



Living Earth Community:

Multiple Ways of Being and Knowing

[Living Earth Community: Multiple Ways of Being and Knowing](#) is a celebration of the diversity of ways in which humans can relate to the world around them, and an invitation to its readers to partake in planetary coexistence. Innovative, informative, and highly accessible, this interdisciplinary anthology of essays brings together scholars, writers and educators across the sciences and humanities, in a collaborative

effort to illuminate the different ways of being in the world and the different kinds of knowledge they entail – from the ecological knowledge of indigenous communities, to the scientific knowledge of a biologist and the embodied knowledge communicated through storytelling.

This anthology examines the interplay between Nature and Culture in the setting of our current age of ecological crisis, stressing the importance of addressing these ecological crises occurring around the planet through multiple perspectives. These perspectives are exemplified through diverse case studies, from a study on the significance of the birdsong of the huia (an extinct species of New Zealand wattlebird) for the Māori people, and its commodification and extinction in the aftermath of colonialism; to a study on the promotion of ecological learning through network thinking, as evinced in a range of examples that portray the basic patterns of



networks – the neurological network of a brain, the mycelial network of a fungus, the Internet, and the transportation system of global society.

Living Earth Community: Multiple Ways of Being and Knowing synthesizes insights from across a range of academic fields, and highlights the potential for synergy between disciplinary approaches and inquiries. This anthology is essential reading not only for researchers and students, but for anyone interested in the ways in which humans interact with the community of life on Earth, especially during this current period of environmental emergency.

About the editors:

The co-editors are Sam Mickey, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim. Sam Mickey is adjunct Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Francisco and Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim are Senior Lecturers and Senior Research Scholars at Yale University where they direct the Forum on Religion and Ecology.



Abstracts and contributor list:

Preface

Sam Mickey

The preface briefly discusses the main ideas and themes covered in the book, including an overview of the structure of the book. Particular attention is given to the guiding thread of the book: integrating multiple perspectives on the place of humankind amidst the vibrant vitality of the Earth community, including perspectives across academic disciplines of the sciences and humanities and across the world's diverse cultures and traditions.

Introduction

John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker

This introduction outlines the different ways of knowing – from the analytical, mercantile mindset of contemporary society, to the organic wisdom (encompassing wonder, beauty, and imagination as ways of knowing) that it superseded. It explores the different metrics (e.g. price, utility, and efficiency) underpinning our current worldview and decision-making processes; examines the rational, analytical kinds of knowledge that this worldview relies upon; and delineates the long-term effects of such a worldview on the individual human decision-maker. It argues for the importance of multiple perspectives, and the integration of traditional environmental knowledge and science, in this vein invoking the versions of empirical observation found among Indigenous peoples, which encompass both rational and affective components..



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Part I: Presences in the More-Than-Human-World

1. Creaturely Migrations on a Breathing Planet: Some Reflections. David Abram.

Reflecting on species dynamics within the planetary biosphere, this chapter suggests that new insight into the uncanny navigational feats of migratory animals may be gleaned by recognizing the broad Earth not as a passive background upon which these movements occur, but as a dynamic, agential player in these migrations. The long-distance movements of various animals can readily be understood as metabolic processes within the body of the living planet, not unlike the rhythmic systole and diastole of a heartbeat.

2. Learning a Dead Birdsong: Hopes' echoEscape.1 in 'The Place Where You Go to Listen' . Julianne Lutz Warren.

The birdsong of Huia, an extinct species of New Zealand wattlebird, is the focus of this chapter. Julianne Lutz Warren describes Huia, of traditional significance for Māori of New Zealand, and their commodification and loss in the ongoing aftermath of colonization. An old recording of a Māori man whistling songs of Huia is a source of hope, a source of ongoing opportunities to co-create contemporary soundscapes for listening to echoes escape, quite alive.

3. Humilities, Animalities, and Self-Actualizations in a Living Earth Community. Paul Waldau.

This chapter considers possibilities for transforming human institutions (e.g., law, education, ethics, and religion) in ways that promote a flourishing Earth community. The author considers how self-actualization for humans can be found not through the arrogance of human exceptionalism, but through different expressions of humility and through a recognition of the animality of humankind.

Part II: Thinking in Latin American Forests

4. Anthropology as Cosmic Diplomacy: Toward an Ecological Ethics for Times of Environmental Fragmentation. Eduardo Kohn.

Drawing on his ethnographic research among indigenous communities in Ecuador, Eduardo Kohn considers the political and ethical implications of thinking with forests. It is a diplomatic



undertaking that seeks to integrate multiple ways of understanding the cosmos, and it is an ontological undertaking that rethinks the very nature of existence by recognizing the psychedelic ("mind-manifesting") dynamics inherent in all life.

5. Reanimating the World: Amazonian Shamanism. Frédérique Apffel-Marglin.

This chapter advocates for integral ecological healing, particularly by attending to the practices of indigenous Amazonian communities. The use of psychedelic plant medicines in Amazonian shamanism exemplifies the kind of non-rational ways of knowing that expand human consciousness beyond the individual ego and into intimate communion with the more-than-human world.

6. The Obligations of a Biologist and Eden No More. Thomas E. Lovejoy.

Thomas Lovejoy elaborates on the importance of biodiversity for the Earth community, with particular attention to Latin American forests. Bringing science together with ethical and political issues, Lovejoy articulates the responsibilities of biologists and other scientists for promoting biodiversity and addressing contemporary ecological crises.

Part III: Practices from Contemporary Asian Traditions & Ecology

7. Fluid Histories: Oceans as the Metaphor of History. Prasenjit Duara.

Human history, including the study of history (i.e., historiography), overlaps with natural history, yet these histories do not operate at the same scales. The fragmentation of those histories contributes to ethical and political failures to address environmental issues. Providing an antidote to this fragmentation, this chapter thinks with the circulating waters of oceans to articulate the complex confluence of human and natural histories, with particular reference to Asian contexts.

8. Affectual Insight: Love as a Way of Being and Knowing. David L. Haberman.

Focusing on religion and ecology in Hinduism, this chapter elucidates the value of love and devotion as ways of connecting to the natural world. In contrast to the detachment that



characterizes abstractly intellectual forms of knowledge, these ways of connecting to nature yield emotional or affective knowledge, which promotes care for the beauty and vulnerability of the natural world.

9. Confucian Cosmology and Ecological Ethics: Qi, Li, and the Role of the Human. Mary Evelyn Tucker.

Mary Evelyn Tucker presents contributions to ecological ethics in Confucianism, highlighting the importance of Confucian cosmology for understanding the material world as vibrant and lively, not passive and inert. Confucianism facilitates an approach to ethics for which personal and social concerns are embedded in the Earth community and the whole cosmos, such that ecological concern is not separate from the practice of self-cultivation.

Part IV: Storytelling: Blending Ecology and Humanities

10. Contemplative Studies of the 'Natural' World. David Haskell.

To build a bridge between scientific and ethical perspectives on ecological issues, David Haskell advocates for contemplative exercise, in the sense of repeated, open-ended attention. Contemplative participation within the community of life deepens one's sense of ecological aesthetics, and such appreciation for the beauty of nature provides an integrative ground for ethical actions informed by scientific knowledge.

11. Science, Storytelling, and Students: The National Geographic Society's On Campus Initiative. Timothy Brown.

Advocating for the cultivation of storytelling skills, the author shares his experience bringing science and storytelling to students, specifically through work with National Geographic. Stories provide a framework for communicating scientific information to non-specialists, for thinking across different academic disciplines, and for motivating action.

12. Listening for Coastal Futures: The Conservatory Project. Willis Jenkins.

This chapter attends to the role of listening in attuning humans to the natural world, specifically in light of a project involving Long-Term Ecological Research oriented around



conserving coastal ecosystems. The Conservatory Project integrates perspectives on environmental change from sciences, humanities, and the arts, designing eco-acoustic listening exercises that afford participants an aural sense of their embodiment and embeddedness in a dynamic environment. Listening can facilitate a contemplative awareness that is conducive to non-anthropocentric ways of being in the world.

13. Imaginal Ecology. Brooke Williams.

This piece is a series of reflections on the conference that gave rise to the present volume, including the author's own presentation, which involved an exercise for engaging with ecology through the imagination. Participants are guided through an imaginal encounter with ancestors, the different kinds of gifts they might bring, and the paths those gifts can be taken.

Part V: Relationships of Resilience within Indigenous Lands

14. An Okanogan Worldview of Society. Jeanette Armstrong.

This chapter introduces the worldview of the Okanogan people, an indigenous people inhabiting in the northwest of North America. Jeannette Armstrong describes her personal background and experience growing up as a member of the Okanogan community in the Okanogan Valley in British Columbia, Canada. She highlights the importance of intimacy with the land, taking responsibility for relationships, and building resilient communities in the face of cultural and environmental destruction.

15. Rising Voices: Indigenous Language Resurgence as Organic Interconnectivity. Mark Turin.

Drawing attention to the contemporary resurgence of indigenous languages, Mark Turin describes the collaborative work of linguistic and cultural revitalization in response to the destruction of indigenous communities in settler colonial nations. While recuperating the vitality of languages, this process also facilitates the recuperation of the well-being of indigenous communities as well as the lands within which those languages and communities are embedded.



16. Sensing, Minding, and Creating. John Grim.

Drawing on the wisdom of indigenous traditions and the world's religions, John Grim proposes a triad for understanding the world without separating nature from culture. All things exhibit capacities for external interaction (sensing) and an inner patterning or consciousness (minding), and those external and internal facets change over time as novel conditions arise (creating). The emergence of life from matter and of humans from other life forms can be understood as an explication of the dynamics of sensing, minding, and creating inherent in the universe.

17. Unsettling the Land: Indigeneity, Ontology, and Hybridity. Samara Brock.

Revitalizing indigenous communities requires more than recognition of tribal sovereignty. Samara Brock shows how it also requires a recuperation of indigenous understandings of existence and ways of being. Including multiple ontologies opens up possibilities for creating relational, hybrid forms of practices that cultivate mutuality and reciprocity between humans and the land.

Part VI: The Weave of Earth and Cosmos

18. Gaia and a Second Axial Age. Sean Kelly.

The period between the 8th and 3rd centuries BCE, known as the "Axial Age," saw the beginnings of philosophy, science, mathematics, and many of the world's religious traditions. Sean Kelly proposes that the current cultural and ecological transformations taking place on Earth are evidence of a Second Axial Age. Whereas Axial Age values were oriented around transcendent or cosmological principles (e.g., Truth, God, Oneness), the Second Axial Age is compelling humans to reorient civilization around the living Earth community—Gaia.

19. The Human Quest to Live in a Cosmos. Heather Eaton.

Reflecting on the enduring quest of human beings to know the universe, Heather Eaton weaves together an account of the exterior (objective) and interior (subjective) facets of the cosmos. Eaton finds the unique qualities of human subjectivity in symbolic consciousness and in the



worldviews, narratives, and other systems of symbols through which humans interpret and respond to their surroundings.

20. Learning to Weave Earth and Cosmos. Mitchell Thomashow.

To facilitate the cultivation of ecological imagination and promote environmental awareness, Mitchell Thomashow's concluding chapter presents proposes five qualities of environmental learning (observation, information, interpretation, expression, and manifestation). Those educational qualities are pathways for integrated ways of knowing and being in the living Earth community.

