

NON-WESTERN ECOLOGIES: A SELECTION

A DRL READING GROUP BLUEPRINT BY KAS BERNAYS

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LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

INTRODUCTION

Environmental Philosophy is rarely taught as a stand-alone topic. It may be taught within a course dedicated to the philosophy of science, applied ethics, or even aesthetics, but despite its global importance, it remains marginalised in English-speaking teaching. Further, attention is very rarely given to non-Western conceptions of the environment and ecology, and non-Western approaches to the climate crisis. This Blueprint offers a selection of readings that will provide readers with a better sense of how these topics have been approached by a variety of non-Western geographical, historical, and religious traditions. This selection is just that: a non-exhaustive presentation of sources. Readers are welcome to follow the entire Blueprint, or to pick a specific week to explore. The Blueprint also offers a large selection of excerpted primary sources as well as full anthologies, which can be used as a jumping board for deeper learning.

TOPICS

- Applied Ethics
- Culture
- Environment
- Environment and Sustainability
- Ethics and Socio-Politics of Religion
- Freedom and Rights
- Gender, Sex, and Sexuality
- Geography
- Justice
- Life Sciences
- Race

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT: <https://diversityreadinglist.org/blueprint/non-western-ecologies>

WEEK 1. DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM - THE WESTERN PARADIGM

The purpose of this week is to encourage the group to consider the Western view of nature and some internal critiques of its flaws, as a way of introducing the project of the reading list, which is to look at how other traditions offer alternative views. If time is constrained, this week can be skipped in order to move immediately to engagement with non-Western texts. It is also suggested that this session include a broader discussion of how we ought to go about engaging with and comparing different traditions of thought.

HORKHEIMER, MAX, ADORNO, THEODOR. DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT: PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS

2007, Stanford University Press.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Fragment: pp.21-22

Abstract: Dialectic of Enlightenment is undoubtedly the most influential publication of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Written during the Second World War and circulated privately, it appeared in a printed edition in Amsterdam in 1947. "What we had set out to do, " the authors write in the Preface, "was nothing less than to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism." Yet the work goes far beyond a mere critique of contemporary events. Historically remote developments, indeed, the birth of Western history and of subjectivity itself out of the struggle against natural forces, as represented in myths, are connected in a wide arch to the most threatening experiences of the present. The book consists in five chapters, at first glance unconnected, together with a number of shorter notes. The various analyses concern such phenomena as the detachment of science from practical life, formalized morality, the manipulative nature of entertainment culture, and a paranoid behavioral structure, expressed in aggressive anti-Semitism, that marks the limits of enlightenment. The authors perceive a common element in these phenomena, the tendency toward self-destruction of the guiding criteria inherent in enlightenment thought from the beginning. Using historical analyses to elucidate the present, they show, against the background of a prehistory of subjectivity, why the National Socialist terror was not an aberration of modern history but was rooted deeply in the fundamental characteristics of Western civilization. Adorno and Horkheimer see the self-destruction of Western reason as grounded in a historical and fateful dialectic between the domination of external nature and society. They trace enlightenment, which split these spheres apart, back to its mythical roots. Enlightenment and myth, therefore, are not irreconcilable opposites, but dialectically mediated qualities of both real and intellectual life. "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology." This paradox is the fundamental thesis of the book. This new translation, based on the text in the complete edition of the works of Max Horkheimer, contains textual variants, commentary upon them, and an editorial discussion of the position of this work in the development of Critical Theory.

Comment: Introduces the key concept of disenchantment and the critique of the Enlightenment's impact on the way nature is understood.

MARX, KARL. ESTRANGED LABOUR

1959, in Martin Milligan (trans.), Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Progress Publishers: Moscow.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: From Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_and_Philosophic_Manuscripts_of_1844): The Manuscripts provide a critique of classical political economy grounded in the philosophies of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach. The work is best known for its articulation of Marx's argument that the conditions of modern industrial societies result in the estrangement (or alienation) of wage-workers from their own products, from their own work, and in turn from themselves and from each other.[2] Marx argues that workers are forced by the capitalist productive process to work solely to satisfy their basic needs. As such, they merely exist as commodities in a constant state of drudgery, evaluated solely by their monetary value, with capital assuming the status of a good in and of itself.

Comment: Marx's clearest statement of the thesis of human estrangement from labour begins with an account of human estrangement from the rest of nature. It is this passage, more than any other, which inaugurates the 'metabolic rift' analysis of human beings' separation from nature, and so serves as a useful starting point for considering how Western ideologies and economics have created a tradition that is intrinsically hostile to an ecological worldview.

LOCKE, JOHN. ON PROPERTY

2016, in *Second Treatise of Government*. OUP Oxford.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1689) is one of the great classics of political philosophy, widely regarded as the foundational text of modern liberalism. In it, Locke insists on majority rule and regards no government as legitimate unless it has the consent of the people. He sets aside people's ethnicities, religions, and cultures and envisages political societies that command our assent because they meet our elemental needs simply as humans. His work helped to entrench ideas of a social contract, human rights, and protection of property as the guiding principles for just actions and just societies.

Comment: Within Locke's influential account of the nature of private property, he offers what seems to be a clear statement of Enlightenment contempt for the notion that non-human nature can have value in itself, apart from its value for human use. It therefore offers a useful encapsulation of a 'Western paradigm' of views about nature.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What view of the environment does the Enlightenment, broadly conceived, help to produce?
2. To what extent is there a 'Western tradition' with respect to nature, and what are its main themes?
3. What is 'disenchantment', and what does it entail for our view of nature?
4. To what extent is our way of thinking about nature and its value encoded by our economic system?
5. How might Marx's analysis of the human relationship with 'land' help diagnose the problem?

WEEK 2. MĀORI PHILOSOPHIES

WAITANGI TRIBUNAL. WHANGANUI RIVER REPORT

1999, Waitangi Tribunal.

Difficulty: Easy

Fragment: Selection from claimant's testimony, pp. 78-111

Abstract: Report Summary: Rarely has a Māori river claim been so persistently maintained as that of the Whanganui people. Uniquely in the annals of Māori settlement, the country's longest navigable river is home to just one iwi, the Atihau-a-Paparangi. It has been described as the aortic artery, the central bloodline of that one heart. The Atihau-a-Paparangi claim to the authority of the river has continued unabated from when it was first put into question. The tribal concern is evidenced by numerous petitions to Parliament from 1887. In addition, legal proceedings were commenced as early as 1938, in the Māori Land Court, on an application for the investigation of the title to the riverbed. From there the action passed to the Māori Appellate Court in 1944, the Māori Land Court again in 1945, the Supreme Court in 1949, to a further petition and the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1950, to a reference to the Court of Appeal in 1953, to a reference to the Māori Appellate Court in 1958 and to a decision of the Court of Appeal in 1962. This may represent one of the longest set of legal proceedings in Māori claims history, yet in all those proceedings, it is claimed, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi had no direct bearing. Nor did the matter rest there for the court hearings were followed by further petitions and investigations, and in more recent times, Atihau-a-Paparangi were again involved in the Catchment Board inquiry on minimum river flows in 1988 and in the Planning Tribunal and High Court hearings on the same matter in 1989, 1990, and 1992.

Comment: The Whanganui River Report famously led to the recognition of the Whanganui River as a legal person in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The selected fragment from this report offers a detailed account, presented by claimants in their own words, of the Māori views toward the natural world, which led to this ruling.

GRIX, MARCO, WATENE, KRUSHIL. COMMUNITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE: WHY PRACTICES AND PRACTITIONERS MATTER

2022, Ethics & International Affairs, 36(2): 215-230.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Abstract: Communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as reduced access to material resources and increased exposure to adverse weather conditions, are intimately tied to a considerable amount of cultural and biological diversity on our planet. Much of that diversity is bound up in the social practices of Indigenous groups, which is why these practices have great long-term value. Yet, little attention has been given to them by philosophers. Also neglected have been the historical conditions and contemporary realities that constrain these practices and devalue the knowledge of their practitioners. In this essay, we make the case for preserving a diverse range of social practices worldwide, and we argue that this is possible only by strengthening the communities of practitioners who enact them in the contexts in which they are adaptive. By concentrating on Indigenous communities, we show how focusing on practices can transform how Indigenous and other local communities are represented in global climate-change conversations and policy as a matter of justice. More specifically, we argue that practice-centered thinking and local practices provide critical insights for determining the extent to which climate policies protect and enable transformative change.

Comment: This piece considers how to directly integrate Indigenous viewpoints into considerations of climate and ecological action, which is argued for as a matter of justice. Of particular interest for the purpose of this list is the consideration of 'practice-centred thinking'.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the concept of 'mana' and how does it structure Māori relationships with the natural world?
2. To what extent does recognising the legal personhood of a river reflect Māori views? Can any such legal change do so?

3. What does the paucity of consciously philosophical accounts of Māori thoughts suggest? Is the concept of epistemic injustice useful here?
4. “The Maori view things differently from Pakeha. We cannot divorce one part of the river from the other. Because without one, the other does not exist.” – How should we understand the holistic element of Māori thinking, and what are its implications?
5. What is ‘practice-centred thinking’, and why do Watene and Grix advocate it?

WEEK 3. AFRICAN PHILOSOPHIES - INTRODUCTION AND IGBO THOUGHT

KELBESSA, WORKINEH. ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHIES IN AFRICAN TRADITIONS OF THOUGHT

2018, *Environmental Ethics*, 40(4): 309-323.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: Besides normative areas, African environmental philosophy should pay attention to the epistemological and metaphysical dimensions of the worldviews of the African people in order to understand the environmental attitudes and values in African traditions of thought. Unlike mainstream Western ethics, African environmental philosophy has renounced anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism, and ethnocentrism and recognizes the interconnectedness of human beings with the natural environment and its component parts. In African worldviews, the physical and the metaphysical, the sacred and the secular, the natural and the supernatural are interrelated. Human beings are part of the natural environment. African philosophers should continue to explore the potential for a strong African environmental philosophy in African traditions of thought that can contribute to the solution of current environmental crises.

Comment: Kelbessa investigates the possibility of certain unifying, underlying features of an African Environmental Philosophy, drawing from a wide range of traditions. Kelbessa's argument emphasises the idea that there are environmental implications to the core metaphysical beliefs which characterise many African traditions of thought, and so advocates a turn away from considering African environmental philosophy exclusively with respect to normative, ethical features.

CHIMAKONAM, JONATHAN OKEKE. OHANIFE: AN ACCOUNT OF THE ECOSYSTEM BASED ON THE AFRICAN NOTION OF RELATIONSHIP

2018, in Jonathan Chimakonam (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*. Routledge.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 120-134

Abstract: *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation* is about the unconcern for, and marginalisation of, the environment in African philosophy. The issue of the environment is still very much neglected by governments, corporate bodies, academics, and specifically, philosophers in sub-Saharan Africa. The entrenched traditional world-views which give a place of privilege to one thing over the other, as for example men over women, is the same attitude that privileges humans over the environment. This culturally embedded orientation makes it difficult for stakeholders in Africa to identify and confront the modern-day challenges posed by the neglect of the environment. In a continent where deep-rooted cultural and religious practices, as well as widespread ignorance, determine human conduct towards the environment, it becomes difficult to curtail much less overcome, the threats to our environment. It shows that to a large extent, the African cultural privileging of men over women and of humans over the environment somewhat exacerbates and makes the environmental crisis on the continent intractable. For example, it raises the challenging puzzle as to why women in Africa are the ones to plant the trees and men are the ones to fell them.

Comment: Moving from the general overview to a specific application of a particular concept from the Igbo tradition — 'Ohanife'. This reading provides an example of depth to balance the breadth of the others.

BEHRENS, KEVIN GARY. AN AFRICAN ACCOUNT OF THE MORAL OBLIGATION TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY

2018, in Jonathan Chimakonam (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*. Routledge.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 42-57

Abstract: *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation* is about the unconcern for, and marginalisation of, the environment in African philosophy. The issue of the environment is still very much neglected by governments, corporate bodies, academics, and specifically, philosophers in sub-Saharan Africa. The entrenched

traditional world-views which give a place of privilege to one thing over the other, as for example men over women, is the same attitude that privileges humans over the environment. This culturally embedded orientation makes it difficult for stakeholders in Africa to identify and confront the modern-day challenges posed by the neglect of the environment. In a continent where deep-rooted cultural and religious practices, as well as widespread ignorance, determine human conduct towards the environment, it becomes difficult to curtail much less overcome, the threats to our environment. It shows that to a large extent, the African cultural privileging of men over women and of humans over the environment somewhat exacerbates and makes the environmental crisis on the continent intractable. For example, it raises the challenging puzzle as to why women in Africa are the ones to plant the trees and men are the ones to fell them.

Comment: Reframes the notion of 'biodiversity' within an African view of nature — illustrating a direct application of these traditions to key environmental concepts.

KELBESSA, WORKINEH. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA

2018, in Jonathan Chimakonam (ed.), African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation. Routledge.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 83-102

Abstract: African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation is about the unconcern for, and marginalisation of, the environment in African philosophy. The issue of the environment is still very much neglected by governments, corporate bodies, academics, and specifically, philosophers in sub-Saharan Africa. The entrenched traditional world-views which give a place of privilege to one thing over the other, as for example men over women, is the same attitude that privileges humans over the environment. This culturally embedded orientation makes it difficult for stakeholders in Africa to identify and confront the modern-day challenges posed by the neglect of the environment. In a continent where deep-rooted cultural and religious practices, as well as widespread ignorance, determine human conduct towards the environment, it becomes difficult to curtail much less overcome, the threats to our environment. It shows that to a large extent, the African cultural privileging of men over women and of humans over the environment somewhat exacerbates and makes the environmental crisis on the continent intractable. For example, it raises the challenging puzzle as to why women in Africa are the ones to plant the trees and men are the ones to fell them.

Comment: A consideration of the relationship between ecology and gender within African traditions.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the 'African notion of relationship', and what can it tell us about ecosystems? How might we compare this with Māori thought and the idea of mana?
2. How have African philosophies diverged from anthropocentrism?
3. How do the metaphysics of African philosophies inform their environmental views?
4. How should we treat an entire continent of thought? Is it meaningful to talk about 'African philosophies' as a whole?
5. How might we move away from thinking about philosophy only in terms of texts?

WEEK 4. AFRICAN PHILOSOPHIES CONTINUED - UBUNTU THOUGHT

TERBLANCHÉ-GREEFF, AÏDA. UBUNTU AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: THE WEST CAN LEARN FROM AFRICA WHEN FACED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

2019, in M. Chemhuru (ed.), African Environmental Ethics: A Critical Reader. Cham: Springer.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 93–109

Abstract: The human race is experiencing climate change and the catastrophic ripple effects, e.g., increased levels of droughts, flooding, food insecurity, etc. It is cardinal that humankind adopts post-haste collective behavior to mitigate climatic changes. Interestingly, although Africa contributes less greenhouse gas emissions than more developed continents, it is one of the most vulnerable continents when faced with climate change. International stakeholders are motivated to implement climate change adaptation strategies, e.g. sustainable development and the introduction of genetically modified crops in Africa's agricultural sector, to lower the continent's vulnerability. However, when developing and implementing adaptation strategies, cognizance must be allocated to the unique cultural values of various stakeholders. This is often not the case as cultural value systems of communities are neglected in these processes, e.g., the African values system of Ubuntu. It is imperative to investigate and compare individualistic-capitalistic Western values and the values of Ubuntu as it pertains to environmental ethics. Both value systems attribute different significance to relationality between humans, non-humans, and the natural environment. From this, I argue that the individualistic-capitalistic West has much to learn from Africa's Ubuntu and the ensuing potential for climate change adaptation. Subsequently, a call for a universal paradigm shift will be made, away from the economic and development foci of individualistic-capitalistic values, towards Ubuntu degrowth, which prioritizes communitarianism, and the principle of sufficiency. I suggest that relevant and diverse stakeholders meet around the "global roundtable" to consider and discuss different perspectives and cultural values when developing climate change adaptation strategies on a global level.

Comment: A piece that applies the Ubuntu philosophical framework to global climate policy, using it to critique key aspects of the 'Western' approach.

GWARAVANDA, EPHRAIM. UBUNTU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: CONCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

2019, in M. Chemhuru (ed.), African Environmental Ethics: A Critical Reader. Cham: Springer.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 79–92

Abstract: Gwaravanda critiques the generalization of Ubuntu Environmental Ethics across diverse African cultures. He argues that such homogenization leads to conceptual vagueness and proposes a more context-sensitive approach to environmental ethics rooted in Southern African traditions.

Comment: A critique of the idea that Ubuntu is a single, coherent philosophical tradition — and a general argument against homogenising distinct traditions.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Ubuntu has frequently been defined by the phrase "I am because we are". How might we associate this ethos with an environmental worldview?
2. To what extent is it justifiable or useful to treat Ubuntu as a single coherent tradition?
3. How does Terblanché-Greeff suggest that Ubuntu offers critiques and alternatives to key facets of the 'Western' approach to nature and climate?
4. Is a collectivist world-view necessarily an environmentalist one? How should we weigh the relationship between collectivism and environmentalism when dealing with these traditions?

5. What is the principle of sufficiency?

WEEK 5. EAST ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES - DAOISM

MILLER, JAMES. DAOISM AND NATURE

2009, in R.S. Gottlieb (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: pp. 220-235

Abstract: Miller explores how Daoist thought aligns with ecological and evolutionary sciences, offering a worldview that emphasizes interdependence, transformation, and ethical obligations to the nonhuman world. He contrasts Daoism with monotheistic and secular humanist traditions.

Comment: A broad, accessible introductory consideration of the ecological themes in Daoist thought.

ZHUANGZI. AUTUMN FLOODS

1968, in B. Watson (trans.), *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: This chapter presents a dialogue between the Lord of the Yellow River and the Ruo of the North Sea, illustrating Daoist themes of humility, relativism, and the vastness of nature. It challenges narrow perspectives and celebrates the interconnectedness of all things.

Comment: A primary reading from Zhuangzi, one of the two most significant philosophers in the pre-Qin Daoist tradition. Readers are encouraged to look closely at this chapter for any ecological themes they can discern.

GIRARDOT, NORMAN, MILLER, JAMES, XIAOGAN, LIU (EDS.). DAOISM AND ECOLOGY: WAYS WITHIN A COSMIC LANDSCAPE

2001, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Further reading

Abstract: Until now, no single work has been devoted to both a scholarly understanding of the complexities of the Daoist tradition and a critical exploration of its contribution to recent environmental concerns. The authors in this volume consider the intersection of Daoism and ecology, looking at the theoretical and historical implications associated with a Daoist approach to the environment. They also analyze perspectives found in Daoist religious texts and within the larger Chinese cultural context in order to delineate key issues found in the classical texts. Through these analyses, they assess the applicability of modern-day Daoist thought and practice in China and the West, with respect to the contemporary ecological situation.

Comment: A collection of essays that allows the reader to look in depth at any particular facets of Daoist ecology that might interest them.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. 'There is no end or beginning to the Dao. Things indeed die and are born, not reaching a perfect state which can be relied on. Now there is emptiness, and now fullness – they do not continue in one form. The years cannot be reproduced; time cannot be arrested. Decay and growth, fullness and emptiness, when they end, begin again. It is thus that we describe the method of great righteousness, and discourse about the principle pervading all things. The life of things is like the hurrying and galloping along of a horse. With every movement there is a change; with every moment there is an alteration. What should you be doing? What should you not be doing? You have only to be allowing this course of natural transformation to be going on.' – How might we read this passage, and the notion of following the 'course of natural transformation', ecologically?

2. How should we treat Miller's claim that the modern scientific picture is moving toward one closer to the Daoist views – and how should we treat claims about 'the science' with respect to these philosophical traditions more broadly?
3. What is the Daoist understanding of value, and how might it be conducive to an environmentalist worldview?
4. How might the principle of non-action be used to address contemporary environmental problems?

WEEK 6. EAST ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES - CONFUCIANISM

TUCKER, MARY EVELYN, BERTHRONG, JOGN. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE CONTEXT

1998, in M.E. Tucker & J. Berthrong (eds.), *Confucianism and Ecology: the Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: Confucianism demonstrates a remarkable wealth of resources for rethinking human-earth relations. This second volume in the series on religions of the world and the environment includes sixteen essays that address the ecological crisis and the question of Confucianism from three perspectives: the historical describes this East Asian tradition's views of nature, social ethics, and cosmology, which may shed light on contemporary problems; a dialogical approach links Confucianism to other philosophic and religious traditions; an examination of engaged Confucianism looks at its involvement in concrete ecological issues.

Comment: An accessible overview of ecological interpretations of the cluster of philosophies commonly labelled 'Confucianism'.

TAYLOR, RODNEY. COMPANIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD: ROOTS AND BRANCHES OF A CONFUCIAN ECOLOGY IN CONFUCIANISM AND ECOLOGY

1998, in M.E. Tucker & J. Berthrong (eds.), *Confucianism and Ecology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: Confucianism demonstrates a remarkable wealth of resources for rethinking human-earth relations. This second volume in the series on religions of the world and the environment includes sixteen essays that address the ecological crisis and the question of Confucianism from three perspectives: the historical describes this East Asian tradition's views of nature, social ethics, and cosmology, which may shed light on contemporary problems; a dialogical approach links Confucianism to other philosophic and religious traditions; an examination of engaged Confucianism looks at its involvement in concrete ecological issues.

Comment: Provides an analysis of a wide range of quoted primary sources for ecological themes in Confucian philosophy.

ZAI, ZHANG. WESTERN INSCRIPTION

1963, in Wing-tsit Chan (ed.), *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: Zhang Zai's Western Inscription articulates a metaphysical vision of universal kinship and moral obligation grounded in the shared substance of all beings. It became a foundational text in Neo-Confucianism, emphasizing compassion and cosmic unity.

Comment: A very short (1-page) primary source which introduces the Neo-Confucian approach to the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature.

TUCKER, MARY EVELYN, BERTHRONG, JOGN (EDS.). CONFUCIANISM AND ECOLOGY: THE INTERRELATION OF HEAVEN, EARTH, AND HUMANS

1998, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Further reading

Abstract: Confucianism demonstrates a remarkable wealth of resources for rethinking human-earth relations. This second volume in the series on religions of the world and the environment includes sixteen essays that address the ecological crisis and the question of Confucianism from three perspectives: the historical describes this East Asian tradition's views of nature, social ethics, and cosmology, which may shed light on contemporary

problems; a dialogical approach links Confucianism to other philosophic and religious traditions; an examination of engaged Confucianism looks at its involvement in concrete ecological issues.

Comment: A collection of essays around the relationship between Confucianism and ecological thinking — a useful starting point for further reading.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the ontology of the Western Inscription, and does it have the ecological implications many have taken it to have?
2. What are the suggested ecology implications of the Confucian cosmology based upon ch'i?
3. Is it right to describe Confucianism as an 'anthropocosmic' worldview?
4. How does Confucianism situate self-cultivation at the centre of ethics, and how might we relate this more individualistic orientation with its ontology of nature, and to a contemporary approach to environmental ethics?
5. Where does (Neo) Confucianism situate the human being within creation, and what responsibilities are associated with that position?

WEEK 7. INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES - BUDDHISM

DUSHUN. THE JEWEL NET OF INDRA

2000, in Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (eds.), *Dharma Rain Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. Shambhala Publications.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: A comprehensive collection of classic texts, contemporary interpretations, guidelines for activists, issue-specific information, and materials for environmentally-oriented religious practice. Sources and contributors include Basho, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gary Snyder, Chögyam Trungpa, Gretel Ehrlich, Peter Mathiessen, Helen Tworkov (editor of *Tricycle*), and Philip Glass.

Comment: A primary reading which helps to introduce the ontological interconnectedness that forms a core part of ecological readings of Buddhist philosophy.

MAHĀRATNAKŪṬA SŪTRA. DWELLING IN THE FOREST

2000, in Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (eds.), *Dharma Rain Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. Shambhala Publications.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: A comprehensive collection of classic texts, contemporary interpretations, guidelines for activists, issue-specific information, and materials for environmentally-oriented religious practice. Sources and contributors include Basho, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gary Snyder, Chögyam Trungpa, Gretel Ehrlich, Peter Mathiessen, Helen Tworkov (editor of *Tricycle*), and Philip Glass.

Comment: A primary source which introduces what we might take to be considerations of duties to other beings, and the notion of non-action.

KAZA, STEPHANIE, KRAFT, KENNETH. DHARMA RAIN: SOURCES OF BUDDHIST ENVIRONMENTALISM

2000, Shambhala Publications.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Further reading

Abstract: A comprehensive collection of classic texts, contemporary interpretations, guidelines for activists, issue-specific information, and materials for environmentally-oriented religious practice. Sources and contributors include Basho, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gary Snyder, Chögyam Trungpa, Gretel Ehrlich, Peter Mathiessen, Helen Tworkov (editor of *Tricycle*), and Philip Glass.

Comment: A broad collection of primary sources related to Buddhist ecology — can be selected to suit any particular ecological themes of interest.

LANCASTER, LEWIS. BUDDHISM AND ECOLOGY: COLLECTIVE CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

1997, in Duncan Ryuken Williams, Mary Evelyn Tucker (ed.), *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy

Further reading

Abstract: Given the challenges of the environmental crisis, Buddhism's teaching of the interrelatedness of all life forms may be critical to the recovery of human reciprocity with nature. In this new work, twenty religionists and environmentalists examine Buddhism's understanding of the intricate web of life. In noting the cultural diversity of Buddhism, they highlight aspects of the tradition which may help formulate an effective environmental ethics, citing examples from both Asia and the United States of socially engaged Buddhist projects to protect the environment. The authors explore theoretical and methodological issues and analyze the prospects and problems of using Buddhism as an environmental resource in both theory and practice. This groundbreaking volume inaugurates a larger series examining the religions of the world and their ecological

implications which will shape a new field of study involving religious issues, contemporary environmental ethics, and public policy concerns.

Comment: A broad consideration of how Buddhism has been viewed with respect to ecology.

ECKEL, MALCOLM DAVID. IS THERE A BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE?

1997, in Duncan Ryuken Williams, Mary Evelyn Tucker (ed.), *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

Difficulty: Easy

Further reading

Abstract: One of the most common and enduring stereotypes in environmental literature is the idea that Eastern religions promote a sense of harmony between human beings and nature. On the other side of the stereotype stand the religions of the West, promoting the separation of human beings and nature and encouraging acts of domination, exploitation, and control. Roderick Nash gave classic expression to this contrast when he said: "Ancient Eastern cultures are the source of respect for and religious veneration of the natural world" and "In the Far East the man—nature relationship was marked by respect, bordering on love, absent in the West." Y. Murota drew a similar contrast between Japanese attitudes toward nature and the attitudes he felt are operative in the West: "the Japanese view of nature is quite different from that of Westerners... For the Japanese nature is an all-pervasive force... Nature is at once a blessing and a friend to the Japanese people... People in Western cultures, on the other hand, view nature as an object and, often, as an entity set in opposition to mankind."

Comment: A critical consideration of Western environmentalist appropriations of Buddhism.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of ontology does the Jewel Net of Indra suggest?
2. How might non-action be an ecological idea?
3. Is there really a Buddhist ecology? How should we treat the usage of Buddhist ideas toward an environmental end?
4. Does Buddhism have an environmental ethics? If so, what is it?
5. In particular, how might Buddhism be related to an ecological holism?

WEEK 8. INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES - JAINISM

UNKNOWN. ĀYĀRAṂGASUTTA

1964, in Hermann Jacobi (trans.), *Jaina Sutras*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: Section 1.1.2

Abstract: From Wikipedia: The Ācārāṅga Sūtra, the foremost and oldest Jain text (First book c. 5th–4th century BCE; Second book c. Late 4th–2nd century BCE),[1] is the first of the twelve Angas, part of the agamas which were compiled based on the teachings of 24th Tirthankara Mahavira. The existing text of the Ācārāṅga Sūtra which is used by the Śvetāmbara sect of Jainism was recompiled and edited by Acharya Devardhigani Kshamashraman, who headed the council held at Valabhi c. 454 CE. The Digambaras do not recognize the available text, and regard the original text as having been lost in its original form. The Digambara text, Mulachara is said to be derived from the original Ācārāṅga Sūtra and discusses the conduct of a Digambara monk.

Comment: A primary source introducing the Jainist account of non-violence, which is central to its environmental ethics.

CHAPPLE, CHRISTOPHER. JAINISM AND ECOLOGY: TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITION

2009, in Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. Oxford: OUP.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: This chapter will investigate the Jaina faith in light of its commitment to environmental values. It will begin with an overview of Jaina history and principles, with attention given to how the observance of the Jaina faith in some ways accords with the worldview of contemporary ecologists. In the latter part of the essay, I will explore the contemporary appropriation of ecological values into a rewriting of the tradition that seeks to proclaim the inherently ecofriendly nature of the Jaina faith, with select adaptations, primarily in the realm of food and consumer habits. This chapter will include my reflections on my own practice of the Jain principles as interpreted through the tradition of classical yoga.

Comment: A broad, accessible introduction to Jainist approaches to ecology.

GORISSE, MARIE-HÉLÈNE. JAINA PHILOSOPHY

2025, in Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Difficulty: Easy

Further reading. Section 2.3 especially

Abstract: The Jains are those who consider that the teaching of the omniscient Jinas is the expression of the eternal essential nature of the universe. The only extant teaching is that of Mahāvīra (traditional dates 599–527/510 BCE, in Magadha, South of modern Bihar), the last Jina of the current cosmic period. In their practice, Jaina renunciants follow a rigorous method towards salvation, in which a non-violent way of life, the renunciation from a worldly ego, the dissociation of self and non-self, and a gradual purification of the self towards unobstructed knowledge, become as many different facets of the same effort to access to a superior order of being in which each self manifests its true nature. This path came to involve structured monastic and lay communities; sets of practices—ritual and devotional acts, ascetic practices, rules of life; as well as conceptions of the world deposited in canonical and post-canonical corpuses, in systematic treatises, or in narrative literature. Jaina Philosophy is the set of philosophical investigations developed by thinkers as they appear in these different corpuses (Malvania & Soni 2007; Potter & Balcerowicz 2013, 2014). While several trends can be observed from the canonical period to modern thinkers via the mystics, the following principles are shared: Jaina metaphysics is an atomist and dualist conception of the world, it focuses on the nature of the self, on that of karmic matter, as well as on their principles of association. Jaina ethics consists of practices

focused on non-violence, non-absolutism and non-attachment, which aim to disentangle the self and karmic matter and which help one to reach omniscience. Besides, Jaina philosophers are particular renown for developing a realist epistemology centered on “many-sidedness”. Jaina philosophy is composed in Ardhamāgadhī, Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī, Śaurasenī, Sanskrit, Apabhraṃśa, Braj Bhāṣā, Kannada, Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, to quote only the main languages. This entry provides Sanskrit terms only, because Sanskrit became the lingua franca of philosophical inter-doctrinal discussions in South Asia at the turn of the common era.

Comment: Useful to assist in reading the primary source.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the doctrine of Ahimsa in Jainism?
2. What do you make of the Jainist doctrine of modifying oneself, rather than the environment?
3. How does the Jainist notion of the jīva (permanent divine-like self) relate to its environmental philosophy?
4. Is Marie-Hélène Goriſse right to describe Jainism as propounding a ‘reasoned anthropocentrism’?
5. How should we consider the relationship between Jainism and Buddhism, as we understand them, with respect to ecology?

WEEK 9. ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHIES

AL-RAZI, ABU BAKR. THE WAY OF THE PHILOSOPHER

2007, in Jon McGinnis & David C. Reisman (trans.), *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*. Hackett Publishing.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: Sections 13-19

Abstract: This volume introduces the major classical Arabic philosophers through substantial selections from the key works (many of which appear in translation for the first time here) in each of the fields—including logic, philosophy of science, natural philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, and politics—to which they made significant contributions.

Comment: A major primary source from classical Islamic philosophy with foregrounds the question of how human beings ought to relate to non-human life within an Islamic framework.

ADAMSON, PETER. ABŪ BAKR AL-RĀZĪ ON ANIMALS

2012, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 94(3): 249-273.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925), a doctor known not only for his medical expertise but also for his notorious philosophical ideas, has not yet been given due credit for his ideas on the ethical treatment of animals. This paper explores the philosophical and theological background of his remarks on animal welfare, arguing that al-Rāzī did not (as has been claimed) see animals as possessing rational, intellectual souls like those of humans. It is also argued that al-Rāzī probably did not, as is usually believed, endorse human-animal transmigration. His ethical stance does not in any case depend on shared characteristics of humans and animals, but rather on the need to imitate God's providence and mercy.

Comment: A useful commentary on the primary source and its author's broader approach to animal ethics.

AMMAR, NAWAL, GRAY, ALLISON. ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL TEACHINGS: COMPATIBLE WITH ECOFEMINISM?

2017, in John Hart (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 301–314.

Difficulty: Easy

Further reading

Abstract: The ideologies and realities of Islam, environmental ethics, and eco-feminism are not opposed. There is a range of overlapping ideas and practices that suggest that Islamic teachings are compatible with the tenets of environmental ethics and ecofeminism. Through exploring the holy texts' views on the treatment of Creation, including key issues of environmental degradation and the equality of women, as well as the intersections between these two issues, this chapter argues that the moral imperative of Islam is to protect and be just and merciful to God's Creation. However, this relationship is distorted in the context of a capitalist market and patriarchal culture, enabling a reading of Islam skewed toward inequality, domination, and exploitation. Therefore, while the stewardship of the environment and the wellbeing of women is in accord with Islamic ethics, this is overshadowed by sociohistorical conditions characterized by exploitation.

Comment: A contemporary piece which looks to reconcile Islamic approaches to nature with ecofeminism.

NASR, SEYYED HOSSEIN. THE ENCOUNTER OF MAN AND NATURE: THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS OF MODERN MAN

1968, Kazi Publications, Inc.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Further reading

Abstract: This work from one of the world's leading Islamic thinkers is a spiritual tour de force which explores the relationship between the human being and nature as found in many religious traditions, particularly its Sufi

dimension. The author stresses the importance of a greater awareness of the origins of both the human being and nature as a means of righting the imbalance that exists in our deepest selves and in our environment.

Comment: A landmark text in modern Islamic environmental philosophy — as a contrast to the focus on more historic sources in this topic.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. How does Abū Bakr al-Rāzī consider the limitations of our right to harm animals? Which harm would be 'necessary'?
2. How does the consideration of liberating souls feature in Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's animal ethics? Does he endorse the transmigration of souls?
3. To what extent are animals brought within the same moral framework as human beings?
4. Is Adamson right to argue that the Platonic 'imitation of God' is key to Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's animal ethics?
5. How far might the principles of animal ethics detailed here be extended into a broader ecological worldview?

WEEK 10. INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHIES - SAMI THOUGHT

KUOKKANEN, RAUNA. TOWARDS AN "INDIGENOUS PARADIGM" FROM A SAMI PERSPECTIVE

2000, The Canadian Journal of Native Studies XX, 2: 411-436.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: The author discusses the need, significance and objectives of an "Indigenous paradigm" which is a way of both decolonizing Indigenous minds by "re-centring" Indigenous values and cultural practices and placing Indigenous peoples and their issues into dominant, mainstream discourses which until now have relegated Indigenous peoples to marginal positions. The author argues that the main objectives of such a paradigm include the criticism of Western dualistic metaphysics and Eurocentrism as well as the return to the Indigenous peoples' holistic philosophies in research.

Comment: A broad consideration of treating Indigenous philosophy, with an introductory focus on Sámi thought.

KUOKKANEN, RAUNA. THE LOGIC OF THE GIFT: RECLAIMING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S PHILOSOPHIES

2006, in Thorsten Botz-Bornstein and Jürgen Hengelsbrock (eds.),
Re-ethnicizing the Minds? Cultural Revival in Contemporary Thought. Brill.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Abstract: This chapter considers the notion of philosophy from the perspective of indigenous peoples. It starts by critically examining the concept of philosophy and expands it with the help of feminist and indigenous scholarship which have pointed out the exclusions and biases in Western philosophical conventions. The main argument of the chapter is that the notion of the gift is one of the structuring principles of many indigenous peoples' philosophies. The chapter suggests that the understanding of the world which foregrounds human relationship with the natural environment, common to many indigenous peoples, is manifested by the gift, whether give-back ceremonies and rituals or individual gifts given to the land as a recognition of its abundance and reinforcement of these relationships.

Comment: Introduces the significance of gifting as an ecological idea in the Sámi tradition.

BURNSIDE, JOHN. WHO THE GREEN MOVEMENT LEAVES BEHIND

2022, The New Statesman, (7 December 2022).

Difficulty: Easy

Further reading

Abstract: Around 1970, the Norwegian government revealed plans for a huge hydroelectric dam on the Alta river, in the far northern county of Troms og Finnmark. This was a shock to the indigenous reindeer herders and fisherfolk who lived and worked around the village of Máze, which was scheduled to be "displaced" by the project: shock that turned to outrage when they realised that the authorities had never once felt any need to consider their rights. At that time, the Sámi, or Lapps, were considered second-class citizens (the term "Lapp" is derogatory), vestiges of an outmoded culture, doomed to wither away as the modern world advanced. And, as with so many other indigenous peoples, they had been mistreated for decades: habitually swindled by corrupt officials, abused and victimised by the justice and education systems, and their cultural traditions condemned as "sorcery", for which brutal penalties could be exacted.

Comment: Relates Sámi thinking to a critique of contemporary environmentalism.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. How and why is indigeneity excluded from discussions of 'European' thinking?
2. How can the notion of the 'gift' be an ecological idea?
3. How does the Sami tradition question the assumptions of Western metaphysics?
4. What is the nature of the 'dualism' Kuokkanen refers to, and why is it critiqued?

WEEK 11. INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHIES - NORTH AMERICAN THOUGHT

BOOTH, ANNIE. WE ARE THE LAND: NATIVE AMERICAN VIEWS OF NATURE

2003, in H. Selin (ed.), *Nature Across Cultures. Science Across Cultures: The History of Non-Western Science*, vol 4. Springer, Dordrecht.

Difficulty: Easy

Abstract: This is how one Native American presents her interpretation of the indigenous understanding of nature. As we will see in this article, many Native Americans present similar understandings. Their reciprocal relationships with nature permeated every aspect of life from spirituality to making a living and led to a different way of seeing the world, what they might call a more “environmental” way of seeing the world. But is this a true picture? Increasingly there has been debate over the nature of the Native American’s relationship to the land, both past and present. This article will examine this debate and the way in which Native Americans view nature.

Comment: An introduction to the views of nature which proliferate across different Native American philosophies, with a consideration of contemporary discourses about whether environmentalist readings are an accurate or appropriate treatment of Native American traditions of thought.

AROLA, ADAM. NATIVE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

2011, in William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Further reading

Abstract: This article introduces the central thinkers of contemporary American Indian philosophy by discussing concerns including the nature of experience, meaning, truth, the status of the individual and community, and finally issues concerning sovereignty. The impossibility of carving up the intellectual traditions of contemporary Native scholars in North America into neat and tidy disciplines must be kept in mind. The first hallmark of American Indian philosophy is the commitment to the belief that all things are related—and this belief is not simply an ontological claim, but rather an intellectual and ethical maxim.

Comment: A broader introduction to Native American philosophy in general, with an emphasis on ontological interconnection as a central theme.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent can we talk about a ‘Native American approach to nature’ given the plurality of different traditions? Is there a core of common ground?
2. How should we treat environmentalist appropriations of Native American thought?
3. To what extent is there a Native American ontology of nature, and how might we compare it to the other traditions we have covered?
4. How might we elaborate on the meaning of the phrase ‘we are the land’ as used by Native American thinkers?
5. Is there a distinct Native American environmental ethics – that is, are there particular descriptions about how we ought to act with respect to nature? How is this tied to a broader worldview?