

Culminating Conferences Viewing Guide

The videos referenced in this viewing guide capture the culminating conferences arising from a series of conferences on religion and ecology held at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions. The viewing guide provides a listing of the location, in running time, of the speakers and notes on the substance of their comments in each of three videos. The notes are not exhaustive but are simply intended to provide an indication of the content of speaker remarks. Two videos were made at the United Nations and a third at the American Museum of Natural History.

1998 United Nations Conference

Part 1

<https://vimeo.com/103268942>

Sponsored by: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR), Center for Respect of Life and Environment (CRLE), Bucknell University, Interfaith Center of New York, and Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS)

Symposium

Key UN representatives, policy makers, and scientists discuss developments regarding environmental issues since the Stockholm (1972) and Rio (1992) conferences on environment and sustainable development. Following this, participants from the Harvard conferences on Religions of the World and Ecology will report to the larger UN and NGO Community on what these traditions have to offer for renewing human-Earth relations.

The Search for a New Ecological Balance

Moderator - Mary Evelyn Tucker, Bucknell University, CSWR

0:00 – 7:44. Welcome - Lawrence Sullivan, Harvard University, CSWR

7:44 – 8:23. Introduction of Maurice Strong by **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

8:27 – 23:40. Maurice Strong, Senior Advisor to the UN Secretary General, United Nations
From Stockholm to Rio. World conferences on the environment and a history of UN involvement in the environment.

Outcomes of the Stockholm conference: 1) Don't do things that affect the environment of other nations; 2) Creation of an environmental organization situated in Kenya – UNEP

UN conference on environment and development held in Rio on the 20th anniversary of Stockholm. Failed to gain agreement on an Earth Charter but developed the basis of this moral/ethical commitment.

23:45 – 24:08. Introduction of Timothy Wirth by **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

24:10 – 37:40. Timothy Wirth, President, United Nations Foundation

From Rio to Now. Rio conference introduced the environment and a common mission across the world towards sustainable development and intergenerational responsibility.

Three themes have endured: 1) Climate Change and its linkage with science; the linkage between economics and the environment; 2) Biodiversity – we haven't done well with this to date; 3) Persistent organic pollutants

Other important themes post-Rio: trade and the environment, politics and the environment, population and the environment (Cairo agreement).

37:46 – 38:26. Introduction of Adnan Amin by **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

38:27 – 45:58. **Adnan Amin**, Executive Director, UNEP, RONA

Few problems originally identified at Stockholm have been resolved...

Future Prospects

46:00 – 46:24. Introduction of Michael McElroy by **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

46:24 – 1:02:57. **Michael McElroy**, Harvard University
Science, Society, and Sustainability

History of human impact on the environment:

- From 1200 there was a local impact on forests
- There has been an impact on the composition of the atmosphere since the industrial revolution
- Subsequent pollution of air and water
- Developing countries now repeating the issues of the industrial revolution

We are still not effectively addressing climate change.

The role for religion is to help us to begin to think about responsibilities rather than rights. Americans need to spend more time listening to their pastor than government officials.

Break in film from 1:01:25 – 1:02:11

1:02:58 – 1:03:19. Introduction of Niles Eldredge by **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

1:03:19 – 1:08:03. **Niles Eldredge**, American Museum of Natural History
Why Environmental Ethics Matter

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction. The last one was 65 million years ago. This extinction is caused by the human transformation of the globe.

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Part 2

<https://vimeo.com/103829316>

Religious Perspectives on the Environment

Moderator - John Grim, Bucknell University, CSWR

00:06 – 00:22. Tu Weiming, The Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University
Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality – end of talk.

00:23 – 00:43. John Grim question to panel: What constitutes religious and moral leadership on the environmental crisis?

00:49 – 02:56. Sallie McFague, Vanderbilt University
Voices for the Earth

Being public advocates. Have we abdicated this position?

02:58 – 07:39. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, George Washington University
The Order of Nature

From Mohammed, “live as if you were to die tomorrow but also live as if you were going to live 1000 years.”
It is blessed to plant a tree even if a day before the end of the world.

Example of the power of religion is the halting of population growth in Iran.

07:39 – 12:18. L. M. Singhvi, Member of Parliament, India
Cosmology and Ethics for Ecology

Religion has not given priority to environmental issues. This should change within each religious tradition and also in an interfaith consensus.

The past is an inheritance and the future is a responsibility in the Hindu tradition.

12:18 – 15:42. Tu Weiming, The Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University

There is a tension between two Confucian traditions: 1) humans can change the environment through their will; 2) Humans form a unity with Heaven and Earth.

Break in film 15:42 – 16:11

16:11 – 19:05. Sally McFague, Vanderbilt University

We are addicted to consumerism and are “living a lie.”

19:08 – 19:29. John Grim question: “does the epic of evolution serve as a unifying story for humans to see themselves as part of nature?”

19:30 – 23:00. Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of Haudenosaunee, SUNY Buffalo
The Call from Words to Wisdom

The personification of nature underlies its importance to indigenous people. Consider the Earth as community. Give thanksgiving to living things individually.

23:00 – 23:22. John Grim reiterates question from **19:08**

23:23 – 28:34. L M Singhvi, Member of Parliament, India

There is a chapter in the Vedas that refers to a community between Earth and people. We need to redefine development and question consumption. The sense of the sacred yields a culture of ecological protection.

28:37 – 31:58. Tu Weiming, The Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University

Humanism in the four dimensions of Confucian tradition: 1) self 2) community 3) nature 4) Heaven

These are governed by three principles: 1) fruitful interaction of the individual with the community; 2) sustainable/harmonious relationship between humanity and nature; 3) mutuality between the human heart and mind and Heaven. Thus a human forms one body with Heaven and Earth. They are interconnected.

We have primordial ties to the Earth. How can we broaden the scope of that relationship?

32:05 – 36:19. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, George Washington University

Suggests that the theory of evolution contributes to the de-sacralization of nature. Is the environmental crisis part of the evolutionary process? Can we derive ethical norms from an evolutionary process based on survival of the fittest? All religious ethics oppose the forces of evolution. Must they forfeit their ethics when adopting evolution? We need an ethics based on self-restraint. Every organism has value.

36:31 – 43:56. Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of Haudenosaunee, SUNY Buffalo

How do you teach your children to respect nature?

44:00 – 44:13. John Grim, Bucknell University, CSWR

44:14 – 44:54. James Parks Morton, Dean, St John the Divine Cathedral, New York City

Role of religious diversity

Break in film 44:54 – 45:37

Concluding Comments

45:37 – 48:49. Moderator - Douglas Candland, Bucknell University - Introduction of Brian Swimme

48:49 – 1:06:20. Brian Swimme, California Institute of Integral Studies

How do we fit into the great scheme of things? Religion shrinks from this question with the growth of science. But the universe is about something. Human presence or cultural selection now determines forms of life. As long as we remain skeptical about our end we fall back into old patterns and outdated biological strategies. Religious imagination is needed to establish our role in the universe. Is it human destiny to appreciate nature?

Break in film 1:02:32 – 1:02:55

We need comprehensive compassion and awe for the Earth community.

1:06:20 – 1:07:00. Mary Evelyn Tucker concluding remarks.

Culminating Conferences Viewing Guide

1998 American Museum of Natural History Conference

<https://vimeo.com/102594556>

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Title and Credits 00:11 – 02:00

02:03 – 09:56. Welcome and Overview from **Mary Evelyn Tucker** with comments from **Timothy Wirth, Maurice Strong, Lawrence Sullivan, Tu Weiming, John Grim, Michael McElroy.**

Break for title 09:57 – 10:08

10:09 – 10:49. Welcome Ellen Futter, President, American Museum of Natural History

Overview

10:50 - 16:13 Mary Evelyn Tucker, Bucknell University, CSWR
Setting the Context
There is a lack of engagement of religions with the environment.

Break for title 16:14 – 16:25

The Role of Education and the Environment

Chair - William Adams, President, Bucknell University

16:26 – 19:46. George Rupp, President, Columbia University
Contrasting disciplinary specialization versus the multidisciplinary necessary to solve environmental problems.

Break for title 19:47 – 19:59

The Challenge of the Environmental Crisis to Economics

Chair - Daniel Little, Bucknell University

19:59 – 25:08. Ismail Serageldin, World Bank
The importance of social bonds and cultural values. A traditional village maximizes bonds while individualistic western society maximizes options. The urban homeless underclass has neither bonds nor options. Development tends to move societies from bonds to options/economic benefits. We need to recognize the non-material values of society.

Break for title 25:08 – 25:19

Science, Society, and the Environment

Chair - Joseph Humphrey, Bucknell University

25:19 – 28:39. Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State University

The role of science in this issue is to inform. Drivers of environmental issues are population growth, consumption (both use of resources and generation of waste). Our hope is in growing environmental awareness.

28:40 – 33:30. Michael Novacek, Provost, American Museum of Natural History

Identifies humankind's hubris in involving itself in evolution. Notes that three of five candidates for an ornithology position at the museum saw the birds they were studying all but exterminated.

Evolution, Ecology, and Ethics

Chair - Mary Evelyn Tucker, Bucknell University

33:30 – 38:20. Brian Swimme, California Institute of Integral Studies

Consider humans as a subsystem of the Earth community

Film break for title 38:21 – 38:33

The Call to Reflection and Action

Roundtable Discussion with Bill Moyers

38:33 – 39:30. Jainism - L.M. Singhvi, Member of Parliament, India

The Earth is my mother and I am its child.

39:31 – 40:17. Islam. - Seyyed Hossein Nasr, George Washington University

Islamic descriptions of paradise always contain plants and animals.

40:18 – 42:01. Indigenous Traditions - Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of Haudenosaunee, SUNY Buffalo

Make decisions on behalf of seven future generations.

42:02 – 42:42. Moderator Bill Moyers, Journalist

Can we put metaphysics aside in developing an ethic of the environment?

42:43 – 48:06. Confucianism - Tu Weiming, Harvard University

Heaven engenders and humans complete. We have stewardship responsibility. Earth is not ours. We hold it in trust for generations to come.

48:07 – 50:05. Hinduism - Vasudha Narayanan, University of Florida

You need all modes of being to save the environment.

Film break for title 50:06 – 50:19

Charting the Course: The Implications of the Earth Charter

Chair - John Hoyt, President Emeritus, Humane Society of the US

50:20 – 52:38. Wangari Maathai, Green Belt Movement, Kenya

A plea to religious leaders.

Concluding Comments

Chair - Mary Pearl, Columbia University

52:39 – 57:47. John Grim, Bucknell University, CSWR

Religion has a role to play in human connectedness, growth and transformation.

57:48 – 1:00:09. Thomas Berry, Fordham University, Emeritus

We should have intimacy with the universe. We are not stewards, the Earth cares for us.

A Student's Perspective

Film break for title 1:00:10 – 1:00:23

1:00:24 – 1:02:50. Adam Parris – film editor

Considers despair transformed

1:02:51 – 1:04:57. Credits