

Is religion a sleeping ecological giant?

Notes, reflections, questions, theses and quotations referring to the 'green' face of the four religions Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam

The text is not written in a style of an academic lecture. It is more an invitation to inspire dialogue and to deepen personal exploration of the ecological aspect of religion.

1) Preface

Religion and ecology: An evident (obvious) relationship?

A secret couple we have not yet discovered?

At present we are – in the world of the daily news - more aware of intercultural conflicts which are mainly associated with the three monotheistic religions: the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions.

Examples: Attacks from Islamic fundamentalism (wahabism, salafism); a growing antisemitism in Europe, especially in France; the upcoming and growing influence of more conservative political parties (for example the 'front national' in France,) which are contributing to a certain kind of polarisation in society; Christian people as target of fundamentalist groups.

Current discussions are dominated by the following subjects:

the peace and violence potential of religions,
the relationship between human rights and religions,
fundamentalism in the religious world,
the relationship between democratic values, human rights and the message of religions.

The attack on 'Charlie Hebdo' in Paris is one of many examples revealing a conflict of different perspectives: Liberty of opinion as opposed to respect for the believers of a religion.

Current situation of Luxemburg:

Abolition of religion lessons and moral lessons at school. New teaching on values will be introduced next year 2016. Of course introduction to religions will be a part of these lessons. The government is producing a bigger distance between the state and religion.

The prime minister and other people and associations like AHA insist that religion is a private affair.

The majority of people seem to agree that religion has a certain moral impact on education and social cohesion in society.

After 9/11 in 2001 the role of religions was intensively discussed until now. A lot of books were written. A few examples >

Jan Assman: The price of monotheism

Peter Sloterdijk: God's Zeal > The Battle of the Three Monotheisms

Karen Armstrong: Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence

Richard Dawkins: The God Delusion

The older book 'Clash of cultures' (1996) by Samuel Huntington became newly topical and seemed to give a useful interpretation of the so-called conflict between the western world and the Islamic – Arabic world, especially for a growing fundamentalism which tended more and more to violent actions.

Two faces of religions became again visible:

1) Solidarity, morality, social responsibility, orientation, consolation, answers to the last questions: where we come from, where we are going, why are we here? (Sense or meaning of life)

2) Violence, intolerance, fundamentalism (maintenance of a literal interpretation of scriptures), there is only one truth and one way to paradise or a good life.

The shadows of monotheistic religions:

With the growing environment movemental (in the sixties of the last century) was also born a big discussion about the impact of religion – especially the Jewish-Christian tradition - on nature:

In fact, there were a lot of books which accused these traditions of being responsible for the ecological crisis we are confronted with.

Some critical issues of monotheistic religions

1) Anthropocentrism

In the centre of the attention of God is the welfare of mankind. The rest of creation seems to be only scenery in the background.

2) Idea of progress

The prevailing linear view of history:

In the Jewish tradition we find a new understanding of history which is not mainly characterized by natural cycles but by the different historical points in the corridor of time describing the way God is going with Israel and mankind. The Jewish culture of historical memory serves as collective action which also protects the special religious identity in the long history of diaspora. For example the celebration of passah during the spring time – compare it with the Christian Easter – rooted in the customs of farmers and nomads. This was a nature-related origin which changed into the celebration of a historical moment reminding Jewish people of the liberation from slavery in Egypt by God.

The German poet and writer of the age of enlightenment Gotthold Ephraim Lessing understood the linear story of the Old Testament as a chain of stations describing the advancing education of mankind.

Christian tradition has assumed a linear understanding of history.

The dogma of original sin has dramatized life on earth and has drawn human attention to salvation with all consequences.

One opposite example is the perspective of Indians from the Lakota tribe in North America.: This earth or better this world 'is' the paradise human being have to take care of.

3) **The concept of anthropocentrism and transcendence** can also change the world in a space of objects man can manipulate according to his wishes.

Interesting question: Is there a certain logical chain from religious transcendence to the modern objective approach of scientists to the world?

Historical contradiction between the three monotheistic religions and the so-called Nature-Religions:

Transcendence	> Against pantheism (All the world = God)
The world is not a manifestation of nature-spirits or gods, it is the dominion-area of the unique God	> against animism, polytheism or ancestral worship

The time of European colonialism was accompanied by a mainly intolerant violent Christian mission face to face with the aboriginal religions of the different continents. (Exceptions: Bartolomé de las casas at the beginning of Spanish mission, the Jesuits in Paraguay 1609 bis 1767)
 North American Indians were not allowed to practise their religious ceremonies, especially the sun-dance (until the second half of the last century).

It was important to consider in some words special shadows of monotheistic religions in order to avoid some kind of consciousness naivety.

But nevertheless the appearance of religions in human history was closely combined with a mindful relationship with the visible and not visible (more spiritual) world. Shamanism as the first form of human spirituality was responsible not only for the welfare of the tribes but also for the balance between nature and the human community. A concrete worldwide example for protecting the balance between nature and man (especially the relationship between man and animal) were the ceremonies in the frame of hunting and killing animals (a traditional concept: man and animal are living in a spiritual community).
 The wall-paintings – 36000 years old - of the Chauvet-Cave in the south of France have also a possible religious function and reveal a deep respect for animals.

Very inspiring: Essay by Garry Gardner (2002, world watch institute, can be downloaded as PDF/link: <http://www.worldwatch.org/system/files/EWP164.pdf>)
 Title: Invoking the spirit: Religion and spirituality in the quest for a sustainable world. This essay wants to produce more awareness of the ecological heritage of religions
By the way this subject shows a new bridge for interreligious dialogue.
 Garry Gardner is fascinated by the fact that there are billions of people belonging to religions (at least officially). The vision is: If religions are discovering and realizing their green traditions an ecological mass movement can be born.

***This book inspired me to have a closer look at the question:
 What could be the contribution or answer of religions to the ecological crisis?***

Conscious evolution

There is a big agreement among a lot of contemporary experts, writers and spiritual teachers concerning the main reason for the ecological crisis.
 The diagnosis: It is our mind, our consciousness or our way to watch ourselves and the world, which has a very deep impact on the earth.

The big challenge consists in changing our mind.

For example Al Gore has insisted on this goal.
 Other names: Matthew Fox/ Joanna Macy/ Ken Wilber/ Eckehart Tolle/ Thich Nhat Hanh/ Andrew Cohen/..

The experts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are emphasizing the necessity of a transformation of human consciousness.

Here we are touching a dimension of religion we have perhaps not realized or appreciated enough. Ken Wilber - perhaps the most famous explorer of the development of human consciousness - has written *mutatis mutandis*: One of the main tasks of religion consists in supporting the conscious evolution of human beings. Indeed: Nowadays it seems to be very urgent to clarify the aspects of religions which concern the evolution of the human mind.

According to the perhaps best-known spiritual teacher Eckehart Tolle the genius of religions is the fact that they have very exactly localized the big problems of mankind in the human mind. Man is generally suffering under a mental perception error. To overcome this suffering religions are offering instruments for healing the false perspective. (Compare his book: **A New Earth: Create a Better Life**)

There are also people who are becoming aware that: Religions have to accelerate the evolution of human mind. (This is the comprehension of the American writer Jim Marion concerning the message of Jesus, title of his book: *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality*)

The thesis of religions – especially of their spiritual branch - :

Rising of the human mind begins in ourselves. Here is the departure point to change the conditions of life.

An example for opening the human mind for a deeper unity can be found in the traditional elements of Christian worship.

- 1) Selfawarenes of being a sinner (having made mistakes and so on.)
- 2) Asking for God's mercy
- 3) Confession (of faith)
- 4) Promise of grace
- 5) The last supper/ eucharist
- 6) Blessing

Therefore it could be anticipated:

The intention of religions is the 'new man'.

The conditions:

- 1) Deep self-understanding
- 2) A certain way to heal and open the mind for deeper love:
For example > trusting God, praying, meditation, rituals, share the presence of God in communities, etc

By the way: Karl Marx for example insists on the conclusion that the human mind can only rise to a higher and better level of consciousness when we are changing the conditions of life in society. Our existence in society creates our consciousness. Therefore Karl Marx rejects the radical anthropocentric way of religions.

Buddhism:

Buddha (560 – 480)

One of the biggest self-explorers of the human mind is surely Gauthama Buddha.

No other religion seems to emphasize so strongly that every human being has to realize his personal responsibility for the development of his mind.

I would like to draw your attention to some central elements of **Buddhism**.

First of all I have the impression Buddha invites us to live a very new quality of relationships with ourselves and the universe with its internal and external aspects.

Only one word:

Relationships without attachments!

Positive expression: Love at its highest level, delivered love, true love, compassion for every part of the universe

The four truths

According to the Buddhist tradition, the [Buddha](#) first taught the four noble truths in the very first teaching he gave after he attained [enlightenment](#), as recorded in the [Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#) (*The Discourse That Sets Turning the Wheel of Truth*). Within this discourse, there are four key verses which present the four noble truths.

- 1) Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the [five aggregates](#) subject to clinging are suffering.
- 2) Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to re-becoming, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for disbecoming.
- 3) Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.
- 4) Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this noble eightfold path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

The four noble truths have been condensed as follows:

1. The truth of Dukkha;
2. The truth of the origin of Dukkha;
3. The truth of the cessation of Dukkha;
4. The truth of the path, the way to liberation from Dukkha (The noble eightfold path)

The four truths are the "classic formulation" of the basic orientation of Buddhism, namely

Suffering and the cessation of suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path is sometimes divided into three basic divisions, as follows:

Division	Eightfold Path factors	Acquired factors

Wisdom (Sanskrit: <u>prajñā</u> , Pāli: <u>paññā</u>)	1. <u>Right view</u>	9. <u>Superior right knowledge</u>
	2. <u>Right intention</u>	10. <u>Superior right liberation</u>
Ethical conduct (Sanskrit: <u>śīla</u> , Pāli: <u>sīla</u>)	3. <u>Right speech</u>	
	4. <u>Right action</u>	
	5. <u>Right livelihood</u>	
Concentration (Sanskrit and Pāli: <u>samādhi</u>)	6. <u>Right effort</u>	
	7. <u>Right mindfulness</u>	
	8. <u>Right concentration</u>	

Some further reflections:

Our life is suffering.

In an everlasting changing world we are suffering under the attitude to hold on to everything.

Dukkha is a central complex expression and does not only mean 'suffering'.

Dukkha is a kind of boundless desire, it is like an existential thirst.

According to Buddhism true fulfilment consists in being liberated from our attachment.

Essential is a way of self-redemption according to the eightfold path.

Particularly we have to overcome our attachment to our self. It is a construction without any reality.

Human beings have to aim at selflessness > Nirwana > The disappearing of every attachment > liberation for a deep awareness of being united with every aspect of the world > **a kind of cosmic consciousness!**

In contrast to Christian tradition Buddhism rejects the existence or concept of a self >

-Special expression > **Anatman**, can be translated as 'non-self'.

Man is more an interbeing than a being.

To make clear the anthropology and the way of Buddhism it helps to compare it with the psychology of commercial advertising.

- 1) Every human being has the potential for wishes and desires which have to be awakened. The commercial world is convinced that a human being is looking all the time for satisfaction. Dukkha(Thirst) Contentment is a danger.
- 2) The commercial world can only survive by our self-image. Our self is fulfilled or grown by buying certain products. This self is not the higher self (soul, higher consciousness), it is our Ego.
- 3) The target of the commercial world is our personal association between our Ego and the product. This has the main impact. We are buying also fantasies or certain images we would like to show to other people. (Marlboro man, Gauloise, Cars).

We see that our ecological crisis has a lot to do with our self-understanding or more exactly with our self-awareness

From the Buddhist point of view we all are suffering **from a perception error.**

We are not aware of our Buddha nature or the big mind or cosmic mind.

We are not aware that there are now boundaries between us and the world.

(Cosmic mind > compare the classical book of Richard Bucke:

Cosmic Consciousness - A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind)

At first we need a pure mind. We need to see through the illusions in order to discover our heart of mindfulness.

Meditation is one of the very important tools to discover our real nature.

In our mind we find not only the problems but also the solutions.

Buddhism is not only a religion but also a practical philosophy and psychology.

Thich Nhat Hanh: Perhaps the first Buddhist who has written two books about the ecological dimension of Buddhism.

Some thoughts from his books:

- Taking care for our environment can't be separated from our responsibility for our personal ecology (harmony).
- The heart of awakening is mindfulness > mindful practice > breathing, walking, to be aware of our body, of our feelings, of our thoughts, of the moment.
- To be aware of our other lives in past periods (reincarnation)

Five Mindfulness Trainings according to Thich Nhat Hanh

1. respect for life
2. generosity
3. sexual responsibility
4. attentive listening
5. mindful dealing with consumer goods

Further reflections:

- At first we must heal ourselves before we can heal the planet.
- If someone is not happy in his heart how he can heal the world?
- We are nature.
- Everywhere – in every living being - we find Buddha Nature.

Religion and the Environment: A Buddhist Perspective, written by Dylan Esler, an expert on Buddhism in the frame of a Buddhist-Christian dialogue Lama Jigme and Ingo Hanke.

- When the Buddha attained enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree in Bodhgaya, his first gesture was to touch the earth; this symbolic gesture is imbued with profound significance, since thereby the Buddha was calling the earth - the element that supports all life - as the witness to the truth of his triumph over ignorance and the powers of darkness.
- When he began teaching around Varanasi, the Buddha instigated the rule of the threemonth rain retreat. This being the time of the monsoon, many small creatures would come out of the earth. Being confined indoors, the Buddhist monks avoided inadvertently harming these creatures by stepping on them. Furthermore, they would use this time for the intensive practice of meditation.
- This attitude of great carefulness and respect for the earth and its creatures follows from the Buddhist principle of cause and effect. Every action of body, speech and mind has an effect corresponding to its cause.
- Moreover, the basis for the development of kindness and compassion is the recognition that our environment and its inhabitants, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem to be, all wish to enjoy happiness and to avoid suffering. In this respect, we are all equal.
- In this regard, it is said that one should take oneself as an example: not wanting to suffer oneself, one shouldn't harm others either.
- This is why devout Tibetans can often be seen picking up small insects to avoid their being trodden on.
- What is more, in the vast perspective of *Mahayana* Buddhism, one considers that throughout the beginningless time one has been turning around in cyclic existence (Skt. *samsara*), all sentient beings have, at one time or another, been one's mother. They have cared for and nurtured one just like one's own mother in this life. Reflecting on this fact, one becomes filled with gratitude and engages all one's efforts in releasing them from suffering and the causes of suffering, and in establishing them in happiness and its cause.
- Moreover, our own bodies and the whole environment exist due to the temporary gathering of the five elements. This gathering is possible due to the interdependence (Skt. *pratityasamutpāda*) of causes and conditions. This means that nothing exists in isolation as an independent entity.
- So if we wish to be happy, we must respect the environment in which we evolve. As the Tibetan saying goes: *mtsho ma bde na/ nya ma bde*. "If the lake is unpleasant, the fish will be uncomfortable."
- At the beginning, we mentioned the Buddha's earth-touching gesture (Skt. *bhūsparsamudra*): we should reflect on the fact that, without the earth, we would be unable to live. Therefore, the earth can be seen as a mother who in her infinite patience carries us and sustains our lives. Such thoughts might make us change our attitude towards this earth. We cannot see it as something just to be used and thrown away - if we cast away the earth, we are throwing away the very ground of our existence!

- The same holds true, of course, for all of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. It is only because of the interdependent interplay of the five elements that we can enjoy the brief moment we call our lives.
- Interdependence: nothing exists in isolation: without bad, there can be no good; without short, no tall; without low, no high; without darkness, no light; without heat, no cold.
- Everything we do has far-reaching repercussions; often, we can hardly fathom the consequences of our actions. So we need to develop a little more care and concern in the way we go about our lives.
- For example, we all believe that we need a car, but we know that the earth's supply of oil is running out. What will we do once the natural resources have been exhausted?
- This is why in Buddhism, one tries to develop an attitude of contentment (*cog-shes*). Instead of always wanting more and more, we begin to recognize the wealth we already possess and to feel satisfied with that.
- Also, we need to think for the future, for the long term, not just being selfishly concerned with our own immediate needs and desires.
- Because if we really love our children and grandchildren, we must think of their future as well. Otherwise, we may say that we love them, but our love does not translate into our actions.
- If you find it difficult to think of future generations generally, at least think of the future of your own children.
- If we look at our planet, it is clear that many animals are disappearing or have disappeared already. What kind of planet are we going to leave for future generations?
- Like other religions, the Buddhist tradition also views certain places as being particularly sacred. In the Buddhist context, the places commemorating the main events in the Buddha's life are especially sacred: his birthplace in Lumbini (nowadays Nepal), the place of his enlightenment in Bodhgaya, of his first teaching in Sarnath and of his passing into transcendence (*Skt. parinirvana*) in Kushinagara.
- Then, in the tantric context of the *Vajrayana*, there are the twenty-four sacred places and many other powerful places throughout India and Tibet. These places were all blessed by very great masters who had attained realization of their mind's true nature. Through their limitless compassion, these masters' very presence sanctified the environment in which they lived. So anyone going to these shrines can still benefit from the profound sense of peace and of inner freedom that imbues these places.
- Finally, a few words about the pre-Buddhist Bon religion in Tibet: this tradition teaches that mountains, trees and lakes are living spirits. Hence, these invisible beings must be propitiated before any important undertaking. Such an attitude has prompted Tibetans to have an innate respect for the natural environment, which is very much in harmony with the specifically Buddhist principles outlined above.

Jewish-Christian Tradition

Some general remarks

- Linear understanding of history
- The story between man and God is in the foreground/ Creation is more the background of this special relationship/ like a theater stage
- eschatology
- more distance to the creation, to natural cycles
- only man is created according to the image of God
- fight against the divine manifestations in nature (for example the first chapter of the Bible has been written in an exile situation of Jewish people and it is a declaration against the religion of the Babylon empire with its gods which are visible in the cosmos like the sun, like the moon, like the stars et cetera. Genesis seems not to have been written as a testimony of enthusiasm about the world. It is more a confession to the one single God who is the chief of all: His supremacy!
- The story of the creation is only a short preface to the long dramatic history between God and man; the creation myths of other contemporary religions had much longer stories like for example the religion of ancient Egypt.

Nevertheless there are really inspiring treasures in the Old Testament:

Genesis 1,31

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

According to the Christian theologian Matthew Fox: In the beginning is the blessing and not the sin.

We are coming from the blessing, from the existential goodness of the universe.
Original blessing against original sin

Some chapters later the goodness of creation is denied in the story of Noah and his ark. God destroys also all animals and plants. After the blood and sacrifice of Noah God announces:

Genesis 8,21-22

"I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Genesis 2,15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

The first commandment of the bible is an ecological commandment.

Genesis 2,18-20

[18](#) Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for⁵ him."

[19](#) Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed⁶ every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

[20](#) The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam⁷ there was not found a helper fit for him.

Very interesting the relationship between man and animals.

This story, belonging to the text body of the jahwist, is probably descending from very old traditions accentuating the essential community between man and animals.

To overcome his loneliness God brought animals to him, a sort of mutual recognizing. Man and animals are part of a spiritual family. This also indicates the reality of interdependence.

We can also remember the antique myth of Orpheus who attracts all creatures by the sound of his music.

Genesis 2 reminds us also of the famous speech of the north American Indian chief Seattle (19. century) who foresaw that the elimination of more and more wild animals will cause a mental loneliness in the world of the white man.

Psalms 104

One of the biggest songs of praise to God the creator and his creation.

But psalm 104 has its origin in the song of the pharaoh Echnaton (father of monotheism).

The blessing of God is turned to all the universe, to all creatures.

Job 38 - 41/ the books of wisdom (their origin in Egypt?)

Very detailed descriptions of animals!

Possible interpretation: Whoever wants to approach to a deeper understanding of God has to realize the beauty and majesty of creation.

Ecclesiastes 3,18 – 21 > Man and animal are sharing the same destiny.

I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts.

[19](#) For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.²

[20](#) All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

[21](#) Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?

[22](#) So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

The Sabbath includes pets as well.

Deuteronomy 5,14-16

but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, ***or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.***

[15](#) You shall remember that you were a slave³ in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

[16](#)

Animals and the Torah

There are a lot of rules and examples about the treatment of animals. The sources of this historically extraordinary ethics are the Torah, the Halacha, the Talmud and the Midrash.

Look for **Judaism 101 (Internet)**

- Jewish law prohibits causing unnecessary suffering to animals
- Animals can be used to satisfy legitimate needs, like food and clothing
- Pets are permitted, but cannot be physically altered, and may cause complications
- Jewish law is compatible with a vegetarian diet, but involves some use of leather

"Herod also got together a great quantity of wild beasts, and of lions in very great abundance, and of such other beasts as were either of uncommon strength or of such a sort as were rarely seen. These were trained either to fight one with another, or men who were condemned to death were to fight with them. And truly foreigners were greatly surprised and delighted at the vast expenses of the shows, and at the great danger of the spectacles, but to the Jews it was a palpable breaking up of those customs for which they had so great a veneration." -Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews.

A righteous man knows the soul of his animal - Proverbs 12:10

Judaism places great stress on proper treatment of animals. Unnecessary cruelty to animals is strictly forbidden, and in many cases, animals are accorded the same sensitivity as human beings. This concern for the welfare of animals is unusual in Western civilization. Most civilized nations did not accept this principle until quite recently; cruelty to animals was not outlawed until the 1800s, and even now it is not taken very seriously.

The primary principle behind the treatment of animals in Jewish law is preventing tza'ar ba'alei chayim, the suffering of living creatures. Judaism expresses no definitive opinion as to whether animals actually experience physical or psychological pain in the same way that humans do; however, Judaism has always recognized the link between the way a person treats animals and the way a person treats human beings. A person who is cruel to a defenseless animal will undoubtedly be cruel to defenseless people. Modern psychology confirms this understanding, with many studies finding a relationship between childhood animal cruelty and adult criminal violence. Sadly, the converse is not always true, and those

who love animals do not always value human life: Hitler loved animals; the animal rights group PETA wrote a letter to Arafat telling him, when he blows up a bus full of Israelis, could he please not hurt any donkeys. (the letter is no longer on their website, but remains in the [Internet Archive](#))

In the Bible, those who care for animals are heroes, while those who hunt animals are villains. [Jacob](#), [Moses](#) and King David were all shepherds, people who cared for animals (Gen. 30, Ex. 31, I Sam. 17). A traditional story tells that Moses was chosen for his mission because of his skill in caring for animals. "The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said 'Since you are merciful to the flock of a human being, you shall be the shepherd of My flock, Israel.'" Likewise [Rebecca](#) was chosen as a wife for [Isaac](#) because of her kindness to animals. When [Abraham](#)'s servant asked for water for himself, she volunteered to water his camels as well, and thereby proved herself a worthy wife (Gen. 24).

On the other hand, the two hunters in the Bible, Nimrod and [Esau](#), are both depicted as villains. The [Talmud](#) tells the story of a great [rabbi](#), [Judah Ha-Nasi](#), who was punished with years of kidney stones and other painful ailments because he was insensitive to the fear of a calf being led to slaughter; he was relieved years later when he showed kindness to animals. (Talmud Baba Metzia 85a)

In the [Torah](#), humanity is given dominion over animals (Gen. 1:26), which gives us the right to use animals for legitimate needs. Animal flesh can be consumed for food; animal skins can be used for clothing. The Torah itself must be written on parchment (animal hides), as must the scrolls for [mezuzot](#) and [tefillin](#), and tefillin must be made out of leather.

However, dominion does not give us the right to cause indiscriminate pain and destruction. We are permitted to use animals in this way only when there is a genuine, legitimate need, and we must do so in the manner that causes the animal the least suffering. [Kosher slaughtering](#) is designed to be as fast and painless as possible, and if anything occurs that might cause pain (such as a nick in the slaughtering knife or a delay in the cutting), the flesh may not be consumed. Hunting for sport is strictly prohibited, and hunting and trapping for legitimate needs is permissible only when it is done in the least painful way possible.

Under [Jewish law](#), animals have some of the same rights as humans do. Animals rest on [Shabbat](#), as humans do (Ex. 20:10). We are forbidden to muzzle an ox to prevent it from eating while it is working in the field (Deut. 25:4), just as we must allow human workers to eat from the produce they are harvesting (Deut. 23:25-26). Animals can partake of the produce from fields lying fallow during the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:11).

Several commandments demonstrate concern for the physical or psychological suffering of animals. We may not plow a field using animals of different species (Deut. 22:10), because this would be a hardship to the animals. We are required to relieve an animal of its burden, even if we do not like its owner, do not know its owner, or even if it is ownerless (Ex. 23:5; Deut. 22:4). We are not permitted to kill an animal in the same day as its young (Lev. 22:28), and are specifically commanded to send away a mother bird when taking the eggs (Deut. 22:6-7), because of the psychological distress this would cause the animal. In fact, the Torah specifically says that a person who sends away the mother bird will be rewarded with long life, precisely the same reward that is given for honoring mother and father (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16), and indeed for observing the whole Torah (Deut. 4:40). This should give some indication of the importance of this law.

We are permitted to violate [Shabbat](#) to a limited extent to rescue an animal in pain or at risk of death. For example, we can move them if they are in pain, move objects that we would not otherwise be permitted to touch to relieve their pain, we may give them medicine, and we may ask non-Jews to do things that would violate Shabbat to help a suffering animal.

In the [Talmud](#), the [rabbis](#) further dictated that a person may not purchase an animal unless he has made provisions to feed it, and a person must feed his animals before he feeds himself (interpreting Deut. 11:15).

Pets

Jewish law does not prohibit keeping pets, and indeed many observant Jews have dogs, cats or other household pets, though Jewish law does raise some complications for pet owners.

As with all animals, we are required to feed our pets before ourselves, and make arrangements for feeding our pets before we obtain them. Also, like all animals, household pets are entitled to Sabbath rest, thus you cannot have your dog retrieve the paper for you on [Shabbat](#), etc.

Some sources consider pets are considered to be muktzeh, within the category of objects that cannot be handled on Shabbat. I haven't been able to get a clear idea of what exactly is and is not permitted with an animal on Shabbat. I have seen several sources say that walking a dog is permitted, but if an animal runs away on Shabbat, it is not permitted to trap the animal.

It is permissible to feed non-[kosher](#) food to pets, as long as you do not consume it yourself. This falls under the general rule that it is permissible to use products of non-kosher animals as long as you don't eat them; for example, it is permissible to use a toothpaste that contains non-kosher ingredients as long as the toothpaste is not fit for human consumption, and it is permissible to wear gloves made from pig suede. However, it is not permissible to derive any benefit from a mixture of meat and dairy; therefore, any food you feed your pet cannot contain both meat and dairy.

Similarly, during [Pesach](#), there are rules for pets, but they are not as strict as for people. It is impermissible to have any chametz (leavened grain products) in your home, or to derive any benefit from chametz, thus you cannot use chametz to feed your pets. However, you can feed your pets food that contains [kitniyot](#). [Star-K](#)'s website usually has a good list of KFP pet foods when the time comes. You can also feed your pets Passover table scraps, and you can feed matzah meal or farfel to fish or rodents. I used to have a hamster who loved Passover: carrot and potato peelings, celery tips, and all the matzah farfel he could eat! If you cannot find suitable food, you must temporarily sell the pets to a non-Jew, as you temporarily sell your other chametz to a non-Jew during the holiday.

It is a violation of [Jewish law](#) to neuter a pet. The [Torah](#) prohibits castrating males of any species (Lev. 22:24). Although this law does not apply to neutering female pets, neutering of females is prohibited by general laws against tza'ar ba'alei chayim (causing suffering to animals). Please note that, while the law prohibits you from neutering your pet, it does not prohibit you from owning a pet that is already neutered. If you want a neutered pet, I strongly encourage you to adopt from one of the many reputable shelters, such as [Spay and Save](#) (where I adopted a cat), [Kitty Cottage](#) (where I adopted two others) or the [Delaware Humane Association](#). I also heard an amusing story about an Orthodox Jewish woman who gave her unaltered female cat birth control pills, but I don't know how much truth there is to that story. It certainly would not be a violation of Jewish law to do so.

It is a violation of the general prohibition against tza'ar ba'alei chayim to have your pet physically altered in any way without a genuine, legitimate need. For example, declawing cats and docking the ears or tails of dogs are forbidden. Again, there is no law against owning an animal in this condition, so you should look into adopting from a shelter if you want such an animal. The cat that I adopted from [Spay and Save](#) was neutered and declawed by her previous owner.

For Jewish Vegetarians

The vegetarian diet was considered the ideal for humanity. Note that in Genesis 1:29, G-d gives humanity all fruits and vegetables for food, but no meat. Meat is not permitted until after the Flood (Gen. 9:3). Even offerings before that time did not involve the death of animals: a traditional midrash indicates that Abel and Cain's offerings (Gen. 4) were wool and flax.

Certainly, a vegetarian diet simplifies the process of keeping [kosher](#), as it eliminates the need to separate meat and dairy! (see [Kashrut](#)) In fact, I once heard a joke about a vegan who decided to keep kosher, but he thought it was too easy for him, so he designated certain vegetables "meat" and certain vegetables "dairy," and certain vegetables "pareve," and he wouldn't eat "meat" vegetables with "dairy" vegetables!

Most vegetarian foods are kosher; in fact, many vegetarians who do not keep kosher rely on kosher certifications to make sure that the foods they buy are vegetarian! Beans, grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products can all be eaten and in any combination, and do not require kosher certification if they are not processed. If they are processed, you should seek reliable [kosher certification](#) to make sure that they weren't prepared on the same equipment as non-kosher food and that they don't have any hidden non-kosher ingredients.

It is traditional to eat meat to celebrate on Shabbat and festivals, but it is not a requirement. There is no holiday or observance for which it is a [mitzvah](#) (commandment) to eat meat, and most symbolic foods eaten for holidays are not meat. In fact, on [Shavu'ot](#), it is traditional to eat dairy meals (which could not be eaten with meat). Meat is a traditional part of Shabbat and festival meals to make them more festive, but as long as you eat something special, something out of the ordinary, that should be sufficient to create the necessary festive atmosphere.

The one area that may cause concern for vegetarians is the use of animal parts for ritual purposes. The [Torah](#) is written on parchment (animal skins), as are the scrolls in [amezuzah](#) and the [tefillin](#). The tefillin are made of leather. The shofar blown at [Rosh Hashanah](#) is a ram's horn. Jewish law requires all of this. What is a religiously observant vegetarian to do? The Jewish vegetarian website [JewishVeg](#) points out that only a very small number of animals are used for this purpose, and also notes that Jewish law allows us to make these ritual items using animals that died of natural causes (though no one is currently advertising that they are doing so -- an overlooked business opportunity?) Also keep in mind: the animal products currently used are merely a byproduct of the vastly larger meat industry. If there comes a time when the meat industry does not provide sufficient byproducts, you may find more Jewish ritual objects made from animals that died of natural causes.

Spirituality and ecology in judaism

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/255515/Jewish/Ecology-and-Spirituality-in-Jewish-Tradition.htm

Ecology is a highly practical branch of science. Nothing could be more "down to earth" than preservation of the planet. Yet there is a facet of ecological awareness that is often overlooked. This is its spiritual dimension. When we act as self-absorbed individuals, with little regard for anyone or anything that exists outside ourselves, we immediately fall into moral and spiritual error. As the Yiddish saying goes, "A blind horse heads straight for the pit!"

Thus, countless laws in the Torah adjure us to open our eyes and act responsibly and compassionately toward the world around us. Among other ecological mandates, it promulgates the laws of *bal tashchit* (neither to destroy wantonly, nor waste resources unnecessarily); the prohibition of cutting down fruit trees surrounding an enemy city in wartime; the laws of covering excrement, and removing debris from public places; and so forth. In doing so, the Torah indicates that although we may feel at odds with nature, having to struggle to survive, in truth the world comprises a potentially harmonious whole, in which each element is precious.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865–1935), Ashkenazic chief rabbi of pre-state Israel and a leading 20th-century thinker, expresses this idea compellingly: "If you are amazed at how it is possible to speak, hear, smell, touch, see, understand and feel—tell your soul that all living things collectively confer upon you the fullness of your experience. Not the least speck of

existence is superfluous; everything is needed, and everything serves its purpose. ‘You’ are present within everything that is beneath you, and your being is bound up with all that transcends you.”¹

A spiritually attuned person will recognize that every creature is essentially bound up with every other creature, and that we share a collective destiny. Thus, our most fundamental attitude should be one of compassion, not acquisitiveness or aggression. This ethic applies toward all levels of creation. As master Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Cordovero of Safed (“RaMaK,” 1522–1570) adjures: “One’s compassion should extend to all creatures, and one should neither despise nor destroy them; for the Supernal Wisdom [i.e., the divine wisdom that brings all existence into being] extends to all of creation—the “silent” or mineral level, plants, animals and humans. This is why our sages have warned us against treating food disrespectfully. Just as the Supernal Wisdom despises nothing, since everything is produced there—as it is written, ‘You have formed them all with wisdom’ ([Psalms 104:24](#))—a person should show compassion to all of the works of the Holy One, blessed be He.”²

RaMaK’s words bespeak a Gd-centered view of the universe, as opposed to one that is man-centered or nature-centered. In the words of the Baal Shem Tov (Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, founder of Chassidism, 1698–1760), we must seek the welfare of all precisely because we are equally Gd’s works, created to perform His will.

“Do not consider yourself superior to anyone else,” the founder of Chassidism states. “In truth, you are no different than any other creature, since all things were brought into being to serve Gd. Just as Gd bestows consciousness upon you, He bestows consciousness upon your fellow man. In what way is a human being superior to a worm? A worm serves the Creator with all of his intelligence and ability; and man, too, is compared to a worm, as the verse states, ‘I am a worm and not a man’ ([Psalms 22:7](#)). If Gd had not given you a human intellect, you would be able to serve Him only like a worm. In this sense, you are both equal in the eyes of Heaven. A person should consider himself, the worm and all creatures as friends in the universe, for we are all created beings whose abilities are Gd-given.”³

This kinship of all creation and shared mission of serving Gd, each creature in its own way, is often compared to a cosmic song. As we recite during the Sabbath prayers, “The soul of every living being shall bless Your Name . . . All hearts shall revere You, and every innermost part shall sing to Your Name.” Indeed, when the Talmud describes the mysteries of the *maaseh merkavah* (“workings of the [divine] chariot,” i.e., the mystical experience), it associates this prophetic wisdom with song. The sages relate how Rabbi Elazar ben Arach demonstrated his preparedness to engage in the study of these mysteries before his teacher, Rabbi Yochanan, at which point the trees of the field were encompassed by heavenly fire and broke into song, echoing the verses of Psalm 148: “Praise Gd from the Earth, sea giants and all watery depths . . . mountains and hills, fruitful trees and all cedars . . . Praise Gd!”⁴

If we listen closely, this song still may be heard. Rabbi Aryeh Levin (the “Tzaddik of Jerusalem,” 1885–1969) told how he once was walking in the fields with his mentor, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook. In the course of their Torah discussion, Rabbi Levin picked a flower. At this, Rav Kook remarked, “All my days I have been careful never to pluck a blade of grass or a flower needlessly, when it had the ability to grow or blossom. You know the teaching of our sages that not a single blade of grass grows here on Earth that does not have an angel above it, commanding it to grow. Every sprout and leaf says something meaningful, every stone whispers some hidden message in the silence—every creation sings its song.”⁵

Wisdom (sophia) in the Jewish tradition

Aspect of wisdom of God, a wisdom who was present during the creation.

Wisdom plays an essential role in the Jewish tradition and spirituality (mystic branch).

The Egyptian and Hellenistic influence (the last three centuries before Christ) effected in biblical literature the integration of a new being: the presence of wisdom.

Wisdom is the original light of creation. Before all creation there was wisdom like a woman of God. She is united with the universe. She is looking to settle in the heart of every person. She is something like the mother of the universe, the female face of God.

There are a lot of images in the Old Testament. She is a deep secret. It is very difficult to enter their holy halls of knowledge. She is present in Zion. Their seat is on the mountain of Zion.

Compare for example: Jesus Sirach 24; Proverbs 8; Job 28;

Later a new expression was born in the Jewish tradition which also could symbolize the wisdom of God >

Shekinah (Gender: Feminine)

From the Hebrew word [שכינה](#) (*shekhinah*) which means "God's manifested glory"

or "God's presence". This word does not appear in the Bible, but later Jewish scholars used it to refer to the dwelling place of God, especially the Temple in Jerusalem.

In the story 'Gog and Magog' by Martin Buber – a Jewish philosopher – shekinah embodies all living beings.

She walks over the streets of the world. Only a few people recognize her presence. As a manifestation of wisdom she is saying: You cannot love me without loving all creatures. She is also manifesting the suffering of all creatures.

The story by Martin Buber also accentuates that God only wants to accomplish (heal) his creation with the help of man.

Christian tradition

Christians and Jews share the heritage of the Old Testament.

At first we have to note some central characters of the historical Christian self-understanding:

- 1) Original sin (Main theologians: Saint Paul; Augustine; Martin Luther > simul justus and peccatus > man is at the same time justified before God and a sinner;
- 2) Therefore Christian spirituality was mostly circling around the redemption of man so that the value and the goodness of creation – according to Genesis 1 – has been greatly neglected.
- 3) This 'fall of man/ redemption theology' determined according to Matthew Fox the theology and structure of hierarchy and the worship/liturgy of the Christian tradition. Human life was stressed by the 'either..or' of the way on earth. This psychological fixation has caused a lot of problems Christians have to be aware of.

Nevertheless the biblical tradition knows also a theology of the blessing which has to be discovered. For example the German theologian **Klaus Westermann** has tried to draw attention to this important heritage:

'The Blessing God and Creation'. In the discussion of the themes of creation and blessing we find some of the author's most creative and distinctive insights. His many works dealing with creation all indicate a desire to revitalize that theme for the Church: 'When the theology and the preaching of the Church are concerned only with

salvation, when God's dealing with man is limited to the forgiveness of sins or to justification, the necessary consequence is that it is only in this context that man has to deal with God and God with man. This means that God is not concerned with a worm being trodden to the earth or with the appearance of a new star in the Milky Way.'....

The book, **Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church**, treats that theme at length. The rediscovery of the blessing activity of God is a necessary supplement to a one-sided emphasis on the mighty acts of God. Blessing, says Westermann, 'is a quiet, continuous, flowing and unnoticed working of God which cannot be captured in moments or dates. Blessing is realized in a gradual process, as in the process of growing, maturing, and fading. It is not as if the Old Testament is reporting only a series of events which consists of the great acts of God; the intervals are also part of it; in them God gives growth and prosperity unnoticed in a quiet working, in which he lets children be born and grow up, in which he gives success in work.' (Source: Old Testament Theology for Ministry: The Works of Claus Westermann in English Translation JAMES LIMBURG/Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminaries, St. Paul, Minnesota In October of 1979)

Also the North American theologian Matthew Fox was deeply inspired by the thinking of Klaus Westermann.

Matthew Fox is surely the most prominent representative of a creation spirituality.

Fox's conception of Creation Spirituality draws on both a close reading of early and medieval mystics within Catholic traditions as well as ecstatic and spiritual practices from numerous other faiths around the world, in an approach Fox called "deep ecumenism" for its connections across many spiritual practices. This was described most particularly in his book *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faith*.

Creation Spirituality considers itself a "green" theology, emphasizing a holy relationship between man and nature. Accordingly, the protection of nature is considered a sacrament and an expression of God and a "Cosmic Christ". This approach was endorsed by eco-theologian [Thomas Berry](#) among others. Fox's book *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* delves more into these issues.

Fox also laid out other tenets of Creation Spirituality in some of his other books, particularly *Original Blessing* and *A Spirituality Named Compassion*. Fox's 1996 autobiography, *Confessions: The Making of a Post-Denominational Priest*, describes his life as a Dominican priest and his struggle with the Vatican as he wrote about his experiences and understanding of early Christianity. Fox also has authored or edited nearly 30 other books, largely on various spiritual teachings, teachers and mystics (listed below). He was the first to translate Meister Eckhart into English from the critical German editions along with a commentary on his work and helped to launch the Hildegard of Bingen revival. His book on the mysticism of Thomas Aquinas translates many of his works that have never before been translated into English, German or French. Fox's theological positions have been categorized as a type of [monism](#), specifically [panentheism](#).^[16]

What Is Creation Spirituality?

Honoring all of creation as Original Blessing, Creation Spirituality integrates the wisdom of Eastern and Western spirituality and global indigenous cultures with the emerging scientific understanding of the universe, and the passion of creativity. It is both a tradition and a movement, celebrated by mystics and agents of social change from every age and culture. It is also the tradition of the historical Jesus himself since it is the [wisdom tradition](#) of Israel. Matthew Fox

Principles of a creation spirituality according to Matthew Fox

1. The universe is fundamentally a blessing.

Our relationship with the Universe fills us with awe.

2. In Creation, God is both immanent and transcendent. This is panentheism which is not theism (God out there) and not atheism (no God anywhere).

We experience that the Divine is in all things & all things are in the Divine.

3. God is as much Mother as Father, as much Child as Parent, as much God in mystery as the God in history, as much beyond all words and images as in all forms and beings.

We are liberated from the need to cling to God in one form or one literal name.

4. In our lives, it is through the work of spiritual practice that we find our deep and true selves.

Through the arts of meditation and silence we cultivate a clarity of mind and move beyond fear into compassion and community.

5. Our inner work can be understood as a four-fold journey involving:

- awe, delight, amazement (known as the *Via Positiva*)
- uncertainty, darkness, suffering, letting go (*Via Negativa*)
- birthing, creativity, passion (*Via Creativa*)

We weave through these paths like a spiral danced, not a ladder climbed.

6. Every one of us is a mystic.

*We can enter the mystical as much through beauty (*Via Positiva*) as through contemplation and suffering (*Via Negativa*). We are born full of wonder and can recover it at any age.*

7. Every one of us is an artist.

*Whatever the expression of our creativity, it is our prayer and praise (*Via Creativa*).*

8. Every one of us is a prophet.

*Our prophetic work is to interfere with all forms of injustice and that which interrupts authentic life (*Via Transformativa*).*

9. Diversity is the nature of the Universe.

We rejoice in and courageously honor the rich diversity within the Cosmos and expressed among individuals and across multiple cultures, religions and ancestral traditions.

10. The basic work of God is compassion and we, who are all original blessings and sons and daughters of the Divine, are called to compassion.

We acknowledge our shared interdependence; we rejoice at one another's joys and grieve at one another's sorrows and labor to heal the causes of those sorrows.

11. There are many wells of faith and knowledge drawing from one underground river of Divine wisdom. The practice of honoring, learning and celebrating the wisdom collected from these wells is Deep Ecumenism.

We respect and embrace the wisdom and oneness that arises from the diverse wells of all the sacred traditions of the world.

12. Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth.

Ecology is the local expression of cosmology and so we commit to live in light of this value: to pass on the beauty and health of Creation to future generations.

Creation Spirituality derives from the oldest tradition in the Bible (the J source) and it is the **Wisdom Tradition** in the Hebrew Bible—the tradition that scholars agree was the tradition of the historical Jesus. Thus creation spirituality brings together the root sources of Christian spirituality (along with other world traditions), those being

- 1) the historical Jesus and
- 2) the Cosmic Christ. These represent the prophetic and the mystical roots of Christianity.

References: Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1983), 12-16.

Representatives of a creation spirituality can be found in history:

Hildegard of Bingen; Saint Francis; Thomas Aquinas (he has integrated the cosmological thinking of Aristotle); Albertus Magnus; later Teilhard de Chardin (theologian and anthropologist) reconciled the concept of evolution with Christian theology.

Gospel of the kingdom of God (heaven)

The main message of Jesus consists in

the announcement of the kingdom of God and
the invitation to change one's ways (Metanoia: Living in a new kind of mind)!
Marc 1,15; Matthew 4,17;

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,
15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." *Mark 1,15*

- 1) Central message of Jesus/ You can't find this message in the Jewish tradition.
- 2) According to the historical-critical analysis of the New Testament, experts agree with the observation that the message of the kingdom of God belongs to the 'ipsissima verba' (the real words) of Jesus.
- 3) Saint Luke 17,20: Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."⁸
- 4) A new perspective on life! Matthew 6,25

Matthew 6,25..

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,

29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

At first, a human being has to cultivate his relationship to God (compare this understanding with the perspective of the hierarchy of desires of human beings according to the theory of Maslow).

The kingdom of God is an often discussed dimension in the message of Jesus.

Anyway it is also an expression for the presence of God in our life.

According to the gospel of Luke the kingdom of God is an inner reality in the heart of man.

For Jim Marion (his book: Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality) the dimension of the kingdom of God is the central core of the message of Jesus. Every human being is invited to realize the kingdom of God in his heart. That means that we are invited to reach the same consciousness as Jesus. Therefore the kingdom of God is more a totally new perspective in the perception of one self and the world.

The kingdom of heaven in this sense is another word for Christ consciousness:

A level of mind where one is aware of a deep unity with every being in the world. (The same as nirwana). Jim Marion is convinced that Jesus wanted to accelerate the evolution of human mind to the level of his own mind. For Jim Marion religion has one general task: To accelerate human evolution!

The role of the holy spirit:

There seems to be an essential connection between the reality of the kingdom of heaven as new cosmic consciousness and inspiration by the holy spirit, a new kind of presence in the life of Christians. According to Saint Paul the holy spirit is like a wind of change for human beings or like an evolutionary energy of God. The holy spirit is according to Luke and John (word: Paraklet) the most important gift of Jesus which enables a human being with a new inner dynamism to expand his mind.

Galatians 2,20

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Saint Paul describes his new kind of mind in his letter to the Galatians 2,20. His personal mind is now integrated in the quality of Christ consciousness as cosmic mind. The boundaries of his old mind are transcended.

Incarnation:

According to the mystical Christian tradition the incarnation of God is not only reserved to Jesus but also a continuous process which includes every man. In other terms: Incarnation is an inspired development of man in order to realize the capacity of universal love.

Saint Francis is an example of a man fulfilled with universal love who also embraces creation.

The salvation of man – in other terms: the evolution of man – is closely connected to the salvation of the total creation.

The letter to Romans /8,18-22

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

The new consciousness of a human being with his new way of life can't be separated from the destiny of earth.

Some last reflections:

The Christian spirituality is an evolutionary spirituality. For Saint Paul it is important to manifest the spirit of God in our daily life. Our vocation is to live as „spiritual warriors“.

Augustine: The life of a Christian is nothing more than the life of the holy spirit ('De spiritu et littera')

Sacraments (for example: Baptism; Eucharist; sacrament of marriage;..) in Christian tradition are like channels of the healing and inspiring power of God. Question: Why can't nature be a sacrament?

Islamic tradition

The majority of Muslims are not touched very deeply by the ecological aspect of the Islamic tradition. Of course in a lot of Islamic countries - especially the Arab world – we are witnesses of a difficult time of conflicts and transformation. Here other challenges predominate.

Nevertheless we can be aware of a growing eco-Islam-movement in the western world like Europe and North America caused by a different political and intellectual climate.

Pioneers of a growing eco-Islam

1) One of the fathers of eco-Islam is the Islamic philosopher **Seyyed Hossein Nasr**. He wrote a prophetic book: '**Man and nature: The spiritual crisis of modern man.**'

Description of his book: 'This seminal and provocative book from one of the world's leading Islamic thinkers was written long before 'ecology' became a fashionable word. It is a spiritual tour de force which explores the relationship between Man and Nature as found in Taoism, Hinduism; Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam; particularly its Sufi dimension. With deep insight and intuition, the author analyzes the ecological crisis of the twentieth century as symptomatic of a spiritual crisis. He stresses the importance of a greater

awareness of the origins of both Man and Nature as a means of righting the imbalance that exists in our deepest selves and in our environment.'

1) **Fazlun Khalid** (born [Columbo, Sri Lanka](#), 1932) is the Founder-Director of the [Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science](#) based in [Birmingham, England](#). He has served as director of training at the [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#) and as a consultant for the [World Wildlife Fund](#).

Some green aspects of Islamic theology:

- 1) God is the creator of the world
- 2) Every part of the creation reveals his presence and majesty.
- 3) So, if we are watching the world we are also encountering God.
- 4) **Ayat:** Traces/Footprints of God/ We are invited to appreciate and to learn from these signs of God in his creation/ Sura 13,3-5/Sura 2,22-23 At the beginning of Islamic history this concept caused the rise of Islamic civilisations – especially an open mind to explore the world with all its aspects-
- 5) The creation is good (perfect).
- 6) There is no concept of original sin.
- 7) Man is a Khalif, he is representing God and is allowed to dominate the creation, but with responsibility
- 8) The world belongs to God (owner) /Sure 7.55.

The basis of eco-Islam is the quran and the sunna (hadiths)

Human beings have an eminent role in the creation. Compared to animals they are owners of an understanding mind (brain).

Example of an old „ecological“ Islamic tradition: Planting a tree is much honoured in the Islamic world, the planter will receive a reward in eternity from every man or animal nourished by the tree.

Principles of eco-Islam:

1. Principle of Unity (*tauhid*) Sura 112:

- 1) against polytheism
- 2) against Trinity
- 3) unity with the creation: Everything manifests an aspect of God (Presence), everything has importance, we encounter God in every living being.

2. Principle of Fitra (Creation)

- 1) The original state of the creation
- 2) Of all things and every living being
- 3) Harmony between man and nature: This basic balance means at the same time the human obligation to protect it and to heal it in case of ruptures.

Fazlun Khalid argues that men in ancient times lived in a natural state of *fitra*. They respected unconsciously the natural borders of creation. By industrialization the effect of human action on nature has changed intensely. Now negative ecological actions can't be limited by nature any more. Man is now able to destroy nature.

3. Principle of khilafa (representative, deputy, governance)

- 1) God entrusted the earth to man

- 2) Man is not the owner, but a responsible trustee (Treuhänder)
- 3) important position in the hierarchy of creation
- 4) No submission of earth

4. Principle of Amana (responsibility)

- 1) Sura 33,72 > moral burden, according to the Quran God offered the khilafat to heaven, earth and mountains, but they refused it (denied). Only man had the courage to accept this offer.

5. Principle of ubudiyya (service as slave > abd' allah)

- 1) To restrict the power of man as caliph of God

6. Principle of mizan (balance, harmony)

- 1) Ecological balance
- 2) The middle way
- 3) Restoring the ecological balance

Other concepts:

Haram- , Hima-Zones > protection-zones (areas)
To protect watersources and rivers

Mystical traditon of Islam: Sufism

The mystical branch of the Islamic tradition stresses the harmony between man and cosmos.
 Some quotes from representatives:

Ibn Arabi (1165 – 1240)

*“My heart can take on any form:
 A meadow for gazelles,
 A cloister for monks,
 For the idols, sacred ground,
 Ka'ba for the circling pilgrim,
 The tables of the Torah,
 The scrolls of the Quran.*

*My creed is Love;
 Wherever its caravan turns along the way,
 That is my belief,
 My faith.”*

„None but God is loved in the existent things. It is He who is manifest within every beloved to the eye of every lover – and there is nothing in the existent realm that is not a lover”

Rumi (1207 – 1273)

„A stone I died and rose again a plant; A plant I died and rose an animal; I died an animal and was born a man. Why should I fear? What have I lost by death?”

Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882 – 1927)

'When we pay attention to nature's music, we find that everything on the Earth contributes to its harmony.'

'Divine sound is the cause of all manifestation. The knower of the mystery of sound knows the mystery of the whole universe.'

Solution according to Islamic eco-ethic:

Reanimation of spirituality and faith

Against consumption without limits

A religious approach to ecological crisis can help mankind to change its mind.

Short conclusion

The ecological crisis is not a technical problem. Mankind has enough knowhow to solve the problems. The human mind is the real obstacle.

Therefore it was necessary to explain in the previous texts also the evolutionary character of religions. Especially the mystic tradition as an expression of evolutionary spirituality is a very important heritage of religion which can be further developed.

According to Ken Wilber **spiritual intelligence will rescue the world.**

In my opinion spiritual intelligence is the essential treasure of religions. Spiritual intelligence means not only the inner sense for the evolution of our mind but also at the same time the capacity to appreciate every aspect and being of our life and the world (integral worldview). According to the deepest intuitions of religion harmony does already exist in the universe. But nevertheless human beings have to realize this reality every day in their lives as people who also are able to forget the balance of the world.

Explorers of human consciousness like Richard Bucke (1837 – 1902), Sri Aurobindo (1872– 1950) and Jean Gebser (1905 – 1973) are convinced, that the next step of the conscious evolution of mankind consists in reaching cosmic consciousness in order to solve our current global problems.

From this point of view religions are spaceships of the homo sapiens with two central orders:

- 1) Evolve (discover your unity with God and the world)
- 2) Protect the harmony!

Religions can be considered as type-specific phenomena of evolution in order to protect the dynamic balance in nature. The main target is the whole (of the universe) and not only the welfare of man.

Religions are really ecological sleeping giants which have to be awakened.

Ingo Hanke

