

redress the history and scope of a term like “nature religion” and reposition it in light of Taylor’s unique observations and analysis.

These criticisms are mitigated, though, by the observation that one of Taylor’s basic intents is to show that dark green religion challenges assumptions about how religion is to be understood. Overall, *Dark Green Religion* is a unique contribution to the field of religion and ecology. It shifts the ground from (religious) ethics to (religious) experience. Moreover, Taylor’s recasting of nature religion as dark green religion brings into focus the social impact of the movement, opening new avenues for scholars outside of religious studies. The central questions Taylor raises—if we admit dark green religion exists as religion, how does this challenge or change our understanding of religion? In what ways will dark green religion impact society in next decades?—are not only worthy of careful consideration, they provide a nexus for a new horizon of humanities research.

Many Peoples, Many Faiths: Women and Men in the World Religions, 9th ed.

Robert S. Ellwood and Barbara A. McGraw. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009.

ISBN: 978-0136017615. Pp. xx + 508.

Reviewed by Richard Greydanus, McGill University

The epithet ‘classic’ is not something usually accorded a survey textbook. With the publication of nine editions in a short period of 33 years, Robert S. Ellwood’s *Many Peoples, Many Faiths* may have the makings of a classic. Then again, it may not. There is a danger in running ahead of ourselves by handing out titles for which a considerable retrospective distance is required. The contemporary undergraduate textbook, which is here today and gone tomorrow, also tends to lead a rather transient life. But while this book most likely will not join the ‘timeless’ ranks of a Great Book, the publication of a 9th edition is nonetheless an impressive achievement. But the dissemination of immortal wisdom seems not to be Ellwood’s purpose; he commends the text to the reader on the ground of the ‘timeliness’ of a survey treatment of the world’s many religions in the introductory chapter. Mosques and temples are found near churches in the present-day American city. Religious pluralism is a reality that cannot be avoided.

A survey treatment of a topic as all-encompassing as the world’s many religions, both in the sense of being a near-ubiquitous presence in communities around the world and down through history and in the sense of comprehending the end-all-be-all of human life, is also something usually thought to be ill-advised.

While most scholars make their way in academia by becoming experts in some particular field of study, Ellwood does not shy away from the broad claims of religion, nor from showing where religious belief naturally seep out of the private lives of individuals into a much wider, objective world. Perhaps the most provocative move Ellwood makes in the opening chapter is to set aside the usual set of critical methodologies for the study of religion. If only at face value, Ellwood appears to adopt a phenomenological approach when he suggests that to truly be critical in the study of religion, 'one needs to be sure that one understands how this matter is understood by believers' (13). His desire to understand religious belief from the standpoint of a believer, however, means that he accepts a fundamental distinction between 'conditioned' and 'unconditioned' reality, which is not, it seems, to be reduced to a mere human 'phenomenon'. The former refers to many ways in which the world is spoken about (Maya, Samsara, Creation, etc.) and the latter, to the many ways the Divine is spoken about (Brahman, Nirvana, the Tao, God, etc.). These basic concepts could quite easily be plotted, as Ellwood uses them, onto a medieval theological distinction between the supernatural and the natural or a modern philosophical distinction between subjective freedom and objective nature. But it will not matter what these two ontologically basic 'poles' of human life are called; 'where the action is... the sphere of religion' (5) is precisely the porous borderline between them. That the boundary line is porous, though not uniformly so, goes a long way to explaining, Ellwood suggests, why some buildings, places, or things are deemed more sacred than others.

Aside from a basic distinction drawn between the wisdom religions of the East (Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Taoism) and the revelatory religions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), which take up a majority of the space in the book, Ellwood organizes his material more or less chronologically. A short discussion of Pre-Axial animism and polytheism and a slightly longer discussion of the proliferation of religious and spiritualist options in the wake of secularizing Western modernity and postmodernity serve as temporal bookends to the Axial faiths and their outgrowths. Faiths more difficult to classify like Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, and the Baha'ism are also briefly touched on. As reparation of a lack in earlier editions, each chapter concludes with a constructive discussion of the role played by women in the particular faith in question. Though not shying away from passing judgment on the near-universal 'patriarchal' predilection among the different religions to view women in a position subordinate to men, with the assistance of Barbara A. McGraw, Ellwood makes an admirable attempt to present actual instances where the opposite is rather the case.

Many Peoples, Many Faiths is meant to be read as if one were on an educational expedition. To underscore the contextual, situational character of learning, Ellwood sets his academic rigor aside from time to time and briefly relates his own personal

encounters with different religious traditions, either with believers or in the form of architecture or artwork. Some readers may be bothered by the intrusion of the first person pronoun into descriptive accounts of the subjective form of belief and objective expressions of belief in celebration, ritual, and worship, in architecture, art, and education. It has the affect of placing the reader, who assumes the author-position, at a distance from the objectified 'non-Western' faith. Notably those chapters in which the Ellwood does not make a personal appearance cover Judaism and Christianity, which are undoubtedly the most familiar to the American audience to whom the book is directly addressed. But if his purpose is to get at something of a total human experience, encountering what is foreign as if it were foreign, all the while retaining an understanding of a common humanity, would seem to fulfill this aim.

Novel additions to the ninth edition include extended discussions of the sorts of political authority to which each set of religious beliefs, through longstanding cultural-historical association, is most naturally acclimatized. In order to meet the changing demands of an interactive educational milieu, a CD containing short videos of explaining key figures and features has been added. Teachers and students are also offered access to online educational resources like prepared questions and study guides.

Even though his prose and writing style may at times leave something to be desired, Ellwood performs a valuable service by providing a credible systematic exposition of an impossibly broad and diffuse topic. Should the study of religion remain 'timely', this textbook stands a good chance of seeing a tenth edition.

Socially Engaged Buddhism

Sallie B. King. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.

ISBN: 978-0824833510. Pp. xiii + 192.

Reviewed by Jordan Johnson, Arizona State University

Socially Engaged Buddhism is a very useful introduction to the contemporary movement of Buddhists who involve themselves with the variety of religious social activism that has come to be known as "Engaged Buddhism." In this rather slender volume, Sallie B. King does an admirable job of providing an effective overview of this nascent international movement that will be of particular value to those who wish to acquaint themselves with the tradition for the first time, as well as those seeking to "connect the dots" between individual instances of "Engaged Buddhist" activism and the transnational movement as a whole.