Book Review

Laura M Hartman (ed.), *That All May Flourish: Comparative Religious Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 328 pp., \$35.00 (pbk), ISBN: 9780100456030.

Within environmental discourse language such as sustainability and the Anthropocene are rallied around and critiqued in equal measure. Most readers of this review will be familiar with the managerial critiques of sustainability, and with the critiques that the term Anthropocene is guilty of glossing over social and economic justice issues. This set of essays is centered around an alternative term from those that have to do with the Anthropos (both the steward and the Anthropocene are focused on the anthro). Instead, this book takes as its central goal 'flourishing'. Drawing from the Aristotelean concept of *eudaimonea* in virtue ethics, 'this book seeks out understanding of human and earth thriving that lead to beauty, wholeness, and a sense of holistic naturalness captured by the term flourishing' (p. 4). This work of comparative religious ethics addresses the concept of flourishing through six themes.

Flourishing and its Costs. The first section asks why so much of human thinking and concern has narrowed moral consideration to efficient causality and instrumental use of the rest of the natural world for human ends. One answer from a Buddhist perspective is to recognize the value and interconnectedness of all living beings. From this perspective science and any other human method for knowing and relating to the more than human world ought to be housed within a moral concern for the entire evolving system of life (p. 31). Another chapter in this section pays close attention to the predator-prey cycle and what it means that life flourishes at the expense of other life (p. 49). Within dominant Western patterns of consumption, the concern for the other stops at the individual level (at worst) and at the level of humanity (at best). What would happen if our consumption was housed in a concern for the flourishing of all beings?

Animals. The closest such beings to humans that deserve our ethical concern are other animals, and this is the topic of the second section. From a Daoist perspective, for instance, flourishing is concerned with the mysterious source and sustainer of the cosmos, the Dao or flow of life itself (p. 79). All life is a part of this flow, and thus ought to be considered in economic, political, and ethical calculations. Other traditions, such as Islam, have seen a growth in the greening of their food consumption habits. The concept of Eco-Halal, it is argued by the Taqwa Eco-food Cooperative in Chicago, should be extended to exclude factory farming practices that are violent toward other animals and the rest of the natural world (p. 109).

Climate and Culture. Food is of course tied to wider cultural values, and these values help shape the systems that affect climate change for better and worse. In this section,

one of the authors argues that Yoga should be wrestled away from a neoliberal agenda (staying healthy through Yoga helps the individual worker/person become more productive) and (re)turned toward local places (p. 131). Practicing Yoga in conjunction with all the earth bodies that make up a local place, and which affect one's own body, might aid planetary flourishing (p. 155). In the second chapter of this section, the author argues that the rites of restoration found in Islam in West Africa can be used to help heal a broken world. Such rites and this cultural-ecological restoration should be done, according to this chapter, in conversation with national, international, and local constituencies.

Texts and Traditions. Rituals are not the only source of ecological flourishing one finds in religious traditions; there are also texts and more philosophical and ethical reflections. The interpretation of the Torah and the interpretations of genetics used for human, plant, and other biological enhancements or transformations have a lot in common, for instance. Just as religious texts have gaps and uncertainties that do not address contexts directly, so too with our genetic knowledge (p. 185). If we are to make meaning out of our contemporary contexts, we have to think about interpreting texts and the genetic code within the context of planetary flourishing (p. 195).

Catholic Social Teaching can also be reformulated to include the rest of the natural world. This is, in large part, what the famous document *Laudato Si* is all about (p. 199). Rethinking catholic social teaching to include solidarity with the flourishing of all creation means that the technocratic paradigm of Modern Western science must be roundly critiqued for not paying enough attention to the common (earthly) good and to the interconnected nature of all life on the planet (pp. 202-205).

Agency and Community. What then ought we do in the face of the flourishing of the planetary community, and more importantly, what can we do? Much contemporary theory has critiqued the idea that individual humans are the powerful agents, suggested by ideas such as being made in the image of God. From a Pagan perspective, for instance, we have to look at nature, human culture, and technology as agents in the world with which we are entangled. The author of this chapter argues for a revision of Taylor's light/dark green typology to include technology as well (pp. 228-35). The author of the second chapter of this section wonders whether a 'green Islam' might contribute to a constructive conversation about Islam in the larger American society.

Relationality. Finally, the book ends with a section on relationality (though relationality and interconnectedness seem to be a thread that runs all the way through the book). One author draws from Mengzi Confucianism to develop an ethic of cultivation and flourishing, but argues that this brand of Confucianism can only provoke concern for conservation and human well-being (p. 273). The second chapter draws from the pluralistic ontologies of some African traditions that recognize the ancestral, animal, plant, and elemental agencies in the world with which humans must work in order to bring about flourishing for all (symbiotic flourishing).

In the end, I argue that this is a great text that challenges the dominant language of stewardship and the Anthropocene and offers the metaphor of flourishing instead. It will be a great supplemental text for courses on comparative religion, environmental ethics, and religion and nature. I appreciate that it includes both comparative approaches, but also a topic-centered approach. Furthermore, the case studies that many of the authors use to anchor their work will be valuable in the classroom!

One minor critique from the more existential side of my being/becoming is that there seems to be an assumption that flourishing is mutual. I'm just not sure that is warranted. Do we live in a world where one's flourishing is another's demise? Are we talking about the flourishing of species, individuals, the ecosystem, or the planet? Each level seems to demand a different type of ethic. Is 'mutual flourishing' (p. 6) for the entire planetary community even possible? I'm not convinced, but the effort to promote mutual flourishing will surely help to bring about better systems of politics, economics, knowledge production, and ethics than what we have now in the so-called Modern Western world.

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