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# Does the Spirit Move You? Environmental Spirituality

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**ABSTRACT:** This article looks at the idea of spirituality as it is discussed within ecophilosophical circles, particularly ecofeminism, bioregionalism, and deep ecology, as a means to improve human-nature interactions. The article also examines the use each ecophilosophy makes of a popular alternative to mainstream religion, that of Native American spiritualities, and problems inherent in adapting that alternative.

**KEYWORDS:** Spirituality, ecospirituality, deep ecology, ecofeminism, bioregionalism, ecophilosophy.

In its broadest context, spirituality is being open to reality in all of its dimensions – in its rational, irrational, and super-rational complexity, and acting on that understanding... What we mean by spirituality is this radical change in the way we think, perceive, experience, and act.

Judy Davis and Juanita Weaver, ecofeminists, 1975.<sup>1</sup>

The question I want to address in this paper is: Can we develop or modify spiritual beliefs so that they are specifically designed to create environmentally and ecologically based values in people?

Not surprisingly, this question has been taken up by a number of ecological philosophical practitioners. Spirituality, of whatever brand, remains fundamentally important to societies and to individuals. To some people it is an essential facet of their life, a life which would be immeasurably poorer without it. To others, the existence of spirituality is anathema; religion is the 'opium of the people', as the Marxists have it, and the cause of much misery and suffering, yet such thinkers are still *responding to the question of spirituality*.

Ecological philosophers then, if they desire to change our ways of thinking about our relationships with the natural world, must also address spirituality. The answers that have been developed, or in some cases are developing, are as varied as the ecophilosophers. However, the question of an ecologically sound spirituality is a foundational idea and springboard for much of the development of theory within ecophilosophy.

In this discussion, I will examine the question of spirituality in three bodies of ecophilosophical thought: deep ecology, ecological feminism, and bioregionalism. It must be remembered that, in contrast to the major (and a number of minor) religions, the spiritual frameworks developed by adherents of the three ecophilosophies are deliberate constructs or deliberate adaptations specifically designed to foster ecological consciousness. All principles develop from that fundamental.

A quick note on terms. In the above I have used 'religion' and 'spirituality' in what might look to be a loose fashion. In truth, so do a number of the ecophilosophers I will be discussing. My inclination is to use 'spirituality' as the most inclusive case, while 'religion' refers specifically to the big, organised collection of beliefs, such as the various versions of Christianity, or Taoism. Unfortunately, some prejudice seems to develop around the split, with 'spirituality' used to denigrate, while religion is legitimate and 'real' (ever see druids at religious conventions?). Without prejudice, I will be using the term spirituality to refer to all sets of beliefs, organised or not, and use specific names where required.

## SPIRITUALITY AND ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM

### *A Quick and Dirty Definition*

The term 'ecofeminism' was coined by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974.<sup>2</sup> There are several interrelated beliefs which frame ecological feminist theory. To begin, women have different ways of seeing and relating to the world than do men, and these ways offer alternative insights on interactions between humans and the natural world. These female insights (which are tendencies rather than absolutes) have been ignored, devalued or suppressed in cultures dominated by men and their values (patriarchies), just as women have been devalued. Thus, the suppression and control of women and of the natural world (with harm to both) are connected. Women are controlled because they are thought to be closer to primitive nature, and the control of wild nature is justified by its personification as female. However, by understanding this connection and by exploring feminine ways of seeing and relating, both women *and* men can discover positive ways of interacting with the natural world and with each other.<sup>3</sup>

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Most interesting, for this discussion, is that ecofeminism from its beginning included a strong and defining connection with 'feminist' spirituality, which developed also in the 1970s.

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The earliest ecofeminists saw spirituality as a key issue, and they approached the question of spirituality by critiquing what they saw as failures in mainstream religions.<sup>4</sup> Today, however, ecofeminists are split on the question of spirituality. Part of this split is inherited from the feminist movement. Socialist feminists are concerned with efforts to improve the material lot of women. Cultural feminists work to construct better social circumstances which affirm women, including feminist spirituality. The socialists regularly denounce the cultural feminists for being fools lost in a spiritual fantasy. Cultural feminists accuse the socialists of being unsympathetic to the human need for spiritual comfort. This discussion will focus on positive spiritual constructs.

Many ecofeminists seek spiritual alternatives that are women focused or have significant roles for women. Looking at spirituality as something which awakens an awareness of the living world raises the discussion above denominational questions and makes valid all spiritualities which honour *both* male and female principles and which honour the living world. These are aspects of spirituality that are reclaimed by many ecofeminists as essential to re-establish relational and caring interactions with nature.

In reaction to the overwhelmingly male centre of many religions, many ecofeminists are drawn towards beliefs which are centred on valuing the female, in nature and in humans. Goddess spirituality, in its many forms, is for many a liberating discovery. Scholars and researchers are still arguing over whether there is sufficient archaeological evidence to suggest that there were once actual matriarchies, and whether Goddess worship was once the celebration of all things female that modern interpreters make of it.<sup>5</sup> However, for many ecofeminists the important thing is not necessarily the history of the idea but rather the idea itself. As feminist philosopher Monique Wittig says;

There was a time when you were not a slave, remember that... You say you have lost all recollection of it, remember ... you say there are no words to describe it, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. *Or failing that, invent* (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup>

Such alternatives, or inventions, include the practice of Wicca, goddess worship, paganism and pantheism, to name a few. While often related, and sometimes used interchangeably, Wicca (witchcraft), goddess worship, paganism and pantheism are different ideas. Things are made more confusing in the

feminist literature by frequent references to nature-based religions, which essentially all of these are. Pantheism functions as probably the broadest category, and includes within it all practices that recognise the presence of Higher Being/s in the world. Often there is a God and a Goddess. In others, however, God has no gender and no human characteristics but is conceived as 'the sum total of the Universe'.<sup>7</sup>

Paganism is also a broad category, including practices ranging from Wicca through to Druidism to Native American spiritual practices. Generally, the practices are pantheistic in one way or another, are sometimes polytheistic but, most importantly, are generally earth and nature centred.<sup>8</sup>

Goddess-worship is a generic designation that has, in some ways, been split off from Wicca. Wiccans tend to recognise both male and female principles in the spiritual Powers-That-Be, although they may focus more on one than the other.<sup>9</sup> Goddess-worshippers tend to focus on only the female divinity, sometimes casting her as the Earth Mother. However, some of the major proponents of goddess worship as ecofeminist spirituality are themselves Wiccans. Wiccan priestess Starhawk is such a practitioner.

Starhawk argues that goddess spirituality (and all nature based spirituality) finds divinity in nature, in life, in humans *and* in other living beings. The focus is on life here and now as it is lived on the existing earth. It respects both male and female elements and values them as necessary complements. The God and Goddess include many ideas within themselves, both human and non-human:

The Goddess is not one image but many ... earth, air, fire, water, moon, star, sun, flower and seed, willow and apple, black, red, white, Maiden, Mother, and Crone. She includes the male in her aspects: He becomes child and Consort, stag and bull, grain and reaper, light and dark. Yet the femaleness of the Goddess is primary not to denigrate the male, but because it represents bringing life into the world, valuing the world.<sup>10</sup>

Anthropologist Riane Eisler, in discussing Goddess spirituality, argues that patriarchal religions encourage a 'power over' controlling approach in human-human and human-nature interactions, which, in turn encourages an indifference to suffering, as in many eastern religions. Or, as in many western religions, it permits dualisms: culture versus nature; man versus woman; spiritual leaders versus common followers.<sup>11</sup> Eisler argues that goddess worship is a *return* to a better, more peaceful life, by arguing for the historical existence in the Neolithic era of peaceful, earth-respecting cultures which were goddess-worshippers. To reclaim the goddess today, is to reclaim this way of life.<sup>12</sup>

These are all aspects of spirituality many ecofeminists see as essential to an ecologically sound relationship between humans and nature. For many this is a strengthening idea. For others in the ecofeminist movement it is a deeply disturbing trend. Mother Earth is a problematic metaphor:

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the truth is that nature *is* itself. It is neither male human *nor* female human... The ground we walk upon is not 'Mother Earth'; it is living soil with a chemistry and biology of its own which we must come both to understand and respect (emphasis in original).<sup>13</sup>

Certainly many Goddess practitioners do appear to personify the deity in question, and images often associate mother earth with voluptuous human females. The association, however, is not universally true. Native American cultures that include a Grandmother or Mother Earth, for example, specifically avoid picturing her as human. She has human characteristics, but they are characteristics generally attributed to anything that is alive and conscious, which incorporates every thing in the universe, not just humans.<sup>14</sup>

A second concern is that the traditional female association of characteristics with the idea of Mother Nature will lead us to false assumptions about nature:

... just below the conscious mind there is that powerful encompassing sense of 'Mother Nature.' And what will 'Mother' do? Mother will always feed you and clothe you and carry away your wastes – and never kill you, no matter how nasty you are, because mothers don't kill you...<sup>15</sup>

Such a concern, again, is not shared by members of cultures that respect the role of women in general and that of mothers in particular.<sup>16</sup> And ecofeminists such as Spretnak and Starhawk would argue that it is precisely the task of ecofeminists to give back value and respect to the image of mother, human or otherwise.

Other critics of ecofeminist spirituality raise serious questions about the value of spirituality in general. Such critics, like Janet Biehl, believe that spiritual ecofeminists lack any practical inclination or understanding of the social causes of women's and nature's oppression. Like many Marxist influenced scholars, Biehl believes that rationality and spirituality are mutually exclusive, that one cannot possess both.<sup>17</sup>

She argues that spirituality alone is dangerously co-optable because it does not demand critical thinking. Instead it requires only the leap of faith spiritually-inclined individuals must make: 'I believe'. In contrast, logic, scientific discovery and other 'rational' explorations of the world are not co-optable. This logic flies in the face of research that suggests as many problems derive from scientific rationality as under the rubric of religion.<sup>18</sup> Nor does rationality necessarily lead to comprehensive thinking, as generations of scientists who cannot see past the limitations of their own disciplines demonstrate.

It is undeniable that some ecofeminist spiritual constructs lack grounding, for the most part, in the simple, common, everyday thoughts and actions of life. It is too deliberate and still too self-conscious for most people. And for some people, it can serve as an escape, as a way to avoid coming to grips with some of the fundamental problems facing human societies. Biehl is correct here,

although Starhawk is emphatic that true feminist spirituality requires an engagement with life.<sup>19</sup>

This is a realisation not limited to goddess-worshippers, but one that many people recognise and honour. For example, ecofeminist spirituality, particularly goddess worship, shares some common elements with other cultures admired by ecophilosophers: Native American cultures. They have an earth-centred focus. They recognise a life-force in nature and some aspect of divinity there as well. They honour and respect the feminine as well as the masculine. They suggest that all spirituality, as for Native Americans, should be so much a part of life that it is inseparable from that life. However, there are crucial differences. Marie Wilson, of the Gitksan Nation (north central British Columbia) writes:

Though I agree with [ecofeminist] analysis, the differences must be because of where I come from. In my mind, when I speak about women, I speak about humanity because there is equality in the Gitksan belief: the human is one species broken into two necessary parts, and they are equal. One is impotent without the other.<sup>20</sup>

Even critics of spirituality are looking for an organising myth that directs them towards action designed to better the world. In our quest for an environmentally sound spirituality, ecofeminism offers perhaps a partial answer. The dualism between spiritual ecofeminists and social ecofeminists is particularly troubling. What is spirituality if it cannot be translated into greater social involvement? Even in the 'patriarchal' religions there is a strong tradition of social and political activism that had a grounding in spiritual beliefs – Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jeanne d'Arc, the Christian families and churches that hid Jews during the Holocaust – there are uncountable examples. But at the same time, what is social life without some sort of sense of a broader set of ideas and values? It does not have to be spirituality that provides this, but it often is. Rationality and logic take us so far; eventually there comes a need for a great emotional leap of intuition. Spirituality often provides the lift for just such a leap.<sup>21</sup>

True, social and political activism and spirituality do not always lead to positive results. I do not find that a reason, however, for declaring one or the other as dangerous or useless. Great things have been accomplished using social activism or spirituality and often both. To insist on rigid distinctions is to believe that a black and white picture is an appropriate colouring of the world. But most often, the decisions and the issues are painted in shades of gray. Why *not* the responses? Mother Nature may well prosper if a guiding spirituality reinvests value in a living world and in all women.

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## SPIRITUALITY AND DEEP ECOLOGY

*Another Quick and Dirty Definition*

In 1972, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess introduced a new concept in ecological philosophy: 'deep ecology'.<sup>22</sup> The focus of deep ecological debate is now on key principles,<sup>23</sup> the most significant of which are biospheric egalitarianism, and an ecological consciousness that locates humanity within the natural world.

Biospheric egalitarianism is an 'intuition' that all living things have an equal right to live and develop in their own way.<sup>24</sup> Or, in other words, humans have no higher worth than the rest of nature, and so are not justified in subduing the earth to their own limited ends. The second key principle, cultivation of an ecological consciousness, begins to lead into a new understanding of humans as part of the natural process, a sense of ourselves as embedded in the 'web' of life.<sup>25</sup> This recognition of self-in-relationship draws clearly from principles of ecological science; as eating, breathing animals we are dependent on our ecosystems. However, the concept goes beyond a recognition of physical reliance to suggest that an essential mental/emotional/spiritual connection needs to be made as well. This connection has been described as a sense of identification with the world.

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Deep ecologists accept spiritual relations with the natural world as necessary and natural. Devall and Sessions argue that spiritual growth allows us to transcend narrow human definitions and to begin to join with the wider, wilder world.<sup>26</sup> Bodian states

Most people in deep ecology have had the feeling – usually, but not always, in nature – that they are connected with something greater than their ego, greater than their name, their family, their special attributes as an individual – a feeling that is often called oceanic because many have it on the ocean. Without that identification, one is not easily drawn to become involved in deep ecology.<sup>27</sup>

Drengson argues that spirituality gives us our first and best glimpse into nature:

The awareness of the essential mysteriousness of nature *as it is*, is maintained through respect, ritual, and worship... Ritual and worship are ways to renew our sense of proportion and humility, our inherent knowledge of value; they are ways to put us in touch with the spiritual reality that joins all things (emphasis in original).<sup>28</sup>

Thus, spirituality is a significant force for helping to align oneself in harmony with the universe. What has been open for discussion among deep ecologists is the question of just *what* spiritual practices are most appropriate.



Deep ecologists recognise the utility of a number of different spiritualities. Some traditions in Christianity are seen as congenial with deep ecological practices, especially traditions such as Franciscanism. Many are strongly attracted to eastern religions such as Buddhism and Taoism.<sup>29</sup> Many of their key ideas draw very heavily on Taoist or Buddhist principles, especially the central idea in deep ecology of realising the role of the individual in the larger conscious universe. Naess comments that his term 'Self' is the same as what the Chinese call the 'Tao'.<sup>30</sup> Noted environmental poet Gary Snyder writes,

Buddhism holds that the universe and all creatures in it are intrinsically in a state of complete wisdom, love and compassion, acting in natural response and mutual interdependence. The personal realisation of this from-the-beginning state cannot be had for and by one 'self' – because it is not fully realised unless one has given the self up and away.<sup>31</sup>

He is careful to distinguish between institutionalised Buddhism, with its willingness to accept human suffering and strife, and the more 'natural' practices of reinterpreted Buddhism.

Deep ecologists are also attracted to other nature based religions. Like ecofeminists, some deep ecologists have embraced pagan practices as rituals appropriately grounded in nature.<sup>32</sup> The appeal for the deep ecologists is the vision of Nature as a teacher and as a living presence with which one must interact. In this way deep ecologists are making linkages with Native American spiritual practices as well, particularly in the development of the concept of the individual within the larger conscious universe.<sup>33</sup> For example, many Native American spiritual practices were part of an ongoing dialogue with the natural world. Lakota Vine Deloria states that:

The task of the tribal religion, if such a religion can be said to have a task, is to determine the proper relationship that the people of the tribe must have with other living beings...<sup>34</sup>

Native spiritual beliefs requires that humanity and 'the rest of creation [be] cooperative and respectful of the task set for them by the Great Spirit'.<sup>35</sup> That task is dwelling with balance and with harmony. Lakota Ron Goodman draws attention to the link between human action and natural action in the annual Lakota renewal ceremonies: 'When we pray in this manner, what is done in the skies is done on earth, in the same way. Together, all of creation participates in the ceremonies every year.'<sup>36</sup> These directions are visible in deep ecological thought as well:

The term 'deep ecology' refers to finding our bearings, to the process of grounding ourselves through fuller *experience of our connection to earth*... Deepness is *felt* in the way we are experiencing our lives... Deepness means *exploring our dreams* to recognise our archaic unity with all life and basic symbols... Deepness implies an attitude of *dwelling-in-the-moment*, meditating; letting one's own rhythms and

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perceptual room open up; respecting and including what is there, what comes, involving the *flow of actions* from the level of *unconsciousness*... (emphasis added).<sup>37</sup>

One of the key problems with deep ecology's approach to spiritual matters, however, is that it includes such a widely disparate set of beliefs drawn from radically different cultures. There may be similarities between Taoism and Native American practices, but using them together is problematic. Similarities might appear because both have been wrenched out of their cultural contexts and so are simplified. Taoist practices can not simply be grafted onto a Westernised culture. The interest in paganism is perhaps less problematic, for pagan practices are essentially European in their origins.

Inevitably, what looks like a mix and match approach leaves deep ecologists vulnerable to critics like social ecologist Murray Bookchin, who finds their approach less than sound:

If 'nature-worship' with its bouquet of woodsprites, animistic fetishes, fertility rites and other such ceremonies, magicians, shamans and shamanesses, animal deities, gods and goddesses that presumably reflect nature and its forces – all taken together, pave the way to an ecological sensibility and society, then it would be hard to understand how ancient Egypt managed to become and remain one of the most hierarchical and oppressive societies in the ancient world.<sup>38</sup>

Bookchin raises issues on spiritual practices to which the deep ecologists have had few constructive responses. The search for a sound spiritual construct cannot end here.

## SPIRITUALITY IN BIOREGIONALISM

*The Last Quick and Dirty Definition*

Bioregionalism in its present form has been around since 1972. Bioregionalism has roots in the theories of regional planning, in particular influential planners such as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Leopold Kohr, Ian McHarg, and E.F. Schumacher in the development of bioregional ideals.<sup>39</sup> The influence of biogeographers can also be noted in bioregional theory.<sup>40</sup> Other, foundational, roots are the histories and cultures of Native American tribes. Bioregionalism is a deliberate attempt to create in all people the sense of being 'indigenous' to a place.

Bioregionalism centres around the identification of, and with, a bioregion:

The term [bioregion] refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness – to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place.<sup>41</sup>

Bioregionalism, however, implies more than merely identifying units of distinctive cultural/biological characteristics. It means discovering and living within

the constraints and possibilities imposed by the character of the bioregion. It means living in a manner that is 'sustainable'. Implicit in bioregionalism is the idea of decentralisation in both political and economic spheres. People who live-in-place are those who, logically, have the best sense of what is right for that region and who, therefore, should make the decisions affecting the region.

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Bioregionalists look for spiritual practices that reflect the sacredness of the land and the need to work within the land's constraints. Bioregionals recognise a need for ritual and ceremony as part of the celebration of the earth and her inhabitants. The reports which have emerged from the last few Bioregional Congresses suggest that bioregionals define spirituality as one sort of emotional/mental relationship between the earth and humans. Within that broad constraint many different spiritualities can encourage the necessary 'living in place'.

A number of key spiritual influences can be found in bioregionalism. Noted 'environmental' poet Gary Snyder, for example, sees in Buddhist and Taoist beliefs a gentle, profound, powerful pattern of interactions between human and non-human.<sup>42</sup> Nor does bioregionalism preclude such 'mainstream' religions as Judaism or Christianity, as there are elements within Christianity that would mesh with bioregionalist theory.<sup>43</sup> For example, Benedictine ethics, as articulated by René Dubos, involve working with the land to create something beautiful and useful.<sup>44</sup>

The most important spiritual influence is that of the earlier 'indigenous' inhabitants, Native Americans. This makes sense, as Native American spirituality is grounded, somewhat literally, in the earth, water, and the sky and the residents of each. For bioregionalists, learning to interact with the land, such a grounded spirituality is of interest. Snyder, for example, is also drawn to native spirituality (in combination with eastern spiritualities). He writes,

So, inhabitory peoples [what bioregionals aspire to be] sometimes say 'this piece of land is sacred' – or 'all the land is sacred.' This is an attitude that draws on awareness of the mystery of life and death; of taking life to live; of giving life back – not only to your own children, but to the life of the whole land.<sup>45</sup>

The Native celebrations which recognised the patterns of the land and sky and the changing nature of the seasons, are also clearly an attractive model for bioregionalists. Such events are vital to survival, and the ceremonies reinforce the essential linkages between human community and natural community. Spiritual practices are a way to learn how to live well with the natural world. They are methodologies for reaching an appropriate level of consciousness, or mindfulness, of the world. For example, anthropologist Barre Toelken describes traditional religions as 'embodying the reciprocal relationships between people and the sacred *process* going on in the world' (emphasis in original).<sup>46</sup> Lakota

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Vine Deloria describes it in slightly different terms:

The task of the tribal religion, if such a religion can be said to have a task, is to determine the proper relationship that the people of the tribe must have with other living beings...<sup>47</sup>

Bioregionalists share with Native Americans a need to define themselves within a community, and the definition of community included the natural community. Spirituality may be an individual choice, but Native American spiritual practices are distinguished by their focus on renewing and integrating the community. Traditional Native American spiritual practices, however, cannot without damage be moved from a given landscape. Rather, they have evolved to reflect particular elements of the chosen land.

Such an indelible bond with the land, however, is clearly a deliberate construction by the tribes. Native cultures have been migrating across the North American continent for the last 40,000 years. Some are very recent arrivals: the Navajo only migrated into the American southwest from Alaska and the Yukon about 600 years ago. They are then, 'native' to the north. They have, however, reconstructed their spiritual practices to reflect the new land in which they dwell, in part borrowing from earlier residents such as the Hopi. From this, Lakota anthropologist Vine Deloria draws two conclusions of interest to bioregionalists. First, he believes it is possible for a cultural group to 'consecrate' a particular landscape, if they are capable of seeing themselves in terms of that landscape.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, it is possible that a particular landscape will 'project a particular religious spirit, which largely determines what types of religious beliefs will arise on it'.<sup>49</sup> It is conceivable that ecophilosophy then is a natural response to the demands of the land.

Bioregionals, along with some ecofeminists, make spiritual use of the 'mother earth' mythology. Here the bioregionalists also draw upon some Native American spiritualities which refer to mother earth (whose use of a mother earth symbolism may have actually been learned from the Europeans<sup>50</sup>), but they also rely on western mythology as well western science. Bioregionalist Kirkpatrick Sale argues that the living earth myth was common to the Graeco-Roman civilisations, which described the earth as coalescing out of chaos to become in the words of Plato, 'a living creature, one and visible, containing within itself all living creatures'. This creature was called Gaia (or Gaea), the mother of the heavens, the universe, the gods, and, not incidentally, humans.<sup>51</sup> This discussion is made more interesting by the emergence of a new scientific hypothesis: the Gaia hypothesis. Developed by climatologist James Lovelock, the Gaia Hypothesis argues that the earth actually behaves as a self-regulating living being infested with any number of symbiotic life-forms (in much the same way that the human body is host to a number of discrete parasitic and symbiotic life-forms such as bacteria).<sup>52</sup> Bioregionals have used this scientific hypothesis as a justification for talking about 'mother earth'.

While spirituality is embraced by many in the bioregional movement, others (like the social ecofeminists) are made uncomfortable by the idea of spirituality. The reports from the Third and Fourth Bioregional Congresses describe the failure of the Spirituality Committee to have their report accepted by the larger Congress. In particular, many seemed uncomfortable with the stress being placed on Native American practices as appropriate models, seeing in them the apparent expropriation of someone else's spirituality.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between native and ecophilosopher has been a troubling one in general.<sup>54</sup> The development of a spirituality as a specific recent construction that is similar to 40,000 years of cultural evolutions, unless done very carefully makes the bioregionalist little more than a thief. This problem is also recognised by indigenous people:

I'm not sure why in order to apprehend the fact that your life is contingent upon the life and the environment around you, why it entails that you go and pretend to be a Lakota in a sweat lodge, or that you purport to teach your neighbors Navajo crystal healing ceremonies... It's done because you want to pretend you're something that you're not rather than becoming something else... But you are never going to wake up as the reincarnation of a nineteenth century Cheyenne warrior, the way some New Age guys seem to think they are.<sup>55</sup>

Upon review, bioregionalism seems to me to offer the best hope for constructing an environmentally sound spirituality, although I find it somewhat ironic that 'non-resident' spiritual practices are raised within a philosophy that is focused on discovering local 'resident' possibilities and potentials. Bioregionalism places humans back into the living world, and celebrates that placement through spirituality, and ceremony. If the bioregion generates spirituality and ceremony that are similar across the generations of inhabitants, that is perhaps no strange thing. After all the Navajo and many other 'native' cultures have allowed the same to happen. Perhaps we are finally being shaped by the land, rather than shaping the land.

## CONCLUSIONS

To return to the initial question: *can we develop or modify spiritual beliefs so that they are specifically designed to create environmentally and ecologically based values in people?* Well, yes. To begin, there is much that can be learned from a comparative study of spiritual practices. Others have looked at refocusing the mainstream religions like Christianity or Islam into a more ecologically sound view of the world, and these in and of themselves are valuable and potentially of huge benefit, both for humans and the non-human world. Like any huge vessel, it will take time to change direction. In the interim, and indeed after, spiritual

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practices which explicitly incorporate ecological values, such as the three I've been discussing, offer much for those who seek immediate alternative spiritualities.

On a more fundamental level, I believe that the different spiritual constructions and adaptations, while less than perfect, offer challenges and directions that, even if we don't agree with them, can lead us in some wondrous directions. What is spirituality if it cannot be translated into greater social involvement? And what is social life without some sort of sense of a broader set of ideas, values, wonderment? It does not have to be spirituality that provides this, but it can be a source for the imagination and creativity it will take to reconcile human and nature, that great emotional leap of hope. As one Pueblo commented,

There are hundreds of religions in this country, and still you white people are searching for something else. We are not searching – we are already there. And you don't have to join us: you are already there too. You just have to realise it.<sup>56</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Davis and Weaver, 1975, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> d'Eaubonne, 1974, p.204.

<sup>3</sup> These principles are derived from: King, 1983, pp. 118-129; King, 1988; Spretnak, 1988; and Warren, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> See, in particular, Christ, 1990, pp.58-69; Daly, 1990; Gray, 1981; Plaskow and Christ 1989; and Spretnak, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> See Stone, 1976, for a good presentation of existing evidence for matriarchies and Goddess worship, and the exchange between Sally R. Binford, Merlin Stone, and Charlene Spretnak in Spretnak, 1982, pp.541-561 for key elements of this debate.

<sup>6</sup> Monique Wittig, 1971, cited in Christ, 1979, p.75.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> For a good introduction to paganism and goddess-worship see Adler, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> For general introductions to the subject of Wicca and goddess worship which are particularly relevant to ecofeminist theory see Adler, 1979; Budapest, 1979; Langer, 1987, pp.23-27; Mariechild, 1981; Starhawk, 1982a; Starhawk, 1979; and Weinstein, 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Starhawk, 1982a, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Eisler, 1990, pp.23-34.

<sup>12</sup> Eisler, 1987. She draws heavily on the following: Gimbutas, 1982; Gimbutas, 1980, and Gimbutas, 1987.

<sup>13</sup> Gray, 1988, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> See Allen, 1986, pp.13-29; and Deloria, 1973, pp.92-93.

<sup>15</sup> Gray, 1982, p.105.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Booth, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the particularly vehement response to Goddess worshippers in Biehl, 1989; and Biehl, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> See Hallen, 1987.

- <sup>19</sup> Starhawk, 1982b, pp.172-184; pp.181-182.
- <sup>20</sup> Wilson, 1990, pp.76-84; p.77.
- <sup>21</sup> Ynestra King has been perhaps the sole theorist truly interested in bringing together the two (or more) sides riven on the question of spiritualism versus social/political work. At the moment, she is unfortunately one voice in a void. See especially King, 1990, pp.106-121.
- <sup>22</sup> Naess presented his lecture at the Third World Future Research Conference, Bucharest, September 3-10, 1972; see Naess, 1973.
- <sup>23</sup> Sessions and Devall argue that deep ecology 'derives its essence' from a wide variety of traditions and philosophies. See Devall, 1980, p.299; Devall, 1988; Devall and Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1989.
- <sup>24</sup> See Devall and Sessions, 1985, p.67; and Fox, 1989, p.6.
- <sup>25</sup> Drengson, 1991.
- <sup>26</sup> Devall and Sessions, 1985, p.67.
- <sup>27</sup> Bodian, 1982, p.11.
- <sup>28</sup> Drengson, 1984.
- <sup>29</sup> Devall and Sessions, 1985, p.66.
- <sup>30</sup> Bodian, 1982, p.11.
- <sup>31</sup> Snyder, 1985, p.251.
- <sup>32</sup> See, for example, diZerega, 1988; Drengson, 1988.
- <sup>33</sup> See, for example, the discussion with Arne Naess in Bodian, 1982; or Snyder, 1985, p.251.
- <sup>34</sup> Deloria, 1973, p.102.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.96.
- <sup>36</sup> Goodman, 1990, p.10.
- <sup>37</sup> Devall, 1988, p.11.
- <sup>38</sup> Bookchin, 1987, pp.3,8.
- <sup>39</sup> Sale, 1985.
- <sup>40</sup> See Kroeber, 1939; Sauer, 1975.
- <sup>41</sup> Berg and Dasmann, 1978, p.218.
- <sup>42</sup> Snyder, 1990, pp.12-19; and Snyder, 1974.
- <sup>43</sup> See Cheney, 1989, p.130.
- <sup>44</sup> See Dubos, 1972.
- <sup>45</sup> Snyder, 1977, pp.59-60.
- <sup>46</sup> Toelken, 1976, p.14.
- <sup>47</sup> Deloria, 1973, p.102.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid. p.295.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.294.
- <sup>50</sup> See Gill, 1987.
- <sup>51</sup> Sale, 1985, p.3.
- <sup>52</sup> Lovelock, 1987.
- <sup>53</sup> See the reports on spirituality in the *Proceedings* from North American Bioregional Congresses Three and Four.
- <sup>54</sup> See Udall, 1973. Books that were and are influential in perpetuating the ecological native theme include Doug Boyd (1974), John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes (1972), and John G. Neihardt. [1932] (1975).
- <sup>55</sup> LaDuke, 1990, p.33.
- <sup>56</sup> Matthiessen, 1981, p.7.

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