

## GLOBAL ISSUES: FOUNDATIONS

### Definitions:

<i>ecology</i>	relationship between living organisms and their environment
<i>cosmology</i>	origin and general structure of the universe, with its parts, elements, and laws
<i>creation</i>	bringing into existence the universe
<i>eschatology</i>	last or final matters; ending the universe
<i>evolution</i>	process of formation or growth; development; change
<i>catastrophism</i>	geological changes in earth's history by catastrophes rather than gradual evolutionary processes
<i>uniformitarianism</i>	geological changes in earth's history by uniform and regular evolutionary processes
<i>anthropology</i>	nature and essence of man
<i>entropy</i>	the amount of energy unavailable for work during a natural process; for a system undergoing a spontaneous change, this quantity increases; measure of probability in a closed or isolated system; homogeneity, uniformity, or lack of differentiation, hence "tendency of the universe toward entropy"
<i>devolution</i>	degeneration; retrograde evolution
<i>apocalyptic</i>	imminent disaster and total or universal destruction
<i>fatalism</i>	acceptance of all things and events as inevitable
<i>humanistic</i>	system in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate
<i>agnostic</i>	the uncertainty of claims to knowledge; human knowledge limited to experience

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Classification of Resources and Their Nature (Non-Renewable? Renewable? At What Rate?):

<i>Empirical</i>	<i>Carbon based</i>	<i>animate</i>	plants, trees animals humans
		<i>inanimate</i>	carbon dioxide, methane, fossil fuels
	<i>Non-carbon based</i>	<i>inanimate</i>	water dirt or soil metals, minerals, & rock oxygen, other gases
<i>Unseen / Non-empirical</i>		<i>inanimate</i>	wind, spirit light, goodness heat, truth energy, love

Questions:

Does *rate of consumption* exceed *rate of replenishment*?

Can man *deface* or *damage* nature so that it can no longer renew itself?

Can *new discoveries* and/or *new technologies* provide for mankind's needs?

Can *old traditions* and/or *old technologies* be an answer?

Can *catastrophic occurrences*, such as earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, tidal waves, etc. effect the level(s) of resources significantly?

Traditional Religious Foundations:

- Hinduism*
- unity in diversity, or diversity in unity
  - the cosmos an ordered whole ruled by a universal law, *dharma*
  - represented in a hierarchical caste system on earth
  - world constantly ending and beginning again, successive world eras, *calpas*, and cosmic periods
  - natural world order functions as moral world order
  - anthropology, spirit in unity with all/other over body, man a soul made of pure spirit, *jiva*, and a material body
- Buddhism*
- similar to Hinduism, with cyclical world eons, *calpas*
  - anthropology, seeking of *nirvana*, soul reborn through death
- Chinese religions*
- dualistic, *Yin & Yang*, two sides of Ultimate Oneness
  - the universe a gigantic, ordered, living organism
  - naturalistic? or pantheistic?
  - practical attainment of universal harmony sought
- Japanese religions*
- animistic native religions
  - universe an interplay of indestructible energies which manifest themselves in constant changes in natural phenomena
  - emphasis on connectedness with nature
- Judaism*
- YHWH, the Eternal One, created universe *ex nihilo*, out of nothing
  - universe sustained by God's providential care and man's covenant care
  - anthropology, man distinct from animals and the rest of creation, bearing the *imago dei*, image of the creator God, YHWH; man both body and spirit
  - eschatology, new heaven and new earth, Sheol
- Christianity*
- ditto Judaism, with the modification of the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah
  - anthropology, recreation after the image of Christ, not Adam
  - eschatology, more elaborate, heaven and hell, destruction of the world/universe
- Islam*
- ditto Judaism, with strong emphasis on the will and wisdom of Allah
  - universe has no autonomous existence
  - similar anthropology & eschatology

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CAUTION!!! All traditional religions, in their particular “nationalistic” context, have been modified and transformed **away from** their traditional bases by the *infusion of modernism, rationalism, and secularism*. Because of this modification, ecological concerns and responses can be varied and confusing with extremes existing within the same broad faith tradition, as well as similar concerns and responses overarching more than one broad faith tradition.

Four Basic Models or Foundations for Ecological Thought (Not Neat / Cut & Dry Categories):

- |     |                   |             |                           |   |
|-----|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---|
| (1) | cyclical universe | —fatalistic | —evolution or devolution? | —finite or renewable?                   |
| (2) | closed universe   | —entropic   | —uniform or catastrophic? | —finite or renewable?                   |
| (3) | open universe     | —linear     | —creation & eschatology   | —finite or renewable?                   |
| (4) | opaque universe   | —too big    | —unknowable               | —DNA (“knowable”<br>data not available) |

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### Bibliography:

Bailey, Ronald, ed. *The True State of the Planet: Ten of the World's Premier Environmental Researchers in a Major Challenge to the Environmental Movement*. New York: Free Press, 1995.

A well-reasoned balance to Malthusian and neo-Malthusian authors. Chocked full of statistical data that counters what many hyper-environmentalists say. The author of the epilogue creatively divides the two camps into **doomsayers** and **cornucopians**, as he seeks a balance between the two.

Barth, Michael C., and James G. Titus, eds. *Greenhouse Effect and Sea Level Rise: A Challenge for this Generation*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1984.

A work by scientists that presents a balanced rather than a radical viewpoint.

Christianson, Gale E., *Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming*. New York: Walker and Company, 1999.

Christianson gives a good historical treatment of global warming.

Gore, Albert. *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Gore thoughtfully reasons his way to conclusions that many would chide as the work of a bureaucratic doomsayer.

Harms, Valerie. *The National Audubon Society Almanac of the Environment: The Ecology of Everyday Life*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994.

Harms has produced a nice, practical guidebook with lots of good ideas. She is very much a pro-environmentalist.

Newson, Leslie. *Devastation! The World's Worst Natural Disasters*. London: Darling Kindersley, 1998.

Newson highlights some of nature's "earth-shattering" events with photos and text.

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*Raging Forces: Earth in Upheaval.* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 1995.

Like Leslie Newson's book, this National Geographic production shows the catastrophic side of nature's forces.

Ray, Dixy Lee. *Environmental Overkill: Whatever Happened to Common Sense?* Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993.

In contrast to Albert Gore's *Earth in the Balance*, Ray's work could be labeled as from a bureaucratic conucopian.

Shabecoff, Philip. *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.

Shabecoff is a pro-environmentalist.