

Scroll down for ERN review by Tony Watling in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22(2):283-86, 2007.

constraints of geography. Territory, if it means anything at all is merely the temporary base for operations. Jihad represents an epiphenomenon of this process, mirroring what it appears to oppose so strongly. Jihad becomes a symbolic act, a “series of effects rather than of causes” (160). It becomes just another global social movement indistinguishable from and as unstable as the rest.

Jihad is therefore not built to last. It is essentially a temporary phenomenon, a conclusion at marked variance with Cook’s analysis, which argues that jihad is a constant factor within Islam. In terms of a cessation of hostilities, the fragmented nature of Islam and its growing instability paradoxically offer hope for the future. Devji concludes by inviting the reader to view jihad as a species of bricolage drawing from unconventional arrangements of essentially unrelated theologies and schools of Islamic jurisprudence and mysticism. He speculates that even Al Qaeda’s emphasis on violence is likely to recede and ultimately disappear, as the movement reconstitutes and transforms itself. This is at marked variance with Cook’s rather more pessimistic vision of an essentially unchanging Islam, with jihad likely to continue as a dangerous force and to argue otherwise is merely “wishful thinking” (166).

Both books have their flaws as well as their uses. Cook’s treatment is overly tied to textual analysis and lacks sociological content and context. While it has plenty of depth, it lacks breadth and Cook appears to ignore some important issues and questions where they might undermine the logic of his analysis. An irritating feature is his tendency ostentatiously to adopt the intellectual high ground, castigating the bias of others while demonstrating a consistently high level of bias himself. Devji is no less irritating, particularly so in his more postmodernist flights of fancy. In places, his analysis is over-abstracted and highly speculative, although Devji cannot be accused of ignoring awkward questions or being selective in his use of facts. Despite these caveats, both books have their undoubted strengths and deserve a reading. Read together, they advance our knowledge of a very topical phenomenon and I would warmly recommend them to a wider readership.

PAUL CHAMBERS

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Glamorgan, Wales, UK

© 2007 Paul Chambers

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature (2 Volumes)

BRON R. TAYLOR, ed. & JEFFREY KAPLAN, consulting ed., 2005

London & New York: Thoemmes Continuum

xliv + 1877 pp., £250.00, \$450.00 (hb)

ISBN 1-84371-138-9

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature (ERN), published in two large volumes (an estimated 1.5 million words), is a work situated in and from (and somewhat

extolling) the emerging 'field' of 'religion and ecology' (the term 'religion and nature' was seen as preferable to the latter or to 'environmental ethics' and providing the broadest scope). Its genesis is the same as the new International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture and the forthcoming (2007) *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*. The ERN—a collaborative effort, arising from discussions within the American Academy of Religion—is similar in aim, form, and layout to the (2003) *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion* (ESR), although nearly double the size: it consists of introduction, acknowledgements, reader's guide, and list of contributors, articles A–J (Vol. 1: xlv + 944 pp), and articles K–Z and index (Vol. 2: 945–1,877 pp).

The main question animating the ERN is "what are the relationships between human beings, their diverse religions, and the Earth's living systems?" (vii). Acknowledging that answers will be difficult and complex, intertwined with cultural, environmental, and religious variables, further analytical categories are stressed to stimulate entries and debate, such as: how have eco-systems shaped human consciousness, behaviour, and religion? What are the perceptions of religions towards the Earth/life and have they promoted eco-friendly lifestyles or otherwise? Are religions being transformed by environmental concern and do eco-beliefs lead to eco-practices? Does environmentalism influence religion or vice versa and how have religions influenced each other in an environmental sense? Can environmental movements be considered religious? How is science integrated into nature-related religion and ethics? How are nature-related religions reshaping the ecological, political, and religious landscape? (vii–viii)

The introduction sets the scene by providing and examining definitions of 'religion', 'nature', and 'nature religion', explores the genesis and evolution of interest in religion and nature, and provides an overview of the ways the ERN may address the future of 'religion' and 'nature' and their relationship (with useful general bibliography). The acknowledged aim is to provide fairly minimal definitions for 'strategic reasons'; that of being inclusive, inviting the widest variety of perspectives, stimulating wide discussion. The 'operational definition' of 'religion' used is "that dimension of human experience engaged with sacred norms, which is related to transformative forces and powers and which people consider to be dangerous and/or beneficial and/or meaningful in some ultimate way"; 'nature' is "that world which includes—but at the same time is perceived to be largely beyond—our human bodies, and which confronts us daily with its apparent otherness"; 'nature religion' is seen as "that religiosity that considers nature sacred (powerful) and worthy of reverent care" (although contributors are given leeway to deviate, possibly using broader definitions, for example, for nature religion "religious phenomena in which nature is important") (x). A brief history/evolution of 'religion and nature' follows, covering the 'American Conservation Movement', highlighting the rise of environmental concern from mid-nineteenth century romanticism, nature related spiritualities, painters, photographers, and writers, such as Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Gifford Pinchot, and 'Seventeenth-Century Europe to the Environmental Age', pointing to anthropology and indigenous peoples, nature religion, world religions, science, and environmental concern. A final brief section on the future of

religion and nature emphasises the need for a 'change of heart', inspired by (hybrid) religion, to address ecological issues.

The (peer reviewed) articles (most quite detailed, some highly extensive, all providing valuable and in many cases detailed bibliographies) are by acknowledged specialists and experts in the field—academics, environmental activists, nature writers, religious thinkers, scientists—for example, to name but some of the 518: Carol J. Adams, Catherine L. Albanese, Connie Barlow, David Landis Barnhill, Thomas Berry, J. Baird Calicott, Christopher Key Chapple, Richard C. Foltz, Ursula Goodenough, Roger S. Gottlieb, Dieter T. Hessel, Steven R. Kellert, Satish Kumar, James Lovelock, Joanna Macy, Jay McDaniel, Sally McFague, Jurgen Moltmann, Arne Naess, Max Oelschlaeger, Larry Rasmussen, Steven C. Rockefeller, Holmes Rolston III, Mary Evelyn Tucker. The 1,000 articles cover a huge variety of subjects with a comprehensive geographic and religious range, including all religions from the ancient world through to the present day, for example, Animism, American Indians as 'First Ecologists', Anthropology as a Source of Nature Religion, Biophilia, Engaged Buddhism, Chinese Traditional Concepts of Nature, Council of all Beings, Christianity and Nature Symbolism, Creation Myths of the Ancient World, the Dalai Lama, Charles Darwin, Deep Ecology, Earth Charter, Earth First!, Ecofeminism, Eco-Paganism, Epic of Evolution, Francis of Assisi, Gaia, Ghandi, Indigenous Environmental Network, Inter-faith Council for Environmental Stewardship, Islamic Foundation for Science and Environment, Kabbalah and Ecotheology, Aldo Leopold, James Lovelock, Mother Nature Imagery, Arne Naess, Natural History as Natural Religion, Perennial Philosophy, Re-Earthing, Sacramental Universe, Shamanism, Sustainability and the World Council of Churches, Totemism, Wilderness Religion. Most of the articles are 'scholarly entries' written in the standard encyclopaedia style, to introduce a theme, historical period or event, group, individual, region or tradition and analyse its relevance to the religion and nature themes in an academic and balanced way. However, alongside these are 'scholarly perspective entries', which afford prominent figures an opportunity to reflect on religion and nature in a more personal and reflective way, and 'practitioner entries', which are written by individuals actively engaged in nature-oriented spirituality. The latter are seen as illuminating the 'ferment' over religion and nature by providing wide latitude for religious practitioners interested in the subject to express themselves.

The ERN is intended to assess, analyse, characterise, and promote the major debates, events, figures, groups, theories, and traditions, concerned with religion and nature, enlightening the wider (academic) public to them, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and promoting further research. It demarcates a territory, an emerging (and evolving) discipline, analysing as wide a representative sample of it as it can, using a scholarly focus that, it argues, is not always seen to be in evidence in the subject. In this it succeeds. It is an intensive academic work, diverse and deep. Yet it is also eminently readable and very enlightening. Each article may stand on its own as a valuable essay, but taken together, the articles provide a comprehensive examination and introduction to the themes that will stand for years to come.

Some minor points of form and style need to be noted: it would be useful to have a list of the articles at the beginning (preferably in each volume) to allow for quick referencing. Also, including the index in both volumes would

be useful, for the same reason. Although very extensive and most valuable for its cross-references, the index is somewhat complicated, which is not helped by the font which does not clearly separate major from minor references. There is also the price. While available (greatly) discounted on the internet, the ERN is a serious investment—at least for individuals, it is an essential reference work for libraries and universities and maybe also environmental or religious organisations. However, despite this, the ERN is an outstanding piece of work, very ambitious, meticulously researched, hugely detailed, very comprehensive, and highly informative and important. It will make an outstanding and valuable tool for anyone interested or working in anthropology, philosophy or sociology of religion, religious or environmental studies. I thoroughly recommend it.

TONY WATLING

Faculty of Theology, Leiden University, the Netherlands

© 2007 Tony Watling

REFERENCE

Huyssteen, Van W., ed. *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*. New York: MacMillan, 2003.

Animism: Respecting the Living World

GRAHAM HARVEY, 2005/2006

London: C. Hurst & Co./New York: Columbia University Press

xxiv + 248 pp., £35.00, US\$67.50 (hb), £14.95, US\$27.50 (pb)

UK ISBN 1-850-65757-2 (hb), ISBN 1-850-65758-0 (pb)

US ISBN 0-231-13700-1 (hb), ISBN 0-231-13701-X (pb)

Graham Harvey's *Animism* is an extremely useful guide to the complex and changing terrain of its subject matter. Combining clarity with passion and some depth, it mobilises insights from a wide range of disciplines: anthropology, sociology, philosophy, religious studies, and literary criticism. This is no less than what is required by a term whose original meaning is currently in the midst of a process of radical re-appropriation by its original targets or their heirs. (This has happened before, of course, with 'punk' and 'impressionism'.)

Harvey defines the new meaning as centring on a recognition that "the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others" (xi)—that is, subject-subject (or I-Thou) relationships. He plausibly justifies this usage on the interrelated grounds that (1) it already exists as such; (2) as a corollary, it addresses concerns and debates of some importance; and (3) in so doing, it entails a critical dimension vis-à-vis the project of modernity: "The reclamation of the name animism from colonial discourse is part of the resistance of those celebrating their relationships to living lands" (81). In this connection, it is gratifying to find, in discourse which is primarily (although not only) academic, open recognition of the fact that epistemological issues are ultimately inseparable from (although not identical with) axiological

and political ones. “To speak of cows, trees, laboratory mice—including genetically engineered ones—as persons, or even as ‘beings’, is to invite an alteration of perception and action.” (196)

We are a long way here from Tylor’s animism as a primitive belief in, and mistaken perception of, spirits—and from the covertly imperialistic teleology that informed it. Harvey analyses that concept in its various guises (religious, anthropological, psychological, and so on) and traces the process of change, drawing on a wide range of creative contemporary thinkers, especially (but by no means only) anthropologists: Irving Hallowell, Nurit Bird-David, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, but also ecological philosopher Erazim Kohak, eco-feminist Val Plumwood, eco-phenomenologist David Abram, and many others.

The following section specifies Ojibwe, Maori, Aboriginal, and eco-pagan ‘case studies’ in more detail. Harvey then bravely plunges into ‘Animist Issues’ such as personhood, spirits, cannibalism, totemism, and ethics. One such section, on shamanism, not only functions as an admirably clear delineation in miniature of that baggy monster, but uncompromisingly—and rightly—identifies the primacy of animism: “shamans live and work for animists not shamanists. Their religions are animisms not shamanisms.” (139) The final section considers perennially difficult areas of thought where the ‘new animism’ has something to offer: environmentalism, consciousness, and selfhood.

There are also tantalising overlaps with still more subjects, such as the phenomenology of landscape and place, and the book is enlivened with insights which extend well beyond purely academic import. Harvey points out, for example, that “Personhood is a goal not a given—people are constructed by experience, effort, engagement and education. Most important, personhood is necessarily embodied and relational, and both of these require and receive responses from other people who grow us up.” (175) By the same token—and this is a point too often overlooked—“the Western categories (and their dichotomisation), ‘object’ and ‘subject’, ‘thing’ and ‘person’, are not naturally self-evident but, rather, locally and experientially determined by those inculcated to see ‘properly’” (151).

Of course, in taking on such a rich and diverse, but also, in crucial respects, new subject, Harvey’s account unavoidably raises some questions which it does not fully or convincingly answer. I do not therefore regard the following problematic areas as in any way debilitating to that account, but rather, if anything, as testimony to its fruitfulness and invitations to further conversations.

One point is that more evidence would have been appreciated of an awareness that even in openly animistic societies, people have still managed to find ways to do pretty horrible things to each other. While I do not think Harvey himself indulges in fantasies of a Golden Age (or Place) of harmony, he does not do quite enough to discourage them in his readers.

Another question is metaphysical: are disembodied spirits possible in an animistic world? It would take a bold soul to rule out the possibility altogether, but Harvey’s position seems ambiguous; on the one hand, “only some people are embodied” (120), but he also maintains that the consciousness indicated by intentional acts—a *sine qua non* of personhood—“is necessarily embodied” (192).

A more urgent consideration is that Harvey argues, with good reason, that the primary obstacle to animism “is the West’s inability to deal with the aliveness of what it insists are ‘objects’” (80) and that “the greatest challenge to Western