

Book Reviews

Bron R. Taylor (editor-in-chief), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (London and New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), I and II, pp. xxlv +1877. Hardback \$450, £250, ISBN 1-8437-1138-9.

This is the first *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. Its publication, therefore, is in itself a truly significant event. While there have always been those (philosophers, religionists and others) who have explored the relationship of religion and nature, Bron Taylor, consulting editor Jeffrey Kaplan, and executive editors Laura Hobgood-Oster, Adrian Ivakhiv and Michael York, as well as the many associate and assistant editors, have created an historic compilation of a field. It is historic because it documents a new field of study; this is an exploration of religion and nature but in the light of the ecological crisis as it came more vividly into human consciousness in the mid-twentieth century. All entries bring scholarship to bear on the ecological or environmental crisis even when such a link is not immediately obvious. Roger Griffin's entry on fascism, for example, takes up the controversial linking of that ideology to nature religion; Daniel T. Spencer concludes his article on homosexuality with a discussion of the recovery of nature, the body, and the erotic by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons.

Volume 1 of the *Encyclopedia* begins with an introduction setting out the aims and intent of the two volumes. It includes an elucidating discussion of the large territory of (often) contested meanings claimed by the terms 'nature' and 'religion'; an overview of a few major developments leading up to the late twentieth century interest in religion and nature; and a briefer piece on what the future for religion and nature might be. The discussion of definitions is useful in orientating the reader to the fact that the several definitions of both 'nature' and 'religion' as well as 'nature religion' are operative in the entries that follow. Such distinctions as 'the natural dimension of religion' and 'religions that consider nature to be sacred' (p. x) can alert one to some important assumptions that differ from one entry to another.

The overview of the evolution of interest in religion and nature begins with an account of the American Conservation Movement followed by a brief summary of events and personalities from seventeenth-century Europe to the 'Environmental Age' (p. xii). Again, these act as signals to the user of the encyclopedia that the primary focus will be American and European. The editors did make a concerted effort to include other perspectives (cf. p. xxvi) and did include quite a few, but this order of topics in the introduction suggests that post-colonial critique has not quite penetrated the field of religion and nature. Other topics covered in the section on the evolution of interest in religion and nature include overviews of 'World Religions and Environmentalism' (p. xiv), 'Nature Religions and Environmentalism' (p. xv), and 'Theories on the Natural Origins and Persistence of Religion' (p. xvii). Finally, there is a brief

indication of what the future might hold for the field of religion and nature and, indeed, for the future of life on the planet. Following the additional features, which include a selected bibliography, acknowledgements, list of contributors, description of the process employed in the compilation of the work, and a guide to some features of the encyclopedia (some of which will be addressed below), Volume 1 begins with the first entry, 'Abbey, Edward (1927-1989)' (p. 1). The last entry at the end of Volume 2 is 'Zulu (amaZulu) War Rituals' (p. 1824).

The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* covers a vast landscape of places, personalities and topics. In a field that is relatively new and evolving rapidly, the openness of the work to the many kinds of entries preserves a snapshot of what was happening in religion and nature at the close of the twentieth century. The following questions are a small sample of those addressed by the varied entries:

1. What historical ideas and personalities were important and how were they related to the ecological crisis?
2. How were the world religions defending their record with regard to the ecological crisis and what recovery and re-interpretations were made?
3. What cultural differences were identified as relevant to the ecological crisis?
4. What were some of the prevalent theories and frameworks used?
5. What religiously inspired actions were employed?
6. What was considered 'spiritual' and/or 'moral' behaviour in relationship to environmentalism?
7. What were considered global trends?

Unique features of this encyclopedia include two kinds of entries not found in others. While most of the entries are scholarly entries such as one would find in any encyclopedia, there are also scholarly *perspectives*, denoted by *SP*, and practitioner entries, denoted by *P*. Examples of *SP* entries are 'Thomas Berry on Religion and Nature' (pp. 166-68), Bron Taylor's 'Disney Worlds at War' (pp. 488-93), and J. David Bleich's 'Vegetarianism and Judaism' (pp. 1693-95). These entries present material by scholars who either give a particular personal vision or have an idiosyncratic way of perceiving the relationship of religion and nature. The *P* entries, as the name suggests, focus on the necessity for action or report best practices that are either personal or community-oriented. Examples of *P* entries include Leona Klippstein's account of the Spirit of the Sage Council which works to 'preserve sage scrub habitats wherever they occur' (p. 1592), P. Krishna's description of the work of Jiddhu Krishnamurti (pp. 970-71), and Will Keepin's exploration of 'Breathwork' across several religious traditions and its relationship to nature consciousness (pp. 214-17). This kind of variety does reflect the scholarly-activist interactions characteristic of much of the response to the ecological crisis, at least from a religious perspective.

There is an extensive index at the end of Volume 2 and it is necessary for locating some topics, such as African Traditional Religions, which has no major article of its own although particular traditional religions in Africa are treated. The actual presentation of the index is confusing at times, as the primary topics spread past a column or page and one is easily lost in distinguishing headings from sub-headings (cf. 'Buddhism', p. 1835-36). There are also a few more substantial inconsistencies worthy of note, however.

While an encyclopedia has the effect of leveling all topics, how a topic is included, as well as the amount of space dedicated to it, does indicate a certain importance. The

world religions, therefore, are rightly given substantial space and a number of sub-headings, whereas 'Middle Earth', the setting of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, has a much shorter space and no sub-headings. However, one might expect to find congruent treatments for Christianity (pp. 316-75), which is arranged with sub-headings, and Hinduism, which isn't, despite the fact that it is quite lengthy. The article related to Native American Spirituality (treated as a twentieth century pan-Indian phenomenon, p. 1162) is separated from the entries on individual native nations and other related topics. The result is that some heavily contested points of view are allowed to stand without the counter-arguments of their scholarly context. There is a generic entry for 'Fire' but not for water, for 'Dogs' but not for cats! There is an independent entry for Mary Daly (p. 444), but not for Herman Daly, who is much more central to the environmental movement than the former. Generally speaking, key scholars are either included as authors of entries, or they are written about. In this case, at least, the system broke down.

Despite these inconsistencies and irregularities, the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* is an excellent contribution to the field of religion and nature. It covers the quirky and the serious, presents movements, ideas, scholars and activists from virtually every continent and many cultures, and, in many cases, brings history forward to meet the ecological crisis. Articles such as the overview of the major religions, the extensive treatment of paganism and related topics, entries on ecofeminism, and the extremely interesting variety of entries from Africa, Asia and indigenous people from around the world represent the best of the scholarship available on these subjects. Other topics will be less frequented perhaps, but there is a certain delight in just coming across over two pages on 'Elephants' (pp. 584-88) or an entry on 'Redwood Rabbis' (p. 1352).

The *Encyclopedia* is an extremely helpful tool for beginners as it is quite accessible to undergraduates and the generally educated. With its specialized topics, broad scope, bibliographies on many topics, and special features it is useful for more advanced scholars as well.

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J.A. Wainwright (ed.), *Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), pp. viii + 181. Paperback \$25 (Cdn), ISBN 0-88920-453-5.

This collection of essays by Canadian environmentalists working as academics, activists, and in government explores the genesis of individual and cultural attitudes toward—and relationships with—the natural world, and discusses ethical and political views addressing environmental destruction. Diverse types of writings are

represented in this anthology, including nature writing, personal memoir, theory, and ethics. The introduction neatly ties the essays together, and the collection is well organized so that the essays follow in logical sequence. Most of them are well written, and none pose any serious problems in terms of readability. Most are accessible even to undergraduates, but a couple are better suited to use as source material for lecturing. A few of the essays are real gems that are sure to find a place in classroom discussion in courses in environmental studies and in religion and ecology. The field of literary criticism is well represented, and the book will have some broader appeal in the humanities and social sciences.

The narrative character of these writings increases their accessibility, and most of the essays are further enhanced by providing definitions of terms when necessary. Karen Krug's analysis of recent changes to larger farms with more machinery, increased use of chemical interventions and genetic modifications – drawing on her personal experience of farm life – would make a good reading for a class on food security or agriculture. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands' paper remains accessible while introducing high level concepts such as the ecotone, an edge space between habitats, the margin that includes species and attributes from both, where abrupt changes can occur as differences collide and connect, providing opportunities for advancement and suffering (p. 46). While Trish Glazebrook's essay is not accessible for first year undergraduates due to her use of specialized terminology, it is informative and provides an insightful theory of nature and cooperative science.

Several of the papers provide useful jumping off points for classroom discussion. Ehor Boyanowsky's provocative look at alliance building around water issues will stimulate debate about what mobilizes support, and where to look for support for environmental initiatives. This essay has good Canadian content but its usefulness is not restricted to that context. Peter Armitage's is a good choice for a discussion of ideas of nature, contextualized in narratives of Labrador. He shows the cultural base of interpretations, how one region can be seen as a wasteland, as wilderness, as a resource ripe for commercial exploitation, and as a broken relationship. Jarmo Jalava speaks of his experiences with spending parental leave on Georgian Bay and in the Bruce Peninsula (Ontario) – popular summer holiday areas frequented by hunters in the autumn. He explores the conflicts between those who desire to experience the land as wilderness, those who live there, and visitors who use the land for hunting. The ambiguous ending of his essay, titled 'Prey', is ripe for classroom discussion, and will provide food for thought for other readers. Lionel Rubinoff's essay supplies good content for a discussion of our place in nature, and the value of wilderness, but is not as readable as the other essays in the collection. He attempts to give a nuanced exploration of how much human control of the environment is acceptable before it becomes domination, but in citing contradictory perspectives his own becomes unclear. Anne Marie Dalton's essay gives a good introduction to the work of Catholic priest and cultural historian Thomas Berry, and describes how his work fits into the development of the field of religion and ecology in the mainstream West.

Onno Oerlemans links the idea of nature in Romantic writings with contemporary environmental discourse in fruitful ways. He finds a theoretical link between nature as an escape from modernity and the impetus toward environmental action, showing why the experience of nature is important. This text will be useful for making nature writing such as J.A. Wainwright's contribution teachable in an environmental context. Wainwright's piece shows a love of place through lyrical prose, expressing a spiritual

connection and nostalgia for those places that have been lost to development.

Monte Hummel's paper is a good example of nature writing that includes ethics. Its geographically specific content connecting wintergreen with Canadian identity is a bonus for Canadians, but less useful outside Canada unless one is looking for a diverse or international sample of nature writing. Elizabeth May, a significant figure in the Canadian environmental movement, gives a highly readable memoir, weaving information on pesticides and historical nuclear testing into personal narrative. Leanne Simpson's contribution, the only piece by an indigenous writer in this volume, gives lots of good specific and informative content about the effects of deforestation, mercury contamination and poisoning, toxic chemicals, and hydroelectric projects on Native peoples' health and culture in Canada. Her essay may make students depressed and/or angry, and is effectively paired with Boyanowsky's more action oriented chapter in this collection. Simpson's Canadian focus is excellent for use in Canada, but would require comparison work regarding the treatment of indigenous peoples for use in other areas.

Some of these essays are specifically relevant to Canada, but most are broader in their scope even if they focus on specific regions. Despite the location of many of the contributors on Canada's east coast those perspectives do not appear to be over-represented, and most regions of Canada are discussed in the papers. There is not much discussion of the northern territories, but some of the relevant issues are discussed in Armitage's essay on Labrador. This book is unique in being a Canadian collection, unlike most anthologies on ecology and the environment, which are American. The contributors show an awareness of issues beyond national borders, and demonstrate the need to speak beyond regional interests.

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Celia E. Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature* (New Dimensions to Religious Ethics Series, 3; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003–2004), pp. xvi + 256. Paperback \$31.95, £20.99, ISBN 0-6312-2938-8. Hardback \$78.95, £65.00, ISBN 0-6312-2937-X.

In her book, *The Ethics of Nature*, I believe that Celia E. Deane-Drummond hopes to do for Christian ethics, and, in particular, a Christian ethics of nature, what Alistair MacIntyre did for virtue ethics in and through his renowned text *After Virtue* (p. 1). I am not sure that Deane-Drummond's manuscript will accomplish such a hope, but I do find both the analysis and vision she imparts in this volume highly refreshing and thoughtful, and certainly worth the significant effort necessary to work through the rather complex and meandering line of thought presented in this text.

Basically Deane-Drummond offers a vision for Christian ethics to be primarily construed as a modified version of (secular) virtue ethics that is focused particularly on the four cardinal virtues of prudence (practical wisdom), fortitude, justice, and temperance (pp. 9-10). She wishes to reinvigorate a basic Thomistic natural law framework of ethics, but centered on the four cardinal virtues, which she also sees as a 'good starting point for reflection on the ethics of nature' (p. 9). I must admit in first reading this text that I was somewhat perplexed by the alleged important connection

between the cardinal virtues, and an ethics of *nature* – the cardinal virtues generally conceived in highly and perhaps even exclusively anthropocentric terms, with very little to do with the purely non-human, natural world. However, Deane-Drummond asks us to consider the contexts in which ‘Aquinas developed his own understanding of the significance of the virtues’ (p. 19). As she points out: ‘for Aquinas the essence of all things is that they arise from the creative activity of God, and [it is] as created that their inner structure is defined...a view of human knowledge that can include scientific understanding’ (p. 19).

If I read her correctly, in basic summary, Deane-Drummond is arguing that a Christian virtue ethics arising out of a reinvigorated realist Thomistic philosophical and theological framework and focused in particular on the cardinal virtues has the potential to break through a significant variety of *false dichotomies* that have *plagued* genuine moral efforts to understand our Christian stewardship obligations to the natural world.

One of these dichotomies concerns our basic Christian understanding of science, and the role of scientific understanding and knowledge to Christian theological, philosophical, and moral deliberation(s). As she points out ‘for Aquinas while we can know the relationship between things and our minds, we can never fully penetrate into the mind of God...our minds are too crude an instrument to fathom the nature of things, hence it is because human beings are created that we cannot know fully the Divine mind in things’ (pp. 19-20). She further adds: ‘such a view does not lead to agnosticism, because it presupposes the idea of a Creator, but an awareness that we are always ‘on the way’; nor does it lead to a rejection of science, for even in their imperfect form creation shows the light of God as it were in a mirror’ (p. 20).

A second of such false dichotomies would include the conflict between exclusive anthropocentric and bio-centric perspectives in the context of environmental ethics, as well as the eco-political debates concerning how to best morally approach the problems created by environmental degradation. Anthropocentric perspectives, of course, see value and ethics as only completely and fundamentally relating to human beings – as human beings are the only beings in the (partially) physical order of nature that are rational and autonomous (i.e. free and thinking) (pp. 29-30). Bio-centrists, in contrast, see this viewpoint as problematic – an arrogant, unjustified undervaluing and subjugation of the natural order to the human order, and generative of many current environmental problems (pp. 30-32). A cardinal virtue ethics using a Thomistic approach, by contrast, seems to find a common middle ground between these polar extremes. Deane-Drummond writes: ‘while Aquinas believed in a hierarchical ordering of nature, his ontology suggests a commonality between human beings and creatures, in correspondence with the creative ordering of God’ (p. 40). Continuing, she adds that as Aquinas suggests: ‘non-rational beings do not share in the workings of human reason, nor do they obey them, yet they participate in the Divine reason by way of obedience: the power of divine reason extends to more things than come under human reason’ (p. 40).

A third understanding of such a false dichotomy might also include current debates over the ethical treatment of animals. Against the arguments of Peter Singer’s claims to the moral equality between human beings and all sentient non-human animals, a (Thomistic) cardinal virtue ethics analysis, by contrast, finds significant differences between human beings and (non-human) animals. For one, it is only human animals who are possessed of the virtue of prudence (practical wisdom), so central to

Deane-Drummond's analysis (pp. 70-71). It is also only human animals who are fully possessed of language, complete reasoning powers, or of a rational soul (pp. 71-72). On the other hand, Aquinas 'clearly gives high ontological status to non-human animals' (p. 73). Deane-Drummond prefaces: 'Aquinas believed that plants, animals, and humans are closely connected through a great chain of being. Humanity is humanity situated in creation as a whole. Yet divisions are not as sharp as such an image might suggest...the lowest of the higher genus touches the highest of the lower species... leading to a very gradual but orderly succession' (p. 68). Deane-Drummond considers a few of the practical consequences of her analysis: 'animals deserve our respect and deserve to be treated with compassion and consideration. A prudential approach would reject, in principle, all forms of factory farming and cruel practices that restrict the well-being of animals' (p. 75).

The massive range of research and scholarship (biological, ethical, philosophical, theological...) that Deane-Drummond's tome represents is breathtaking. I strongly recommend her text to any scholar or researcher genuinely serious about the subject matter—i.e. a truly interdisciplinary study of the science, ethics, philosophy, and theology of the living natural world.

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Arthur Asa Berger, *Shop 'Til You Drop: Consumer Behavior and American Culture* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 152. Paperback \$20, £14.99, ISBN 0-7425-3691-2. Hardback \$60, £46.00, ISBN 0-7425-3690-4.

In *Shop 'Til You Drop*, Arthur Asa Berger covers everything on the subject of consumer culture from Calvinist perspectives on asceticism, to the mythical importance of houses, the feminization of men, and the death of shopping malls. The book appears to serve as a kind of 'catch-all' on consumer culture, defining, describing, and explaining consumer culture and behaviour in sociological, psychological, philosophical and anthropological terms. The diversity of topics explored include marketing typologies, consumer clusters, 'tweens', myth models, postmodern theory, fads, semiotics, shopping patterns and tourism. Perhaps in an attempt to represent the postmodern culture it describes, the text is sprinkled throughout with snippets of trivia ('factoids'), cartoon figures, and photographs.

Berger most likely intended this book for classroom use by students already familiar with cultural or consumer studies. Much of its content could serve as a useful starting point for more detailed exploration and discussion. Students might also be entertained by some of the interesting facts and figures Berger provides, which are often relevant to the everyday lives of youth, such as teenage spending, marketing to

'tweens' and 'The Super Bowl Pizza Connection'. They might also appreciate the illustrations, which serve to lighten some of the theories presented.

In its attempt to be accessible and academic at the same time, however, the book feels compromised. The theories of consumption it presents might appear obscure or overly abstract to the layman, while it lacks depth of analysis from an academic perspective. Its lack of focus on a specific audience causes problems in structure and content. On the most basic level of readability, it is often difficult to understand the author's rationale for much of the book's structure. The text jumps from heading to subheading, with little flow between ideas, and various threads of thought appearing and disappearing throughout the chapters, only to reappear under later subject headings. This results not only in a sense of fragmentation, but repetition and inconsistency. For example, cruises are discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 52-53) as an illustration of 'chains of consumption' where one purchase necessitates another (travel insurance, airline tickets, new clothing etc). Yet, later (Chapter 7), cruises are discussed as 'up front' (one-time) package purchases in contrast to other tourist activities which involve 'continual expenses' (p. 114).

By nature of the scope and diversity of topics covered in the book, the author is unable to explore any specific topic for more than a page or two (and more often a paragraph or two). The theories presented tend to rely on a single quotation, anecdote, or example. For readers unfamiliar with some of these ideas and with Berger's previous works, this approach is often unconvincing. Berger's suggestion that we are connecting to ancient myths when we read, go shopping and buy things is one such example. The suggestion in itself might be perfectly valid. However, Berger illustrates the parallels of myth and consumerism with the single (and rather exceptional) example of purchasing a house, where he compares the natural innocence of the Garden of Eden with a house in the suburbs. The notion that human beings are drawn to nature, and that this is reflected in the stories and mythologies we have created is fairly intuitive. However, the suggestion that we are drawn to nature (the suburbs) *because* of the myths we have created seems to be based on more precarious logic. In terms of likely explanations, it seems more likely that the suburban lifestyle is better connected with lower real estate prices, than mythology.

The author also tends to meander on topics, digressing from the subject at hand and losing the initial train of thought in the process. For example, under the heading of 'sales: spend and save at the same time' (p. 47), the author discusses 'deals' on automobiles. Once on the subject of automobiles, he then shifts his discussion from the subject of sales to symbolic (and phallic) aspects of purchasing an automobile. This last part of the section would seem better placed within later discussions on semiotics or psychological aspects of consumption behaviour.

Finally, other than a few sentences on suggested tax reform to remedy the distributional problem in American society, the book fails to touch upon the political-economic dimensions of consumer society. Readers (such as myself) interested in the importance of political economy and power dimensions in shaping consumer culture would find little to satisfy them, other than a smattering of references to media and advertising ('the insidious sales pitches' of automobile companies, for example, p. 123), and the passing remark by the author that 'the problem we face is structural' (p. 121). Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest the magnitude of social, cultural, psychological and environmental impacts that are attributed to a pervasive consumer society. Although Berger briefly addresses the social impacts of consumption in his

final chapter (p. 119), he makes no mention of the broader environmental and socio-economic impacts resulting from American consumerism. Instead, he touches briefly on inequality in American society (which was also addressed earlier in the book), and the consumption treadmill of overworked Americans.

In the final analysis, Berger's book may not be the best choice for popular audiences or scholars, but could be better appreciated as a tool for discussion in the classroom, or as a quick reference to the myriad of topics that fall within the subject of consumer culture.

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Simon P. James, *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics* (Ashgate World Philosophies Series; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 142. Paperback \$29.95, £16.99. ISBN 0-7546-1368-2.

Most books on Zen Buddhism are shadowed by the inevitable Zen(ish) critic who begins, like a wine critic, by pointing out that however well written the wine guide is, it is no substitute for drinking the stuff. This is usually followed by references to traps instead of animals, fingers instead of moons, and the building of elegant rafts on the near shore rather than boldly crossing over the stream of enlightenment. Simon James attempts to disarm this inevitability by a series of apologies along the same lines throughout his book, especially in his Conclusion, where he outlines the negative aims he has sought to fulfill; and as his *envoi* he suggests that we can become too attached to philosophy, and might be otherwise engaged. The Zen mat as the solution to Wittgenstein's ladder, perhaps.

Suitably somewhat disarmed, this Zen(ish) critic, then, finds this to be a fine, if puzzling, book. The fineness is, among other things, in the succinct and deft way in which the author handles many aspects of this vast topic. Certain sections, such as the discussion on emptiness, are dazzling pieces of void avoidance: those who have worked through their Nagarjuna, their Hua-Yen, and the rest, know with what care James has synthesized and worked through for the benefit of his readers many of the cruxes of the literature. But following on from that, the puzzle is in determining exactly who the readers might be for this book. Can readers without this kind of background really benefit from it?

To begin with, the book opens with a 'short history of Zen' which is a breathless race through Buddhist history. The reader with little or no knowledge of the Buddhist tradition is immediately faced with references to the Vaibhasika Abhidharma, the Madhyamaka, Hung-Ch'ou, and a level of discussion which presumes a fair working knowledge of some recent interplay in Buddhist scholarship. Yet, on the other hand, the discussion as presented is in fact a marvel of clarity and synthesis. This continues throughout the book, not just in the Zen discussions, but in the environmental ethics

and Western philosophy discussions that are the other foci: complex arguments lucidly presented as if to a general audience, but really at a different level – for example, in the paragraphs on Bradley’s version of internal relations. Furthermore, many chapters are organized around the attempted refutation of criticisms of Zen – it is assumed that the reader is already deeply into this game – but even the author admits in his Conclusion that readers may come away with more criticisms than when they began. My suspicion is that the book was written by the author for the author, so he could get straight about Zen and environmental ethics for his own purposes – this is not a bad general aim as book aims go, but it assumes a responding echo in the bosoms of a wider audience than there may actually be.

The great ingratiating problem with this book is that the book contains its own best irritants and refutations in the occasional descriptions and quirkinesses of various exemplary Zen figures, the odd, the scholarly, and the saintly. There is some quality about their stance in the world that is not remotely captured by the pages of discussion that surround them. It has been said that one of the qualities of Gandhi, St Francis of Assisi, and other powerful religious figures is that they somehow present in themselves, as themselves, a solution to problems that were thought to be un-integratable. How are we to solve the problem of being in the world, to undertake the impossible task of saving all beings whose existence is in a real sense empty? Basho, D.T. Suzuki, and Hakuin present themselves irrefutably before us.

A specific aim of the author is to bring the topic of Zen and environmental ethics within the purview of ‘virtue ethics’ – the Aristotelian tradition updated by Anscombe, MacIntyre and others. This ethics has the virtue of being able to connect to related Eastern traditions through the similarities and echoes found in the Confucian gentleman, the Taoist craftsman, and the Hindu practitioner of *svadharma*; but it is one place in *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics* where I feel the author is not making the most of the power and the ‘feel’ of real Zen life, as exemplified. (The virtue tradition being strong on exemplars). Rather, he seems to think at one point that a proper life with the key virtues – which may make sense in Aristotelian terms – is a form of template for the arc of a Zen life. But it is not the virtues that give the taste of Zen: it is something else – found in Socrates more than in Aristotle perhaps, and equally puzzling to the Western virtue tradition, which is why from the beginning that tradition splintered in all directions trying to figure out what on earth Socrates thought he was up to.

More properly, James later also emphasizes the more Taoist thread in Zen: that there is a moral pattern in the universe (like the grain in wood) that we are out of sync with, and our efforts are designed to remove the obstacles to going with that grain, after which our ethical lives will go more smoothly. Non-violence is also a backing away from attempts to wrest control of the world from the world. James omits to make the parallel with the Western ‘natural law’ tradition, which, given his Aristotelian bent, is a pity: one would have liked to have some discussion of the Eastern ‘craftsman’ or ‘sportsman in a zone’ version of natural law, versus the legalistic version – natural *law* as opposed to *natural* law – that has prevailed in the West. It would have been appropriate in this context to make the point that Arne Naess (the guru of Deep Ecology) derives much of his ecological universalism from Spinoza, the deepest of the Western natural law thinkers.

Finally, I would strongly recommend this book to readers with some grounding in both Zen and environmental ethics, or for Zen students who want to explore

mainstream environmental ethics more deeply. It would also help banish some myths about Zen for students of environmental ethics who might otherwise be untempted.

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Ian Mills, *a divine ecology* (Sarasota, FL: FLF Press, 2004), pp. 649. Paperback \$34. ISBN 1-89185-5662.

The book, *a divine ecology*, is a weighty tome, especially in the themes it covers and the issues it addresses. Subtitled 'the infinite potential of our between', the book traces the life journey of the academic and filmmaker Ian Mills from his childhood, his deeply transformative experience living with the Dyak in Borneo, and his love affairs with the philosopher Spinoza, the medieval Italian author Dante, and with the beauty of the natural world. In fact, Mills sees Dante as a collaborator in the project, while Spinoza is his guide and muse, and the contemporary philosopher Levinas his partner in thoughtful and rigorous conversation. Along the way he teams up with the Taoist Lao Tzu, the Zen master Dogen, the Sufi mystic Rumi, Meister Eckhart, and the French feminist writer Luce Irigaray, in an unfoldment of his ecotheological ideas and ideals.

The starting point for *a divine ecology* is inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*: 'In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost'. This quote reinforces Mills' own experience – 'our life is not simply about getting from place to place in a straightforward way, it is a process (sometimes circuitous) of creating meaningful relationships with the Other—in his case, with other humans, other species and with God. He explains that the essence of our living well, and living ethically, is found in the process of 'inter-relating' within and between all beings. And it is the quality of this relationship that lies at the heart of our wellbeing. It is a divine connection, says Mills, one that is mutually beneficial.

From here Mills takes the reader on a multi-layered adventure in ecological-theological philosophy using the outstanding elements in his own life, as well as his relationship with mystics and theorists, to craft his assertion that 'life is relating'. In co-creative terms, if the health of the environment suffers, so too does the health of our interrelatedness, or to use his expression, 'our love', defined as a certain quality and intensity of relating.

And this is crucial for me personally, for it is only by co-operating with the Other to reciprocally preserve the grace of the way we are being together that I am able to preserve beneficial relating, and so the happiness of my own being. (p. 362)

Mirroring the dynamic interconnectedness of ecosystems (of which humans are also part), Mills outlines how human health and wellbeing are co-dependent with ecosystem health and wellbeing. So to be content, happy and satisfied, we need to live simply, with earth in mind, body and soul. In this construction, the personal *is* the

ethical, is the ecological, is the theological, where God is defined as life itself (based on Spinoza's contention that 'the essence of God is existence'), and where life/God unfolds in its sacredness through the continuous inter-relating within and between all beings. Out of this process, he says, God emerges as an ecological activity, or 'a divine ecology'.

Mills' awareness of the rich tapestry that arises through inter-being was born in the jungles of Borneo, out of his experience interacting with Dyak-ecology. Under the tutelage of the elders, Mills discovered a new way of being: the Dyak call it 'Antara'. It can be described as an interflowing of beingness, where each being remains separate, distinct, discrete, and entwined at the same time. Yet there is something more as well, an essence of 'between-ness', or Antara, that emerges out of the interconnection within and between beings. Mills' Dyak friend, Mimpri, explains: 'Antara is the spirit of the whole world and all the spirits in and between all things' (p. 110).

In the flowering of Antara each being comes to this sense of between-ness, mutually shared yet differing, enacted as a kind of respectful or mindful reciprocity which Mills defines as love. Antara became the guiding principle for Mills' life and for this book. He carries it like a torch in light of the recent and terrible destruction of the Dyak rainforest homeland through widespread logging.

Delving into *a divine ecology* is a serious undertaking. It is not an easy read. Sometimes it is like going on an archeological dig where the more you read, the more you unearth, the more questions (about life and your own life) you need to engage with. The author demands that. But the density of the text is also its drawback. Like Dante's dark wood the way is not always clear and the reader can get lost in the mingling of story, argument and reflection.

At one level the book is an exploration into the depths of human existence with nature/God; at another it is a treatise on Spinoza and other influential philosophers and mystics; at a third it is a poetical and biographical story where Mills revisits significant moments from his childhood, his time with the Dyak, and his relationship with lovers (human and other-than-human). Through journeying in this fecund soil he comes face to face with his sacred ecological self embedded deep in the humus of existence, where human is humus is human. This is terrain well-mapped by (eco)philosophers such as Arne Naess, David Abram and Ken Wilber and dwells in the discourse between religion and ecology amongst authors like Sallie McFague, Roger Gottlieb, Rosemary Radford Ruether and others but these writers are bypassed in this deeply personal pilgrimage.

Like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Mills does not tread the safe, straight way but detours and remembers, returns to his muses, quests and questions, travelling the path with serious intent. His footsteps reverberate with passion, pleasure, pain and loss but this is life. He fosters his relationship with life/God through acknowledging the power of nature, the turning wheel of life, death and re-birth, through the changing seasons, the patterns of tides, the pull of the moon, and with a small yellow-bellied bird who thrives in relationship with Mills on the crumbs he leaves each afternoon. Here is divine ecology at play, where the ecological is not simply located within the functioning of ecosystems but is found within the precious inter-being-ness of human/Mills with all of nature. But what disturbs this harmonious existence, he argues, is the way we behave in the world, with our wants and desires, our hopes and dreams. 'Live in the now; be real; be who you really are'. These were the lessons Mills learnt from his year-long sojourn with the Dyak. In the jungle, and in the longhouse, Mills learns to

live intuitively and act accordingly and throughout the book he returns to his experiences by way of teaching us (the readers) how to see, treat and relate to the world differently, ethically, ensouled. To see the world with soul-eyes, to relate to the world and each other with virtue and love, to connect with the divine essence, to feel, to suffer, to be, to let life happen, this is the delicate wisdom of 'a divine ecology'.

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David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Literature, Art, and Culture* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. xix + 208. Paperback \$25. ISBN 1-4051-1975-6. Hardback \$58. 1-4051-1974-8.

The heat was hot and the ground was dry
 But the air was full of sound

- 'Horse With No Name'

I begin with an epigraph from the hit song about the desert by the band *America*, because that is where David Jasper will end his book – with a dark meditation on the U.S. role in ravaging mid-eastern spaces supposedly devoid of anything but oil, but also because the band's lines counter such destructive tendencies. Jasper begins his own work with the Desert Fathers, specifically St Antony who took refuge in the desert 'where life becomes almost impossible and unbearable, language is transfigured and the impossible necessity of theology may be rediscovered' (p. 5). By situating the desert within the mind as well as a real place for wanderers, and an 'intertextual space produced by cross-references among cultural creations dealing with [it] as archetype or icon of the imagination' (p. xii), Jaspers has a host of others follow Antony's example in one way or another – including Blake, Schoenberg, Heidegger, Thomas Merton, T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), Georgia O'Keefe and her fellow painters Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. What unifies this disparate group is the shared search for the lost unity of God's creation, a pre-lapsarian unity that provided a glimpse of heaven, making Eden a place of vision and 'language which is so profound we have not yet articulated it or perhaps have forgotten as in a dream' (p. 123). The desert as journeyed through on the page and canvas, or in burning reality, is both Eden and language on the cusp of re-birth, where life lived on the edge involves a 'true ecumenism' (p. 6) and access to a 'commonality' that is at the heart of human lived experience and human sense of the Divine.

It is one thing to link together desert figures and narratives in order to emphasize the vital place of wilderness beyond quotidian existence. Jaspers does this very well, not having to work too hard to make the case for Jesus' mystical refuge in the desert that resulted in new theology, but having to work harder to position T.E. Lawrence as a "de-centered" person...an unlikely and finally tragic companion for the religious souls who preceded him into the sands of Egypt and Arabia, or the deserts of mystical spirituality' (p. 10). Christ went out to meet God, Lawrence to find himself by losing

himself. But here is where things get complicated. It can seem that Lawrence, in writing self-absorbedly of his rape by Turkish officials, is closer to Jaspers' reading of Michel de Certeau's reading of the Marquis De Sade for whom 'pure oblivion is sexual excess, a loss of identity that is also loss of memory' (p. 51). There is some evidence (see John Mack's biography *A Prince of Our Disorder*) that Lawrence desperately needed to disremember the conflicted figure he was, and some question as to whether the rape itself happened or was recalled from a dream. Jaspers also sometimes assumes that because there was Desert Fathers literature, it is enough to convince his readers of the relationship of various poets and novelists to the desert, real and symbolic, through the use of brief quotations or close readings of specific passages, though I commend him for his attention to the spiritual darkness of Cormac McCarthy's remarkable *Blood Meridian*. He is much more convincing with visual artists like Pollock: to see Pollock's paintings is to 'share an impulse with ritual and liturgy as fundamental acts of faith that are not remotely mimetic... They are... pure sacraments, and to look at them demands a total suspension of any articulation of belief, a blindness that is yet visionary and revelatory' (p. 119).

All this moves towards the apprehension and experience of the desert as the kingdom of silence, where to say 'yes' in the face of apparent emptiness (as did Christ on the cross) is to simultaneously fail and triumph in radical fashion that has the power to dissolve imperial Christianity and the overweight secular moralities of institutions that would rule the world in the place of the churches – remember, Jaspers reminds us, asceticism comes from the Greek *askesis*, meaning exercise or training (of the mind and spirit, as well as the body). Modernity, he says, does not comprehend the desert, though there is potentiality in postmodernity's understanding of 'texts as sand and sand as texts...[and] the complex interplay between body and text' (p. 38). All this moves, too, towards final considerations of the destruction of the desert and those who live there in the recent Iraqi wars, something postmodernity cannot prevent and that has language lost on the tongue of Yeats' 'rough beast' salivating at the prospect of consuming Bethlehem and Basra alike. If, as Jaspers insists, the desert is a place 'that both kills and redeems', we must struggle with our own oppositional roles as killers with diminishing opportunities for redemption and as pilgrims in a singular landscape that contains our beginning rather than our end.

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Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), pp. x + 214. Paperback US\$24. ISBN 1-57075-525-6.

Like other ecotheologians, Denis Edwards argues that the intellectual revolution that has been stimulated by our emerging understanding of Big Bang cosmology requires a concomitant renewal of our understanding of theology. He is not advocating a rejection of our Christian theological tradition, but rather a rearticulation that is both

faithful to the core of our Christian beliefs while allowing our understanding to evolve and more relevant to the issues of our times. In his earlier works, *Jesus and the Cosmos* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), and *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1995), Edwards expanded our understanding of Christ as Redeemer to include a deeper appreciation of Christ as Creator. He employed a study of Scripture and, in particular, the wisdom tradition, a review of earlier theological sources, such as the Patristics, as well as an exploration of more contemporary authors, such as Karl Rahner. He now employs a similar method in *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* to construct a more holistic understanding of the third person of the Trinity.

After a brief overview of Big Bang cosmology, Edwards explores the writings of Basil of Caesarea to lay the foundation for a renewed theology of the Holy Spirit. Providing historical context as well as drawing on primary sources, Edwards carefully constructs Basil's understanding of the Spirit as the Breath of God who dwells within every creature of creation – not just human beings – thereby linking all of creation with the Divine Communion. He augments Basil's pneumatology with the works of other Patristics, particularly Irenaeus, Athanasius and Ambrose, considering how each of these authors employs biblical sources and the controversies of their day to develop their respective theological positions. Edwards demonstrates that the patristic appreciation of the Spirit as the immanent source who enables creation can easily expand to describe a Spirit who is present within an ever emerging and evolving universe described by Big Bang cosmology. Given that the Spirit has been active in creation since the universe's origin 14 billion years ago, not just since Pentecost, it has been a faithful companion to every creature of the universe, not just humans. This perspective, notes Edwards, should inform how humanity relates to the rest of God's good creation, prompting us to value that which God also values.

Edwards argues that the Spirit and the Word are reciprocally related both in salvation history and in the eternal life of God. He recounts how Irenaeus described the Word and Spirit as the two hands of God at work in salvation and creation. The Spirit brings about the incarnation of the Word, and rests upon and accompanies the Word in every step of salvation history. Similarly, in the Trinitarian communion, the Word is fully involved in the procession of the Spirit while the Spirit is involved in the generation of the Word.

Acknowledging how a lover leaves space for a beloved to be freely expressive in a celebration of difference and unique identity, Edwards notes that the Creator Spirit embraces creation with a self-limiting love that permits each creature and entity within cosmogenesis to experience its proper nature and autonomy. This is a universe that is not controlled by a predetermined divine master plan nor left to random happenstance. This is a universe where the Creator Spirit works from within, enabling and beckoning creation to a new birth and new future. This Spirit serves as both as Midwife and compassionate companion who enables each creature to realize its unique identity.

While we have seen the Word face to face, the Spirit remains more elusive, acting where the Spirit wills in ways that are not visible to us. Edwards addresses the need to discern the authentic work and encouragement of the Spirit so that we are not deceived. He draws on the insights and methods provided by Ignatius of Loyola in order to discern those interior movements that are of God from those that are evil. Edwards also summarizes Karl Rahner's exploration of Ignatius's understanding of

'consolation without previous cause' in order to describe how the times when we are wholly drawn into God's love might help us discern the gift of the Spirit from times of deception.

Edwards provides a solid overview of Christianity's teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. His clearly written and well organized approach gradually leads the reader through the essential elements of pneumatology, beginning with the insights discerned from the Patristics' scriptural basis for their understanding of the Trinity and ending with the perspectives of contemporary theologians. His sketch of the Spirit will extend from a succinct exploration of the *filioque* controversy to the latest discussion of Spirit Christology.

A reader with a particular interest in ecotheology will find Edwards' description of pneumatology helpful, especially when the author is describing the activity of divine immanence within a sacred creation. Edwards' work provides a rich complement to Mark I. Wallace's description of an ecological pneumatology in *Finding God in the Singing River* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) and *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation* (New York: Continuum, 1996). And while discussions of the Spirit and ecumenism, the Spirit and synodality, the Spirit and the Church, and the procession of the Spirit could seem irrelevant to those who are mainly interested in ecotheological issues, other readers will appreciate the more comprehensive quality of Edwards' text. All readers will undoubtedly welcome his frequent use of primary sources and his mature grasp of contemporary theologians.

Although the text frequently recalls theological positions that have been developed in earlier chapters, this is only mildly annoying and the liberal use of subheadings permits the reader to skip sections that tend to repeat earlier discussions. These same subheadings also allow the reader to follow easily Edwards' gradual development of various aspects of a more contemporary pneumatology.

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