

**The Love-Hate Relationship of Religion in  
Environmentalism**

Exam Question #1

*SUM4014: Environmental Philosophy and Ethics*

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*Missa Gaia: This is My Body* (1988), Judith Anderson

The notion of religion being used in environmentalism is a complex idea with deep roots in history, with serious implications in regards to the future of the Planet. The terms *environmentalism* and *religion* can be confusing and possibly misinterpreted if they are not defined for the purposes of this essay. The term *environmentalism* will refer to a generally non-anthropocentric ideal of natural concerns for the planet and ecosystems, in which these specific concerns supersedes all other concerns (this term may be used in conjunction with the term *environmental movement*). The term religion will refer to organized religions that have existed in human history, with a special focus on the Judeo-Christian subset (although other religions outside of this subset will be explored).

The launching pad for this essay will be to explore Tarjei Rønnow's two arguments that environmentalists often evoke religion in making their claims, and that the environmental movement is embedded in religious views. Using Rønnow's reasoning behind these two arguments, two of Holms Rolston's articles dealing with environmental ethical issues will be dissected to discover his abundant use of religious connotations in making his arguments, as well as his logic behind using these connotations. Other philosophical references will also be employed to bolster the argument that a unique use of religion is used in environmentalism at this elevated philosophical level.

While it is important to study these arguments and issues on a philosophical and ethical level, it is even more important to see if these ideals are evident in present "everyday life", and practical circumstances (while also looking back in history). The practical evidence will point to the conclusion that religion is generally not accepted in modern mainstream environmentalism (although current radical environmentalism has more obvious religious tendencies). Explanations for the current disconnect between religion and environmentalism will include looking into history as well as the future while exploring the topics of paganism, anthropology, capitalism, democracy, change, and ultimately...human nature. Only after this deep and exciting exploration can the question of *whether environmentalists evoke religion in making their claims* be answered.

#### Tarjei Rønnow: *Analyzing Religious Similarities in Environmentalism (Theoretical Level)*

During Tarjei Rønnow's lecture, he began his argument that religious notions can be found in environmentalism by discussing the Religious Environmental Paradigm. This paradigm states that environmental questions are indeed in religions, and that environmental problems are not only economic, political, and technical, but also spiritual and religious. Rønnow also confides in the notion of Ecotheology, which acknowledges that environmental questions and principles are found in religions, but these principles need to be brought more into the forefront of religious teachings. He further states that many modern popular figures (Al Gore, the Pope, Gro Harlem Brundtland) have publicly recognized religious and spiritual connotations are evident in environmental matters. (Rønnow, 2004)

Only after understanding these roots of environmentalism in religion, can the notion of religion in environmentalism be explored. Rønnow began his argument on this matter by simply listing similarities of various components of environmentalism to religious values and concepts. Rønnow states that above all, environmentalists see nature as a point of origin, with order, meaning, and values that defines reality (a statement that carries obvious religious notions). Rønnow explains that

environmentalism is at times seen as a religious awakening; and that the movement over the past few decades has migrated from a sect organization, to more of a religion-type structure (political to cultural). He also indicated that there are similarities between religion and environmentalism within the symbolism of evil (physical:pollution, sin:environmental problems, guilt:moral responsibility). With these similarities stated, Rønnow discussed the principles of Ecotheology, stressing that a stronger relationship is desired between religion and reality. One example of this move towards reality is that environmentalism has recently been treated as repentance for past and current disregard of nature, including our place in nature...humans feel unclean, and must wash away the guilt. This exemplifies that there is indeed a disconnect, and humans feel some remorse for that relationship. When asked how this phenomenon is reversed, Rønnow explained that nature and god<sup>1</sup> must become one! This radical and surprising statement will be revisited in the conclusion of this essay. (Rønnow, 2004)

Although Rønnow's stated similarities between environmentalism and religion are evident, he fundamentally remained on the theoretical level with these comparisons, giving few practical examples. It may be easy to find religious references, connotations, and meaning in environmentalism as well as many other subject areas (Marketing, IT, Health Services, Education, etc.). While this may be the case, Rønnow was only *analyzing* this particular subject and setting the overall stage for this essay with the underlying theme that environmentalism is embedded in religious views, and that environmentalists use religion in making their arguments. And, his concluding remarks and Ecotheological views will be supportive in the conclusion of this essay.

Through understanding Rønnow's analysis of these similarities we can now move to examine Holmes Rolston. With Rolston, we find concrete evidence of religion being creatively *used* in environmentalism at the philosophical/ethical level. Interestingly, it will be shown that Rolston uses his religious arguments in environmental ethics to reflect upon religion itself, and highlight human's misuse of religions native intentions. Rolston effectively puts into ethical action the notions that Rønnow has listed and argued.

#### Holmes Rolston: *Using Religious References and Claims in Environmentalism (Philosophical Level)*

Holmes Rolston is a religious man, but above that, he is a strong environmental philosopher that tends to stay in the bounds of reality. His writings are perfect examples to analyze in support of Rønnow's arguments. Two of Holmes Rolston's articles have been selected and investigated in regards to these specific arguments. The first article, *Value in Nature and the Nature of Value* demonstrates the abundance of value at different levels of the environmental; and the second article, *Feeding People versus Saving Nature* argues that environmental issues supersede all other issues.

In *Value in Nature and the Nature of Value*, Rolston argues that value is found at all levels of the environment: humans, animals, organisms, species, ecosystems, Earth, and nature. Surprisingly throughout this demonstration, Rolston does not directly evoke religion in formulating his arguments; there is only one *direct* reference to god or religion, "Earth could be the ultimate object of duty, short of God, if God exists" (Light and Rolston, 2003:151). Even here where he is arguing that Earth<sup>2</sup> is above everything else, it is unclear whether he is directly using religion to support his claim, because he is

essentially questioning god's existence, and placing god under Earth. However, there are numerous slightly hidden religious references and religious meanings in his environmental arguments.

As Rolston argues for increased value towards ecosystems, and that humans should think less organismically, and more systemically, he states that "An ecosystem generates a spontaneous order that envelops and produces the richness, beauty, integrity and dynamic stability of the component parts" (Light and Rolston, 2003:149). The idea of an ecosystem generating order, and producing stability, is parallel to religious beliefs of order and origin of life. He continues with this theme by stating in the same chapter, "The ecosystem is the depth source of individual and species alike" (Light and Rolston, 2003:149). Again, he is referring that ecosystems have an origin and are a creator. He further argues that ecology is needed for understanding life, "We need ecology to discover what biotic community means as an organizational mode. Then we can reflect philosophically to discover the values there" (Light and Rolston, 2003:148). Only after this [religious] understanding, can humans discover its true values.

Rolston is infatuated with the idea of values in this article because of the deep roots that values have in ethics and philosophy, which in turn is rooted in the religious principles of moral responsibility. "The system [ecosystem] is a kind of field with characteristics as vital for life as any property contained within particular organisms. The equilibrating ecosystem is not merely push-pull forces. It is an equilibrating of values" (Light and Rolston, 2003:149). To conclude that an ecosystem is a balance of values is in itself placing a very high, almost divine, value upon it.

Rolston makes his most religious quote of the article when he states, "Earth is all dirt, we humans too arise up from the humus, and we find revealed what dirt can do when it is self-organizing under suitable conditions. This is pretty spectacular dirt. Really the story is little short of a series of 'miracles', wondrous, fortuitous events, unfolding of potential; and when Earth's most complex product, *Homo sapiens*, becomes intelligent enough to reflect over this cosmic wonderland, everyone is left stuttering about the mixtures of accident and necessity out of which we have evolved" (Light and Rolston, 2003:151). Rolston's own story of human creation from dirt [Earth] implies that humans don't necessarily understand or respect their creator [Earth], and once humans do eventually realize their creator, they will value life, and in turn should value the creator.

As Rolston concludes the article he becomes somewhat perturbed as he indulges in the dark subjects of evil, tragedy, and a dreadful destiny..."there is something subjective, something philosophically naive, and even something hazardous in a tie of ecological crisis, about living in a reference frame where one species takes itself as absolute and values everything else in nature relative to its potential to produce value for itself. Such philosophers live in an unexamined world, and in result, they and those they guide live unworthy lives, because they cannot see their valuable world" (Light and Rolston, 2003:152). Rolston wanders into the religious extreme in this values argument, as he refers to a judgement day (and essentially hell) for the ecological unworthy. One could almost miss this striking religious reference, as the devilish connotation is just barely hidden under Rolston's eloquent writing style.

In addition to Rolston supporting Rønnow's two arguments, Rolston also directly incorporates the ideas of origin, order, values, and evil; which are religious-environmental similarities Rønnow also

directly discussed. In addition, Rolston refers to a “dooms-day” type prediction, which Rønnow commented was common among the environmental movement, reflecting a religious end of the world vision. As a final revelation, Rolston even mirrors Rønnow’s liberal religious-environmental thought that Earth/nature can be, or become, god!

In *Feeding People versus Saving Nature*, unlike the previous article, Rolston uses more direct religious references in making his environmental claims, and there are obvious embedded religious views throughout the entire article. Throughout this potentially controversially article, Rolston discusses the compromises humans make in daily life as he argues the importance of placing nature above humans. Within this argument he quotes the Ten Commandments and the Bible to prove that religion has references to placing nature before humans, while also continuing with refreshing negative and pessimistic views towards humanity.

There are many instances in the article where Rolston uses religion against his own argument, such as this quote from the Bible referring to the needs (specifically food) of people above everything else, “Jesus teaches his disciples to pray that this will of God be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ (Matthew 5.11). These are such basic values, if there is to be any ethics at all, surely food comes first” (Light and Rolston, 2003:452). But in all of these instances where he uses religion against his own main argument, Rolston then remarkably refutes the people first argument by again turning to scripture, “If giving others their daily bread were always the first concern, the Christians would never have built an organ or a sanctuary with a stained glass window, but rather always given all to the poor” (Light and Rolston, 2003:452). Although Rolston’s arguments are strong as he manages this unique debating style, it can leave the reader confused whether religion actually supports people first, or nature first. But, this argument style goes above and beyond supporting Rønnow’s claims, because Rolston is using religion to argue against, but ultimately for, his environmental claims.

Rolston proposes the rhetorical question, “Humans win? Nature loses? After analysis, sometimes it turns out that humans are not really winning, if they are sacrificing the nature that is their life support system” (Light and Rolston, 2003:451). This exemplifies the irony of the present case that humans are sacrificing their life’s blood (Earth); here Rolston introduces, and continually uses in the article, the religious notion of sacrifice. Similar to the previous article, Rolston again refers to a tragic judgement day for humans, “But when we come to our senses, we realize that this kind of winning, if it keeps on escalating, is really losing. Humans will lose, and nature will be destroyed as well. Cultures have become consumptive, with ever-escalating insatiable desires...” (Light and Rolston, 2003:457). Not only is he using the religious tragic argument here, but he is also again becoming upset and pessimistic towards the human species, underlining his broad argument that nature is more valuable, worthy, and pure than humans.

As Rolston concludes the essay, he again revisits his religious point that humans are sacrificing nature, as he is simultaneously quoting scripture, “There is something ungodly about an ethic by which the late-coming Homo sapiens arrogantly regards the welfare of one’s own species as absolute, with the welfare of all the other five million species sacrificed to that. The commandment not to kill is as old as Cain and Abel, but the most archaic commandment of all is the divine, ‘Let the earth

bring forth' (Genesis 1)" (Light and Rolston, 2003:461). Rolston blatantly states that because of human's maltreatment towards nature, they are living by an ungodly ethic! Again, he is touching on the extreme, and basically condemning humans to hell because of their sacrilege.

As in the previous article, Rolston again supports Rønnow's two arguments, as well as incorporating the ideas of origin, sacrifice, values, and evil; which are identical to the religious-environmental similarities Rønnow discussed. Rolston again refers to a dooms-day and judgment day for humans because of the current ecological destruction. But brilliantly Rolston is commenting that humans have strayed from religions original intentions of respect for nature, and are on the brink of irreverence toward their religion, but of course humans are arrogant and do not even realize this blasphemy. This point touches on the origins of human instinct and its role in the disconnect between religion and environmentalism.

These two essays have demonstrated that Rolston rather obviously, while also at times more passively, uses religious claims and has religious views strongly embedded in his environmental arguments. His religious claims are creative and unique in the sense that his arguments are ultimately criticizing religion itself, or more specifically, commenting on human's misinterpretation of religions original intent. In addition, it shows that Rolston values Earth more than the human species, and acknowledges a disconnect between religion and environmentalism, while going as far to say that Earth can be synonymous with god. He even touches on the potential absolute root of this evil, which is human nature itself. But, do other environmental philosophers use the same religious approach when arguing environmental issues?

#### Analyzing Other Philosophers Use of Religion in Environmentalism (Philosophical Level)

Other philosophers and environmental ethics authors use similar embedded religious methods as Rolston in making their environmental arguments and claims. This is evident with other authors of the *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology* text. A sample of these authors will be taken to show that religion is being used in arguments encompassing an assortment of environmental topics.

In an ecofeminist article by Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, the authors discuss that the onset of patriarchal religion can be seen as origin of separation from nature. That one point in time, the goddess religions, the earth, and women's fertility were seen as sacred. "They date the origin of the oppression of nature back to 4500b.c., well before the scientific revolution, when the shift from goddess-worshiping cultures to male deities began" (Light and Rolston, 2003:278). Gaard and Gruen further argue that this occurred because of a shift to hunting and worshiping the domination of animals, and in this scenario women were removed, thus inferior, and eventually suppressed with nature and animals. (Light and Rolston, 2003:278)

In a wilderness preservation article by Michael P. Nelson, he discusses *The Cathedral Argument* which declares that nature is spiritual, and a place to feel harmony with creation. "For some, wild places represent and reflect the various spiritual and religious values that they hold dear. To go one step further, some even claim that since designated wilderness areas are the closest thing we have on earth to the original work of God, to destroy them would be tantamount to the destruction of God's handiwork, forever altering God's original intent" (Light and Rolston, 2003:420). Nelson is

placing nature directly under god, where humans then fall below, this is not as extreme as Rolston placing nature on god's level, but it is again a major example of religion being used and incorporated into an environmental argument. Nelson further quotes John Muir, "John Muir believed that the closer one was to nature, the closer one was to God. To Muir, 'wilderness' was the highest manifestation of nature and so was a 'window opening into heaven, a mirror reflecting the Creator,' and all parts of it were seen as 'sparks of the Divine Soul'" (Light and Rolston, 2003:420). Muir was one of those obscure ecological geniuses' that only occasionally surface. He is like many previous geniuses in history that have attempted to reunite religion and nature. This idea will be examined later as the idea of change, including St. Francis of Assisi is discussed.

Even Arne Næss, despite his underlying principles to please all, uses religion in an argument implying that Christianity has shortcomings in its respect to environmentalism, and in comparison to Buddhism. "The history of Buddhist thought and practice, especially the principles of non-violence, non-injury, and reverence for life, sometimes makes it easier for Buddhists to understand and appreciate deep ecology than it is for Christians, despite a (sometimes overlooked) blessedness which Jesus recommended in peace-making" (Light and Rolston, 2003:271). In regards to Arne Næss's style, this is a colossal attack against Christianity, where he is essentially commenting that Christians are overlooking Jesus' will, and have difficulties grasping an environmental belief like deep ecology.

A majority of philosophers and ethical debaters may always have some level of minute religious reference in their arguments and claims because the roots of philosophy and ethics lay under, and are essential embedded in theology. In other words, they will always be debating values, morals, and responsibilities, which have direct religious significance, thus they will at times turn to religion to support their arguments. In that respect, and on this philosophical level, Rønnow's arguments that environmentalists sometimes employ a more obvious use of religion in their claims, are difficult to refute. However, he was basically referring to the *environmental movement*, which is more on the practical, grass-roots level, and at times somewhat far removed from the philosophical level. To transition to the practical level, radical environmentalism will first be discussed, where there are obvious traces of religious connotations, but traditional religion is despised, and not used in claims.

#### Radical Environmentalism: Ancient Religious Tendencies in Environmentalism (Radical Level)

The most prominent radical environmentalist group is Earth First!; there are few, if no other groups that can compare to their environmental radicalism. Interest groups such as GreenPeace normally confines themselves within the political and social structure thus will be considered at the *practical level* for the purposes of this essay. Most Earth First!ers will claim they disregard religion, and do not practice a particular religion. They see organized religion as an obstacle to their goals and beliefs in natural dominion (Foltz, 2002:449). However, Rønnow would view Earth First! as a sect or cult with extreme values and a sense of sacredness in nature, being overall extremely religious in nature. In actuality, Earth First! beliefs can be traced back to diverse religions such as Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Paganism in the way they tend to worship nature (Foltz, 2002:449). Rønnow would also predict that their beliefs have obvious religious tones in their claims to protect nature, although these tones do not necessarily reflect any of the beliefs of modern conventional religions.

Bron Taylor explains this point through his experiences of following the Earth First! Movement, as a Pagan Earth Firstler proclaims, “Gnomes and elves, fauns and faeries, goblins and orges, trolls and bogies...[today must infiltrate our world to] effect change from the inside...[These nature-spirits are] running around in human bodies, ...working in co-ops,...spiking trees and blowing up tractors,...starting revolutions,...[and] making up religions” (Foltz, 2003:449). This demonstrates that Earth First! is highly spiritual and religious in its organization and its claims, but embraces the less conventional and ancient religion of Paganism. But does this count as using religion in its claims? No, it does not necessarily count because many will contend that Paganism is not a religion, but more importantly, because the Judeo-Christian beliefs eradicated Paganistic beliefs thousands of years ago. So, if our main modern religions destroyed paganism because of its contradicting beliefs, then using Paganistic beliefs can not technically be considered religious in modern terms. This interesting point will be explored further in this essay as the history of environmental disconnectedness from religion is discussed. So if radical environmentalism has quasi religious roots, and technically does not use religion in its claims, where does practical mainstream environmentalism stand?

#### Mainstream Environmentalism: Against the use of Religion in Environmentalism (Practical Level)

In order to explore whether mainstream environmentalism is embedded in religious views and uses religious claims, the two following environmental sectors will be analyzed: interest groups, and environmental management (public and private). There are not many texts or articles available to substantiate this practical specific topic, for example, the text *Religion in the Environment*, has a single 4 page chapter dedicated to this topic, but it is riddled with irrelevant examples and weak arguments. (Tanner and Mitchell, 2003:204-208). So my own personal experience working in each of these environmental professions will be analyzed for any indications of religious references and claims.

A prime example of an interest group working for environmental issues is the United States Fund for Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG), (personal experience, 1997). The purpose of this group was to lobby policymakers to support environmental initiatives that protected a citizen's right to a clean environment. Although, most of the issues were primarily environmental health related, nature issues were employed to arouse people's interest and emotions. The structure of this environmental group matched some of Rønnow's arguments in the sense that this group could be compared to a sect, and its beliefs and workers alike vigilantly worshiped nature and treated is as sacred; in addition, the group prescribed to the “dooms day” argument to scare the public into submission. But, in none of their literature, discussions, or arguments were there references to religion or god. Similar to Earth First!, religion was not appreciated, and seen as a conservative, anti-environmental ideal. USPIRG did not evoke direct or hidden religious references when making their claims.

The environmental management sector (including policy and planning) constitutes a large part of the overall global environmental movement. An example of an organization in this sector is the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Watershed Management Division (MCDEP-WMD), (personal experience, 1996-2003). This local government agency in the U.S. was responsible for monitoring and managing the fresh water streams and rivers in the County. Rønnow could probably find little, or no religious ideas embedded in this organization. The sciences of biology and engineering monopolized the thinking and policies generated within the department. Like

USPIRG, all literature, discussions, and policies definitely contained no references to religion or god, as all claims and arguments were scientifically cause-effect related. In fact, to mention religion was actually somewhat taboo. Being an American government agency established in a diverse suburb of Washington, DC, the culture of secularism dominated the area. The same situation was evident in the private sector. For 4 months I worked for an environmental consulting firm, called BioHabitats, which specializes in monitoring and restoring ecological systems. Like the public sector, religion was not evoked when making arguments and claims, exemplifying the strong disconnect at the practical level (personal experience, 1996-2003).

From my experience, it can be concluded that practical environmentalism does not use religion in its claims. But why exactly do they not use this tool? It may not be a question that they simply do not use the tool, but that they can not use this tool...because of the nature of modern religion and its current disconnect with the environment. To explore this dynamic relationship we must follow history to the point that these two prominent matters became disconnected.

#### Historical Reasons for the Disconnect Between Religion and Environmentalism

In order to locate a time in history where environmentalism and religion were connected and essentially one, the best example is to look back in history, long before Christ. During a particular period humans were primarily food *gatherers*, worshipping nature and animals around them (Paganism). This can be attributed to the fact that nature (animals and the environment) controlled and dominated humans during this period, so it was only righteous to respect and worship ones creator and overseer. The Pagan religion also included women as sacred because of their physical nature of bearing and creating new humans. As technology developed, early humans began using tools and producing weapons to hunt, while also gathering. But soon, hunting became the most effective manner for producing large quantities of food, and surpassed gathering as a viable survival tool. Humans emerged into successful *hunters*. With this stunning innovation, nature and animals were no longer controlling humans, humans fully dominated them. This profound switch in human development and move towards androcentricism disconnected humans from worshipping nature and women, because now men hunted and dominated their surroundings. (Light and Rolston, 2003:278)(White, 1974:6-8) (Rockefeller and Elder, 1992:45) Paganism still survived in pockets of human societies, until Christianity (viewing Paganistic beliefs as a threat) labeled Paganism as an ancient respect for the devil (nature). Lynne White illustrates this episode perfectly when he notes, "The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture...By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (White, 1974:6-7). With the innovation of hunting, including Christianity crushing Paganism, religion and nature have eternally been disconnected. This can be an explanation for why environmentalists can not use religion in their claims, because religion itself is the reason for human's general disrespect and domination of the Earth and nature.

This domination and disconnect from nature has continued through modern times, with religion and the environment moving farther apart over time (see Figure 1)<sup>4</sup>. Religion can be viewed as a reason for this major disconnect, but what were religion's intentions for this move? The social, political, and economical ramifications of capitalism can be seen as an answer, including its

domination of human societies for more than a thousand years. Capitalism depends on domination of the Earth to survive; this can be defined as the polar opposite of Paganism. But isn't capitalistic treatment of nature put in check through democracies? Similar to the point that religions' roots in environmental thought have been forgotten, the democratic principles of democracies have also been ignored. J. Ronald Engel contends that our current environmental crisis is a crisis of citizenship, and misuse of democracy, "Beneath the crisis in the prevailing understanding of liberal democracy as a philosophy of citizenship adequate to the ecological crisis, there is a deeper crisis, the crisis among us, the people. It is our failure to fulfill the revolutionary promise of liberal democracy in the modern world" (Rockefeller and Elder, 1992:73). So, capitalism is not really to fault, but our lack of initiative in the world's democracies; humans are not revolting against the prevailing natural atrocities. But this is essentially not democracies fault. Religion, capitalism, and democracy are not to blame, humans are complacent and comfortable with this disconnect. (Cooper and Palmer, 1998:131) Humans themselves are to blame, and their natural animal instinct of survivability (which includes domination).

The checks that humans have established (religion to provide morals, democracy to allow revolts), were created to prevent a situation like our current ecological crisis, and these checks have failed because humans have reverted to their natural instincts of domination to survive. Humans have technically been able to slowly accomplish this over time by purposely misinterpreting and straying from the original meanings of religions (and governments) that humans have intentionally established to control themselves.

#### Role of Religion in Reversing Human Nature: TMC

It has been shown that human nature can be seen as the primary reason behind the disconnect between the environment and religion, and why the current environmental movement can not use religion in its arguments. Although Christianity can be seen as a minor contributor to the current disconnect, there are also many positive environmental messages in all religions. In fact, as stated previously, religions are basically a set of moral guidelines to live ones life in tune with ones neighbors and surroundings. Although they are wholly anthropocentric in context, most religions have a deep respect for the Earth, and state this respect in their writings because there is a realization where humans have gone wrong in the past. It is only that humans have strayed from, misinterpreted, and ignored these natural messages that has produced this disconnect, it is not religion itself.

Religion can be seen as the golden vehicle with the most potential to re-connect its own separation from nature. This is the entire premise of Rønnow's belief in Ecotheology. Religion itself has the power to reign in the human domination instinct, and correctly interpret and re-educate its original message of humans' connection with nature. This major paradigm shift, or The Massive Change<sup>3</sup> (TMC), will take a religious revolution, or the emergence of powerful prophets (See Figure 1). These prophets and geniuses have emerged in the past, and devoted their life exactly to this topic. One such example is St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was a religiously devoted man that dedicated his life to a religious connection with nature, using Christianity as his instrument. (White, 1974:10) St. Francis is proof that humans can approach TMC through religions paths.

### Conclusion: Why Environmentalists Do NOT Evoke Religion in Making Their Claims

Religion is embedded in environmentalism when analyzed at the philosophical level, and many philosophers use religion or religious references in making their environmental claims. But they are ironically also making claims that religion and the environment are grossly detached, as they are using religion in their argumentation. These lines can become blurry because philosophy and ethics are fundamentally offshoots of theology. But if analyzed deeper, it can be seen that philosophy acknowledges and recognizes the disconnect between religion and nature, and gives warning and guidance towards the negative implications of this divorce. Philosophy is picking up where religion is faltering in assigning values and morals towards nature and Earth. It will take philosophies help to jump start religion in its migration towards TMC.

Radical environmentalism has embedded religious beliefs, but these beliefs are ancient and not representative of contemporary practiced religion, thus technically they do not use religious claims in their individual environmental movement. This form of activism does have a purpose in reestablishing the connection between religion and the environment; the fact that this group can effectively revolt and rebel against religion, capitalism, and democracy gives credit and value to their abilities to make change.

Practical environmentalism fully disenfranchises itself from all religious connotations, beliefs, and claims. They rely solely on science and biology, two subjects that have contradicted religions for centuries. Any similarities between this modern sector and religion would be totally coincidental because they have been on divergent paths since the innovation of hunting and dissolution of paganism. But this sector struggles enormously at times and lacks significant power, and could only wish to be reunited with religion and share its influence. Like radical environmentalism, practical environmentalism is also important to keep nature and the Earth on the table as a subject of concern and value, allowing environmentalism not to slip away into eternity, thus leaving the possibility open that a future change can occur.

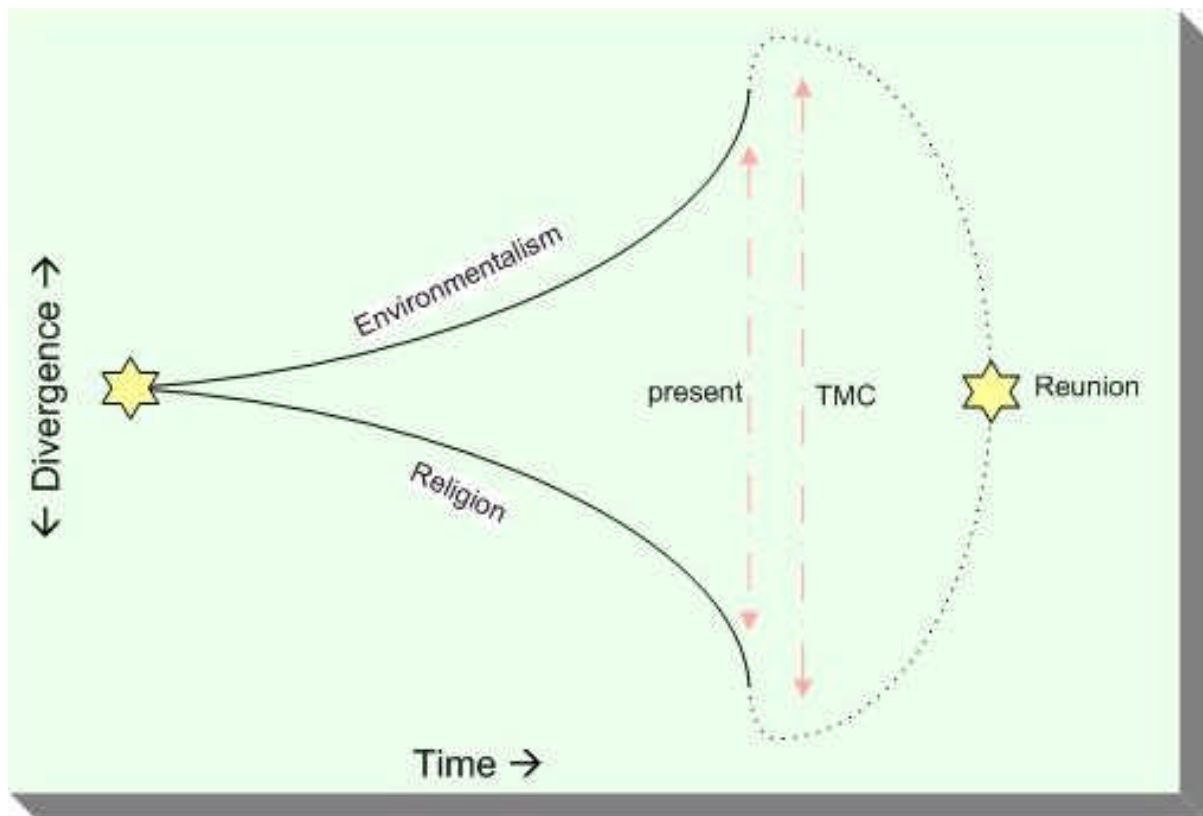
In conclusion, practical environmentalists do not evoke religion in making their claim. The disconnect runs too deep. The reasoning for this situation is because of the underlying principle that religion disregards its environmental roots, and environmentalism disregards its religious roots, which eventually results in an ecological crisis (and possibly a religious crisis as well). This unfortunate circumstance is accredited to an unchecked human natural instinct of domination and abuse. These instincts have been realigned and checked in the past, but it has been a long time since one of these occurrences; our current fail-safe precautions (government and religion) are failing and need to be revisited and updated. Humans have traveled so far without this important instinctual check...a major paradigm shift (via philosophy, religion, and/or prophet) is now needed to realign our connection with nature, so nature and religion can again be one and embedded in each other...and practical environmentalists can then use religion in their in claims.

*"I offer myself as a nature guide, exploring for values. Many before us have got lost and we must look the world over. The unexamined life is not worth living; life in an unexamined world is not worth living either. We miss too much of value" – Holmes Rolston (Light and Rolston, 2003:143).*

Essay Notes:

1. In this document, except where quoted, "God" is purposely referred to in the lower case ("god").
2. In this document, except where quoted, "earth" is purposely referred to in the upper case ("Earth").
3. The Massive Change (TMC) will be explored as a potential future thesis topic.
4. Figure 1 was idealized and produced by this essays author.

Figure 1: Divergence of Religion and Environmentalism over Time<sup>4</sup>.



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