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Human Responsibilities and Rights

By **Walt Mandell**

Pantheists reject the notion of any personal God, either loving or wrathful, any belief in an afterlife, or in souls or minds separate from our mortal bodies. Instead, we revere and celebrate the completely natural universe in its totality, for its power, beauty, fundamental mystery, and inexhaustible ability to self organize and evolve.

Thus our ethics are NOT based on fear of some supernatural god judging us, on the hope for supernatural rewards, nor on the fear of supernatural punishments. Instead they are based on reason, love of beauty, justice, compassion, and appreciation of nature. They are based on a realistic assessment of the possible outcomes of actions in particular situations, a consistent set of values, and a recognition of our need for self esteem, and of the relation of self esteem to our values.

Pantheists look to whether the expected consequences of an act will make the world a better or a worse place. An ethically well intentioned act is one that is expected by the doer to make the world (or something or someone in it) at least a little better off. Better means more in accord with the values pantheists hold. Pantheists share certain life enhancing values: love of beauty, fairness, reason, empathy, compassion, respect for life (not just for human life), and a general desire to preserve the magnificent complexity of the natural world and its ecosystems.

As a practical matter, to help quickly gauge whether the expected consequences are in accord with their values, people usually choose to use ethical rules or principles,

rather than try to work out all the possible outcomes of every act.

A rule is very specific e.g. 'Thou shalt not steal'. In general pantheists are less concerned with specific rules than with broader principles. There is no one principle that all pantheists would agree without reservation as being always applicable, but here are some broad principles that most pantheists could assent to:

The Golden 'Rule'

(actually a principle rather than a rigid rule):

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

While it is generally acceptable to pantheists, the main problem with the Golden Rule is that it assumes that 'the other' necessarily wishes to be treated as you do, (and has the same values you do). Obviously this is NOT always true. If the other comes from a different cultural background the unthinking application of the golden rule may sometimes lead to conflict.

The Confucian principle:

Don't do anything to others that you yourself would find unacceptable if done to you.

This is sometimes called the 'Silver Rule'. It avoids the assumption inherent in the Golden Rule that the other will necessarily value what you value, but it assumes that he or she will seek to avoid what you despise. Since such things as pain, suffering, death, and humiliation are generally regarded as evils by people in all cultures, this assumption

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may be true more often than the Golden Rule assumption that others will want what you want. However it is not always true that others will shun what you do. For example a person seriously trying to commit suicide may not shun death.

Hillel's Questions:

If I am only for myself what am I? And if I am not for myself who will be? And if not now when?

These questions do not provide a definitive answer of what to do in any particular situation but they seek to balance our own self interest with the needs of others, encourage self reliance, and urge timely action to better our own lives and those of others.

The 'Anthropologist's code':

Respectfully treat anyone else as he or she wishes to be treated, unless it will harm yourself or some other person (or animal). If you don't know how someone wishes to be treated, ask. If you can't ask just follow the Golden Rule and the Confucian Principle.

This approach does not assume that the other's values and dislikes are the same as our own; it enquires whether this is so. It seeks to balance the good of the other with the rights of oneself (and of third parties).

The Physician's Guidelines:

Above all do no harm. If you can do so, prevent harm. If you can't prevent it try to cure it. If you can't cure it, maximize useful function. If nothing else is possible, at least minimize suffering.

This principle, is in a narrow sense designed only for healers (physicians, counsellors, veterinarians etc.); but interpreted less literally it is a good code for anyone entrusted with powers over the lives of others: parents, arbitrators, judges, social workers, executives, guardians, legislators, advisors, teachers, and social engineers.

The Compassionate Principle:

In so far as possible, act to minimize suffering of all sentient beings.

This is the core of Buddhist ethics. Many Pantheists would regard it as the core of their own as well. The logical problem here is where to draw the line as to what is a sentient being, and whether some sentient beings are more important than others.

The Empathetic Principle:

Try to feel what the other is feeling. Then you will know what is best to do.

This goes beyond the compassionate principle in that it is concerned not just with the suffering of another but also with their happiness and indeed with all their emotions. Two major problems: it is notorious easy to be mistaken about what another is feeling, and those who would most benefit from applying it are unfortunately those who have the least

talent for empathy in the first place.

The Wiccan Rule:

Do whatever you wish so long as it harms none.

- This is discussed in detail on pages 4-7.

The Principle of Rational Responsibility

Consider consequences carefully. Then do whatever you think best.

This principle is intended to reconcile freedom, responsibility and rationality. It recognizes that whatever one does, or fails to do, will have consequences (for oneself, and often for other humans, other species, and in some cases for the entire ecosystem). It asserts that actions are to be chosen based on their expected consequences, and that the moral worth of an action depends on not some arbitrary rule, but on what its consequences are likely to be. Good acts are those that make the world better. Bad acts are those that make it worse.



This principle acknowledges that all things are interconnected in a web of cause and effect, and that everyone is responsible for the foreseeable consequences of their own actions.

Because of the complexity of the universe, long term consequences may not be predictable, but each of us is responsible for choosing our actions based on their predictable consequences.

Some would object that this is too libertarian or too intellectual an approach to work for most people, and that it is poorly suited to dealing with crisis situations. Can it be used by people who are not already independent, rational, and responsible? Perhaps practising it would be a good way of acquiring

these virtues.

Pantheists regard all (conscious) humans as centres of awareness, and thus of being capable of happiness and suffering. Based on another's fundamental similarity to ourselves, it is reasonable to extend to them the same basic rights that we wish for ourselves, namely freedom, democracy, justice, and non-discrimination, and to work towards a world community based on peace, sustainable ways of life, full respect for human rights and an end to poverty.

Since future human beings, will be as conscious as ourselves, they have the same rights, including a right to a world we do not despoil. From this a conservation ethic naturally follows. Thus, stewardship for the future is an

important pantheist value. This can take many practical forms: avoidance of pollution, use of sustainable energy, control of population, preservation for the future of nature reserves, woodlands, ecosystems, species, and works of art.

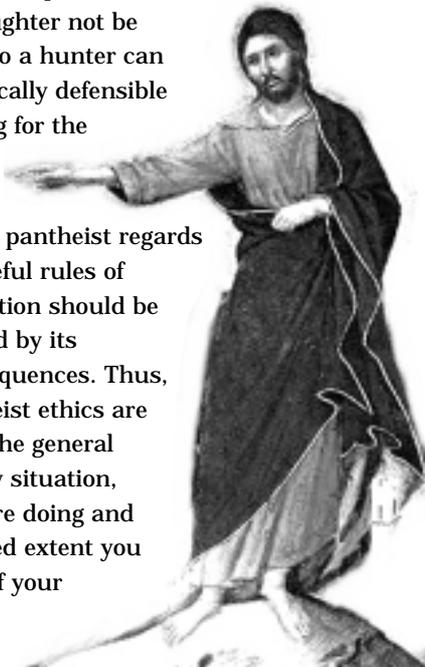
Extending the notion further, animals - in so far as they are conscious - can feel pain, sorrow, or joy and happiness. Thus animals would be entitled to some of the basic considerations that people are - that the quality of their life be good, that suffering be minimized and happiness, joy or contentment be maximized. In practical terms this would mean that domestic animals should not be abused, that living conditions be suitable to the particular species needs.

It means we should pay attention to wild animals' need for habitat (and intact ecosystems). And that if we hunt or trap at all, that the methods used be as swift and painless as possible. And it requires that slaughter not be wasteful: killing so a hunter can eat is a more ethically defensible action than killing for the sake of a wall trophy.

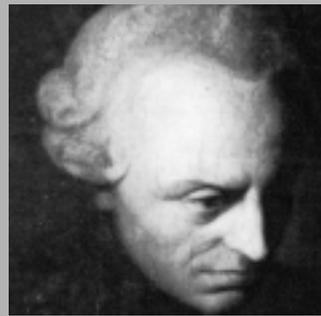
Ultimately the pantheist regards all of these as useful rules of thumb. For an action should be logically be judged by its anticipated consequences. Thus, at bottom, pantheist ethics are situational. And the general strategy is: In any situation, know what you are doing and why. To the limited extent you can, know each of your possible action's potential outcomes, and

how likely each is. Then act in such way as to try to optimize the outcome. A better outcome is one that is in accord with the values you hold. By acting to bring about an outcome in accord with your values you will enhance your self esteem.

Self esteem is extremely important, for without it you cannot have a good life. Since it is so important, and since it depends on acting in accord with your values, it is very important to have rational, consistent, realistic values, and to act so that the outcome of your actions is likely to be in accord with your values. That is why acting in accord with your ethical values is not masochistic self sacrifice, it is life enhancing self realization.



Philosophers' principles



One of the most famous principles of ethics is Kant's categorical imperative. Kant rejected the idea that morality should be based on the consequences of actions, and argued that they should be based on a supreme principle grounded in reason.

He formulated that principle in his Categorical Imperative. This was expressed in two main versions which are quite different from each other.

The Principle of Universalizability:

Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

Kant examines questionable acts, such as suicide, or making promises knowing you cannot keep them, and tries to show that it would be logically impossible to imagine these as universal laws. For example, if promises were broken at will, the very idea of a promise would become worthless.

Ultimately this principle is of little use as a general guideline because other, unconnected principles are needed when deciding how to apply it - different people can refer to different systems of values or political ideology and get differing results. A dictator might justify tyranny in the name of stable government, a democrat would oppose it on grounds of violation of human rights.

The Principle of Humanity:

Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.

This is a useful guideline, but it assumes that we know what it means to treat another person as an end. It could not properly mean: treat them in the light of your own view of the ends for which humanity is here on earth for, because that could lead to all kinds of oppression. Even the Inquisition treated its victims as ends - souls that needed rescuing from heresy. The only practicable meaning could be: treat them according to their own view of their ends. So this is basically a rather indirect version of the Anthropologist's code: treat others as they wish to be treated and if you don't know, ask.

Maximum happiness of the maximum number

More in tune with naturalistic thinking is Utilitarianism. Jeremy Bentham the most famous philosopher of this school, expressed the central goal of ethics as the maximum happiness of the maximum number:

An action may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it.

Bentham was far ahead of his time in thinking about extending the principle to cover animals, and looking forward to the day when animals would enjoy rights just as humans did.

Paul Harrison

The Wiccan rede

Can it ever really harm none?

I have been pondering the pantheist and Wiccan ethical principle, "If it harms none, do as ye will."

Most pantheists would not see this as an ethical code for all seasons, because it focuses only on the right to freedom. It says nothing about responsibilities to other humans, to animals, or to nature. Wiccans acknowledge this, for the full rede goes on to state: "What you send forth comes back to thee, so ever mind the rule of three." That is, the good or the bad that you do in society and the environment will be returned threefold.

Most pantheists might go further still, asserting basic responsibilities as fundamental obligations of the condition of being human in society and in nature. Pantheists would justify them not in terms of self-interested returns, but in terms of equal and co-responsive membership in a vast community of Being.

Most pantheists would apply the "an it harm none" code only to victimless activities such as consenting sexual behaviour, use of alcohol or other drugs, gambling, eccentricity, suicide, risky sports and so on, in cases where these did not result in harm to others through recklessness or negligence.

Some people add to "an it harm none" the words "including yourself." I prefer it without this addition. I believe that people have the right to harm themselves if they wish, as long as harming themselves does not harm anyone else.



This might occur under the following circumstances:

1. *Suicide in conditions of terminal illness, intolerable and incurable pain, or extreme and intolerable social humiliation. Suicide was regarded as a virtue by the ancients, including the pantheist Stoics.*
2. *Taking serious risks for the sake of thrills. Some people require a high level of risk in order to feel fully alive, for example through skydiving, mountaineering, surfing giant waves and so on. We may feel they should learn to feel alive without such risks, for example by studying beetle markings inside tree bark or blue jays foraging for nuts. But if they really cannot do without such risks, and they are not likely to leave traumatized orphans behind them, then on what ethical grounds should they give up their risky pursuits?*
3. *Risking lower level or slow-acting damage in pursuit of preferred pleasures*

or highs, for example, by smoking, taking drugs and so on.

4. *Taking pleasure in minor self-harm through masochistic tendencies, a taste for self-discipline and so on.*

Of course we can always find cases where any of these pursuits may harm others, and where therefore the self-harm in those cases should be avoided. But that does not invalidate the basic principle that self harm should perhaps be allowed in the Wiccan/pantheist ethic.

Paul Harrison

I fail to see how harming oneself could not harm another, being as how we are all interconnected in this universe. Whatever act is done to the individual will effect the whole in some manner. For instance, by killing oneself, the individual is emotionally harming those left behind. By smoking, one is subjecting his surroundings whether it be people, animals or plants to second hand smoke.

Carole Vila

To refuse someone the right to 'self-harm', providing this self harm causes no direct or intentional hurt to anyone else, would be an infringement on that person's basic rights as a human being.

I take it for granted that the person committing the self harm is not intentionally hurting any other sentient being. Humans are a species of animal. Animals in the wild (ie in their natural

environment) hurt themselves and even die in agony every hour as prey of other animals. What harm does this cause, save to the animal in question?

If a lamb were to commit suicide, rather than be tonight's dinner for the lion, would that harm the rest of the animal species? If a gorilla harmed himself by risking, in a spirit of adventure and recklessness much like his human cousins, an extra swing on the slender branch, would his hurt harm other gorillas or any other part of the 'whole'?

Regarding suicide, although a suicide will always leave behind much grief in those who loved him/her, I still believe that an individual has the right to take his/her own life. If he/she can be persuaded otherwise, by counselling or other compassionate means, so much the better. But if the person is still committed to the act, this is his or her right. Those left behind must come to terms with the fact that death was the firm wish of the person in question, and respect this.

It is a dark and dangerous slippery slope once one starts taking away individual freedoms, that don't directly harm others. One of those is the freedom to do with our bodies what we like, to think what we like and to DO what we like. The Nazis, amongst many other authoritarian regimes throughout history, tried it. It has always ended in misery and despair for the majority.

Sue Williams

The idea that "If it harms none, do as ye will" is probably as good as we can get as a basic attitude but, of course, there are all sorts of permutations inviting varying responses.

For one thing it depends upon the degree of self-harm and the intent with which it's undertaken. There's a big difference between, on the one hand, taking extreme risks for excitement or pursuing masochistic activities for pleasure and, on the other, inflicting injuries to the self because of self-loathing. Even these differences can be a bit spurious, however, because many behaviours apparently undertaken for pleasure can have their roots in low self-esteem and feelings of self-disgust.

Equally, it's difficult to imagine many instances of self harm that don't impact on others in some way. If someone dies or injures themselves during an extreme sport, someone else has to clean up the mess or mount a rescue operation.

When it comes to suicide, I find nothing basically "wrong" in choosing to end one's life. Death is part of the natural order of things. However, some suicides occur at moments of despair that would in due course pass, or be helped to pass if further time were available.

On the other hand, some ongoing situations of psychological distress persist so long that it would be harsh to deny suicide as a valid option.

Roots of the rede

Typically a modern witch will claim that she learned the Wiccan rede while sitting on the lap of her grandmother who learned it from her grandmother, and so on.

In reality the rede shows all the signs of being a modern concoction. The saying is not found at all in any of the authoritative collections of traditional English proverbs such as the "Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs"

The remote ancestor of the "Wiccan Rede" is a saying of St. Augustine: *Dilige et quod vis fac*, "Love, and do what you will". In a Christian context, where one is used to so many rules beginning "Thou shalt not...", this seems amazingly radical and daring. The background is that those who are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit will not commit moral errors.

At the end of his novel "Pantagruel", Rabelais describes the Abbey of Theleme, inspired by the maxim, *Fay ce que voudras* (Do what thou wilt). This later became the motto of the Hell Fire Club, in the Eighteenth Century. Debauched aristocrats would meet by night in a ruined abbey dressed in Franciscan robes for unbridled partying and sensuality. The motto was later also adopted by the would-be sorcerer Aleister Crowley in the form "Do what thou wilt". He formed a community for the practice of occult rituals at Cefalu in Sicily, which he called "Thelema".

The most likely originator of the full rede is Gerald Gardner, who in the 1940s claimed to have discovered a witchcraft tradition in rural England, for which he invented the name "Wicca". The 1940s was a time when many activities were against the law in Britain. Laws against witchcraft and various types of sexual activity, were still on the Statute Book. There was a movement to abolish these "victimless crimes".

It was important to point out that in Wicca spells would not be cast to harm others, and Wicca eschewed "black magic". Gerald Gardner liked to think of Wicca as a fertility religion, and sexual rites played an important role. He was a keen nudist, and introduced a lot of naked or "sky-clad" rituals into Wicca. Nudity is traditionally a symbol of simplicity and innocence, although it also attracts voyeurs. Gerald Gardner needed to stress the harmlessness of his unconventional practices.

The "rede" seems to have been accepted uncritically as a genuine traditional saying from the 1940s onwards. The full version "An' it harm none, do what ye will" was published in a United States magazine Green Egg in 1975, as the final line in a poem called "Rede of the Wicca", submitted by Gwen Thompson, who claimed to have learned it from her deceased grandmother Adriana Porter.

Tor Myrvang

The Abbey of Thelema



In Chapters 52-57 of his book *Gargantua and Pantagruel* Rabelais describes the plans for an abbey that will be designed to the contrary of all existing ones. Men and women were to live there together, and everyone would be free to leave at will. This is Rabelais' account of the rules governing life in the abbey:

All their life was spent not in laws, statutes, or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure. They rose out of their beds when they thought good; they did eat, drink, labour, sleep, when they had a mind to it and were disposed for it. None did awake them, none did offer to constrain them to eat, drink, nor to do any other thing; for so had Gargantua established it. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed,

DO WHAT THOU WILT

Because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour. Those same men, when by base subjection and constraint they are brought under and kept down, turn aside from that noble disposition by which they formerly were inclined to virtue, to shake off and break that bond of servitude wherein they are so tyrannously enslaved; for it is agreeable with the nature of man to long after things forbidden and to desire what is denied us.

Oliver Chadwick

An injunction against harm is violated with almost every kind of striving. We put ourselves through sleepless nights when our children are infants, we risk our wealth and postpone our pleasures to build a business, we focus our efforts to explore and discover, risking harm to ourselves in many ways for the chance of gaining some greater benefit. Some of the best that is within us comes from allowing harm to come to us, or at least the chance of it.

Antony Van der Mude

My interpretation of the rede would be that you can do what you want as long as you don't "intentionally" harm anyone.

I was reared in a fanatic religion where I always felt guilty about something and was never good enough. It took me a very long time to finally start feeling good about just being me. As long as I am living each day the best I can, I'm allowed to make mistakes, even when these mistakes may hurt others. As long as I'm not intentionally trying to hurt others, then I can feel good about myself even though I may not be the best at everything I do.

I guess that's why when I first read this Wiccan principal, I liked it. It helped me see that I don't have to be perfect. I don't have to feel bad about myself because I'm not good enough at this or that.

Cindy Christensen

Some people are compelled to climb Mt Everest. For them, the calling of the mountain shouts louder than any other voice. Some die in the attempt. They leave behind children, husbands, wives, relatives, friends and associates.

I hear no call of the mountain. I accept that it is something they "must do". It has been said that we are the universe made self-aware. If that is true, we might well consider our purpose to be "experiencing the

universe". This experience covers an enormous range, from quiet meditation to cliff diving.

Within each of us bubbles a chemistry that gives us our inclinations. To be risk-taking or risk-averse. To dance under the moon or lie quietly looking up at it. To climb to the top of the world or to shake our heads in disbelief at the foolishness.

At the most, all we can do is remind ourselves to consider the consequences of our actions. It might be researching that next topic or hurling ourselves from that next cliff. We can calculate our risks. And then - Do!

Bruce Merkle

I frequently find myself with feelings on both sides of an ethical dilemma. I dislike abortions on the principle (deeply held) that life is sacred. Contrariwise, I detest those who would impose the ethics of the state in the private decisions between a doctor and a woman. I would rather have abortion on demand, than to have back alley abortions, unwanted and uncared for children.

I see ethics as an informed dialogue. Life is sacred. But are there any times when it ceases to be sacred? Are there times when dying is more appropriate than continued existence? If I don't kill person A who is a threat to me, then I risk getting killed myself. I have no choice which preserves all life. My only choice is which life to preserve, his or mine?

I don't see anything I do that doesn't impact others. We are a web of life - totally interconnected. What I do to myself, directly or indirectly, affects many others. As I understand it, that is basic to a pantheistic understanding of life. I am part of and indissolubly connected with the universe. If I harm myself, I cause harm to that which we say is sacred. It is as if the little toe on my body says it is ok to rot away without realizing it is bringing gangrene to the whole body!

Due to my limitations, I can never have perfect knowledge (far from it!), but from a pantheistic viewpoint, I must make the best decisions of which I am capable, because what I do reverberates throughout the all.

Karl Slinkard

Any action has consequences ultimately affecting the whole. With chaos or complexity theory the natural sciences have even begun moving into a direction of at least implying that anything like the TOTAL consequences of any one event are impossible to assess. There is a strange reality to the fictional example of the butterfly in Asia eventually causing a hurricane

in Florida.

What this means is that any consideration of consequences prior to acting will necessarily be incomplete. Certainly one can consider fairly obvious consequences, such as how telling someone the truth under certain circumstances could cause them horrible pain, how unprotected sex can possibly lead to a lifetime of regret, and so on. But when we get into the complex types of behaviour that are required for our social institutions to function properly, the good willed person would frequently make the wrong choice. As a quick example, consider the defence attorney who, while counselling the client, learns something that makes her quite sure

the client is actually guilty. It seems apparent, in individual cases, that "the greater good" would be served by having the attorney report what she has learned to the proper authorities so that justice could be served. Were such behaviour generally allowed, however, it would eventually completely undermine the ability of any attorney to serve as an effective defence counsel. Similar situations frequently arise in a psychiatrist's dealings with his or her clients, and with teachers, parents, etc. No one is so well educated as to be able to understand the complexities of behaviour well beyond a limited area of expertise.

Gene Troxell

Living by the Rede

I was involved in the very early days (approximately 1962-66) with the Church of All Worlds (publisher of the GREEN EGG). The notion that one should be free to do as one wished, limited only by the potential to harm others, was well established in the Church of All Worlds long before it was published in their journal. CAW was not much concerned with the historic accuracy of its "neo-pagan" practices.

The original source of inspiration came from Robert Heinlein's now classic *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and had nothing to do with Celtic or other ancient practices. It was only gradually that Tim Zell (now Oberon Zell) became aware that there was some consonance between CAW practices and an emerging "neo-pagan" movement in England. That and a growing ecological awareness, were thrown together in a sort of heady witches' brew of ideology which seemed to legitimize our practices of polyamory, recreational drug use, nudism and formation of communal pseudo-family groups ("nests").

Following Heinlein and our own raging hormones (we were in our late teens, early 20s at the time), we decided that sex with one partner for life was a terrible constriction of our natural instincts. (We blamed sexual restraint for a whole host of psychological and developmental evils!) On the other hand, "cheating" as commonly practiced, was a moral abomination, and to us, the solution was a "nest" (forerunner of the hippie "commune") where everyone had consensual

sex with everyone, but was honest about it. Similarly, with recreational drug use, nudism, etc.

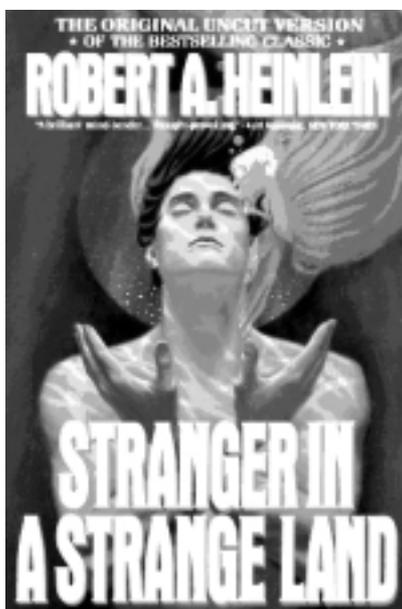
The problem with all this, was that except for Heinlein, there was no generally recognized source for legitimizing these practices. Somewhere, we got the idea that Druids (we knew nothing of Druids at that time) had worshiped the Earth Mother, and that must have led to "fertility" rites and

so on. Voila, we had a legitimizing source. The "old" religions predated Christianity, and hence were more legitimate. Not only would Earth Mother sanction our sexuality and "natural" recreational drugs like mushrooms or cannabis, but we could tie all of this into a program of revering and protecting mother earth.

Suddenly, we were legitimate. We were avant garde even. Instead of mere sex crazed, drug taking, intellectual post teens, we were the vanguard of a revolution that was going to free an uptight world, restore the ancient faith of the "old ones," and protect mother earth. We thought surely worshippers of "the mother" must have been less uptight than the followers of "the father," and would have approved of our practices, more or less.

At the time, it never bothered us that we didn't know anything about the faith of the "old ones." We would appropriate whatever seemed desirable from the various myths we heard. Besides, we were just as good as the "old ones." We were the vanguard. We would develop rituals to worship mother earth as seemed appropriate. And we did.

Karl Slinkard



the rights approach to ethics

Pantheists believe we are all equal observers of and participants in a cosmic unity. This entails respect for each others life goals and respect for human rights, argues Paul Harrison.

Like humanism, pantheism accepts that human ethics are the creation of human beings, not of supernatural gods. Humans succeeded as a species by being capable of cooperation and altruism and the drawing up of agree rules of social conduct.

As societies grew more complex, more and more rules were needed - but these were all human inventions, not divine commands. Human standards of ethics have not stood still since the ten commandments or the Koran - they have evolved continually. Once it was fair game to rape or kill people from a neighbouring tribe. Aristotle and St Paul defended slavery and Aquinas defended the burning of heretics.

Gradually belief that one should love and care for others has been extended to wider and wider groups of people until, today, more and more people consider the whole human race to be one family for ethical purposes. We are currently living through another great leap forward in human ethical standards, extending rights and consideration beyond the human sphere, to animals, plants and even ecosystems.

In pantheism, the Universe as a whole is revered, and all things are part of a single Unity. Every natural thing is one spark that goes to make up the whole fire. If we revere the fire, we are obliged to respect and cherish the sparks that make it up. So pantheism involves equality of respect for all natural things.

Of course, not all natural things require moral consideration. Non-living things like rocks cannot really be said to have interests. A volcano does not suffer if it explodes; a pebble does not get hurt or feel bad if you throw it into the sea. On the other hand respect for all natural things does mean respect for the way nature has organized things, and large-scale disruption for human purposes

can be unaesthetic as well as disrespectful. Wanton destruction of non-living environments, for example through mining, also matters because of its impact on human rights, animal welfare, and ecosystems.

For pantheists the main beings to be taken into account ethically are other humans, and other living things. Respecting these beings as equal participants in a revered universal unity means recognizing each being as a value in itself, regardless of its value to us individually, or to us as a species.

Each being is an end in itself, not just a means to our human ends. Each being is also an end to itself - it has certain goals. Respecting it as an end in itself means respecting its goals as well as our own in all our dealings with it, and interfering with its goals only when overriding survival needs demand this.

Respecting animal welfare

These principles dictate that we should regard all life-forms with the deepest respect and compassion. Living creatures were not put here for us to use or abuse. They evolved in their own right, and they exist for their own benefit.

Pantheism has an ecological approach to ethics which is concerned not only with the individual organism or the individual species, but also with the whole community of living and non-living things in which they thrive. Individual species add extra variety and complexity to the scene - but species do not exist in a vacuum. They evolve in specific habitats, on which they depend for food, security, and the chance to reproduce. So preserving the diversity of habitats is perhaps the most important measure in preserving the diversity of species, and the stability of the greatest ecosystem of them all, our planet earth.

Respecting human rights

The pantheist attitude to other humans is one of the deepest respect. Pantheism offers a deeper grounding for human equality than most other religions. Although theists state that all men are created equal in God's eyes, in fact if there were a God it would be S/he who creates humans unequal in abilities and looks. Hindus and Buddhists believe that people's lot in this life is deserved by their actions in previous incarnations.

In Pantheism, every individual consciousness is an equal focus of awareness of and wonder at nature and the cosmos. Whatever our abilities or disabilities, we are all absolutely equal in this core respect, which pantheists regards as central to our existence. Pantheist ethics means respecting other humans as equal parts of, participants in, and observers of Reality. We should treat them as ends in themselves and not simply as means to our own ends. We should respect their legitimate goals in life in so far as they do not conflict with other people's goals.

The rights approach is a useful way of embodying respect for other people's goals. It originated in Europe as a protest against the lack of any secure rights for ordinary people under absolutist monarchies, and was central to the American and French Revolutions. The growing body of human rights in international and national law establishes a range of goals that are generally accepted as legitimate for humans to have. This body is continually growing and being refined as time goes on (see box).

In law, states have a duty not just to respect these rights in their own activities but to protect and promote them. Ethically, individuals have a duty at least to respect others' rights, and ideally to protect and promote them.

The groups whose rights are unrealized or violated are rarely the rich and the powerful. It is the poor, the vulnerable, and the powerless who are most often denied their rights, so the defence of human rights favours the redress of injustice and the removal of oppression.

The United Nations and Human Rights

One of the greatest ethical achievements of the human race is the body of rights statements and conventions of the United Nations. This corpus is continually evolving as human standards evolve.



The basis of the United Nations human rights system is the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948). This was fleshed out by two major covenants adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and since ratified by a majority of countries in the world, is still being expanded on and improved.

The **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** establishes rights like the right to life and security, freedom from torture and arbitrary detention, freedom of movement, expression, religion, association, assembly, speech, opinion and so on.

The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** enshrines the right to freedom from hunger, the right to work, health, education, adequate housing and others.

Another important instrument, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** was adopted in 1979. This added women's rights to equal treatment, to adequate maternal nutrition, and access to prenatal services and family planning. The **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, passed in 1989, strengthened some of the above rights and added the right to primary health care.

International enforcement of these rights has strengthened in recent years but still focuses almost entirely on civil and political rights. Supervision and enforcement of the economic and social rights is almost non-existent.

The biggest gap in the body of rights, and the next big step in their evolution, is environment. It would be useful to embody a series of human environmental rights - to clean air, clean water, clean food, accessible natural areas - as well as rights of living creatures, species and habitats. The latter rights are different from human rights, in that animals cannot defend them but depend on humans to defend them on their behalf.

Pantheist reserves: a focal point for local groups

The idea of pantheist nature reserves unites the environmental, social and belief aspects of the World Pantheist Movement

A dream I have is for each WPM local group (when it gets large enough) to have its own small nature reserve, on which there would be a very simple building (e.g. a rustic lodge with a wood burning fireplace), where indoor meetings could be held when the weather is too bad for outdoor meetings to be practical.

The lodge could also serve as a site for ceremonies e.g. indoor weddings. Depending on site, and acreage, the reserve could include trails and/or gardens not only for meetings but meditation or just walking in the woods. A garden might have benches, a frog pond, a sundial, a bird feeder, and a fountain. Memorial trees could be planted in the garden to commemorate dead loved ones.

The garden would stress the use of native plants growing in as natural a way as possible. An outdoor site for a campfire would be a definite plus. The reserve might also be used by a nature oriented children's program e.g. the proposed Wild Kids program. If the site were bought as inexpensive unimproved acreage unsuited for farming and not in a prime location, and the construction of the meeting lodge were a communal effort with



Joshua Tree National Park in California is one of the most spiritual places I have ever been. When the sun begins to set, you can't help but feel at one with the desert.

Photo copyright Audrey Pavia

members providing 'sweat equity', we might eventually be able to make this an actuality.

Members building the lodge and creating the gardens and trails together could be a lot of fun, and would be a great communal bonding experience, like a barn raising! There would be few things we could do together that would be more effective in building a sense of community.

Walt Mandell, Novelty, Ohio

To help pay for upkeep on the reserve,

WPM members could be allowed to rent the cabin for camping when it's not in use for organizational purposes. Only WPM members should be allowed since we know they will treat the reserve with respect.

Audrey Pavia, Santa Ana, CA

The need is especially strong in an urban environment. I tried to imagine what form this would take in the middle of a city. Living in the Northeastern USA, the most tranquil areas that can be found are often by

the river. In cities such as Boston and Philadelphia, there can be found a “boathouse row” that has ideal buildings for Pantheist activities which, being beside the water where it is often harder to develop, usually contain a fair amount of nature right in the middle of the city. I like the concept of sitting a Pantheist gathering area beside a river. That tends to be where the foliage is, where others have set up their own spaces as an urban retreat and where many of the parks are. A river is also a wonderful place to go for recreation and refreshment.

Antony Van der Mude, Summit, NJ

I strongly favour making it official WPM policy to encourage and help create reserves/meeting places. They can provide us with a very distinctive and valuable image and a real and worthwhile concrete program of action that will motivate and unite us. They will also make us far more attractive to environmentally aware people and to potential donors than if we were merely a talk-and-wonder outfit.

All of the following will of course take time and a lot of local effort and collective thought. It will also require us to develop, over time, central advice resources about green building, land law, and conservation.

In some cases willing people with very large gardens may be able to start creating such a place much earlier than if we waited to collect enough money to buy land. In other cases people may make bequests of land, or lease the land at a low rent for this purpose.

The idea solves with one blow several of the central problems of local groups.

• Having a “church” or meeting place:
In so far as we go in for architecture we

should be at the leading edge of what is green, so these lodges should be cheap, and as far as possible use local materials, renewable energy, natural ventilation and insulation and so on. In doing so they would serve as examples of environmentally sustainable architecture.

• Having a focus for environmental action: By managing the reserve for wildlife, in keeping with the local environment, we can help preserve or increase biodiversity.

• Having a focus for social and educational action: The reserve can be opened for visits from schoolchildren and from urban schoolchildren. From this point of view ponds and butterfly areas would be valuable.

• A place for ceremonies in the pantheist mode, like weddings and child-namings. This would be free for members but could be hired by others who might then get interested.

• A memorial garden: The planting of trees can be encouraged if people can dedicate trees to loved ones.

• A natural woodland burial area (possibly later as a long term aim): There is a great shortage of natural burial facilities and I imagine a large hidden demand for them. Such an area need not necessarily be part of the reserve. However, there are considerable health and planning problems involved in setting up natural burial areas.

• A camp site: Lodges could be rented by members when not scheduled for use. If there is a network of reserves, then members can have cheap holidays!

Paul Harrison, Hampstead, London

What should we call it?

Various suggestions were proposed for the new reserves:

- Pantheist Garden
- Pan Garden
- Pantheist Park
- Pantheist Preserve
- Pantheist Reserve
- Pan-Patch
- Pan-Land
- Oasis
- Paradise
- Haven
- Temenos

EARTH'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

***Thou shalt love and honor the Earth
for it blesses thy life and governs thy survival.***

***Thou shalt keep each day sacred to the Earth
and celebrate the turning of its seasons.***

***Thou shalt not hold thyself above other living things
nor drive them to extinction.***

***Thou shalt give thanks for thy food
to the creatures and plants that nourish thee.***

***Thou shalt limit thy offspring
for multitudes of people are a burden unto the Earth.***

***Thou shalt not kill
nor waste Earth's riches upon weapons of war.***

***Thou shalt not pursue profit at the Earth's expense
but strive to restore its damaged majesty.***

***Thou shalt not hide from thyself or others
the consequences of thy actions upon the Earth.***

***Thou shalt not steal from future generations
by impoverishing or poisoning the Earth.***

***Thou shalt consume material goods in moderation
so all may share Earth's bounty.***

© 1990 by Ernest Callenbach

Elections for the Membership Advisory Council

The Membership Advisory Council democratically represents members' interests in the World Pantheist Movement. The MAC's brief is to advise the directors on services to members and members' activities, such as publications for members, members' forums, fees and status of ministers/celebrants, formation and activities of local groups.

The MAC may also review complaints by individual members when these have not been dealt with by officers to the members' satisfaction. It can make recommendations to the directors about how to resolve these complaints. When a poll of members is being held on a matter within its brief the MAC reviews the directors' choice and wording of poll questions and recommend changes if these seem necessary.

Although the directors ultimately decide WPM policy, the directors are obliged to give good faith consideration to the MAC members' recommendations and the results of polls of members, having regard to the WPM aims and credo. The directors are also obliged to listen to members' views as represented in our lists. New directors are regularly recruited from among active MAC members.

Elections for vacant posts on the MAC are held every year. This year there were potentially five seats vacant. Initially we nominated eight candidates including four women, but three candidates, all women, did not wish to stand at this time.



The 2001 election was held between May 28 and June 6. The following new members were elected to the MAC - left to right. **Stuart Stell**, the new MAC chair, is a science teacher in Cleveland, Ohio. **Oliver Chadwick**, the MAC deputy chair, is a hypnotherapist working in Essex, United Kingdom. **Sheila Rosenthal** is an artist and arts teacher from Agoura Hills, California. **Gene Troxell** is emeritus professor of philosophy at University of California San Diego. **Travis Unwin (T-man)** runs an ebusiness in Phoenix, Arizona

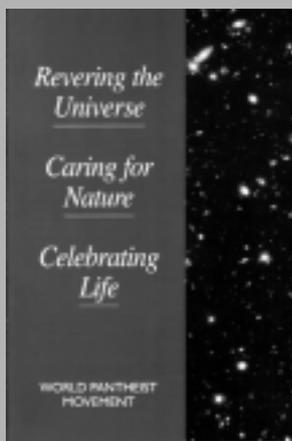
New WPM leaflets available

We now have an impressive new set of colour leaflets and membership forms, designed by David Wright who also oversaw the production.

The general leaflet of 12 pages covers our beliefs, our services, and our goals and plans. Each double spread has text on one page and superb illustrations of nature and the universe on the other.

There are also quotes & portraits of Heraclitus, Thoreau, Einstein, and Marcus Aurelius.

There is a Nature leaflet covering the planetary crisis and the need for a new spirituality of nature, explaining the pantheist attitude to nature and environmental ethic, and the WPM's beliefs and actions and plans in relation to nature. This has quotes from Emerson and Marcus Aurelius. The Reason and Science which covers our naturalism, our naturalistic view of death, our attitude to



the methods and findings of science. This has quotes from Einstein and Sagan.

The general leaflet with a form inserted cost the WPM 67 cents each, the smaller ones cost us 25 cents each. We will not be charging for these, but we want to try to ensure that these are distributed in promising places only, for example:

- * To friends you think are potential members
- * Posted on noticeboards at Unitarian Universalist churches, health and organic food and natural product stores, with a local contact.
- * On tables or given out at events, talks, meetings or conferences of environmental, nature-loving, zoological, astronomical, scientific, humanist or atheist nature.

Used wisely in these ways, these leaflets could be our best method yet of attracting new members in specific localities, and also of informing the public about our ideas and getting more widely known.

To order please write to leaflets@pantheism.net stating how many you want of each, what plans you have for them, and your postal address.

WPM at Unitarian Universalist General Assembly

In June this year we had a stall in the exhibition hall of the UU GA at Cleveland. Walt Mandell describes the action:

I will miss the fun we had. It was a high energy weekend. Conversation constantly would run off on interesting tangents - North African social customs, the life cycle of solitary bees and their parasites, religion, law, flutes, cooking, animal consciousness, pheromones, spider bites, bird and butterfly migration, the psychology of battered women, what makes a good visual design. We would get so engrossed in conversation we missed our interstate exits.

We sold books, distributed pamphlets, explained pantheism, and fielded odd questions. Our booth was in a good location, so we had a lot of traffic. We had a big poster photo of the earth from space. Between 400 and 500 people stopped to talk and took our literature. Four signed up to become WPM members on the spot (3 of these were UU ministers). More may sign as they explore the Website. And a lot more people now know the World Pantheist Movement exists.

In addition we also had time to have a vegetarian cookout at Stu's place; go to the Rainforest Exhibit at the Cleveland Zoo; explore the mineral garden at the American Society for Metals; go on a small hike to Hidden Slot canyon.

Some lessons learned for future stalls:

- Getting together in person for a concrete purpose really energizes a local group.
- We need WPM posters, t-shirts, and buttons with catchy slogans that we can sell.



- We should make our booths visually interesting. That draws customers.
- Bring extra folding chairs.
- Don't let argumentative kooks set up their own chairs in front of your booth and drive people away.
- We must concentrate on recruiting young members, and have young members among those staffing our booths.
- We need to increase our non-white membership too. Stressing the fact that indigenous Native American and African belief systems emphasized 'Revering the Universe', 'Caring for Nature' and 'Celebrating Life' might help us here.
- Italian sausage eaten everyday for lunch quickly loses its appeal.
- GETTING TOGETHER WITH OTHER PANS IS FUN!!!

Almanac



Special events

October 16
World Food Day

October 17
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 24
United Nations Day

October 31
Halloween/Samhain

November 2
All Soul's Day

November 16
International Day of Tolerance

November 20
Universal Children's Day

November 25
International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

November 30
John Toland's birthday

December 1
World AIDS Day

December 3
International Day of Disabled Persons

December 10
Peak of Geminid meteors Human Rights Day

December 22
International Arbor Day

December 25
Newton's Birthday



Equinoxes & Solstices

2001

Summer solstice
June 21, 07:38

Autumn equinox
September 22, 23:05

Winter solstice
December 21, 19:22



Full Moons

2001

September 2, 21:43

October 2, 13:49

November 1, 05:41

November 30, 20:49

December 30, 10:40

All times Universal time aka Greenwich Mean Time (= Eastern Standard Time + 5 hours)

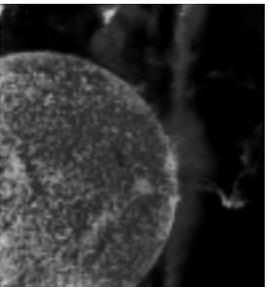
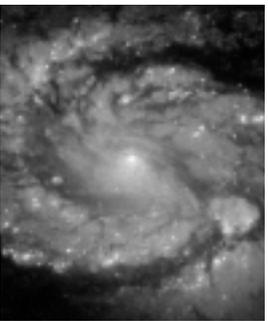
When you look at the night sky, are you filled with awe at the beauty and power of the universe? In nature, do you feel a sense of the sacred, like being in a vast cathedral? Are you sceptical about a God with a mind like ours, separate from, and outside, the universe? If you answer yes to these questions, then you are already a Pantheist.

Natural/scientific pantheism transcends both theism and atheism. Its central tenet is that the Universe is the ultimate reality and the highest object of human reverence, while nature and each one of us is a sacred part of the totality. Our naturalistic approach accepts and reveres the universe and nature just as they are, and promotes an ethic of respect for human and animal rights and for lifestyles that sustain rather than destroy the environment.

We do not believe in supernatural entities or personal creator gods. This earth is not a temporary stage that God will soon destroy, it is a paradise we must restore, preserve and cherish. Life is not a passageway to an imaginary world after death: it is all we have, and each moment must be celebrated for itself. We humans must create our own ethics and purposes, to explore and appreciate reality, to save the planet, and to ensure a life of dignity for all its inhabitants.

The World Pantheist Movement opened at the Spring Equinox 1999. Our goal is to promote natural/scientific pantheism as an alternative option to traditional religions. We aim to create local pantheist groups in as many places as possible, for mutual support, shared celebration and action – and to provide a network of celebrants so that pantheists can have weddings and funerals in harmony with their beliefs.

The WPM grew from the Scientific Pantheism mailing list, set up in 1997, which now has members in 47 countries and all US states. We have a quarterly magazine PAN and a growing number of mailing lists, bulletin boards, and local groups. We are a vibrant international community of lively, spiritually aware folk, from high-school students, gardeners and busdrivers to computer programmers and university professors. Join us today, or find out more at our web site <http://www.pantheism.net>.



What we believe

- We revere and celebrate the Universe as the totality of being, past, present and future. It is self-organizing, ever-evolving and inexhaustibly diverse. Its overwhelming power, beauty and fundamental mystery compel the deepest human reverence and wonder.
- All matter, energy, and life are an interconnected unity of which we are an inseparable part. We rejoice in our existence and seek to participate ever more deeply in this unity through knowledge, celebration, meditation, empathy, love, ethical action and art.
- We are an integral part of Nature, which we should cherish, revere and preserve in all its magnificent beauty and diversity. We should strive to live in harmony with Nature locally and globally. We acknowledge the inherent value of all life, human and non-human, and strive to treat all living creatures with compassion, empathy, and respect.
- All humans are equal centers of awareness of the Universe and nature, and all deserve a life of equal dignity and mutual respect. To this end we support and work towards freedom, democracy, justice, and non-discrimination, and a world community based on peace, an end to poverty, sustainable ways of life, and full respect for human rights.
- There is a single kind of substance, energy/ matter, which is vibrant and infinitely creative in all its forms. Body and mind are indivisibly united.
- We see death as the return to nature of our elements, and the end of our existence as individuals. The forms of "afterlife" available to humans are natural ones, in the natural world. Our actions, our ideas and memories of us live on, according to what we do in our lives. Our genes live on in our families, and our elements are endlessly recycled in nature.
- We honor reality, and keep our minds open to the evidence of the senses and of science's unending quest for deeper understanding. These are our best means of coming to know the Universe, and on them we base our aesthetic and religious feelings about reality.
- Every individual has direct access through perception, emotion and meditation to ultimate reality, which is the Universe and Nature. There is no need for mediation by priests, gurus or revealed scriptures.
- We uphold the separation of religion and state, and the universal human right of freedom of religion. We recognize the freedom of all pantheists to express and celebrate their beliefs, as individuals or in groups, in any non-harmful ritual, symbol or vocabulary that is meaningful to them.

Join the World Pantheist Movement today...

- Personal benefits:
- Quarterly 'Pan' magazine.
 - Free e-mail forwarding address at our domain, eg: Yourname@pantheism.net
 - Membership of associated mailing lists and bulletin boards.
 - Membership of a rapidly growing, vibrant international community.
- Public benefits:
- Helping promote earth-honoring life-affirming natural/scientific pantheism as a religious option and alternative to traditional religions.
 - Supporting the creation of a network of celebrants for pantheist weddings and funerals.
 - Making possible an expanding pantheist presence in all media.
 - Helping to promote the formation of local groups.
 - Making possible free associate membership for under 17s, hardship cases, and people from developing countries and emerging economies.

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State: _____

ZIP code: _____

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Membership level (please tick box and write in amount sent):

Basic (\$30/£20) Family* (\$60/£40) Life (\$600/£400)

Internet only(\$8/£5) Low income and student (\$12/£8)

Donation (please write amount here) \$/£ _____

* Family provides one copy of the magazine plus up to four e-mail forwarding addresses @pantheism.net and four memberships of the World Pantheist Movement bulletin board.

Please mail with your check (US dollars) to:

The World Pantheist Movement,
131 North Ludlow Street, Suite 1311
Dayton, OH 45402-1111

The World Pantheist Movement
PO Box 18687,
London NW3 2FG, UK

Please photocopy double sided and give to friends.

WORLD PANTHEIST MOVEMENT



Revering the Universe, Caring for Nature, Celebrating Life

A religion that stressed the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science, might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.
 Sooner or later, such a religion will emerge.

Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot.

<http://www.pantheism.net/>