

REPLY

(IN RE E&A III/3, Squadrito's review of Gray's book)

Thank you for forwarding the review of *Green Paradise Lost* by Kathy Squadrito. Naturally, I'm very pleased by the care given by her in summarizing the major points of my argument from the point of view of the study of ethics and animals.

The one concern I have is her use of the words "pagan animistic" in describing the alternative paradigm I am suggesting. I'd do that a little differently. I was getting my graduate professional training thirty years ago at Yale Divinity School and still count myself as within the Judeo-Christian tradition (as I think is clear from my preface to GPL).

But I'm not willing to give over the entire Judeo-Christian revelation to patriarchy! In my subsequent book *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap* (1982) I've gone further in documenting *how* that revelation has been coopted by patriarchal influences, influences which (it is true) have largely shaped and dominated our Judeo-Christian tradition. For example, Judaism in some of its major aspects functions as a male fertility cult (see PCT, pp. 25-30).

Having said all that, however, I still want to view that patriarchal accretion as a distortion of an authentic religious impulse that perceives the Creator-God at work on this planet.

So...correcting that distorted (hierarchical and oppressive) perception of creation into a perception that is more true to reality could not be labeled by me as "pagan" or "animistic." I would have labeled it "*more authentically* Judeo-Christian."

It is my understanding that "animism" involves believing in the spirit residing in trees, groves, rocks. But I do not perceive trees, groves, rocks are *in any sense* "gods."

What I do perceive is that all of what we characterize as inanimate as well as animate participates in the incredible beauty and connections and "dance of energy" of this created system in which we as humans--and they--share. Further, we do *not know* what the consciousness of rocks, trees, cats may be. Nonetheless many of us have been convinced in our Western tradition that "cats don't pray"--which, in my view, is an unsubstantiated assertion about the consciousness of other species and forms of matter.

Most of what I'm saying here goes beyond what was available to Kathy Squadrito in GPL, and I don't intend in any major way to take issue with anything she said in her review except the words "pagan animistic." She is on target in seeing that what I am urging and arguing for is not the traditional orthodoxy.

What I am calling for is another Reformation of our religious tradition. We're called upon to "finish the Copernican revolution." With difficulty we corrected the astronomy that saw humans' home, the earth, as at the center not only of God's love but at the center of God's universe in the skies. Having shifted, in our minds, the center of our solar system from the earth to the sun (so that the planets now are understood to revolve around not the earth but the sun), we must now continue on and

delegitimate "the divine right of humans," our sense that we are somehow of greater value (to God) than other species also created by the Creator.

The problem in all these cases is that we have been content in male culture to distort authentic intimations of religious reality by bending them to fit our delusions of dominion and

anthropocentricity.

It is clear this self-serving "bending" of revelation has not been good for other species or for the planet. Hence it is not good for humans either. And what is becoming clear is that this "bending" has been basic to the patriarchal stance which has determined how we treat the rest of creation.

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