Animism: Respecting the Living World, Graham Harvey, Columbia University Press, 2013, 0231510276, 9780231510271, 248 pages. Graham Harvey explores current and past animistic beliefs and practices of Native Americans, Maori, Aboriginal Australians, and eco-pagans. He considers the varieties of animism found in these cultures as well as their shared desire to live respectfully within larger natural communities. Drawing on his extensive casework, Harvey also considers the linguistic, performative, ecological, and activist implications of these different animisms.

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Shamanism A Reader, Graham Harvey, 2003, Religion, 461 pages. Shamanism: A Readerunites perspectives from disciplines including anthropology, psychology, musicology, botany to provide a unique overview of modern writing on shamanism. From ....


Animism Or, Thought Currents of Primitive Peoples ....

The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft , Ronald Hutton, Nov 4, 1999, Body, Mind & Spirit, 512 pages. Ronald Hutton is known for his colourful and provocative writings on original subjects. This work is no exception: for the first full-scale scholarly study of the only religion ....


Indigenous Youth in Brazilian Amazonia Changing Lived Worlds, Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen, Nov 9, 2012, Family & Relationships, 238 pages. In Latin America, young indigenous people have become visible subjects in ethnic and interethnic encounters. Their engagement with the global world, institutions, technology ....


Animism The Seed of Religion, Edward Clodd, Sep 1, 1996, , 100 pages. 1921 Contents: the Prehuman Elements in Religion; Brain in Animal and Man; Animal and Human Psychology; Naturalism; or, Conception of Power Everywhere; Animism, or Conception ....

Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations , Graham Harvey, Charles Dillard Thompson, Jan 1, 2005, Religion, 199 pages. Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations engages with examples of communities with different experiences, expectations and evaluations of diaspora life. It contributes ....


Animism, Volume 1 , Anselm Franke, Jul 31, 2010, , 253 pages. To Navigate, in a Genuine Way, in the Unknown Necessitates an Attitude of Daring, but not one of Recklessness (Movements Generated from the Magical Passes of Carlos Castaneda ....

How have human cultures engaged with and thought about animals, plants, rocks, clouds, and other elements in their natural surroundings? Do animals and other natural objects have a spirit or soul?
What is their relationship to humans? In this new study, Graham Harvey explores current and past animistic beliefs and practices of Native Americans, Maori, Aboriginal Australians, and eco-pagans. He considers the varieties of animism found in these cultures as well as their shared desire to live respectfully within larger natural communities. Drawing on his extensive casework, Harvey also considers the linguistic, performative, ecological, and activist implications of these different animisms.

I am a professional anthropologist, with a specialization in anthropology of religion and the author of a forthcoming text on anthropology of religion from Routledge. Like the previous review, I was skeptical when I saw that Harvey included discussions of wiccans, feminists, and eco-spiritualists. However, the concern was ill-founded. Harvey has actually given us a very intelligent book on the latest research into "animism" or more properly the agent-centered view of nature and supernature. Truly, early commentators like Tylor considered animism to be an inferior type of religion, one based on false notions of intelligence or will in non-human beings (of course one could criticize all religions for false notions about non-human intelligence). However, as Harvey shows, not only is animism not inferior at all, but it is actually the essence of ALL religion--that there are non-human agents in the world, and that we humans interact socially with them. The contemporary sources that Harvey cites are a valuable library on their own.

There are some shortcomings of the book. It does not include some of the best new work on agency in religion, like Pascal Boyer, Scott Atran, and Paul Bloom. The discussion of Hallowell and the Ojibwe is valuable, but the chapter on Australian Aboriginals is very deficient, relying on two main sources, one worthwhile (Deborah Bird Rose) and one not worthwhile (Michael Jackson). There is much literature he could and should have referenced, as I know, having done my fieldwork among the Warlpiri of Central Australia. Even the discussion of eco-spiritualism and such shows that these religions are as authentic as any "traditional" belief system, and in fact all belief systems are of course invented and constructed, and all are as affected by modernity as these new ones.

Harvey's conclusion, that animism has been a concept invented by moderns to achieve modern intellectual goals is a good one, and he rightly points out that not all cultures share our Western dualistic approach to mind and body or to humans and "nature." It is a book very worth reading.
I am impressed with this book for at least a few reasons. One, it goes to the heart of indigenous/shamanic/animist/pagan/earthy worldviews by placing the emphasis on relationships and learning how to relate well with diverse other kinds of beings. Two, it does so with language that is honoring of diversity and non-divisive, no small task considering the history of English-speaking cultures. And three, Harvey is playful. He’s fun to read and gets that most animists are not uptight curmudgeons.

I teach shamanism to spiritual seekers as part of my day-job and see how this IS something that is learned (or not), just as Harvey asserts, by indigenous and non-indigenous folks alike. I also work as a professional counselor and see how most folks at least in this area of the US only see other living humans as full persons and that the major task before Western cultures (in my opinion) is to restore personhood to our other-than-human relations and to allow our ethical frameworks and conduct to follow suit from this shift in attention and worldview. You can call this a reclamation of Indigenous Mind, an animist revival, or survival. In any case, it's time.

Graham Harvey defines what he means by animism in his first paragraph, when he states that 'animists are people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship to others. Animism is lived out in various ways that are all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons' (p. xi). This definition of animism foregrounds Harvey’s perspective for the rest of the book, which, like the definition is broad and far-reaching in scope. By person, Harvey means those beings that interact socially with varying degrees of reciprocity. These persons may include other animals, rocks, trees, mountains, or thunder. This is a new form of animism, which has become prominent in recent anthropological literature, particularly the work of Bird-David, Viveiros de Castro and Descola.

The first section of Harvey’s book provides background to western views on animism from philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, ethologists to novelists. He begins with the 'old animism' in the form of Tylor, Durkheim and Mauss but moves quickly on to the seminal work of Irving Hallowell (1960) and his influential work with the Obijwe. Hallowell's writing inspired later anthropologists to consider a new kind of animism. Harvey himself seems very much a proponent of this 'new animism', in that he writes of animism as a relational way of being, engaging with 'other-than-human persons'.

'Other-than-human person' was a term first used by Hallowell. Harvey acknowledges that some academics, such as Bird-David, have difficulty with this term because of its human bias. Harvey uses this term repeatedly throughout the book, as he claims that there can be 'other-than-bird persons' too, arguing that the term draws together 'degrees of relationality'. I felt the term somewhat impeded the flow of sentences at times because of its unwieldy length, perhaps a shortened form, such as 'non-human persons' would suffice, or when referring to animals then, 'other-animal persons'. Toward the end of the book, Harvey refers to Mary Midgley's comments about the serious need to find new words and terminology for animist discourse that is not biased by Cartesian polemics. Perhaps the Cartesian dualism within the English language is part of the reason why these terms, like 'other-than-human persons', sound awkward, as we are not yet used to other beings written or talked about as agents, or as persons in the world.

Harvey presents a number of case studies, all containing elements of his own ethnographic research with the Obijwe, Maori, Australian Aboriginal and western eco-pagan activism. The more substantial sections of the book are when Harvey re-visits these ethnographic examples but relates them to specific animist issues, such as personhood, death, spirit and souls, shamans, cannibalism, totemism and ethics. Harvey incorporates the anthropological terms of shamanism and totemism within the broader category of animism. As with animism, shamanism and totemism have been re-visited and re-defined in recent literature. Harvey describes (animist) totemism, as 'a mode of sociality and socializing that includes particular other-than-humans in kinship and affinity groupings and avoidances' (p. 164). He rejects the term 'shamanism', arguing that shaman religious belief is essentially animism but recognising that the role of the shaman is often essential to a people's understanding of animism.
The final chapters incorporate the academic spheres of philosophy, consciousness and environmentalism, within which he particularly draws upon feminist environmental philosophy, such as Val Plumwood's Feminism and the Mastery of Nature. Animism: Respecting the Living world, as the title suggests, advocates a way of living in the world that espouses respect for other persons, whether human or other. This book provides an informative review of the recent animist literature and animist issues. Harvey successfully summarises the literature in a straight-forward, yet compelling way. According to Harvey, if we can set aside our dualist Cartesian mindsets in favour of an animist approach to the world, then we can 'live a theory of personhood and selfhood that radically challenges the dominant point of view which is that of modernity'; (p. xviii).

Graham Harvey applies the new use of the term 'animism' to the religious worldviews of communities and cultures such as Ojibwe, Maori, Aboriginal Australian and eco-Pagan to introduce the diversity of ways of being animist. The book explores what role deities, creators, tricksters, shamans, cannibals totems and elders play in these religious traditions and relationships? The book also touches on the 'animist realism' of West African literatures, the 'perspectivism' of Amazonian shamans, and the relational ethics of South and Central Asian communities. The notions that 'animism' is about 'beliefs in spirits' are rejected in favour of a nuanced and positive evaluation of indigenous and environmentalist understandings that the world would be a better place if humans celebrated their relationships with the whole of life.

Aboriginal academic alive Amazonian ancestors and/or animism animist animist worldviews anthropomorphism artefacts benei→t Bird-David body cannibalism celebrate ceremonies challenge chapter Chiuta Circle Sanctuary citing consciousness considered context continue Core Shamanism cultures death debates deep ecology dei→ned deei→nitive dialogue diffici→cult discourse discussion diversity Dreaming dualism ecology embodiment encounters engage ethnography everyday experience expressed i→nd ire→rst i→esh gender gifts Hallowell Hallowell’s human and other-than-human important inanimate indigenous kind Kohak label lands living Maori marae modernity nature notion objects Ojibwe Ojibwe grammar Ojibwe language oneeTM’s ontological other-than-human persons Pagans panpsychism panpsychist participation particular performance perhaps personhood philosophers Plant persons possible recognise reference rei→ction relational relationality relationships religion require respect responsible rocks shamans signi→cant Similarly social sometimes souls speak speci→c spirits stones stories tangata whenua term theory things totemism traditional transformation trees Tylor understanding various Viveiros de Castro War Western Wicca worldviews and lifeways

"Harvey's insightful and balanced study challenges both earlier studies of animism and more recent critics who argue that scholars should throw out the term altogether. This is a fascinating and passionate study of lifeworlds in which things are 'very much alive' and in which relation to non-human others is considered central."

Welcome to Animism: Respecting the Living World, a companion website for my book by the same name. The site expands upon the book and includes further discussion, examples, elaborations and incitements that will enable more fruitful discussions about these ways of living respectfully within the wider community that is the living world.

Conveys something of the range of beliefs and worldviews which â€œanimismâ€œ might cover. The guts of the book are two sections: one with four cases studies, and the other with seven more general aspects (â€œissuesâ€œ) of animism. The former look at how animism can be woven into language (eg grammatically distinguishing animate from non-animate things), our embeddedness in land and environment (Aboriginal â€œDreamingâ€œ), the arts and, finally, eco-paganism.

The author leans over backwards atoning for the patronizing, sometimes abusive, treatment of animism by earlier generations of social scientists. The trouble is that history remains something that we did to them so thereâ€™s no way of understanding how particular animisms have changed over time. Weâ€™re told that Moaris see themselves as â€œintegral part of nature â€œ[with the] responsibility to take care of the whenua (land) and, tangata (people)â€œ. One may imagine this has developed over time given the extinction of fauna like the moa on which Maori relied. This is the kind
of attitude Western civilization will have to learn and the book’s missed the chance to show how other cultures have done that.

I found it very highly detailed and analytical - rather like an academic paper or dissertation. I thought that the sections on language and grammar in Objiwe, Maori and Australian Aboriginal society were meaningful when they detailed practice and related conversations with tribal members, but it seems to me that examining the way language is used is an unreliable way to de...more I've given this book 4 stars - not because 'I really liked it', but because it did what it set out to do - no more, no less.

I noticed that the author sometimes arrives at conclusions that are by no means certain from the evidence he presents. One in particular concerned the idea of the animist viewpoint of children, and the possibility (expressed by some ethologists) that this is retained in certain cultures rather than being lost by education. His conclusion seems to be that animism in different cultures is arrived at by discussion among elders and others, that animism is taught or absorbed in these cultures, and childhood understanding of/belief in animism irrelevant.

The book is descriptive in some parts and analytical in others. I enjoyed the sections that delved into the practices of different cultures, but found his examination and criticism of the work of earlier academics difficult to retain until the end of the page. I questioned his conclusions sometimes too, and once I spot one leap I tend to look for others.

I was surprised that the author didn't include a section on scientific research conducted to study consciousness in plants. I read somewhere that a plant will react if a person who has destructive intentions towards it enters the room - I think this would have been far more relevant, informative and fascinating than including examples of creative writing, which should have had no place in a serious work such as this.

An excellent overview of animistic and neo-animistic worldviews. Slightly spoiled for me by the feeling that this was a doctoral dissertation dumped into a book for the general reader, so the style didn't always make for an elegant flow, but that should in no way detract from the wealth of information and thought provoking content.

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