

Introduction

DAVID LANDIS BARNHILL AND ROGER S. GOTTLIEB

NATURE, RELIGION, HISTORY

AWE, REVERENCE, LOVE, and affection (along with fear, frustration, and grudging respect) have long marked human beings' attitude toward the natural world. In recent years the ethical and religious attitude of valuing nature for its own sake and seeing it as divine or spiritually vital has been called "deep ecology." The subject matter of this book is the relation between contemporary deep ecology and the world's religious traditions.

The simple and overwhelming reason why a new name is needed for a human attitude that may be tens of thousands of years old is that history has fundamentally altered our relationship to the surrounding, supporting Earth. Deep ecology has emerged as a response to what we have done to nature. In a sense, as Bill McKibben bleakly argued, nature has "ended." Having altered the atmosphere by thinning the ozone, affected global weather patterns, extinguished species at a rate unknown for tens of millions of years and consciously created new ones, we have put an end to that relatively autonomous realm. Of course every breath, hut building, and berry picking alters "nature." But the global effects of what we have done over the last century or so are monumentally larger than anything we might have even dreamed of before. Even if we think of "nature" as including human beings, we find that one part of nature—ourselves—is having vastly disproportionate and unsettling effects on the other parts.

Thus, at least on Earth, nature as we have known it is gone. In its place is "the environment." Every tree and river, large mammal and

I

small fish, now exists in relation to human action, knowledge, commerce, science, technology, governmental decisions to create national parks, international campaigns to save endangered species, and (God help us) leisure lifestyle choices about mountain bikes, off-road vehicles, and sport fishing. Cell phone towers sprout like mushrooms on mountain tops, grizzly bears wear radio collars, genetic engineering produces overweight, arthritic pigs, and the children of Los Angeles slums grow up with stunted lungs because of polluted air. The world's coral reefs are bleaching a sickly, dead white; all of Japan's rivers are dammed; and the cod off Nova Scotia have been fished out.

But deep ecology embodies more than a love of and identification with nature, and a simple recognition that all of us, whether or not we flee from it in denial, live in the midst of an environmental crisis. It also purports to be the guiding philosophy of an environmental movement that seeks to slow or halt the ruin. Other philosophical or religious values guided wars of conquest or rebellion, shaped movements for national liberation or racial justice. Similarly, a renewed reverence for wilderness, endangered species or the maple tree in your front yard—not to mention an awareness of what toxic waste dumps do to people, animals, and plants alike—can shape public policy, move us to sue polluters, change the way children are educated, and lead us to resist Monsanto's chemicalized agriculture.

What sense can religions make of a world now colored by an environmental crisis—and of the deep ecological ethical and spiritual response to that crisis?

To begin with, religious spokespeople need to admit to themselves and the world that they live in history. This is, perhaps, not such an easy admission to make. Fundamental to the perspective of most religions, after all, is the notion that they embody a timeless truth, one derived either from a divine Source or from insight into an unchanging Reality. It is therefore a challenge for religions to admit that something absolutely basic to the world has changed. In response to the transition from nature to environment and the corresponding threats that are posed to humanity, religious values must themselves be closely examined.

In this light, religious traditions need to examine their own role in creating the disaster, rethinking the anthropocentrism of all our major religious traditions. Further, it must be admitted that whatever their theological attitude toward the earth, religious traditions were pretty much blind to the environmental crisis until it was pointed out to them by others. While many religious leaders were suspicious of science's claims when they conflicted with scriptural narratives, few were critical of technological advances and the threats they posed. Romantic poets,

spiritual mavericks such as Thoreau, phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, and Western Marxists (Karl Korsch, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse)—these were the voices that challenged the dominant Western treatment of nature, not those of ministers, priests, popes, or rabbis.

As have the rise of science, the struggle for democracy, and recent challenges to sexism and racism, the environmental crisis will alter religious sensibilities. It has already called forth explicit proclamations from almost every established religion. Whether nature is considered valuable in itself or as a part of God's creation, most religious authorities now see it as deserving of care, stewardship, and respect. In this way traditional religions are making (perhaps unconscious) common cause with deep ecologists and their kindred: radical environmentalists, ecofeminists, witches, and various tree-huggers of indeterminate self-description. An alliance between deep ecology (or, more broadly, any serious environmental philosophy) and world religion may thus have some quite significant political effects. The kind of energy religious institutions invested in the civil rights and antiwar movements, for instance, could be manifested in support of endangered species, clean energy sources, and World Bank "development" loans that don't destroy the rain forest. Religious institutions could look inward as well: making their buildings energy efficient and nontoxic, using recycled paper, and asking serious questions about where their own endowments are invested and how their wealthy secular leaders make their money. (If pornographers would not be allowed on a church's board of directors, why should polluters?)

Further, religious rituals, from church services in honor of animals to Buddhist meditations emphasizing our interdependence with the natural world, have been and will continue to be created and practiced. Considered as a technology of spiritual life, rituals allow us to celebrate even in the midst of devastation, and to express a kind of formalized, collective contrition for our ecological sins. As methods of focusing spiritual energy and moral intention, rituals are essential to a religious life that seeks to be more than a purely inner experience. Spiritual imagination and creativity are needed to continue to help us find widely meaningful ways to allow us to do this.

Finally, religions need to face how the environmental crisis changes certain basic facts about the spiritual meaning of the world around us. Considered as God's creation, nature—at least in the form of the ecosystems that make up this current phase of earth's biological development—is now subject to human intervention, alteration, and (to some extent, at least) control. No longer can God intimidate Job with talk of

the whirlwind and the behemoth, not when we've hunted whales to the edge of extinction and can fly into hurricanes. No longer is the vastness of God's creation an intimation of human finitude. We might be guilty of folly in the way we use our powers, but they remain powers nevertheless.

Perhaps most painfully, the natural world is no longer an unclouded source of calm and peace, no longer a pure promise of goodness and happiness. All the religious poems and prayers that counsel us to find God in forest or field, to celebrate the simple beauty of flower or sunset, must now reckon with the toxic chemicals that permeate flora and fauna, with the increased certainty that sunshine causes skin cancer, with trees that are dying from acid rain and flowers that have strange new growing seasons because of global warming. And this new awareness might be extended to religious practices that do not explicitly concern "nature." If, as the Buddhists tell us, we should "focus on our breath" to develop a meditative awareness, we will have to be aware of what we are breathing on a humid summer day when the air pollution index is up. If we are to find Christ in a wafer, we might well wonder what pesticide residues are there as well. And our knowledge of these same residues may alter the blessings we make over wine on Sabbath eve.

In short, everything has changed—and we cannot go home again. This change may be an opportunity for increasing our self-awareness, rekindling our dedication to God, and finding an Inner Truth that is a source of blessing for Others. But these outcomes are only possible if world religions recognize and respond to this Frightening New World that humanity—and not God—has created.

It is the task of any world religion worth its salt to act openly, honestly, contritely, and (paradoxically) joyously in the face of the environmental crisis. The essays in this volume sketch some of the ways those responses have taken place and how they might unfold in the future. In particular, the essays in this book ask: what relations—of support, mutual enlightenment, creative tension, or conflict—can hold between world religions and a contemporary philosophical, ethical, and spiritual outlook that is committed to acknowledging and healing our fundamental connections to the earth?

DEEP ECOLOGY

In collecting essays about the complex phenomenon of deep ecology, we have sought a wide diversity of perspectives, approaches, and styles. Some authors see a close parallel between deep ecology and the religion

being examined. Others find sharp contrasts. Some authors treat deep ecology as a way to extend and refine traditional religions. Others use that religion to reformulate deep ecology or critique its limitations. Indeed, it is not only traditional religions that are problematic. Deep ecology also is in need of ongoing rethinking, and one of the principal goals of this book is to use world religions as a framework for that task.

The very term *deep ecology* is multivalent and in dispute, and the authors in the volume use it in different ways. It may be helpful here to summarize some of the basic variations in meaning and how they relate to religion. We can follow Warwick Fox¹ and distinguish three principal meanings of the term. First, it refers to deep questioning about environmental ethics and the causes of environmental problems. Rather than simply adjusting existing policies or amending conventional values, such questioning leads to critical reflection on the fundamental world views that underlie specific attitudes and environmental practices. By probing world views, deep ecology inevitably is concerned with religious teachings and spiritual attitudes. In this sense of the term, deep ecology is a *methodological approach* to environmental philosophy and policy.

Second, deep ecology refers to a platform of basic values that a variety of environmental activists share.² These values include an affirmation of the intrinsic value of nature; the recognition of the importance of biodiversity; a call for a reduction of human impact on the natural world; greater concern with quality of life rather than material affluence; and a commitment to change economic policies and the dominant view of nature. Various religious world views can form the basis of these values, which can lead to a variety of different types of environmental activism and spiritual practices. In this sense, deep ecology is a unifying but pluralistic *political platform* that can bring together disparate religions and support a diversified environmental movement.

Third, deep ecology refers to different *philosophies of nature* (sometimes called ecosophies) that arise out of that deep questioning and that are in concert with the values associated with the platform. Individual ecosophies differ from each other, in part because they are often grounded in distinct religious traditions. Yet they have certain common characteristics, which are referred to generically as deep ecology, so it may be useful to begin with a list of the characteristics commonly ascribed to deep ecology. A caution, however. These are simply tendencies, and they can be found in a variety of forms and degrees in different deep ecologists, and some in fact may be absent or rejected by a particular deep ecologist. As a result, what one person praises as deep ecology may be different from what another criticizes.

With that proviso in mind, we can say that deep ecology is usually characterized by most of the following qualities:

- an emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature (biocentrism or ecocentrism);
- a tendency to value all things in nature equally (biocentric egalitarianism);
- a focus on wholes, e.g., ecosystems, species, or the earth itself, rather than simply individual organisms (holism);
- an affirmation that humans are not separate from nature (there is no “ontological gap” between humans and the natural world);
- an emphasis on interrelationships;
- an identification of the self with the natural world;
- an intuitive and sensuous communion with the earth;
- a spiritual orientation that sees nature as sacred;
- a tendency to look to other cultures (especially Asian and indigenous) as sources of insight;
- a humility toward nature, in regards to our place in the natural world, our knowledge of it, and our ability to manipulate nature in a responsible way (“nature knows best”);
- a stance of “letting nature be,” and a celebration of wilderness and hunter-gatherer societies.

In his opening essay, Roger S. Gottlieb adopts a fourth and related meaning of deep ecology: a general *spiritual orientation* of intimacy with and reverence for the earth. As Gottlieb notes, in this inclusive sense of the term, deep ecology is the “oldest and newest religion.” Rather than being limited to one school of contemporary ecophilosophy, it is a quality common throughout human cultures, and it can function as the foundation for diverse forms of contemporary spirituality. In general, the authors in this book use the term deep ecology in either the third sense (especially if it is being criticized) or this more inclusive sense.

To sharpen these different ways in which the concept of deep ecology has been used, it might help to contrast various “deep ecological” beliefs with what deep ecologists oppose. Thus, when a deep ecologist makes the *moral* claim that nature has inherent or intrinsic value, she is opposing (variously) instrumentalism and anthropocentrism. That is, the instrumental belief that the natural world exists solely to meet human needs; or the anthropocentric belief that only human beings have ethical value. For the deep ecologist, how we treat nature is a moral question, not one simply of efficiency or property rights.

When a deep ecologist makes the *metaphysical* or *psychological* claim that to be human is to be part of nature, he is opposing (again) anthropocentrism and individualism. That is, the anthropocentric view that human beings are (because of intelligence, technology, science, political life, language, the soul, etc.) categorically different from their surroundings; or the individualist view that sees people essentially as individuals, who form relationships with other beings but are not constituted by those relationships. Thus, for deep ecology our kinship with nature penetrates deeply into the essence of who we are. If as individuals and communities, we fail to realize and celebrate this fact, we will be neither truly happy nor truly sane.

When a deep ecologist advocates an "ecocentric" or "biocentric" *ethic*, he may be opposing a position that stresses individual rights. That is, for the deep ecologist the ecosystem or "life as a whole" is the unit of value, and not each particular human or animal taken as an individual possessor of rights. Thus, when authorities in California seek to kill feral cats because of their decimation of endangered birds, animal rights advocates resist and deep ecologists applaud. When property owners appeal to the absolute quality of their right to do what they want with what they own, deep ecologists argue that the value of the ecosystem takes precedence over that right.

At times, deep ecologists may express the *religious* claim that the earth, or nature, or life is "holy." Here the opponent is any religion that reserves sacredness for humans, angels, and gods, and excludes it from sea turtles, rivers, and redwoods. Here deep ecologists make happy common cause with pagans, witches, druids, and indigenous tribes. Here the environmental crisis signals a desecration and not just a terrible "mistake." (Or, as Edward Abbey remarked, we've agreed not to drive cars through our cathedrals and bedrooms, why can't we keep them out of the national parks as well!)

Finally, deep ecologists have taken a *political* or *strategic* position that makes the preservation of wilderness and the "defense of mother earth" the primary goal of the environmental movement. Here deep ecologists have a different orientation than that of social ecologists, ecosocialists, ecofeminists, or the environmental justice movement. Such groups, while not always in opposition to deep ecological positions, typically employ a different vocabulary and sensibility. They are much more likely to stress the interconnection between social relations and the human treatment of nature than are deep ecologists; and may even claim that humanity's collective treatment of nature is actually the outcome of the way different groups of human beings treat each other. For socially minded ecological groups, the environmental crisis is to a

great extent the product of social forces such as racism, sexism, militarism, nationalism, and class exploitation.

Stressing these differences among environmentalists can help clarify their various approaches. But it also can be merely an academic exercise and even lead to unnecessary bickering. In some cases, a closer look at apparent differences in philosophy can reveal fundamental theoretical compatibility. In addition, theoretical disagreements about environmental philosophy often can coexist with political agreement about cleaning up the mess we've made. As in the history of other social movements—from nineteenth-century European socialism to the U.S. civil rights movement—alliances among groups with different philosophical orientations or constituencies have sometimes been essential for success. At other times, alliances have been impossible for principled reasons. And still other times coalitions have fallen apart mainly because of childish egotism or arrogance on the part of theorists or leaders. We prefer an ecosystem view of environmental thought: health is found in diversity and interdependence. Deep ecology is one among many perspectives, all of which seek to promote the earth and all who dwell upon it.

DEEP ECOLOGY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

Each essay offers insights into deep ecology and the religion being considered, but much of their value lies in the relationships among them: the parallels and divergences of interpretation, the contrasting or complementing emphases, and in some cases surprising juxtapositions. Gottlieb establishes a context for the essays by reviewing the response of contemporary religion to the Enlightenment. The enormous success of the Enlightenment has generated terrible results: a destructive technology, a consumer society devoid of community, social "progress" that has destroyed both cultures and ecosystems and created injustice. Religions have responded with renewed energy, but they face competition from secular philosophies and a wide variety of other religions and confront a growing recognition of their past sins. Such a situation is difficult for religions, because it calls for self-criticism and humility at that same time as it demands passion and commitment. In linking religion and politics, Gottlieb asks, how can a spiritual deep ecology transcend the limitations of the Enlightenment yet keep its positive accomplishments? That question must be answered incisively, for what is sacred, this earth, is under siege.

John Grim compares indigenous traditions and deep ecology in terms of conceptual foundations, politics, and religions. A central ideal

of deep ecology is the development of epistemologies and world views intimately related to the local bioregion, something characteristic of indigenous traditions. For the Maori of New Zealand, the intimate connection between nature and culture (from patterns of basket making to conceptions of cosmological forces) implies that every living thing has an inherent right to its place in the world, and all food is sacred, a view that resonates with deep ecology's affirmative ecocentric approach to value and spirituality. Deep ecology also tends to share with indigenous traditions an intuitive sense of an interwoven cosmology. Differences emerge in notions such as "wilderness." Deep ecology has emphasized the destructiveness of human activity in nature and in response has idealized a state of wilderness devoid of human intervention. Indigenous traditions, on the other hand, emphasize "the covenantal character of working in and with the land." There also has been the complaint that deep ecology has appropriated Native American ritual life in an inauthentic way. Unlike most deep ecologists, indigenous peoples tend to integrate spiritual attitudes in pragmatic, subsistence activities. The link between deep ecology and indigenous traditions, then, is both real and problematic.

Christopher Key Chapple explores the complex relationship between Hinduism and deep ecology by considering scripture, meditative techniques, agricultural rituals, contemporary conservation projects, and urban consumerism. Central to his study is the notion of embedded ecology, which suggests the materiality of Hinduism's positive view of nature and its incorporation into rituals and agricultural practices. A belief in the sacrality of the five elements, for instance, forms the basis for an understanding of the body's interconnectedness with the cosmos. Agricultural rituals enact a divinization of the land and its association with human fertility. Closely related is the tradition of sacred groves, which informs current reforestation projects. Chapple also reviews a Third World critique of deep ecology that echoes criticisms by indigenous scholars of deep ecology's tendency to cordon off nature as a sacred wilderness free from human interference—and the subsistence needs of local peoples. He then offers a possible model for a Third World form of deep ecology: the Indian state of Kerala, which has a high level of health, nutrition, and education combined with low consumption. This model of concern for both material welfare and an ethical, sustainable use of the land accords with Grim's description of the lifeways of indigenous peoples, and it may help deep ecology bridge the gap between a concern for nature and for humans.

In his essay on Buddhism, David Landis Barnhill takes a more philosophical approach by analyzing the issue of holism and relationships,

an issue that lies at the heart of spiritual ecophilosophies and which has caused sometimes rancorous debate between deep ecology and ecofeminism. Reviewing ecofeminist criticisms of deep ecology's emphasis on an expanded self and whole systems, he explores Huayan Buddhism's nondualistic approach as a way to overcome the division between relationality and holism. In this perspective, nature is a whole with which we can identify, but it involves neither the monistic denial of relationality nor the transcendence of the concrete world of particulars, which many ecofeminists have objected to. Instead, the whole and the part mutually imply each other, both the earth and the organism have unqualified value, and the absolute is nothing other than this concrete, phenomenal world. Barnhill proposes a new typology concerning the self and the whole, and he presents Huayan as a form of "relational holism" that incorporates many of the values found in both deep ecology and ecofeminism. Such a view could serve as a philosophical basis for the practical embodiment of valuing nature found in the state of Kerala, while the practices found there and in indigenous traditions could help to extend Huayan ideals into concrete reality.

Jordan Paper brings a sharply critical approach to the way deep ecologists have appropriated Daoism, raising the key issue of validity in using non-Western religions in modern ecophilosophy. Deep ecologists have tended to limit discussions of Daoism to two early texts, the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuang Zi*, ignoring the long ritual and spiritual tradition associated with Daoism.³ In addition, they have followed the Western practice of artificially separating a complex but singular Chinese religion into distinct traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Paper finds portrayals of Daoism as anarchistic and uncontaminated by religion to be a romantic fantasy that is unhelpful in dealing with ongoing environmental destruction. He urges us to take a holistic view of Chinese religion and recognize its pragmatic intent, seen especially in agricultural rituals that divinize Sky and Earth and thereby provide checks against the abuse of the natural world. Paper claims that the experience of the earth as sacred, embodied in these rituals, is found in many cultures, an argument that finds support in Grim's analysis of indigenous traditions and Chapple's discussion of Hinduism.

Like Barnhill on Buddhism, Mary Evelyn Tucker analyzes the metaphysical views of Neo-Confucian philosophy. This tradition, which dominated China from 1000–1900, offers a complex and sophisticated view of nature that the West is just beginning to understand and appreciate. Neo-Confucianism displays a number of characteristics found in deep ecology and Huayan Buddhism: the intrinsic value of nature; an insistence on ontological continuity, with humans seen as fully a part of

an organic universe; an emphasis on interrelatedness combined with a type of holistic view ("heaven and earth as one's body"). However, Neo-Confucianism also exhibits certain views that are normally associated with Western views, such as a sense of hierarchy, with humans having a distinctive role in the cosmos. Like Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism stresses that reality is characterized by change; like Daoism, it highlights the dynamism of nature. Its particular emphasis, however, is on each living thing's natural process toward fulfillment, which links the growth of a tomato plant and the moral development of human beings. This is one manifestation of "anthropocosmology," the perspective that the qualities and processes of nature are same as those of humans, and vice versa. Given this directional dynamism, to identify with the earth is to actively participate in this process of transformation and to help bring nature to completion, rather than simply to "let nature be." In some ways Neo-Confucianism combines aspects of deep ecology and stewardship, and it avoids certain problematic tendencies in deep ecology such as a disconnection between human cultural activity and natural processes.

Before turning to the essays on Western religions, it is appropriate to highlight troublesome issues that Jordan Paper raises but, not surprisingly, does not completely resolve. Any consideration of a foreign religion such as Daoism that removes it from its cultural context distorts its character. But how can it be useful to us if we simply interpret it as inextricably part of a culture far removed from us? If we give Daoism or Neo-Confucianism a Western interpretation, will we not both falsify it and infect it with the very assumptions that have led to environmental catastrophe? If, however, we simply try to modify Western traditions from within, can we create the radical change that is necessary? How is Daoism or any other non-Western religion really useful in dealing with contemporary environmental problems, both practical and philosophical? These questions will continue to haunt comparative studies of deep ecology, but whatever one's view on them, the essays in this volume will help us clarify the issues and refine the debate.

Western religions do not show as many parallels with deep ecology as do indigenous and Asian religions, and as the following essays show, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam challenge deep ecology in productive ways. Eric Katz explores traditional Judaism, in particular the commands *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* ("the pain of living creatures") and *bal tashchit* ("do not destroy"). He finds parallels to deep ecology in a respect for nature, a recognition that the purposes and value of nature transcends human designs, a critique of a search for material affluence, and a sense of the limitations of our knowledge and control of the natural

world. Differences emerge when we examine anthropocentrism. The constraints involved in the two commands (notably, "commands" and not "principles") focus on the human context, e.g., domestic animals and fruit trees. They do not demonstrate the kind of ecocentricism found in deep ecology and in Huayan Buddhism. In this, Judaism shares the combined concern for nature and human economic needs discussed by Chapple in relation to Hinduism. In addition, Judaism is theocentric, with absolute value placed in a transcendent realm and nature's value found in being God's creation. But Katz is troubled by such a theocentrism because, like Job, we are unable to grasp the Creator's designs, especially in response to massive evil such as the Holocaust. Our inability to understand and conform to the greater cosmic patterns seems opposite that of the anthropocosmology of Neo-Confucianism. However, Katz finds that we can come to understand and identify with the processes of Creation, becoming a "copartner" with nature. Such a view recalls not only Neo-Confucianism but also contemporary stewardship thinkers such as Wendell Berry. Deep ecology needs to consider seriously this stress on an activist participation in nature's processes.

John Carroll examines the Catholic tradition, noting that most contemporary Catholics are unaware of the ecological significance of its doctrines and practices. He begins by giving basic Catholic principles an ecological reading, but his main emphasis is on contemporary Catholic social teachings, not only from the Vatican but also (perhaps more importantly) from the pastorals of local bishops in this country. In addition, he discusses countercultural forms of ecospiritual praxis in rural communities such as Genesis farm and the group Sisters of the Earth. By providing lifepaths largely divorced from the consumer economy, they recall Hindu-based communities Chapple discusses and could be compared (with Paper's critique in mind) to Daoist ideals and also indigenous economies. Carroll also argues that Catholicism exhibits a historical trend toward greater valuing of the natural world, but whether this tradition can become truly ecocentric remains an open question. It seems likely that Catholicism, like Judaism and Protestantism, will remain fundamentally theocentric, however much it comes to affirm the sacramental dimension of creation.

Nawal Ammar's analysis of Islam centers on an interpretation of scriptures. There we find an emphasis on the sacrality and transcendence of God, who alone has ultimate spiritual value. Nature is neither sacred nor profane but reflects God's sacredness as Creation. Ammar thus points to a position that is, as in Katz's discussion of Judaism, theocentric. Humans have a special role in creation, with moral knowledge and thus responsibility to treat nature with care. The command to avoid

evil and do good involves our relationship with the earth, which we must not use excessively or destructively. The natural world is for our use and fulfillment, but only when used kindly, sharing what we have and conserving what we can. This is not a mere environmental ethic but a call for devotional action that participates in Creation. Thus, Muslims might criticize deep ecology for attempting to separate humans from a supposedly pure wilderness. Deep ecologists, on the other hand, might well criticize such a stewardship view as retaining too much anthropocentrism. But the similarities are worth noting. Both Islam and deep ecology affirm that the natural world is an integrated whole (as Creation, for Muslims), with humans an inextricable part of that whole. Nature is not to be exploited but responded to with contemplation, appreciation, and protection.

John Cobb recounts his own movement toward an ecologically concerned theology within the Protestant context. Such a change, inspired in part by deep ecology, involved turning from a narrow focus on the salvation of the individual person. Like other process theologians, he came to reject the Kantian separation of nature and history, which relegated theology to the study of human history while placing nature in the province of science. The process ecotheology that Cobb presents rethinks some of the basic categories of Western thought and as such parallels the probing critique of its fundamental world view, characteristic of deep ecology in the sense of a methodological approach. Cobb also rejects certain forms of anthropocentrism, but he highlights his differences from deep ecology. He emphasizes social justice, starting with a concern for humans and expanding out to environmental issues. For Cobb, it is wrong and dangerous to consider humans as just one species among many; only by realizing our unique complexity and the dominance of our effects on nature can we develop the sense of responsibility needed. In part this recalls the Neo-Confucian view, but in this essay Cobb highlights a more "negative" responsibility of avoiding the destruction of nature rather than a call to participate in nature's process toward fullness. This view shares with Judaism, Catholicism, and Islam an understanding of the earth as sacramental but not sacred in itself, for only God as transcendent has absolute value. Like Neo-Confucianism, Cobb's process theology retains a hierarchy of value, although here his defense of this perspective is more pragmatic than ontological: a hierarchy is necessary to solve questions of conflicts of interest in environmental issues. He also tends to focus more on the welfare of individual animals than the environment as a whole, as do many ecofeminist critics of deep ecology.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, like Barnhill, considers the ecofeminist critique of deep ecology. For Ruether, deep ecology falsely locates the

source of the problem in anthropocentrism, which shows deep ecology's neglect of androcentrism and the connection between the oppression of women and of nature. In doing so, she argues, deep ecology puts the blame on all humans, when in fact it is certain privileged groups, especially white males, that are guilty of most of the destruction. Ruether also examines the deep ecology critique of the Bible, responding that a positive theology can be drawn from it; like Cobb, she argues for a reinterpretation of traditional Christian theology. Ruether concludes with critical reflections on ecofeminism itself. She argues that essential ecofeminists, who uphold a special connection between women and the earth, reinforce false and dangerous gender associations. In addition, ecofeminism needs to be more concerned with issues such as poverty and class dominance. Moreover, she says, Western ecofeminism has much to learn from Third World ecofeminists who struggle with poverty and work to establish healthy alternative communities. Ruether thus echoes Chapple's discussion of a Third World critique of deep ecology and John Carroll's account of Catholic communities in this country.

In the last essay, Michael Zimmerman analyzes Ken Wilber, who represents a contemporary form of ecospirituality and a strong critique of deep ecology. Wilber agrees with spiritual deep ecology's criticisms of certain aspects of modernism, its assertion of the spiritual significance of the material world, and a transpersonal ideal of going beyond the ego. But contrary to many deep ecologists, and like Cobb, he affirms a transcendent dimension to reality. For Wilber, any metaphysical view that confines reality to the natural world (which would seem to include Huayan Buddhism) is one-dimensional. He also sees the universe evolving toward increasing complexity, an idea that informs Cobb's process theology. This sense of transcendence and evolution leads to a type of hierarchical view that places humans in the highest position, a perspective that recalls both Western religion and Neo-Confucianism but that deep ecologists tend to reject out of hand. Wilber chastises deep ecologists for splitting nature and culture and devaluing culture as "the original crime." In addition, he claims that deep ecology suffers from the "pre/trans fallacy": instead of working toward a truly transpersonal ideal, it regresses to a pre-conscious state of union with nature found in tribal cultures. Such a move, he says, will fail to stop the destruction of nature and will keep Americans from taking spiritual ecology seriously. Wilber and Zimmerman join Gottlieb in insisting that we need to retain certain positive aspects of modernism while criticizing other aspects. Zimmerman finds much of value in Wilber's view, but like most deep ecologists he lacks Wilber's

confidence in the grand narrative of evolutionary advance and the related dismissal of tribal cultures.

These essays suggest the importance of deep ecology and the complexity of its relationship to religion. We cannot simply celebrate deep ecology's insights or point out parallels to world religions. As the methodological meaning of the term indicates, we need deep questioning—of deep ecology itself and of its religious significance. The severity of our situation calls for an increasingly subtle and comprehensive understanding on our part in order to formulate a vision, political activism, and way of life that embody a reverence for the sacred and vulnerable earth. This book is a small step in that direction.

NOTES

1. *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990).
2. A "Deep Ecology Platform" was first proposed by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1984.
3. There are currently two different systems of transliterating Chinese into English. In the older Wade-Giles system, we find Taoism, the *Tao-te-ching*, Chuang Tzu, and Hua-yen. The pinyin system established by the Chinese government is increasingly being used, in which we read of Daoism, the *Daode jing*, Zhuangzi, and Huayan.