
Editor's Introduction

From its beginning in 2007, the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* has recognized the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship when examining the religion-nature-culture nexus. One method of promoting multidisciplinary efforts can be found in the theoretical, methodological, and geographic diversity of our articles. Equally important to our mission, however, is to provide a space for scholars to integrate multiple threads of inquiry in order to deepen the understanding of the complex relationships between humans, their religions, and the ecosystems they inhabit. A crucial part of this effort is to consider the implications of advances in the natural sciences for the study of religion as a biocultural phenomenon. As the cognitive and biological sciences continue to develop new levels of experimental and technical sophistication, they will be invaluable tools for the scientific study of religion.

In that spirit, I am proud to present the following issue on religion, art, and cognition. This issue was expertly developed by Bryan Rennie, who has been a driving force in the advancement of new theoretical approaches to the study of religion and art. This issue brings together the perspectives of Rennie, a religion scholar; Stewart Guthrie, a cognitive anthropologist; and Regina Coupar, a visual artist. Their distinct perspectives provide a wealth of insight into the complex relationship among human minds, artistic representation, and religions. In each case, the author demonstrates how the integration of scientific and humanistic perspectives can lead to an understanding of the processes of meaning-making and symbolic thought, which are crucial elements of human evolution. Rather than applying cognitive science to 'solve' questions about human minds, this issue illuminates the ways that insights from the humanities and social sciences deepen and enhance a combined naturalistic inquiry into the nature of *Homo sapiens*.

In the final featured article of the issue Amanda Baugh presents her research on the 'greening of religion' within a Chicago African-American community, highlighting the importance of race, ethnicity, and class in the transmission and reception of environmental discourse. This issue

concludes with a Field Notes report by Elizabeth Allison about a symposium at the Esalen Center for Theory and Research, which has been a nexus of alternative and environmental spirituality since the 1960s. This symposium included discussion of the work of Rudolf Steiner, gender equality, and environmental psychology, culminating in a mixed media presentation to the larger Esalen community.

Of special note as we go to press is the 10th Anniversary Conference of the ISSRNC with the theme Religion, Science, and the Future, which will take place in Gainesville, Florida, 14–17 January 2016. It will feature scholars from a wide range of disciplines while focusing on the role of religion and science in contemporary society and how religious beliefs and commitments may positively or negatively shape the future of religion and nature. Subthemes of this conference, to name just a few, include evolution, religion, and science; religion, violence, and neuroscience; religion, science, and indigenous knowledge systems; consciousness, mysticism, and meditative practice; the greening of religion; religion and nature in the arts; and ethology, botany, and sentience. For more details on the conference please see the announcement online at <http://www.religionandnature.com/society>, and follow the Society on Facebook and Twitter.

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