of an extraordinary variety of supernatural beings.

These gods, demons, and spirits – and therefore nature itself – had a multiplicity of responses to humanity, some hostile, some welcoming and many simply ambivalent. Although invisible in normal context, they were perceived as ever-present and easily prone to taking offense, the consequences of which might be felt in any manner of natural catastrophe such as landslide, drought, fire, or illness. Conversely their cooperation was regarded as essential to the successful outcome of many endeavors, from constructing a house, to growing crops, to safely completing a journey through the mountains. Rituals were developed to deal with certain common situations: a symbolic offering would be left as thanks for the cooperation of the attendant deity when a mountain pass had been safely crossed, prayers and offerings would be made to placate the Earth spirits when turning soil in a particular area for the first time, and so on.

Given that the supernatural beings had their main

existence in a world beyond the mundane, a specially skilled intermediary was required when more complex transactions with them were required. These specialists commonly displayed the attributes which we would associate with the word "Shaman," entering a supra-normal state of consciousness, either trance or ecstatic, to communicate with the being in question. He or she would thereby determine the actions necessary to placate or win the cooperation of the entity, which would usually require some form of offering or sacrifice. Interestingly, most animals do not appear to have had any status in this hierarchy aside from their value as commodities, and were themselves often offered as a sacrifice.

The welfare of the people was obviously regarded as dependent upon the success of the intermediary, and as such they held a valued and powerful position in Nepalese popular religion. Indeed they remain an ever-present feature in rural (particularly tribal) societies throughout Nepal, where they are often known as Jakhri or Dhami. While many confine their activities to the traditional role as intermediaries between the human and spirit worlds, some also perform the function of village priest or religious specialist. Those of the Limbu tribes, for example, have expanded their duties so that they include not only communication with gods, demons and spirits, soothsaying and healing, but also the performance of religious rituals, prayers, and sacrifice when not under direct "spirit control."

In some Nepalese communities – among certain of the aforementioned Limbu tribes for example – the folk religion remains predominant. In most cases it has been supplanted by Hinduism, whose roots go back to the Indo-Aryan tribes who settled in Nepal approximately three millennia ago. They had brought with them some distinctive customs – including the recitation of a group of hymns called the Vedas – with their emphasis on the gods of nature, Agni, fire, Varuna, water, and Vayu, wind, presided over by the rain-god, Indra. The wrathful goddess Durga retains great popularity, and is worshipped in all her manifestations during Dashain, the largest of the Nepalese annual festivals, but the principal gods of the modern era are the triad of Shiva, Vishnu (conceived as having entered the world in the human form of Rama and later Krishna) and Brahma. Hindu philosophers explain that all gods are aspects of the one Brahman, a transcendent, unifying all-pervading deity, and that the world is governed by the principles of karma.

The broader relationship of Hinduism with nature – as it is experienced globally – is discussed in a separate entry, but in local context it clearly has much in common with aspects of Nepalese folk religion. Again there is a sacred element to the forces of the natural world, which are to be treated cautiously but are still available for human exploitation provided that the appropriate ritual conditions are met.

These often find their place in the large, spectacular festivals for which Nepal is renowned, many of which have connections to the seasons, climate, agriculture or harvest, or some other form of natural resource management. Amongst the more obvious examples of this is the Indrajatra, usually celebrated in August/September, which appeals to Indra to provide the rain necessary for the harvest of the rice crop.

Nepalese Hinduism and folk religion also find common ground in that both continue to perform animal sacrifice, a custom which has been abandoned by most other Hindus as contrary to the precept of *ahimsa* (nonviolence). The practice is common throughout Nepal, although the Dakshinkali temple on the outskirts of Kathmandu is famous for the numbers of chickens, pigs, goats and other animals which are slaughtered every Saturday on behalf of pilgrims. Such sacrifice can be traced to Hinduism's roots in Vedic society, where it was offered either as a way of providing sustenance for the dead, or – as it is usually performed in the Nepalese folk tradition – as an act of exchange or offering to spirits or gods, from whom some reciprocal boon was expected.

It is in the character of this latter form of offering that most contemporary animal sacrifice seems to take place, although more sophisticated adherents of the practice have justified it as ultimately being a kindness to the animal, which is thus released from a life of suffering, and brought one step closer to a more fortunate rebirth as a human being. This perspective could be seen as reflecting the tradition, which emphasizes the illusory nature of the material world (*maya*) and asserts the importance of transcendence, but it seems likely that – on a popular level at least – it is the widespread belief in the efficacy of the practice that explains its persistence rather than more abstract concerns for the creature's spiritual welfare.

A rejection of animal sacrifice – and indeed the unnecessary killing of any living creature – is of course one of the hallmarks of the other numerically significant religion in Nepal: Buddhism. The Buddhism practiced in Nepal is largely that of the Mahayana school, commonly associated with Tibet. The Buddhist perspective on nature is a complex one: the phenomenal world has ambivalent status as it is characterized by suffering, but it is also the ground from which the enlightened attitude of compassion is developed, as the Buddhist's ultimate wish is to attain enlightenment so as to bring all beings to enlightenment. The concept of interdependent origination is also important. This emphasizes the connectedness of everything and gives significance to all life.

While such perspectives are embraced and understood by a small, educated elite, the majority of Nepalese Buddhist practitioners appear to follow more simple precepts, such as refraining from killing animals personally, because the Buddha stressed the importance of com-

passion. Otherwise their perception of the natural world is that of the local folk beliefs: hardly surprising given their shared cultural history. Thus they also regard the natural world as alive with spirits, and when necessary call upon the priest or lama – and in some cases the local Jhkri – to mediate on their behalf. The belief in these spirits is strong at all levels of Buddhist society. Testament to this are the local rNying-ma lamas of the Jomsom area, who volubly maintain that the destruction by landslide of their monastery several decades ago was the result of the wrath of a local mountain deity who was affronted by a foreign mountaineering party which had stayed with them, but failed to undertake the appropriate rituals of permission before venturing up its slopes.

Perhaps the best-known festival of the Kathmandu valley is that of the Red Machchendranath: the local god of rain and fertility. Originally a local Newar and Buddhist festival, Machchendranath is regarded as the deity who brings the all-important monsoon rains to the region, and as such is now worshipped by virtually the whole populace irrespective of religion or caste.

The Nepalese perspective on nature has been problematic in its effects. While it encourages people to respect the environment and reflect upon their interaction with it, it also inclines the popular imagination toward the view that the environment is a commodity which can be exploited heedless of other consequences once the requisite ritual actions have been performed (the exception being actions that are specifically taboo such as the killing of cattle by Hindus, or the defilement of any site deemed sacred). This has left the path clear for the extraordinary environmental damage that has been wrought throughout the country in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In the last few decades there have been increasing attempts to tackle the problems of environmental degradation. Initially these took place under the auspices of foreign aid bodies, but there has been a growing local awareness of the problem. This has inspired a movement within Hindu and Buddhist circles actively to promote the idea of the sacred totality of nature as expressed in their religions as an alternative to the exploitative model. In practical terms this has also led to the creation by religious leaders and groups of a variety of societies, projects and trusts with ecologically “friendly” objectives.

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See also: Buddhism – Tibetan; Hinduism; Mongolian Buddhism and Taimen Conservation; Mountaineering; Sacred Mountains; Tibet and Central Asia.

Network on Conservation and Religion

In September 1986, to commemorate its 25th anniversary, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) founded a Network on Conservation and Religion. At the initiative of the then-president of the WWF, Prince Philip of the UK, and Martin Palmer, director of ICOREC (the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture), a strange mix of environmentalists, including grassroots environmentalists, prominent officers of WWF-International, and representatives from the five so-called world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism) undertook a pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, the birthplace of St. Francis, the Roman Catholic saint whom the Vatican had in 1979 given official status as a heavenly protector for environmentalists.

The final session was staged as a religious ceremony in the basilica raised above the grave of St. Francis, and included apologies to First Peoples represented by a Maori warrior. Representatives of the religious traditions read their declarations on religion and nature and pledged themselves to cooperate with each other and the WWF in order to help save the planet, Mother Earth, from ecological disaster. The WWF Network on Religion and Conservation (sometimes also called The New Alliance), was thus formally established. Other religions joined the network in subsequent years, including Bahá'í, Sikhism, Jainism and Daoism.

The ideas behind the Network can be summarized as follows: the religious traditions, with their spiritual and ethical values as well as their billions of adherents and their impact on substantial geographical and cultural areas all over the world, can cooperate with conservationists to make a substantial and durable contribution to environmental thinking and practice. Though recognizing that the religions in the past have not always contributed in a positive way to the conservation of the natural environment, the Network sees them as an alternative to a purely materialistic, dualistic, anthropocentric and utilitarian worldview which has been partly responsible for creating the environmental crisis.

The event in Assisi, and the issuing of the declarations (published by WWF-International as *The Assisi Declarations on Religion and Nature: Interfaith Ceremony*,

WWF 1986) set the standard for the activities (interfaith meetings, celebrations of specially designed ceremonies like Harvest rituals, environmental projects run by religious communities in collaboration with scientists and the WWF, publication of more declarations) of the Network from 1986–1995. During this time, the WWF Network on Conservation and Religion published a periodical *The New Road*, and in cooperation with WWF-International and ICOREC it helped pave the way for several other publications, including among others the series *World Religions and Ecology* published by Cassell. In 1995, the WWF Network on Conservation and Religion was subsumed by the Alliance of Religion and Conservation, ARC.

Tim Jensen

See also: Alliance of Religion and Conservation; World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

New Age

The New Age movement is an amorphous association of people who identify primarily as spiritual explorers. Many if not most feel that humanity is at the dawn of entering into a new form of consciousness. The new Age of Aquarius, unlike its Piscean predecessor, is to be a time for balance between male and female qualities, the elimination of aggression and power obsessions, and a civilization more in tune with the rhythms of nature and based on a more equitable development of human potential. New Age adherents or associates, inevitably characterized by various forms of spiritual syncretism, are seekers after what they believe to be truth and peace. With this protean mix of nuance and the bizarre, the New Age itself remains among the more difficult of contemporary spiritual developments to comprehend and portray, but as a “religion of commodification,” it parlays with any number of alternative medical or psychological methods ranging from meditation, acupuncture, homeopathy, aromatherapy, astrology, environmentalism, Hermetic practice, Esoteric Christianity and Goddess Worship.

Beneath the popular image of New Age, its antecedents derive from various venerable aspects of what Colin Campbell terms the “cultic milieu.” Among these we find the Spiritualist, New Thought and Theosophical traditions of the nineteenth century. From these particular orientations, New Age inherits its practice of channeling spirits or entities from other dimensions, its belief that both illness and poverty are illusions or diseases of the mind, and its understandings of karma and reincarnation. The “cultic milieu” is itself a mix of non-mainstream spiritual and esoteric ideas imported from the East and blended with Western occult and pagan notions. The bedrock New

Age spiritual position is Gnostic or Transcendental and seeks divine truth as something masked by the physical phenomenal world. From this perspective, nature is considered ultimately an illusion and something that must be penetrated to gain access to "higher understandings."

In the 1960s, at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, the Jewish-German ex-patriot Fritz Perls introduced his Group Gestalt Therapy with its stress on the value of immediate, authentic experience within a framework that takes the mind/body as a holistic organism rather than a Cartesian dichotomy. Perls, along with such seminal thinkers as Wilhelm Reich, Otto Rank, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Rogers and such complementary practices as Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualization and Roberto Assagioli's Psychosynthesis, launched the field of humanistic psychology from which the Growth and Human Potential movements took their birth. Beginning in California and quickly spreading beyond, Human Potential intertwined with the American psychedelic heritage and spawned numerous self-help/psychophysical therapeutic practices. As these became increasingly integrated with the "cultural milieu," the New Age as a self-conscious spiritual movement began to evolve.

Following the emergence of transpersonal psychology from humanistic psychology and concern with the transcendent potential of the individual in self-actualization, New Age represents the spiritualization of the Human Potential movement. Placing relationship with divinity into a holistic worldview, any development of an ecology of self eventually includes an ecology of the planet and the potential for cross-fertilization with the concerns of deep ecology. Succinctly, and grounded by the astrological consideration that we are leaving an age of Pisces for the new age of Aquarius, the New Age is an expectation of individual change that will coalesce into a quantum leap of collective consciousness. Following current theories of complexity that study spontaneous self-organization in which the whole becomes more than simply the sum of its parts, New Age continues the idealism of the counter-culture of the 1960s as a modification if not refutation of contemporary cynical trends by affirming the reality of magic as it relates to self-transformation, communal development and progressive global change.

While New Age derives from specific cultural or sub-cultural trends (Theosophy, spiritualism, humanistic and later transpersonal psychologies), it is nevertheless a disparate conglomerate of different movements and/or religions. Sociologically, it remains difficult to grasp. It is neither a traditional church, identifiable sect, mainstream denomination, nor a single unorthodox cult. There is no institutional mechanism for determining membership or countenancing expulsion, no one who can speak for the movement as a whole, there is no list of creeds, and there is no register of membership. It is instead a loose series of networks, often cellular and replicate, with a constantly

shifting rostrum of spokespeople, therapists and teachers. In short, its fluid organization or even non-organization makes it more of a consumer phenomenon than anything that could be understood as traditionally religious. In fact, New Agers frequently proclaim that they are not religious but spiritual. This non-institutional nature and marketing choice of New Age appears to be its underlying appeal. The New Age represents *a* if not *the* spiritual consumer supermarket that is steadily superseding the appeal of traditional religion in the Western world. In the present-day context of rapid social change, New Age may be cited as an affirmation and celebration of spiritual choice. But this in turn leads to severe accusations of cultural appropriation – especially from identity-endangered peoples such as Native Americans and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. As a rebuttal, New Age insists that the multi-cultural register is now public domain and accessible to everyone.

In short, an inordinate amount of criticism is directed against its varied practices and more prominent beliefs. Foremost is the critique that dismisses New Age spirituality as essentially narcissistic. The self-preoccupation that has to do with "me" only is described as touchy-feely, airy-fairy, intellectually vapid and eclectically woolly. For many, New Age is described as cheaply false, spiritually kitsch, and a mumbo-jumbo mash that is pastel-colored and lavender-scented. Its central purpose is frequently understood by the non-sympathetic as little more than an effort to make money from those reputedly foolish enough to purchase the many gimmicks and psychophysical therapies that are marketed under the widely embracing label of New Age.

The New Age response to anti-religion criticism accepts that religions have their roots in early practicalities and anxieties but argues that uncertainty and the need for pragmatic solutions is no less a part of our ever-changing and increasingly complicated world. The New Ager is also as likely to retort that if Christianity, Buddhism and the other major religions are now established, they were not always so but were once themselves essentially new religious spiritualities. Despite the wide range of beliefs and practices that might fall under the general rubric of "New Age," as a religious perspective, New Age is no less a shared attempt to understand what constitutes the world, humanity and the supernatural and the relationships between them in ways that give meaning to participants' lives and help them determine what is valuable within some sort of workable framework. The heart of New Age is not such superficial peripherals as candles, crystals and incense, but is instead the increasing awareness in today's world of individual difference and cultural multiplicity that religious choice is a personal decision. Insisting that religious truth is no longer the monopoly of private elites or esoteric cabals, New Age religion may be said to represent a democratization of spirituality within the emergent

information age that validates universal suffrage to spiritual prerogative.

Consequently, the shallow, scented and evasive proclivities of what is termed characteristically New Age are primarily a media-induced creation. The press has tended to sensationalize the practice of channeling, use of crystals and the reputation for “flakiness,” but New Age itself may be something more than these. As holistic theoretician Marilyn Ferguson describes it, there is an “Aquarian conspiracy” that endeavors and promotes humanitarian and ecological consciousness. The problem for New Age in gaining a respectable public image perhaps lies more with the fact that decentralist empowerment policies, citizen diplomacy missions, ecological and educational reform, and integral thought do not sell newspapers. Apart from the unresolved issue of cultural “theft,” New Age’s deepest problem is a public relations issue.

Nevertheless, New Age appropriation from a truly holistic perspective might constitute the movement’s Achilles’ heel. Inasmuch as New Age facilitators exploit indigenous culture for financial profit and self-gratification, they remain largely insensitive to the suppression, denial and socio-economic constraint under which the traditional holders of such culture have labored. They also appear to be callous with regard to the damage and destruction they cause to the heritage of people whose identity and potential for survival are intimately connected to their own spirituality. For those for whom knowledge is something that is privileged and not simply a marketable commodity, the unscrupulous and ruthless exploiter of “sacred knowledge” becomes simply a fraud, charlatan, liar and cheat. The “plastic” shaman and New Age wannabe who claim that practicing native spirituality is “their right” are condemned by those who feel robbed as seeking “a quick-fix or religious Band-Aid.” If it were true that spiritual property can no longer be privately owned, New Agers have consistently demonstrated a flagrant lack of sensitivity to the broader consequences of this issue.

Analytically, New Age may be broken down into three distinguishable and often overlapping orientations: occult, spiritual and social. Occult or esoteric New Agers accept the supernatural as a real and intervening force in human and terrestrial affairs. Frequently there is in this orientation an expectation of violent or even apocalyptic Earth changes (storms, famine, earthquakes, pole shift, plagues) that will constitute the transition into the new era. There is general acceptance of a *deus ex machina* or divine intervention as the instigator if not designer of collective consciousness emergence. By contrast and unlike the media-promoted occult side of New Age with its associations of spirit guides, channeling, crystal meditation and appropriation of symbols from different cultures, the spiritual and social dimensions of New Age place their emphasis on human effort rather than supernatural intervention. The former stresses spiritual development of the

individual – whether through meditation, yogic practice, shamanism, personal discipline, human potential and/or psychophysical therapy. The rationale is based on the belief that as individuals develop and transform, so too will both global society and the human biosphere. Personal enlightenment in enough numbers will bring about collective enlightenment (i.e., a new age). The social dimension of New Age, on the other hand, is epitomized in Ferguson’s 1980 publication of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Here the emphasis is on social service and pragmatic work in the areas of educational, institutional, environmental and remedial change. The concern is neither with the self nor with transcendental or magical assistance but with concrete work that brings about empirical transformation. The social-service wing of New Age preoccupies itself with charity work and both humanitarian and ecological reform.

When critics ignore the more serious and less sensational sides of New Age, they tend to dismiss it as little more than a fad. New Age becomes accused of being shallow, self-indulgent, escapist and superstitious – offering little more than a potpourri equivalent of snake-oil cures. But once again, even to the degree that such accusations may contain an element of accuracy, faddism is simply New Age’s means and not its goal. New Age uses the currently popular to explore, test and digest each religion’s symbols, images, objects and “spiritual truths” as resources to understand their validity and usefulness. While to date much of this pursuit can accurately be labeled uncritical and insensitive, New Age’s insistence on the undemanding and pleasant is simply a reflection of present-day consumer-society mores. The critic accuses New Age of adopting the position that “anything goes,” but the reality of New Age experimentation is that everything is tried and sampled. There are no restrictions. This is the way it seeks to uncover meaning and value within a religious framework that applies as much to the individual as it might also to various collectivities, communities, society or the planet.

Despite the great disparities of practice and pursuit encountered throughout the broad range of what can be labeled as New Age, we find certain common denominators of belief. Among these there is the acceptance that we have all lived previously; that our present life is not our first or only life. This attitude is largely to be traced to Eastern ideas of reincarnation that New Age inherited from Theosophy. It is predicated upon the essentially Gnostic belief that the cycle of rebirth is something from which to escape and transcend. In this sense, New Age contrasts strongly with contemporary forms of Western Paganism that embrace the world as a desirable and welcome reincarnation as offering a means for the return to earthly life. The corollary to this, therefore, is that New Age is less likely than Western Paganism to promote environmental activism.

From its Spiritualist legacy, on the other hand, New Age accepts that we can communicate with the dead. Once again, this possibility relates to the idea that this life is not all that there is. With or without reincarnation, or at least between successive incarnations, there is, to use the Spiritualist designation, Summerland – the realm of spirits in the beyond. Spiritualism insists that we can communicate with our deceased family members and loved ones for guidance, knowledge and confirmation. New Age has tended to take this further and, especially through its Theosophical affinities, is less interested in the departed as it is in contacting spiritual masters or mahatmas, extraterrestrial beings or space-brethren, and extra-dimensional discarnates. New Age is not concerned with Spiritualism's desire to *prove* the existence of life after death but rather with the acquisition of "higher wisdom" to assist one's spiritual development in the here and now. At the same time, as environmental alarm increases in the world at large, New Age channeled messages have revealed a growing turn toward more "green" issues.

From its origins in New Thought, New Age assumes that evil is an illusion of the mind. It seeks therefore to eradicate both illness and penury for the individual – at least the evolved individual who comes to understand the almost limitless power of the human brain and its relationship to ultimate universal energy. For New Age, this translates into the doctrine that we can heal ourselves. Its many Human Potential therapies from Roling, yoga, Reiki, shiatsu, reflexology, t'ai chi, gestalt, encounter, bio-energetics, iridology, *est*, Zen, Aikido, neo-shamanism, Transactional Analysis and Transcendental Meditation are simply different vehicles through which the New Ager seeks self-healing. In other words, these techniques aim to assist the individual toward actualizing the implicit assumption that the negative is simply a figment of the imagination. As New Age shaman Jonathon Horwitz perceives the healing consequences of the illusory nature of evil, the challenge arises from this to "network nature" and halt the "slaughter of the environment" – using the powers of the universe in the optimum way for the planet and all its inhabitants.

The Human Potential aspect of New Age also relates directly to what could be identified as a fourth New Age belief, namely, that we are in charge of our lives. This attitude, along with the belief that the negative or evil of illness and deprivation is an illusion, comprises the singular uniqueness of New Age: its insistence on the positive and utter denial of hindrance. In this sense alone, New Age is an affirmation that demands the world to be as it wishes. Concepts of retribution, original sin and punishment become completely alien in the New Age context, and however naive and foolish such an attitude might be judged to be, New Age represents a daringly courageous spirituality that affirms the power of positive thinking as a means to obtaining progressive ends. If there

is one spiritual principle that distinguishes New Age from the world's other major religions, it is probably this. To the degree that the "negative is encountered," it is seen simply as an "opportunity" for spiritual progress.

And, finally, in keeping with its place in the Gnostic lineage, New Age is the belief that spiritual truth comes from within. Insight is not a product of revelation or external acquisition, but one of inner development and discovery. In this complete valorization of self-experience, New Age affirms its belief in both seekership and the validation of private experience. In this sense, New Age offers a Gnostic form of mysticism – not a mysticism of escape as we find in Hinduism and Buddhism, nor quite the mysticism of union with God that occurs with esoteric Christianity or Sufism, but a mysticism of *becoming* a god. Authority and validity belong to the inner, private individual where, for New Age, lies the source of truth.

All these essential New Age beliefs – that we have lived before, that we can communicate with discarnate forms of consciousness, that we can heal ourselves and are in charge of our lives, and that spiritual truth is something to be discovered within the sanctity of the self rather than in a sacred text, or from a pulpit, or through an ecclesiastical sacrament or via an act of external or transcendental grace – resonate with the contemporary forms of spirituality that appear increasingly to be turning away from traditional institutional forms. In our world of today, spirituality is about choice – perhaps reflecting our increased valuing of the consumer and the right to make decisions that reflect personal needs and desires as apart from automatically following the dictates of established authority.

Because of its Gnostic and Theosophical heritage, there is an underlying bias throughout New Age to consider the environment a secondary concern. At the same time, however, the nature-as-illusion versus nature-as-real dichotomy has not been clearly articulated within much if not most New Age expression. Through such collective efforts as Findhorn, The Farm and Esalen or such communal centers as Glastonbury, Sedona and Ojai, New Age community efforts develop immediate awareness of – and have direct impacts on – their local environments and have tended thereby to emerge as vanguard ecological models for the global audience. Experimentation and incorporation of organic farming methods, renewable energy sources, conservation techniques, vegetarianism, home-spun textiles, alternative technology, cottage industries and cost-efficient production have shown that where New Age types of spirituality meet the Earth, they are fully capable of developing a sustainable environmental equilibrium. Consequently, despite New Age's affinity and continuation of Gnosticism, the movement's overall paradoxical nature as well as its interface with paganism and shamanism encourage a holistic inevitability that encompasses not only whatever other concerns there are

with self and transcendence but also the well-being of the planet as a place upon which “to walk gently.”

Michael York

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- See also: Aboriginal Spirituality and the New Age in Australia; Astrology; California Institute of Integral Studies; Celestine Prophecy; Cetacean Spirituality; Channeling; Dolphins and New Age Religion; Earth Mysteries; Ecopsychology; Ecotopia; Esalen Institute; Findhorn Foundation/Community (Scotland); Harmonic Convergence; Rainbow Family; Re-Earthing; Rustlers Valley (South Africa); Shamanism – Neo; Steiner, Rudolf – and Anthroposophy; Theosophy; Transpersonal Psychology; Unitarianism; UFOs and Extra-terrestrials; Western Esotericism; Whales and Whaling.

New Religious Movements

The expression “new religious movement” (NRM) is a term of convenience designed to circumvent the negative connotations that, sometimes correctly but perhaps more often erroneously, have accrued in the public mind to such sociological constructs as the “cult” and “sect.” More accurate terminology might be “marginal religious movements” or “alternative religious movements.” These terms avoid the question of when ought a group no longer be classified as new, but “NRM” has emerged in the academic *lingua franca* as the currently accepted and pragmatic designation.

Among the higher-profile NRMs are the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church (the Moonies), ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness or the Hari Krishnas), The Family (formerly, the Children of God) and Rastafarianism. Others more contentious in the past but now generally less so, either through internal transformations or through changes in external perception, include Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Transcendental Meditation, Guru Maharaj Ji’s Divine Light Mission (now Elan Vital), followers of Rajneesh/Osho, Ananda Marga, Summit Lighthouse/Church Universal and Triumphant, *est*/the Forum or Centres Network and Subud. On the other hand, certain groups have demonstrated various degrees of violence – either self-directed against themselves (Jim Jones’ Peoples Temple of Guyana; Heaven’s Gate in San Diego; the Solar Temple in both Switzerland and Canada) or engineered against others (Aum Shin Rikyo in Japan) or as themselves the recipients of external violence (David Koresh’s Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas). Less prominent groups that come under the label of new religious movements include the Aetherius Society, Raëlians, Brahma Kumaris, Sahaja Yoga, Sri Chinmoy, ECKANKAR, Church of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA)/Insight Transformational Seminars and Nicheren Shoshu Buddhism/Soka Gakkai. In general, NRMs that can be located as or through identifiably organized groups derive chiefly from the traditions of Christianity, various forms of Eastern spirituality (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh or Sufi) or the more secular Human Potential Movement (including UFO groups). Nevertheless, other influences and innovations found throughout the general alternative-spirituality market that Colin Campbell referred to as the cultic milieu continue to modify and shape Christian, Eastern and secular NRMs. In addition, less organized, structured and/or totalitarian religious expressions have also emerged, namely, the more amorphous New Age and Contemporary Western Pagan movements.

Many of the “older” NRMs developed as counter-responses to the 1960s counterculture in which radical experimentation and rejection of established social mores led to disorientation, polarization, hostility, confusion and

anomie for many, and the emerging new religions may have served as vehicles toward either social reintegration or increased but structured marginalization and status as outsiders. For others, however, NRMs are part of a perennial exploration of new and different spiritual parameters that has always been a feature of Western civilization. In virtually all cases, NRMs represent various forms of protest and efforts toward either social withdrawal or social change. These are understood by Roy Wallis to be either world-rejecting, world-affirming or world-accommodating.

Charles Glock and Rodney Stark see religion more broadly as providing various forms of compensation to economic, social, organismic, ethical and/or psychic deprivations. Individuals or groups that are not equally valued by a society resort to the Church as a logically religious response. Those, however, who suffer from a disadvantaged economic position turn instead to the sect. On the other hand, the resolution for those who perceive mental or physical disability (organismic deprivation) – both objective and subjective – is the healing movement. If healing becomes the exclusive concern of the religious movement, the group will tend to conform to the cult-type. Ethical deprivation refers to holding values that are in conflict with prevailing norms, while psychic deprivation is that which is experienced by people who do not possess a system of meaningful values by which to interpret and organize their lives. The response to both psychic and ethical disequilibrium may be either religious or secular. Movements that arise through ethical deprivation tend to be ephemeral, faddish and reformist. In contrast, psychic deprivation finds its religious resolution in the extreme cult and/or occult milieu (New Age, UFO groups, Theosophy and New Thought), but if this deprivation is accompanied by economic disadvantage, one likely outcome is the radical political movement (e.g., the more violent protest activities directed against the World Trade Organization). For Glock and Stark, either the cult succeeds and comes to set the prevailing social norm or it fades away. In their typology, protest against industrial pollution and environmental degradation is a response of ethical deprivation, but to the degree that it is also a healing and remedial effort it is an organismically derived response as well.

In contrast to Glock and Stark's understanding of organizational resolutions based on the various types of subjective deprivations that people experience relative to others, Bryan Wilson has refined the broad sectarian response to encompass what he terms conversionist, adventist or revolutionist, introversionist, Gnostic or manipulationist, thaumaturgical (miracle-working), reformist and utopian ideal-types. To understand the relationships of new religious movements to nature, Wilson's typology along with an understanding of the theological tradition in which any specific NRM emerges

allows the most fruitful analysis. But at the same time, the sectarian response as understood by Wilson conforms in its range of possibilities to the specific attitude toward the world shared by the holders of any given response. Those who reject the world take little or no interest in its preservation, and those who simply accommodate their own agendas to something that is regarded as either intrinsically or indifferently valueless have no rationale toward making any concrete and sustainable engagement or reformist effort. Consequently, it is largely those who religiously, spiritually and/or secularly affirm the world as something real and valuable who are the ones who become involved with holistic concerns, ecological reforms and political protest on behalf of the environment and protection of nature.

From Wilson's perspective, the sectarian movement always exists in some kind of tension with the world, rejecting the orthodox or dominant religious tradition and generally seeking salvific goals in ways that differ from the means provided by the prevailing socio-cultural institutional facilities. Wilson's typology is meant to provide a measuring of standard ideal-types rather than to be a system of classification. This means that any specific group might approximate to more than one type, although usually more to one particular ideal over the others. Wilson's conversionist sect is exemplified by Christian evangelism, orthodox fundamentalism and pentecostal sectarianism. A classic example is the Salvation Army and, among NRMs, The Family, the Jesus Army (the Jesus Fellowship Church) and the International Church of Christ (the "Crosslands Movement") in which the primary concern is the experience of emotional conversion and transformation. This change of heart as the central feature becomes the proof of an individual's transcending the world's evils and his or her ultimate unconcern with decay, death and worldly well-being. This conversionist response differs from the revolutionist one that holds instead that only the destruction of the world will be sufficient for human salvation. This is usually expected imminently and through divine action. Believers may participate directly in the revolutionary process, but in general they are more passive and rely on faith for the new dispensation of supernatural intervention and apocalyptic upheaval. The classic examples here are Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians and, among NRMs, the Branch Davidians, the Unification Church and again to some extent The Family.

The most developed anti-worldly position from Wilson's perspective is his introversionist response that sees the world as irrevocably evil and calls for withdrawal from it as the only possible route to salvation. Some of the Holiness movements conform to this response as do conservative Quakers and the Amana Society, but here too we find many of the Eastern-inspired or -derived groups such as the Hari Krishnas, Brahma Kumaris and to some extent Mataji Nirmala Devi's Sahaja Yoga. More extreme

than the introversionist position but at the same time less anti-worldly is the utopian response that seeks to reconstruct the world according to some divinely inspired plan – usually by establishing a communal model. Some examples include the Mennonite, Amish, Hutterite and/or Brüderhof groups, Koreshan Unity and the Oneida community as well as the more contemporary collectives such as Stephen Gaskin's The Farm, Esalen in Big Sur, California, Findhorn in Forres, Scotland and the various communities of the Emissaries of Divine Light. The reformist response is less radical than the utopian, concerned with accommodation to the world but is centered on making efforts toward the gradual improvement of society and terrestrial life. While some of the New Age manifestations may be seen as reformist, much of the neo-pagan and related spiritualities are concerned with amending the world through motivations of social conscience if not also spiritual connection. Especially for contemporary Western Paganism, reformation may be either dictated through supernaturally inspired insight or via secularly rational deduction. To the degree reformist orientation conforms to this last, it essentially bypasses the Wilsonian typology that restricts itself to the positing of a supernatural factor in its sectarian response to the world. If, on the other hand, we allow that the supernatural may or may not be regarded as an operative, Wilson's ideal-types are applicable to the contemporary range of new religious movements. The revolutionist, thaumaturgical and conversionist responses are the ones that specifically emphasize the autonomous operation of the supernatural: the first expects it to overturn the world, the last expects change through divine Providence to be internal, and the magical expects certain concrete or demonstrable dispensations and miracles to occur.

In Wilson's understanding, the conversionists are subjectivists, but the "overturning" revolutionists, the "abandoning" introversionists, the "amending" reformists and the "reconstructing" utopians are all objectivists who focus one way or another on the world itself. Both thaumaturgists and manipulationists he refers to as relationists, and while the latter is close to the subjectivist position in that they expect a change of perception through the supernatural, it is at the same time more intellectual and less emotional, other-worldly and transcendental. But again, both these relational responses are implicitly this-worldly: the thaumaturgical in seeking local, immediate healing, restoration, reassurance, foresight, consolation and magical guarantee; the manipulationist in seeking everyday well-being and improvement. It is this last which essentially informs most of the New Age, Contemporary Western Pagan and Human Potential/Self-Help movements as well as such specific identities as Christian Science, New Thought, Scientology, est, Raëlianism, Transcendental Meditation, Rajneeshism, Elan Vital, Sri Chinmoy, Subud, ECKANKAR, MSIA, Eternal

Flame Foundation and Soka Gakkai. At its heart is the obtaining of gnosis or inner wisdom through intellectual acquisition, mental hygiene or physical regimen that in turn becomes the tool by which to change one's perception of the world and achieve both objective achievement and psychic reassurance. By contrast, the thaumaturgical consideration of the supernatural as an external force that can exert tangible influence on the world is most at home, along with the revolutionist movement, in less-developed societies. It persists in the West through Spiritualism, such orientations as the "I AM" Religious Activity and the Church Universal and Triumphant, or New Age channeling. On the other hand, the contemporary Pagan and esoteric practices of Ceremonial and other forms of Magic(k) tend to work with psychological and internal constructs of the mind rather than with what are considered to be objective and self-existing magical entities. In other words, they conform more to the manipulationist than thaumaturgical positions.

Consequently, NRMs can be focused on individual salvation or universal concerns or both. To the degree that they follow a Gnostic or Transcendental theology of one sort or another, they exhibit less interest with the world and its reform and transformation. But inasmuch as NRMs are grounded in a this-worldly pagan theological understanding, religion and nature become fused as a central concern – especially as industrial imbalance and random unconscious exploitation continues to put the very viability and future of the planet into a perceived and/or real jeopardy. New religions that engage with nature rather than some transcendental reality to which nature is merely a foil, impediment or at best subservient will tend to be reformist, utopian or manipulationist and, to a lesser extent, thaumaturgical. Those that are either conversionist, revolutionist or introversionist will tend to see nature as an illusion or worthless or both and have little foundation or desire for a dynamic and holistic engagement with the organic dimension.

Michael York

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See also: Cetacean Spirituality; Church of Nazareth, KwaZulu-Natal, Deep Ecology; Dolphins and New Age Religion; Ecopsychology; Emissaries of Divine Light; Esalen Institute; The Family (Children of God); The Farm; Findhorn Community (Scotland); Gush Emunim; Harmonic Convergence; Hippies; Kimbanguism (Central Africa); Koliada Viatichei; Masowe Wilderness Apostles; Mother Earth and the Earth People (Trinidad); MOVE; New Age; Radical Environmentalism; Rainbow Family; Redwood Rabbis; Scientology; Soka Gakkai and the Earth Charter; Steiner, Rudolf – and Anthroposophy; Transcendental Meditation; Transpersonal Psychology; UFOs and Extraterrestrials; Western Esotericism.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a nation-state composed of three major islands in the southern Pacific approximately 1000 miles (1750 km) southeast of Australia. Its remote geographic location contributed to its unique ecology, which included flightless birds such as the moa. The moa ranged in height from four to ten feet and was hunted to extinction by Maori inhabitants centuries before Captain James Cook claimed the islands for Britain in 1769.

Stretching nearly 1000 miles from north to south, New Zealand has a temperate climate, characterized by semi-tropical fern-tree forests in the north and hardwood beech forests in the uninhabited fjordlands of the South Island. The indigenous Maori population migrated south in a series of canoe journeys from "Hawaiki" in Eastern Polynesia from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. The Maori introduced exotic mammals, the dog and the rat, and the kumara (a sweet potato cultivated in the southern Pacific region). Maori history has been divided into an "archaic moa-hunting culture" (ca. 900–1300) and a "classic" Maori culture (ca. 1300–present).

Religion in pre-contact New Zealand has been reconstructed with great difficulty, due to the aggressive colonization and Christianization of the Maori by European settlers and missionaries beginning in 1814. Most of the missionaries were British Anglicans and Methodists who regarded the Maori as the "children of Shem,"

descendants of the "lost" ten tribes of Israel. Subsequent Maori prophets alleged that Jehovah was brought to the islands by their Jewish ancestors, forgotten for centuries, and rediscovered by them in their dreams and visions.

Missionaries required converts to renounce *mana* and *tapu* as things of the devil. Mana is an extra-human power that inheres in certain people, places, objects, and collectives. It can be gained or lost. *Tapu* refers to any place, object, or person that is set apart as prohibited or sacred. *Tapu* rules regulated Maori society, just as civil law imposes order in Western cultures. Loss of *mana* and *tapu* contributed to social disorder and the rise of Maori renewal movements that challenged colonization and Christianization. Followers of the "good and peaceful" movement received *mana* from wind spirits, led by the Angel Gabriel. The King movement united the central North Island tribes under the *mana* of a Maori king and established a *tapu* boundary around their ancestral lands. Today, the Maori practice a variety of Christian religions, some of which, such as Anglicanism, Methodism, and Mormonism, are imports, and a few of which, such as Ringatu and Ratana, were initiated by nineteenth- and twentieth-century visionaries.

The European impulse to missionize the Maori was millenarian. New Zealand was the geographical antipode of the British Isles. The Christianization of the Maori tribes fulfilled the command to carry the Gospel to the "end of the Earth" (Acts 1:8) before the Savior would reappear in the thousand-year reign of God. The enterprise of colonization was regarded as the fulfillment of a prophecy that "God shall enlarge Japhet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Buddle 1873: 5). Japhet was presumed to be the white race, "enlarged" by its technological superiority and parliamentary system and destined to rule over the other biblical races delineated in Genesis, chapters 9 and 10.

The rise of Maori new religious movements in response to colonization and Christianization sparked the epic series of Land Wars from 1858 to 1872 that forged the modern state of New Zealand, a "new Albion" in which pastures and orchards replaced native forests, and commercial enterprises replaced fishing and horticulture. During the wars, tribes lost their lands through punitive confiscations and special legislation that divided tribal holdings into private parcels. In the North Island, Aboriginal forest remains primarily in the Urewera National Park – contested ground between conservationists and the Tuhoë tribe that claims the totara tree of the creator god, Tane Mahuta, and ancestral burial caves in the sacred mountain fished from the sea by the creator god, Maui. The South Island was inhabited only in the north by the Kai Tahu people, who controlled the trade in greenstone, which was used to fashion sacred objects. The Kai Tahu land was acquired under extreme duress in 1848 by the imperial government, which sold it to settlers for sheep stations.

New Zealand is now an independent commonwealth nation, a largely biracial state that remains divided over ultimate claims to the land. The Treaty of Waitangi, a founding document signed by some Maori chieftains and representatives of the British in 1840, is so ambiguously worded that Maori and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descent) both claim that their sovereignty over the land is upheld by the treaty's language. The extraordinary Waitangi Tribunal, set up in 1985, has since fostered the payment of reparations and the restoration of land and fishing rights to specific North and South Island tribes, including the Kai Tahu.

According to Maori custom, land is an inalienable possession of the tribe and cannot be sold. The Maori word for "land" and "placenta" are one and the same. A new-born's umbilical is buried in the Earth in a special ceremony. Sacred places are the central feature of Maori religion, and the land is regarded as essential to the life-force of the people. It is noteworthy that the Maori population suffered its greatest decline in the latter half of the nineteenth century when tribes were being separated from ancestral lands. A prophet who received God's call to save his people, responded: "If your wish is for me to save only people, I won't help, but if it is to save the land, then I will carry out this task" (Webster 1979: 158).

According to the Christian creation myth, from the beginning man (not woman) was granted dominion over the Earth and its creatures. This myth has been cited time and again by British agents and settlers to justify their takeover of Maori "waste lands." The official who drafted the English version of the Treaty of Waitangi argued against Aboriginal rights, asserting that the only "natural right of a man to land" was over land "which he had subdued from the forest, to the uses of man." He compared this right to "that instinctive sense of right which a man possesses in his own children" (Busby 1860: 10). The tension over what the Maori call "mana over the land" and the Pakeha call property rights underlies the cultural conflict between the government and the tribes regarding specific places and ecological resources. These contesting worldviews are derived from each people's creation myths.

New Zealand has been cited as one of the least religious (i.e., church-attending) countries on Earth. Jokingly, the religion of New Zealand has been called "rugby, racing, and beer." Neither assertion has much validity, because religion is that which symbolically binds a distinct people together in a common religious identity. Myths of the origin of a tribe's world and people, and its oral recitation of the names of ancestors and significant events that happened at specific places, reveal what is of ultimate concern to a self-identified group. Statistics regarding church affiliation or attendance are insufficient measures of religion. What is most sacred to both races in New Zealand is the land itself, which is not surprising considering that islands are finite territories wherein an expanding

population must negotiate the use of its most important and dwindling resource: space. Viewed as the paramount religious sacrality, the land of these beautiful islands is the chief protagonist in the history of New Zealand.

To New Zealanders of European descent the land is also dear. No longer regarded as terra incognita, the Anglicized landscape of New Zealand provides recreation (literally, re-creation) for a largely urban population. Sheep stations and coastal or lakeside cabins are handed down as familiar places of refuge and rest. They are places infused with meaning, where ancestors and present inhabitants are connected via remembrance and story.

The Southern Alps and Fjordland National Park in the South Island are world-class tourist destinations. The Pakeha conservationist ethic may be interpreted as a benign extension of the Genesis myth of domination and enterprise when it succeeds in establishing wild lands as an economic base for outdoor sports and tourism. Conversely, the Maori struggle to regain their ancestral places may be interpreted as an extension of tribal creation stories that establish certain trees, waters, stones and mountains as tapu treasures (taonga) that provide for the continued wholeness and life of the community.

In 1991 after extensive public review, the New Zealand parliament passed the Resource Management Act, a "greenprint" for the islands' ecological health. It divided the country into sixteen bioregions based on watersheds. Elected regional authorities are responsible for implementing the goal of the RMA: comprehensive planning of sustainable management of natural resources. Utilizing a Nash Equilibrium approach, business interests have rallied around the RMA as the optimal means of securing each company's self-interest (Johnson 1995: 68–87). The RMA seems to have combined the Pakeha myth of human management of natural resources and the Maori myth of human dependence on Earth as sustainer of life in a rational program to protect the environment of New Zealand. One may regard the RMA as an expression of an emerging transnational religious consciousness of the doctrine of ecological sustainability. Only New Zealand and The Netherlands have committed themselves to such a far-reaching political, social, and environmental plan. This cannot be accidental. Religion in New Zealand is pre-eminently oriented to landscape, which is the "homescape," of Maori and Pakeha, both of whom have established their lives and those of their descendants upon their contrasting but equally sacred orientations to the land and its treasures.

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- See also: Australia.

Nhat Hanh, Thich (1926–)

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Zen monk trained in both Zen and Theravada practices. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for his peace work during the Vietnam War. He lives in exile in France, is a prolific writer and retreat leader, and is one of the most influential Buddhist teachers in the West.

The heart of Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching consistently has been healing and reconciliation. Nhat Hanh offers tools to heal and reconcile not only human communities, but also human relationships with our bodies and the natural world. For Nhat Hanh, if we could heal our relationship with nature, if we could "be peace" with respect to nature, knowing that we are in no way separate from it, the actions that naturally arose from that condition would spontaneously be respectful, loving and generous toward the natural world.

The healing and reconciliation of our relationships with the natural world are rooted in mindful awareness, in particular, mindfulness of "interbeing." Nhat Hanh uses two favorite mindfulness practices for this healing purpose: eating meditation and walking meditation. In eating meditation, one simply eats something, for example, an orange, very slowly and with full attention given to the

present moment of peeling, smelling, chewing, tasting, salivating, swallowing, etc., with no silent verbal commentary. Such a meditation may take as much as an hour. In addition, one may be asked to contemplate the interconnections that have made the orange possible – the sun without which the orange could not exist, the rain-producing cloud, the minerals, the farmer. One may be invited to see the sun and the cloud within the orange and, ultimately, all things within the orange. Thus, one is invited to see how the orange, the sun, oneself, and all things "inter-are," producing visceral awareness of the non-separation of all life.

Whereas in traditional Buddhist walking meditation, one is asked to focus one's attention exclusively on the internal physical sensations of very slow walking, in Nhat Hanh's walking meditation one is invited to look out at the world, to feel the warmth of the sun on one's face, the gentle touch of the breeze, to see the beauty of the flower, the greenness of the leaves – all in mindfulness, one attention focus at a time, in a relaxed and unhurried manner, with internal silence.

These meditations are deceptively simple; for their practitioners, they do many things. They help them to feel themselves alive in and through their bodies. For those in the modern, urban, technological world, this is a necessary first step. Secondly, these meditations put their bodies in the world: they make real in a tangible, physical way using all their senses, their connection and continuity with the world, and ultimately their non-separation from it. From their experiential awareness of their connectedness with the natural world, practitioners' will to care for the world springs naturally.

In addition to his creative work in adapting traditional meditation practices, Nhat Hanh has also creatively expanded the traditional Five Precepts, the five minimal ethical practices, of Buddhism. Whereas the traditional first precept invited all people to avoid destroying life (by which sentient life was meant), Nhat Hanh's expanded first precept reads:

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life (1993: 3).

Here Nhat Hanh has enlarged the traditional first precept in four ways. The precept: 1) now includes all forms of life, "people, animals, plants, and minerals"; 2) has moved from passive (avoiding killing) to active (actively protect life); 3) calls for nonviolence in one's thinking and way of life, in addition to one's acts; and 4) calls for the individual to intervene in the acts of others, not only to guard his/her

own actions. In support of this precept, Nhat Hanh cites both instrumental motives based on interbeing (“We humans are made entirely of nonhuman elements, such as plants, minerals, Earth, clouds, and sunshine”) and deep ecology reasons (“Minerals have their own lives, too). In Buddhist monasteries, we chant, ‘Both sentient and non-sentient beings will realize full enlightenment’” (1993: 14). Both are rooted in the awareness of interbeing produced by mindfulness practice: “We feel in permanent and loving touch with all species on Earth” (1993: 18).

Without advocating any particular approach, Thich Nhat Hanh encourages his students directly to face the suffering of the Earth and then take action to care for the Earth and its beings. Consequently, his students are found throughout the environmental movement. They lead efforts to end radioactive waste, intervene to prevent the cutting of redwood forests, teach environmentalism, lobby and work legally on behalf of the Earth, promote the protection of endangered species, hold leadership positions in national environmental organizations, promote alternative energies, work to protect the rainforest and strive to protect animals from suffering, among other things.

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See also: Buddhism – Engaged; Payutto, Phra Dhammapitaka; Siam’s Forest Monasteries; Sivaraksa; Sulak; Thai Buddhist Monks.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900)

In a now famous article written in 1967, Lynn White, Jr. traced the roots of our present ecological crisis to Christianity and other monotheistic religions, while arguing that the solution of this crisis requires that we adopt a new religion or radically rethink our old one. In the years since the publication of this article, there has been much debate over White’s position. Some philosophers have attempted to defend monotheistic religions by claiming that these religions suggest that humans are to be stewards or

caretakers of nature, not despots of nature as White had claimed. While the view that humans are despots is clearly incompatible with ecologically oriented thinking, these critics of White believe that the position of humans as stewards is consistent with the principles and aims of reform environmentalism.

Other thinkers, however, especially those who have been identified with the movement known as deep ecology, have whole-heartedly adopted White’s call for a new religion or way of thinking. These thinkers argue that, even if monotheistic religions are consistent with the principles and aims of reform environmentalism, these principles and aims are inadequate to resolve our current ecological crisis.

In carefully examining the views of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), it is apparent that Nietzsche’s philosophy is relevant to this recent debate over the merits of White’s position. Indeed, Nietzsche not only anticipates many of White’s criticisms of Christianity and monotheistic religion, but the development of his thinking also shows a movement from what can be described as a reform environmentalist position to a position that has many affinities with the views of the deep ecologists.

While anyone acquainted with the philosophy of Nietzsche will no doubt be aware of his antipathy for Christianity and monotheistic religion – one of his last books was entitled *The Anti-Christ* – they may not be aware that one of Nietzsche’s principal lines of criticism of Christianity is almost identical to the line of criticism that was later developed by White. Like White, Nietzsche criticizes Christianity for divorcing humans from the natural world, for elevating humanity above nature, for denigrating the Earth by instilling in humans the feeling that they are the crown of creation and thus lords over other creatures. In other words, for Nietzsche as for White, traditional Western religious thinking has tended to ascribe a disproportionate importance to the human species, thereby providing a religious framework for the domination of the natural world.

Moreover, by tracing the development of Nietzsche’s thinking, we can see that he was gradually working his way toward the new type of thinking that White envisioned. In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche identified a type of human experience (Dionysian experience) that would allow us to discover what he calls “wild and naked nature.” However, it was in one of his *Untimely Meditations*, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” that Nietzsche’s early views on humanity’s relation to nature are most fully developed. In this work, Nietzsche describes nature in decidedly anthropomorphic terms. He says that nature has certain goals or intentions, but that these goals are usually thwarted because nature is imperfect, misguided, wasteful, inexperienced, a “bad economist.” Because of this misguidedness, Nietzsche

argues that nature needs humanity (or at least the highest types of humanity – the philosopher, saint, and artist) to correct its mistakes and to set it on its proper course. Although Nietzsche's views differ in important respects from White's critics, it should be evident that his position here falls within the humanity-as-steward tradition that they were defending. Also, while most reform environmentalists would assign the task of correcting or perfecting nature to the scientist rather than to the philosopher, saint, or artist, Nietzsche's early views are consistent with the assumptions of reform environmentalism.

However, in his later writings, Nietzsche attacks human arrogance and pride, and argues that humanity must be reimmersed into nature. Rather than viewing themselves as lords over nature, or as enlightened perfecters of nature, Nietzsche claims that humans must realize that they are only one species among many, that they are, to use Aldo Leopold's terminology, plain members of the biotic community. Indeed, Nietzsche states that his task in *Beyond Good and Evil* is to "translate man back into nature" (1966: 161), and his later writings are filled with passages, like the following one from *The Anti-Christ*, that attempt to undermine human arrogance and pride:

Man is absolutely not the crown of creation: every creature stands beside him at the same stage of perfection . . . And even in asserting that we assert too much: man is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts (1968: 124).

The flip side of Nietzsche's attempt to undermine human arrogance and pride is his recognition that the values and perspectives of nonhuman life forms must be taken into consideration. On a symbolic level, this is shown by the fact that Zarathustra's companions are animals, an eagle and a serpent, and by the fact that it is the eagle and serpent who first state Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. On a theoretical level, it is demonstrated by Nietzsche's epistemological position, known as *perspectivism*, in which he rejects epistemological anthropocentrism and explicitly acknowledges the views and values of nonhuman creatures. Stating in a note collected in *The Will to Power* that the attempt to privilege human interpretations and values is "one of the hereditary madnesses of human pride" (1969: 305), Nietzsche goes on to say that this privileging of human knowledge and values is directly linked to the attempt to "maintain and increase human constructs of domination" (1969: 14). However, in rejecting epistemological anthropocentrism and thereby deconstructing the human constructs of domination that have resulted from it, Nietzsche's later philosophy opens the way for a non-exploitative relationship of humanity with nature. Instead of viewing themselves as the crowns of

creation and/or the masters of the nonhuman world, humans become plain members of the biotic community.

In addition to reimmersing humans into nature and thus rejecting epistemological anthropocentrism, Nietzsche is also one of the first modern Western thinkers to recognize two key concepts of contemporary ecological thinking: the interdependency of all living things, and the importance of environmental factors for the quality of both human and nonhuman life. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche coins the term "life-collective" (*Gesammt-Lebens*) to express the interdependency of human and nonhuman life forms, and in a note collected in *The Will to Power* he says clearly that "man is not only a single individual but one particular line of the total living organic world" (1969: 359–60). In other notes, he defines life as a system of interdependent forces that are connected by a common mode of nutrition (suggesting a view of the natural world similar to Aldo Leopold's land pyramid), and he describes the world as an energy system in which there is "contiguous and concurrent dependence" (1969: 340). Indeed, while Nietzsche's notion of the will to power has been variously interpreted, there is a clear sense in which the will to power serves as a concept that explains change immanently, a concept that comes close to the ecosystem approach of modern ecologists.

Like modern ecologists, moreover, Nietzsche is well aware of the way in which our theoretical views about the natural world can impact the quality of both human and nonhuman life. While Nietzsche's perspectivism contains an implicit call for the preservation of endangered species (since the values and perspectives of all life forms have epistemological significance), several passages in his writings and letters discuss the practical implications of our philosophical thinking about the world in which we live. One example of this is found in the following passage from *The Will to Power*: "The way our streets are paved, good air in our room, the soil, the wells not poisoned, food – we grasp their value; we have taken the necessities of existence seriously" (1969: 525).

"We have taken the necessities of existence seriously" – these simple words provide a key to understanding Nietzsche's significance to the topic of nature and religion. For as we have seen, Nietzsche not only relentlessly attacks those types of thinking that are other-worldly and anti-natural, he also repeatedly urges us to remain faithful to the Earth. In other words, one important thrust of Nietzsche's thinking, a thrust that has decidedly ecological implications, is to extend an invitation to us to return home – home to the Earth and to the joys of this-worldly existence. While this invitation reverberates throughout Nietzsche's later writings, it is already forcefully expressed in the following passage from *Human, All Too Human*, where he describes the "aftereffect" of philosophical thinking.

Finally one would live among men and with oneself as in *nature*, without praise, reproaches, overzealousness, delighting in many things . . . that one formerly had only to fear. One would . . . no longer feel the goading thought that one was not simply nature, or that one was more than nature (1984: 37).

This invitation for us to return home to the Earth, this call for us to live fully in the natural world, becomes even more pronounced in Nietzsche's later writings. Indeed, this invitation not only stands behind one of Nietzsche's most life-affirming concepts, the concept of *amor fati* (love of fate), it also becomes one of the principal motifs of Nietzsche's best-known work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. For whereas the concept of *amor fati* serves as a concept through which one is finally able to view the natural world without praise, reproaches, or overzealousness, one of the fundamental goals of Zarathustra's teaching is to lead us away from other-worldly hopes and back to the Earth. In other words, one of the primary thrusts of Nietzsche's thinking is to make it possible for each of us to leave our caves of ignorance and despair, as Zarathustra himself does, "glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains" (1966: 327). But if we are to do so, Nietzsche tells us that we must learn the simple, yet difficult, lesson that the ugliest man learns from Zarathustra – we must learn to love the Earth and earthly existence.

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- See also: Deep Ecology; Leopold, Aldo; Philosophy of Nature; White, Lynn – Thesis of.

Nile Perch

Sometimes called the world's largest freshwater fish, Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*) are not as big as White or Beluga sturgeon, Yangtze paddlefish, Amazonian pirarucu, or Mekong and Wels catfish. They are Africa's largest freshwater fish. Some have exceeded 6 feet in length and 500 pounds in weight. Remains pointing to rituals involving land and water animals, including Nile perch, have been found at ancient Egypt's Hierakonpolis-Nekhen ceremonial complex (ca. 4000–3100 B.C.E.). Nile perch are known fiercely to battle capture yet few Hierakonpolis-Nekhen skeletal materials belong to "small" perch (under 3.5 feet). One was 7 feet long. Nile perch burials dominated the fish section of Egypt's Gurob animal cemetery (ca. 1290–1190 B.C.E.). More attention was given to their preservation–mummification than with other fish, oxen, or sheep. Artifacts linked to Seth, a god connected to violence, and Sobek, the Crocodile God, were also found at Gurob, along with a pottery dish showing a Nile tilapia-lotus motif.

Greeks named the city of Esna "Latopolis" for the prominence that the Nile perch (*latos*-fish) held in the city's religious practices. Neith, who had Nile perch as a sacred symbol, was one of the deities the town's inhabitants worshipped. Archeologists have found coins and art with the venerated *latos*-fish and many mummified Nile perch there. A painting of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the dead, embalming a Nile perch, appears at Luxor on the walls of the tomb of Khabekhnnet, a tomb-builder for Rameses II (ca. 1290–1224 B.C.E.). Neith and the nome-sign of Latopolis are depicted, linking Luxor to Latopolis' spirituality. Other Luxor-area tomb art shows Menna, "Scribe of the Fields of Lord" under Tuthmosis IV (ca. 1400–1390 B.C.E.) and Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1353 B.C.E.), thrusting a spear into waters with a Nile perch and Nile tilapia inside. The Nile perch has been interpreted as symbolizing the turbulent stage of the journey of the deceased; the Nile tilapia the calmer. Nile perch and Nile tilapia were often paired in Egyptian art. Symbolism joined what ecology gave some separation. Nile perch have preferred the Nile's deeper waters; tilapia the shallower. The two could come into conjunction in ways inimical to tilapia. Some Egyptian fish spears were tipped with Nile perch bone. Tilapia flesh served as bait for Nile perch.

Neith/Nit, a goddess whose importance to Upper and Lower Egypt was long-standing and who had the epithet "Terrifying One," was associated with Nile perch. Neith was associated with blessing warriors' and hunters' weapons and with mortuary rituals. As a creator deity, she cast her saliva into the primal waters, producing Apep/Apophis, the water-serpent, sometimes identified with the python, Africa's largest and most aquatic snake. Apep's attempt to swallow everything in the created world and send it into

non-existence was continually battled by other deities. Apep was the nemesis of Neith's son Re/Ra, the Sun God. Neith also had the epithet "Nurse of Crocodiles." Neith's other son Sobek/Sebek took the shape of *Crocodylus niloticus*, reputedly Africa's greatest eater of humans, and a killer of large wild and domesticated animals. Neith sometimes took the form of the fierce *latos*-fish which was believed to swim beside Neith on her journeys. Neith's more benign activities included controlling floods and protecting marriages. Neith was generally thought of as an independent virgin-goddess; sometimes Seth was called her spouse.

Ancient Egyptians accorded Nile perch some beneficent attributes. Oil in which its dorsal fin had been cooked was used to increase milk flow in lactating mothers. Egyptian children and young women wore apotropaic fish pendants, including those of Nile perch, to avert drowning. When it came to beauty, however, Nile tilapia dominated on perfume containers and zoomorphous palettes which held cosmeceuticals used to protect and beautify eyes, like kohl. Mouth-brooding tilapias take their dependent young into their mouths to protect them, releasing them when danger passes. Tilapia/tilapia-lotus motifs signified rebirth in Egypt's religious art. Nile perch devoured this affirmative symbol.

Seth/Set was a deity of evil, hunger, destruction, wastelands, and the unclean. Seth slew, dismembered, and cast the body of Osiris, his brother, into the Nile. Most sources name the elephant snout fish (the *Oxyrhynchus* fish, *Mormyrus kannume*), seabream, eel, mudfish, or tiger fish (the *Phagrus*), and Nile carp (the *Lepidotus* fish, *Barbus bynni*), as the fish that ate Osiris' phallus. A few sources place Nile perch in this group. The elephant snout fish, with which the Nile perch is most often misidentified in these presentations, actually feeds upon insects and midge larvae, while the Nile perch is almost fully carnivorous-piscivorous. Nile perch were among the fish trampled and burned in some areas of Egypt in a ritual repudiating opponents of divine-royal order. In some places, tomb inscriptions have fish hieroglyphics which appear to have been made and then deliberately damaged, following "homeopathic magic," to prevent dangerous fish from injuring the deceased.

Nile perch is a misnomer in ichthyogeographical terms. It is not a true perch but a snook, and is indigenous to other waters, including some in Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. While Nile perch fossils dating to the Miocene have been found on Rusinga Island in Lake Victoria, the lake was later drained by geological faulting. In its current form, Lake Victoria arose 12,000–12,400 years ago as a shallow but vast water. A rich and diverse variety of cichlid fishes proliferated in the absence of Nile perch. In the 1950s, Nile perch were introduced into the lake with catastrophic consequences. Had

more attention been paid to the biological observations embedded in Egyptian religious beliefs about Nile perch, British plans for the world's second largest freshwater lake might not have gone so awry. Destruction, devouring, and death were symbols made quite concrete when this large predator was taken from waters where it was endemic and placed elsewhere.

Plantations, pesticides, pollution, and population growth around Lake Victoria had led to decline of its indigenous cichlids (tilapias and haplochromines) by the 1950s. In response, the British put Nile tilapia (*nyamami*: *Oreochromis/Tilapia niloticus*), which grow to a little over two feet, into Lake Victoria. Other introduced tilapia, ranging from one and a half feet to nine inches did not catch on well. Placed into the lake, Nile perch exploded in numbers. Many of Lake Victoria's indigenous cichlids were unable to survive the onslaught of the voracious, prolific Nile perch. At present, 65–85 percent of the estimated 350–500 or more indigenous species, many unique to Lake Victoria, are said to have died out, or become rare. Nile perch ate fish which helped control malaria, schistosomiasis, detritus, anoxia, and the diseases algal blooms-cyanobacteria bring. Indigenous tilapias (*ngege*: *Oreochromis esculenta*, *ngege/mbiru*: *Oreochromis variabilis*) can be sun-dried. Nile perch are too big and oily; they have to be wood-smoked for local preservation without refrigeration. Further deforestation, eutrophication, and disease ensued. Lake conditions contributed to proliferation of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), "the beautiful blue devil." It prevented even large boats from leaving some ports, blocked irrigation canals, and led to human displacement when clogged areas of the lake flooded. This "curse" can form masses so extensive that ordinary people can "walk on water" where it flourishes. Mechanical removal, hand removal, chemicals, biological agents, and indigenous doctor-diviners have been set against it, but the resurgent "devil" eludes defeat.

Scientists have documented these details, lamented fish extinction, and then considered this extinction "an event as exciting as it is depressing" to observe (Kaufman 1992: 846). Terms like "fish genocide" and a "green holocaust" are scarce, perhaps because they question why the mass extinction of nonhuman animals has not evoked the widespread revulsion associated with human genocides, particularly those in Europe. Some local and foreign sources even portray Nile perch as a "Savior" (*Mkombozi*) of the lake-basin economy, and a "successful predator" by capitalistic calculus. Yet it is national and foreign elites rather than local people who are the main beneficiaries of the Nile perch takeover of Lake Victoria. Independent fishermen who used small boats when they fished offshore, and women who had processed and traded sun-dried fish and done some riverbank fishing lost out to an industry predicated on big boats, unrelated

workers, refrigeration, and mostly foreign-funded processing plants concerned with export of Nile perch fillets, hides, and other by-products to Israel, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the USA. Proponents note Nile perch is protein-rich with high levels of Omega-3 fatty acids. Many Luo claim its fatty, oily character makes it difficult to digest. Some studies show it absorbs more mercury than other fish, making it unhealthy in the long term, especially for women and children. With a high percentage of fillets sent overseas, poor people get smoked, leftover scraps. Protein export coexists with protein deficiency diseases.

Having eaten its way through many cichlid species, Nile perch are increasingly feeding on their young or small shrimp (*Caridina nilotica*). With changing international tastes for less fatty foods, remaining juveniles are being exported. By the 1980s, while 500-lb “giants” were still reported, most Nile perch caught ranged from 110–220 lbs. Presently, it is said the average size may be a tenth of that. This fish with predatory appetites seems itself threatened by global capitalism and its appetites.

Scientists, the Ugandan, Tanzanian, and Kenyan governments, the UN, and NGOs have produced a vast literature on Nile perch’s impact on Lake Victoria’s ecosystem. The religious response has not been proportionate. A number of NGOs have religious help in funding projects to “save” the lake. However, Henry Sindima, a Presbyterian minister-scholar from Malawi, is one of the few commentators to mention Nile perch’s impact on Lake Victoria, link it to ecological theology, and critique development “experts” who fail to acknowledge the “spiritual intelligence” of African peoples (1990: 140, 142). Many Western missionaries working around Lake Victoria consider eating Nile perch an “authentic” African experience. Some Christians assert that the fish connected with Jesus’ miracles was the Egypto-African Nile perch, although Nile tilapia (“St. Peter’s fish”) is a more likely candidate. Exponents of Afrocentric theology and Theosophy tend to present Nile perch positively, though close attention to Egyptian religious history shows it was an ambivalent symbol. Evangelist Billy Graham’s parable of “God’s Provision in a Fish”/“Keys in an African Fish,” a popular sermon topic, displays no awareness of Nile perch’s historical trajectory in Africa.

Many Africans living around Lake Victoria know it as more than nature endangered. Baganda have called it *Nalubaale*, “Mother of the Gods.” For Kenya Luo, it is *Nam Lolwe*, “The Endless Lake.” They take their identity from it, calling themselves *Jonam*, “people of the lake.” Indigenous Luo religion had rituals for making boats and fishing implements, for recognizing the spiritual personality and maintaining the sanctity of boats, for setting out to fish. A death out on *Lolwe* was “like one kinsman killing another” (Ocholla-Ayayo 1980: 123). For Luo, *Lolwe* has been home to powerful possession spirits. What the Nile perch

introduction has irreparably harmed is not the nature of positivistic and “dismal” sciences – it is nature imbued with spirituality, peoplehood, political economy, and passions.

Legio Maria, the largest African-instituted church in sub-Saharan Africa showing Roman Catholic influence, began among Kenya Luo circa 1963. It has a long list of potential food prohibitions. Legios believe that the Holy Spirit can provide personal release from some prohibitions or move an individual toward stricter observance. Prohibitions are placed upon things seen as polluting the body, “the tabernacle of God.” Alcohol, tobacco, and goat-meat prohibitions are the most likely to be observed. Nile perch is next for many Legios. Many will not drink unboiled water, bathe in open water, eat chyme or meat from livestock that has not been slaughtered but is found dead, believing these harm the body-as-tabernacle. One reason Legios reject goat, quail, and wild greens/edible botanicals is their association with doctor-diviners, who work with indigenous spirits rather than the Holy Spirit. A number of prohibitions follow from Leviticus 11 (e.g., pork, hare, flying “white ants”/termites, fish without scales). Many Legios consider all fish with “snake-like” appearance, “ugly snouts,” or bottom-feeding habits abominations, whether or not they have scales, and reject lungfish (*Protopterus aethiopicus*), elephant-snout fish (*Mormyrus kannume*), mudfish (*Bagrus bajad*, *B. domac*), and various catfish (*Arius africanus*, *Clarias spp*, *Amphilius jacksonii*, *Schilbe spp*, *Synodontis spp*). Bony fish which can choke people and the Holy Spirit may be on Legios’ lists of rejected food. *Omena* (*Rastrineobola argentea*) are on lists because these 1.75 inch “little sardines” are equated with swarming insects, because the mounds these insects build for homes are equated with graves, and because cooking *omena* sends a smell upwards deemed offensive to the Holy Spirit. Children are allowed to “grow into the Spirit.” Some eat foods a parent rejects. Cheap *omena* rather than smoked Nile perch bits are the fish-protein many Legio children now get to eat.

Most tabooed fish have declined in numbers with Nile perch predation but Legios are not favorably inclined toward the killer of “abominable” fish. The most common reason Legios give for considering Nile perch an utter abomination is its cannibalism of fish, fishermen, and others who fall into *Lolwe*. Legios have also spoken against the harm it brings to the body-as-tabernacle, particularly their experience of intestinal and skin problems. Legios view it as anomalous in size and behavior. It is blamed for causing tragedy, trouble, and death in *Lolwe*. Nile perch are anti-charismatic megafauna for Legios.

Legios reject the multicolored garment (*law mokiko*) saying it creates an environment the Holy Spirit does not want to enter. A synonym for “mixed-up” clothing is

“Nile perch clothing” (*law mbuta*). Many diviner-doctors, especially those who work with lake-dwelling possession spirits, share Legios’ dislike of Nile perch. Doctor-diviners claim their spirits strongly protest against it,

Mumbo is a spirit whose ways I know well. The spirits want Nile perch to be stopped – it is a thing of today. That is why the Mumbo-spirit rumbled, making a loud sound that reached from Kadenge to the lake. It was the sound “Dudududuu,” sounds like that (Schwartz 1989: 206).

At a Legio church in the 1980s, the Voice of the Holy Spirit, speaking through a woman congregant, was explicit in its odium, “All of you curse Nile perch, my friends!” (*Kuoug’uru mbuta, yawa*). The congregation responded back resoundingly, “*Wakuong’e, ‘We curse it’*” (Schwartz 1989: 308–10). A few Legio women, driven to sell smoked Nile perch for needed income at local markets, reported having nightmares afterwards. The local unacceptability of Nile perch has been strong and spirited.

Nancy Schwartz

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- See also: Egypt (both); Fishers; Snakes and the Luo of Kenya.

Noble Savage

“Primitivism” is a belief that arose during the European Romantic Movement which held that people who live in a natural setting are closer to God and thus live purer lives. The primitivist prefers the “natural,” tribal life to highly urbanized social orders, and reveres impulsiveness, free expression and passion over the dictates of reason, rules and the restrictions of form. The motif of the “Noble Savage” is an idealized stereotype of indigenous people as primitive in this sense. Its two main elements are a reverence for people in the rural environment, and a simplistic representation of indigenous morality, including the assignment of high-minded virtue to pastoral peoples. The motif is connected with the belief that goodness, dignity and nobility have to do with a primitive and free state that existed in innocent prototypical people like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It came into existence largely as a reaction against the onslaught of capitalism, industrialization and materialism in the later half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

The phrase “Noble Savage,” was first expressed in the eighteenth century by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) in his famous essay, “The Social Contract,” (1762) where he stated that humanity in a state of nature does not know good and evil, but their independence, along with “the peacefulness of their passions, and their ignorance of vice,” keeps them from wickedness. To Rousseau, the Noble Savage represented the “natural man,” uncorrupted by contact with the structures of society, or the evil effects of civilization including political organization and technology. This idea is reiterated in *Emile* (1762) where Rousseau writes, “Everything is well when it comes fresh from the hands of the Maker . . . everything degrades in the hands of Man” (pages vary by edition).

Since Rousseau, the “Noble Savage” has become a stereotypical romanticization of indigenous people in general, particularly in pre-European America and Africa, especially the Zulu’s and Maasai when allied with militaristic idealization, but not limited by those territorial boundaries. Examples of the motif stretch back to antiquity, but are readily identifiable in Michel Eyquem Montaigne (1533–1592) in his Essay “Of Cannibals” (1580), later in Dryden’s play *The Conquest of Granada* (1670) and more famously in Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko: or the History of the Royal Slave* (1688). This motif has special significance in America where the concept of the Noble Savage is integral to the early nineteenth-century fascination with North American Aboriginal peoples. The romanticized American Aborigine personified the spirituality assigned to humanity in a natural state, uncorrupted by European society, thus reinforcing the established links between primitivism and the “Noble Savage.”

Rousseau's contrast between natural and social existence attests to the underlying elevation of "White" civilization in the noble savage myth: "Although, in this state [civil society], he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are stimulated and developed" (Rousseau 1993: Book I, section 8). However, Rousseau's Eurocentrism paled in comparison to some xenophobic commentators. Charles Dickens wrote

I beg to say that I have not the least belief in the Noble Savage. I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. His calling rum fire-water, and me a pale face, wholly fail to reconcile me to him. I don't care what he calls me. I call him a savage, and I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the Earth (Dickens 1850: pages vary by edition).

Although the motif of the "Noble Savage" is primarily associated with the nineteenth century, its antecedents are still with us today. The main tropes of the motif still embrace a belief in the superiority of the person in a rural setting and an associated spiritual superiority or closeness to God in nature, but now also include an associated ecological soundness romanticized as the indigenous worldview.

John Senior

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- See also: American Indians as "First Ecologists"; Eden and Other Gardens; Mother Earth; Religious Environmental Paradigm; Romanticism and Indigenous People; Rousseau, Jean-Jacques; Savages.

Noble, David F. (1938–)

David Noble is a historian of technology whose body of work has explored how technology has more often been used to reinforce hierarchy than to deliver humans from drudgery. In *The Religion of Technology* Noble traced the role that spiritual investiture plays in driving and rationalizing centralized technological development. Understanding technology as a religion can help explain why so many have embraced rapid technological change despite its human and ecological costs, he has argued.

For over 1000 years in Western Europe the "useful arts" have been closely associated with notions of salvation, driving technological innovation, by Noble's account. Innovation is primarily driven by interest, he says: it is the means by which some people and societies control and subjugate others. But cultural justification is necessary, and for those benefiting from technology the religious impulse cloaks self-interest, justifies the technological world, and comforts those who suffer from it. Noble finds his earliest evidence among ninth-century Benedictines who embraced knowledge of the useful arts as something akin to godliness. Charlemagne's heirs were influenced by Benedictines. Joachim of Fiore (twelfth century), Noble reports, saw the development of technology as a means toward reunification with God. The thirteenth-century Franciscans and Roger Bacon believed humans had lost the knowledge of God's creation with the Fall and could regain it by increasing humanity's knowledge of the world, technology being a primary means. It was the sixteenth century's Francis Bacon, however, heir to the Rosicrucian revival of an earlier era, who most fully developed the theme of reclaiming the garden through application of the useful arts. Noble argues that Bacon saw the useful arts as the path to heaven and as marking human uniqueness. He quotes Bacon: "We are agreed, my sons, that you are men. That means, as I think, that you are not animals on their hind legs, but mortal gods" (Bacon in Noble 1977: 51). This hubris, Noble argues, combined with early capitalism, was an irresistible historical force that accelerated the pace of technological innovation in the face of injury and criticism.

The founders of the early modern scientific academies further developed the religious view of technology, Noble argues, viewing science and technology as indistinct. The knowledge necessary for and generated by technological innovation not only helped the faithful know God's creation, but also allowed them to know the mind of the Great Architect. Scientists considered science the pursuit of divine knowledge and held it sacred, Noble argued, in *A World Without Women*. As late as the early nineteenth century, Noble documents scientists declaring that the truths of science and religion could never conflict. Darwin, he reminds us, changed all that, and because science and technology formally disengaged into separate spheres by

the mid-nineteenth century, this enabled technological faith to continue while science challenged religious orthodoxy and even belief in a Creator.

Noble argues that three of the twentieth century's major technological projects have a powerful religious component: space travel, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering. From the early days of the missile program to NASA at present, Noble argues, religiosity has permeated the space program. Werner Von Braun spoke of taking the gospel to other worlds; astronauts have spoken of flight bringing them closer to God. Noble quotes Lewis Mumford: "Only a mixture of adventurous impulses and religious convictions of the deepest sort would persuade normal warm-hearted human beings, such as many astronauts seem to be, to take part in such a life-denying ritual" (Mumford in Noble 1997: 137).

Noble admits that the project to create a thinking machine has not been explicitly religious in the way the space program has been. But he argues that the project is nonetheless imbued with an extreme dualism characteristic of much Western religious thought: the animal is a degrading fetter on the spirit. By stripping away the body, reason and spirit approach god-like perfection. Noble quotes Danny Hill of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: "[W]hat's good about humans is the idea thing. It's not the animal thing" (Hill in Noble 1997: 162-3).

Genetic engineering is seen by many practitioners, Noble says, as providing the opportunity to join with God and become co-creators of life. Genetic engineers see their applied knowledge as God's gift, allowing them to redeem humanity by reprogramming evolution's haphazard programming. Since they believe genetics can only alter the body and not the soul, Noble says, they believe nothing can go terribly wrong.

Critics have puzzled at Noble's failure to address more directly the effects of the marriage of technology and religion on the natural world. Keith Thomas, the British historian, noted that Noble's argument doesn't account for the many other, non-Christian and secular cultural milieus in which technology has developed; nor do his arguments acknowledge that Christianity was far from monolithic, at times ignoring or opposing technological development.

David Johns

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See also: Astronauts; Space Exploration.

SP Noble Savage and the "Ecologically Noble" Savage

Since the Greeks and Romans of classical antiquity, but most of all from the age of European geographic exploration and colonization, usually the "savage" has represented the primitive condition of humans in nature prior to the domestication of plants and animals. Both the earliest stage of prehistoric cultural evolution, and contemporary hunter-gatherers as supposed analogues, have been viewed in two diametrically opposed ways, in essence as either positive or negative.

More than anyone, philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is usually credited with the positive view, but not necessarily accurately. The "noble savage" was envisioned as enjoying a life of harmony within society and between it and nature. This is the romantic image of the "primitive" as superior in freedom, innocence, simplicity, generosity, goodness, purity, and peacefulness. Also this society was conceived as an egalitarian community with property held in common rather than privately. Such an ideal or utopian society supposedly thrived in a natural paradise during a golden age.

By the eighteenth century those Europeans ascribing to this cult of exoticism pursued the critical analysis of their own society and its morality and politics by glorifying the "savage" in contrast to degenerate civilization, the ideology of primitivism. Indeed, primitivists would even go so far as to reject civilization, at least in their discourse although almost never in practice. In theory the "noble savage" offered alternative possibilities for European society, having been identified variously as archetypal primitive communists, ecologists, environmentalists, conservationists, spiritualists, healers, philosophers, and pacifists.

For primitivists, these societies are not simply a more desirable human condition, but also are closer to nature, most living in wilderness. A correlate is that such societies practice various kinds of nature religion or eco-spirituality. Accordingly, implicitly if not explicitly, the societies and religions of civilization are critiqued as unnatural and environmentally destructive. Environmental organizations from the Sierra Club to Earth First! have stereotyped indigenes as guardians of nature – "green primitivism." The so-called "ecologically noble savage" and nature religions have often found common ground in New Age spiritualities like neo-paganism and their antecedents.

The "noble savage" was popularized much more than anywhere else through the arts (poetry, novels, drama,

opera, art, music), but occasionally surfaced in philosophy and eventually in the social sciences. Among the better known examples in literature are Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and William H. Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1904). Hollywood's *Dances with Wolves* (1989) expressed this idea, and the movie's widespread popularity indicates that the idea of the "noble savage" remained attractive in the late twentieth century.

Within anthropology, primitivism is more of a personal and private emotional attitude than any overt and examined philosophical, intellectual, or theoretical stance, according to William Y. Adams. Nevertheless, elements of primitivism can be detected in the writings of many anthropologists, some more explicitly than others, including Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Paul Radin, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Stanley Diamond, Marshall Sahlins, Elman R. Service, John Bodley, and Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff. Primitivism is also reflected in the life of several notable anthropologists who have actually "gone native" while living in an indigenous culture for many years or even decades, including Frank Hamilton Cushing with the Zuni, Jacques Lizot with the Yanomami, Kurt Nimuendaju with several Amazonian societies, and Patrick Putnam with the Pygmies of the Congo. Some outstanding ethnographic examples of the "noble savage" are Ishi of the Yahi, Kayapo, Kogi, Koyukon, Kuna, Mbuti, Semai, Tahitians, and Tasaday. In the first textbook on spiritual ecology, David Kinsley (1995) portrays the Ainu, Australian Aborigines, Mistassini Cree, and Koyukon, all hunter-gatherers, as ecologically noble by virtue of their nature religions which tend to promote sustainable subsistence economies and green cultures.

The opposite of this romantic view, the "ignoble savage," is commonly attributed to philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Hobbes imagined "savage" life as poor, nasty, brutish, and short. This negative view considers "primitive" life to be permeated by disharmony, conflict, and violence, both socially and ecologically. Ritualized violence, such as blood sacrifice and cannibalism, is another common correlate.

Paradoxically, in the writings of a single individual, the prominent British anthropologist Colin Turnbull (1961, 1972), both extremes are found, the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest in the heart of Africa described as "noble savages," and the Ik in the rugged mountains of Uganda as "ignoble savages." He depicted the Ik as former foragers, forced by the government to relocate, sedentarize, and farm; and, as a result, a degenerate and dehumanized society without sociality, culture, morality, and religion. Not surprisingly, Turnbull was severely criticized for his explicit negativity regarding the Ik, but not for his positive view of the Mbuti.

As described by Turnbull, the Mbuti are the epitome of

the "noble savage" in the way their society and religion are embedded in nature. For millennia they have lived as an integral part of the forest in all of its beauty, goodness, and mystery. Their profound dependence, understanding, respect, and affection regarding the forest is best expressed in the words of one Mbuti: "The forest is a father and mother to us . . . and like a father or mother it gives us everything we need – food, clothing, shelter warmth . . . and affection" (Turnbull 1961: 89).

The Mbuti commune with the forest not only in their daily subsistence activities, but also in their sacred music which embraces singing, chanting, and dancing around the camp fire at night in a ritual called the molimo. In particular, they use a long wooden or bamboo trumpet (molimo) to sing through, or to make naturalistic imitations of the voices of forest animals, such as the leopard and the elephant which respectively symbolize life and death. The trumpet for this ritual is retrieved from high in a tree where it is usually stored, then bathed in a stream, and brought into the camp late at night. If this ritual is to be repeated the next night, then during the day the trumpet is hidden in a streambed. Women and children are not supposed to see the molimo, they hide in the huts when the sounds of the trumpet become audible as it is played by men approaching camp. While men take turns using the trumpet, the distinctive effect seems to transcend any human noise to become an awesome sound invoking the great spirit of the forest.

If the Mbuti suffer bad luck in hunting, illness, death, social tensions, or other problems, then they believe that the spirit of the forest has fallen asleep and must be awakened by the molimo so that it will again protect and nourish them. The molimo sounds awaken the forest and make it happy, and thereby the Mbuti are empowered with its trust and love. Thus, for the Mbuti, the forest is their benevolent deity, their religion is the worship of nature, and this is celebrated through the sounds of the molimo. In sum, Turnbull writes:

They were a people who had found in the forest something that made their life more than just worth living, something that made it, with all its hardships and problems and tragedies, a wonderful thing full of joy and happiness and free from care (1961: 17).

In conclusion, whether it is the relationship of "savages" to one another within or among societies, or with nature, Westerners tend to emphasize either the positive or negative image. That is, "savages" exemplify a life of harmony socially and ecologically far more than any other culture, or else they are antithetical to sociality and nature. In reality, however, the world is far more complicated, varied, and variable than to sustain such all-or-none and always-or-never postures. Either pole, the "noble savage" or the "ignoble savage," is simplistic,

dualistic, reductionist, and essentializing. Extremists ignore the tremendous variations among and within the up to 7000 distinct cultures extant today. It is far more scholarly and scientific to consider this great diversity through particular cases, rather than to over-generalize in either idealistic or derogatory excess. Both the noble and the ignoble representations of the “primitive” need to be scrutinized for the possibility of a hidden agenda and its consequences as well as deconstructed and thereby demystified. Nevertheless, often indigenous cultures can provide profound wisdom and insights for realizing the place of humans in nature in spiritual and other ways.

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North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology [and the] North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology

The North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE) was one of the early organizations in the United States founded to motivate Christians toward ecological action. Founded in 1986 by Al Fritsch, David Haenke and Fred Krueger, it originally attempted to bring together activists from across the Christian theological spectrum. The desire was to bring everyone together to “elucidate Christianity’s ecological dimension,” as the motto on their symbol, the North American continent surrounded by crosses, reads.

Toward this end, the organization held a major conference in 1987 at a Methodist camp in North Webster, Indiana, attended by over 500 people. This was a significant turnout considering that the idea of Christian ecology was still relatively new in the U.S. and Canada. One stated goal of the conference/organization was to help “Christians become ecologists.” But even before the conference took place, tensions concerning this goal erupted during the initial planning, as the organizers argued over whether to solely focus on Christianity. The decision was made that a conference on Christianity still left room for participants from other traditions. Tensions were also evident at the conference between the more interfaith, cosmologically oriented theology of Thomas Berry and the more biblically oriented theology of the evangelical and Orthodox members, especially as delegates worked together to articulate a statement of Christian ecology. No statement was ever approved by everyone at the conference, although a version was published in the proceedings of the conference. This was in part because of objections from the Berry advocates who complained of

an over-reliance in the document on biblical references, while on the other side, conservative Christians charged that creation spirituality was pagan and all references to creation spirituality should be excluded. From reports in their magazine, *Epiphany*, members of the Orthodox Eleventh Commandment Fellowship, one of the organizing groups, were particularly offended by the “beyond Christianity” approach of Thomas Berry and adherents of the creation spirituality associated with Matthew Fox. In one statement, they called Fox a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” They also objected to Berry’s suggestion to put the Christian Scriptures temporarily on “the shelf” in order to learn from the revelation of the “new story” found in the evolution of the universe and his view that the future lay in developing a common religious ecological worldview, a common creation story, that went beyond the exclusivity of many religious traditions. Put simply, the differences in definitions of Christianity and theology, as well as the future direction of outreach – whether to be solely focused on Christians – were too great to be overcome for the group to present a unified Christian voice.

By 1989, after a bumpy two years, the outcome of the tensions led to two separate organizations – NACCE: the North American Coalition (or Conference) on Christianity and Ecology, and NACRE, the North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology. The confusing similarity of the names highlights the tension of the split. While their differences were great in the beginning (even though Thomas Berry’s brother, James, was the president of NACCE), with the diminished influence of those associated with the Eleventh Commandment Fellowship, and with the growth and diversification of the religious environmental movement, the two organizations were not so far apart a decade later.

In the early years and up until 1991, NACCE published a magazine entitled *Firmament*. With the departure of its editor, Fred Krueger, the group started publishing a simpler newsletter entitled *Earthkeeping News* under the long-term guidance of Elizabeth Dyson. In its initial stages, NACCE was associated with James Berry, Fred Krueger (later of the Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation) and the Eleventh Commandment Fellowship, Cal DeWitt and the Au Sable Institute, and NACCE soon merged with Wesley Granberg-Michaelson’s New Creation Institute. Granberg-Michaelson, author of several eco-theology books in the 1980s, served on the World Council of Churches and played a significant role at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Granberg-Michaelson’s theology in many ways summed up the stewardship or earthkeeping approach of the organization. This eco-theological position was premised on the Genesis commandment (said by many eco-stewards to be God’s first commandment) for humans to till and keep the “garden” or Earth.

Despite the anthropocentric implications of the “Earth-

keeping” name, NACCE’s approach involves more than stewardship, or the human care for God’s creation and resources. The pages of *Earthkeeping News* demonstrate the group’s commitment to issues of environmental justice and its support for a wide range of activities and theologies. The organization’s mission even speaks of “a loving relationship with Earth” that includes “reverence for God’s creation, with the understanding that humans are embedded in the natural world,” as well as “the study of ecological issues in the context of biblical theology and contemporary science.” NACCE has sponsored several noteworthy conferences, and has worked to promote earthkeeping circles, once termed eco-churches, both within and outside of individual congregations. NACCE is now a broad and mainstream Christian (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox) ecological membership organization that has moved far beyond some of its conservative Christian roots. It represents a broad spectrum of Christians, from evangelicals to Quakers, with an openness to interfaith work. NACCE is active in the Earth Charter movement, and was a significant religious ecological presence at the second World Parliament of Religions in 1993, where it offered six environment-related workshops.

NACRE, or the North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology, was founded by Catholic Don Conroy (a member of NACCE) in part, as the name change reflects, in order to pursue a more interfaith approach. The schism of the two groups was not amicable, for NACRE took with it a recently awarded World Wildlife Fund grant to organize the 1990 Earth Day ceremony at the Episcopal National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The WWF was sponsor of the Assisi Declarations on Religion and Nature, made by representatives of the world religions in 1986. The WWF approach embodied the perspective of Berry, who had been influential at the Assisi conference. The schism was also the result of power struggles for influence within NACCE. For a while, there was talk of lawsuits and charges about not forwarding mail to the correct organization, but both organizations survived the split. Even NACRE’s vision, as summed up in the phrase “Caring for Creation,” is similar in focus to NACCE’s emphasis on “earthkeeping.”

NACRE, however, pursued this vision in a different manner than NACCE, for its central focus is the advocacy of the “Eco3 Solution” of getting “ecologists, economists, and ecumenists to have,” as Conroy describes it, a “trialogue, in which religion, science and society clarify and come to share values for a new global ethic which promotes sustainability at all levels” (email correspondence with author, 24 June 2003). Although NACRE briefly attempted to become a membership organization and tried to produce a newsletter, the organization’s focus, under Conroy’s continuing leadership, has always been on forming partnerships for education and specific projects. In 1990, it produced a religious study guide to accompany

the 1990 Public Broadcasting Service television series, "Race to Save the Planet," and during the 1990s, NACRE worked with the United States Environmental Protection Agency both on climate-change education, and with its "Solar Stewardship Initiative" in an effort to enlist 340,000 faith-based congregations and organizations. NACRE is listed on websites concerning genetically engineered food, the treatment of animals, sustainability, solar energy, and the Earth Charter, which illustrates how it has sought to work outside religious circles and closely with environmental organizations. NACRE, along with its international arm, ICORE, is listed as part of Earthvoice, which describes itself as the "Global Environmental Arm of the United States Humane Society" and also as "the chairman" of ICORE. It is through Earthvoice that NACRE has worked to promote the Earth Charter.

Laurel Kearns

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See also: Au Sable Institute; Biblical Foundations for Christian Stewardship; Berry, Thomas; Christianity (7i) – An Evangelical Perspective on Faith and Nature; Earth Charter; Eco-Church movement; Eleventh Commandment Fellowship; Evangelical Environmental Network; Fox, Matthew; Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation; Stewardship; United Nations' "Earth Summits".

Nursi, Said (1877–1960)

Said Nursi, also known as Bediuzzaman, was born in 1877 in eastern Turkey and died in 1960. Nursi's eventful life can be divided into three major periods. The first is informal learning. It was as a result of these feats of learning that he was given the name of Bediuzzaman (Wonder of the Age) by one of his masters. He witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, following World War I, which led to the birth of the modern Republic of Turkey. He was actively involved in politics before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which he referred to in his later writings as the "Old Said" period.

The second period, the "New Said," began after World War I. It coincided with the founding of the Turkish Republic. In this period, he devoted his life to interpreting the Qur'an afresh. As he was by nature a lover of solitude, he would retire into seclusion to devote himself to worship and meditation. The last ten years of Nursi's life witnessed the emergence of a "Third Said," which differed from the New Said in so far as Nursi once again took a closer interest in social and political matters.

Nursi on Nature and God

The adorned animals, decorative birds, fruit-bearing trees, and flowering plants are miracles of His knowledge, wonders of His art, gifts of His munificence, propitious signs of His grace. The blossoms smiling at the embellished fruits, the birds twittering in the breezes of the early morn, the pattering of the rain on the petals of the flowers, the tender affection of mothers for their infants and young, all show to jinn and men, and spirits and living creatures, and angels and spirit beings a Loving One making Himself known, a Merciful One making Himself loved, a Tenderly Kind One bestowing His mercy, a Gracious Bestower manifesting His kindness.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi
Ibrahim Ozdemir

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Nursi was a religious scholar of the highest standing, who was unusual in his breadth of learning of both religious and modern sciences. He was well aware of the challenges posed by the modern worldview to religious thought. Aware of this global challenge, he invited members of the Abrahamic religions to develop a spirit of dialogue and establish a common ground against the spread of secular values and their implications in the 1940s. On the other hand, he devoted his life to the revival of the traditional Islamic understanding of the universe and its moral implications. It is here, that his cosmological views come to the fore. In his emphasis on the spiritual aspects of Islam, Nursi is regarded as a modern representative of the great saintly tradition embodied in the life of such figures as al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Rumi (d. 1273). He once said that he regarded his works as a modern rendering of Rumi's great *Masnawi*. To overcome the challenge of "mechanical" modernity, Nursi developed a God-centered view of the universe. He underlines the Qur'anic notion of stewardship in his system of thought.

Nursi had a great passion for nature. He contemplated both the manifest and hidden wonders of nature, and

linked nature's secrets to the omnipotence and omnipresence of the divine. In his daily life he formed relations of a very different sort with the universe and with everything around him – from dogs to ants – based on wisdom, compassion, and kindness.

For example, he would give the cats and pigeons that came to him part of his own food. Once, he rebuked one of his students who killed a lizard, saying, "Did you create it?" While in prison, he was most upset when the flies were killed by spraying, and wrote a short piece called *The Treatise on Flies*. In all the places he stayed, he had close ties, almost at the level of friendship, with all the creatures around him and called them "my brethren." When going for excursions in the countryside, Nursi would study "the Great Book of the Universe," and urge his disciples to read it "in the Name of the Sustainer Who created." The hallmark of Nursi's *magnum opus*, *Risale-i Nur (The Epistle of Light)* is that it never compromises its rule of taking the Qur'an as its guide and explains what, why, and how the universe should be seen and read.

Nursi examined nature through the Beautiful Names of God. For example, the Most Holy (Quddus), one of the Most Beautiful Names of God, means being exempt from all fault and defect; most sacred; deficient in absolutely nothing; pure and clean. Nursi likens the universe and the Earth to a vast factory, guest-house, or hostel. He draws attention to its cleanliness and explains that everything – the clouds, rain, flies, crows, wolves, worms, ants, insects, the red and white corpuscles in a person's body – all manifest the Name of Most Holy and perform their cleansing duties. He points out that the cleansing of the soil is done in the Name of Most Holy. For if all the corpses of all the animal species and the debris of dead vegetation on the land and in the seas were not cleaned up by the carnivorous cleansing officials of the sea and those of the land like the eagles, and even maggots and ants, the Earth would have become uninhabitable.

Nursi regards animals as divine officials, which act as mirrors, and glorify God and mention his Name. For example, all sorts of beings from microbes and ants to rhinoceroses, eagles, and planets are diligent officials of the Pre-Eternal Sovereign; he regards these animals as cleansing and public health officials which collect the corpses of wild animals, and since they act as mirrors to and have a relation with that Sovereign, the value of all things infinitely surpasses their individual value . . . (paraphrased from Nursi 1995: 397). According to him,

everything, from the heavens to the Earth, from the stars to flies, from angels to fishes, and from planets to particles, prostrates, worships, praises and glorifies Almighty God. But their worship varies according to their capacities and the Divine Names that they manifest; it is all different (Nursi 1998: 361).

Nursi suggests that if the natural world were observed through the Qur'anic lens, then everything would turn to a book and a letter which could be read and understood by any careful student of the Qur'an.

Thus, Nursi reads the universe as a book. He says that "one page of this mighty book is the face of the Earth" and

one word of the line is a tree which has opened its blossom and put forth its leaves in order to produce its fruit. This word consists of meaningful passages lauding and praising the All-Glorious Sapiient One to the number of orderly, well-proportioned, adorned leaves, flowers, and fruits (Nursi 1995: 404–5).

Nursi, therefore, calls the universe "the mighty Qur'an of the universe" and he repeats this in many places. Also, a noteworthy point is his emphasis on the order and balance in the universe. While he considers this order and balance as indicating God's existence, he also draws people's attention to the preservation of this order and balance. For example, he argues that "there is no wastefulness, futility, and absence of benefits in the nature of things. Wastefulness, in fact, is the opposite of the Name of Wise" (Nursi 1995: 410). So, when he argues that humanity should take lessons from ecosystems and lead a wise and frugal life, he also keeps in mind the Qur'anic verse: "Eat and drink, but waste not in excess" (7:31). According to him, there is no contradiction between the teachings of the Qur'an and the book of nature.

Thus, in Nursi's metaphysics, the universe, as a whole, is meaningful, full of art, lovable, and comprised of numerous benefits. Moreover, it makes known to us its Creator together with His Beautiful Names. Nature, as a sacred book, is full of symbols and signs and therefore has some far-reaching implications for Nursi. As Muslims hold the Qur'an in respect and awe and do not touch it unless purified by ablutions, they also must treat the book of the universe respectfully and lovingly.

Nursi encourages human beings to take nature seriously by pursuing a meaningful life. He rebukes those who see the order, harmony, and measure in the universe, yet do not draw the necessary lessons and moral implications from it. In a nutshell, Nursi's cosmology is based on the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung* and demands an environmentally friendly life.

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Nyau – A Closed Association (Central Africa)

Often referred to as a secret society and described by locals as a religion, nyau belongs to the Chewa, Nyanja and Mang’anja peoples of eastern Zambia, central and southern Malawi and neighboring parts of Mozambique. Nyau is one of a group of closed associations spread across central Africa. The origins of these associations can be traced to the Katanga Region of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the time of the Lunda and Luba kingdoms. These associations therefore have a history extending back at least one thousand years. When one asks, “What is nyau?,” the most common answer received is “Nyau is an animal.” Animal power and animal symbolism lie at the heart of nyau.

Nyau membership is open only to men and entry is gained near the time of puberty through a boys’ group initiation ceremony. For the ceremony, the boys are taken off for up to one month and taken to a place called the “dambwe.” Today this is usually in the graveyard, but in the past it might have been any thickly forested place. At the start of the initiation each boy is engulfed by a large basketwork animal figure known as kasiyamaliro. As noted by Claude Boucher, when lifted up, the base of this figure has the form of the womb. The symbolism of all the parts of kasiyamaliro is explicitly female. Inside kasiyamaliro the boy learns the greatest secrets of nyau and, when he comes out, he is metaphorically reborn as an adult. Boys who do not go through this ceremony are never considered to become to men.

Both members and non-members refer to nyau as Gule wankulu – meaning the greatest dance – and dance is key to nyau activity. Nyau dances occur at three main ceremonies: the funerary ritual (maliro), the commemorative celebrations for the deceased (m’meto) and the girls’ initiation ceremony (chinamwali). In all of these dances

elaborate costumes and masks are used. There are, essentially, two types of masks: face-masks and mobile structures. All represent animals and spirits. Face-masks are most commonly made of wood and then painted, but a few are made out of cloth, feathers or mud. The rest of the body is covered with bits of cloth, grass and leaves. Where skin can be seen, it is disguised with white ash. The mobile structures comprise a wickerwork wooden frame, covered by an ornate shell of tied maize husks, grass and pieces of cloth. Concealed dancers animate these structures from inside. The majority of structures take the form of particular animals or birds. Kasiyamaliro is the most important of all the structures. The animal that it represents is contested, but most believe that it is the eland.

Non-initiates are meant to believe that the nyau characters are real animals and spirits; that they are not, is the greatest secret of nyau. The majority of nyau dancing occurs in an open arena on the edge of the village known as the “bwalo.” When nyau perform in the bwalo they are accompanied by vigorous drumming by special nyau drums. The rhythms of the drums reflect the unique identity and character represented by each mask. Each nyau figure has its own name and its own dance and, when it appears, women will sing its own particular song. Most of the dances and songs carry a strong instructive message; they remind people of societal norms and taboos and they warn of the dire consequences that result from bad behavior.

Today there are many hundreds of different masks, but it appears that this multiplicity may be comparatively recent. Many of the masked characters, such as the Pope, the Colonial Officer, the Car, former President of Malawi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu [d. 1997] Banda, current Malawian President Bakili Muluzi, are demonstrably recent. New masks continue to be developed: a recent one is Edzi – meaning AIDS. Kasiyamaliro – meaning the one that delivers the funeral – is probably among the most ancient of all nyau figures. Kasiyamaliro dances at all important rites of passage and thereby oversees the transformation of boys into men, girls into women and the dead into ancestral spirits. Its appearance marks the climax point of most nyau ceremonies.

Despite nearly a century of suppression from the 1860s until the 1960s when nyau came into conflict with Ngoni invaders, the early Christian Church, and the Colonial administration, nyau continues to thrive. In the operations of nyau we see a key historical force that has made Chewa, Nyanja and Mang’anja society strongly resilient to unwelcome intruding forces. Its masks caricature and mock intruding forces and reaffirm traditional ways and values. The cow mask, ng’ombe, for example, was developed in the 1860s to mock the incoming Ngoni invaders who, as with other Ngoni groups, built their villages around the cattle kraal and buried their male dead within the kraal. The ng’ombe mask lampooned this

behavior and thereby served to undermine Ngoni authority.

The masked figures do not just represent animals and spirits, they are perceived by society to be animals and spirits. They are above the law and they cannot be prosecuted. In the final years of Dr. Banda's government this allowed nyau to be a powerful force in advocating multi-party democracy, even at the time when all other avenues for political dissent were closed. Nyau figures continue to parody what is perceived as the poor behavior of societal leaders and thereby play a key role in the sometimes troubled democratic processes of the region.

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