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"Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism: Attentive Interactions in the Sentient World"

Rose, Deborah Bird

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Towards the end of her eventful and productive life, Val Plumwood was turning toward Indigenous people and cultures as a way of encountering the lived experience of ideas she was working with theoretically. At the same time, she was defining herself as a philosophical animist. As I understand her term, she was making connections with animism as a worldview, but rather than mimic or appropriate indigenous animisms she was developing a foundation that could be argued from within western philosophy. Her beautiful definition of philosophical animism is that it "opens the door to a world in which we can begin to negotiate life membership of an ecological community of kindred beings." Thus, her animism, like indigenous animisms, was not a doctrine or orthodoxy, but rather a path, a way of life, a mode of encounter. In the spirit of open-ended encounter, I aim to bring her work into dialogue with some of my Australian Aboriginal teachers. More specifically, I focus on developing an enlarged account of active listening, considering it as the work participants engage in as they interact with other sentient creatures. I take a country or place based perspective, engaging with life on the inside of the webs and patterns of connection. (Text from author's abstract)

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