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The Sacred and the Profane in the Ecological Politics of Sacrifice

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A Crisis of Meaning

If progress is synonymous with increased consumption of goods, does ecological sustainability entail the end of progress? “We’ll all have to make personal sacrifices,” we often hear, which, given the equation of progress with material accumulation, can only be heard as a gloomy prognosis. But what if our culture’s concept of sacrifice is upside down? What if, rather than being a painful exercise in self-abnegation, sacrifice is actually “a celebration of consumption and being consumed?”¹ What if, rather than being either a superstitious act of futility or a heroic act of altruism, sacrifice is understood as a fundamental law of the cosmos to which humans can align themselves joyously? This chapter articulates a life-affirming perspective on the politics of sacrifice, a perspective that is rooted in a cosmology of interdependence that understands people as an integral part of a participatory universe. This reading of sacrifice helps to address the crisis of meaning implicit in concerns about “the end of progress.”

The “environmental crisis”—really a creeping megacrisis, in which the exponential expansion of human populations is coupled with even greater increases in consumption—is generally understood as a material phenomenon. This many tentacled crisis includes the mass extinction of species, unprecedented climate change, unsustainable resource depletion, and myriad pollution dangers. While the widespread formula for quantifying environmental degradation, $I = PAT$,² is a useful thumbnail sketch of the *material* dimensions of the crisis, it is silent about the deeper *ideational* forces at work. If human behavior is rooted in systems of meaning, as I believe it is, then the environmental crisis must be

understood as a crisis of meaning. Human action, relationships, and their material effects are a reflection of human consciousness.³

The prevailing materialist framing of the crisis inevitably sends a bleak and moralistic message to the mainstream public in high-consumption societies, or at least one that is received as such. The common perception is that sustainable consumption will entail sacrifice, which in turn implies unwanted limitations on personal freedom and comfort. Ironically, this perception of sacrifice as negative and limiting is shared not only by those who oppose policies aimed toward sustainable consumption, but even by many environmentalists themselves. The primary difference is that the former see such sacrifice as morally and politically offensive, while the latter view it as necessary. This places environmentalists in the awkward position of appearing to dictate through policy what, in the minds of many, should be personal lifestyle choices—thus the embittered accusation of “eco-fascism.” Less strident global consumers, on the other hand, may simply succumb to paralyzing guilt. As Mitchell Thomashow notes, the blame-guilt circuit involves “feeling victimized and exploited by a situation that is out of one’s control, that was unexpected, or for which someone else was initially responsible. This casts a disquieting shadow, becomes a place of perpetual suffering, in which people shift from blame to guilt to denial, powerless to take action, and plagued by doubt. Rather than being moved to action, they are immobilized by guilt.”⁴

Yet across the spectrum from green to antigreen, and including the immobilized guilt-ridden, there is broad agreement that sustainable consumption will require personal sacrifice and varying degrees of self-denial. At first glance, this consensus might seem surprising. Yet, as I will argue, it is symptomatic of a deeper cultural ontology to which both sides subscribe. In cultures premised on individualism and a notion of progress as consumptive accumulation, sacrifice will inevitably be understood as fundamentally constraining, painful, and self-abnegating. From this perspective, such a “reflexive focus on sacrifice funnels scholars, activists and policymakers alike into a dismal, depressing, and anti-democratic politics of change.”⁵

There is, however, a far more uplifting perspective, one that recognizes the need for major reductions in consumption by global overconsumers, yet frames that recognition in light of an affirmative view of sacrifice. One point of entry to that perspective is through the root meaning of

sacrifice, derived from *sacre* (sacred) and *facere* (to make).⁶ Rather than engendering a sense of limitation and constraint, true sacrifice is a gift that enlarges the giver by linking him or her to forces and wider circles of identification beyond his or her ordinary sense of self. Outside our own modern cultural context, sacrifice is a nearly universal practice whose effects have been generally understood as positive. Though the forms it takes vary greatly from one culture to the next, anthropologists affirm that sacrifice typically promotes both social cohesion and a sense of deep relationship with the cosmos and transcendental forces. Naturally, we may find specific forms of sacrifice, especially the most gory rituals of human sacrifice, morally abhorrent, and given our own cultural context, we may even find the whole idea of sacrifice economically dangerous or politically irrelevant. Nonetheless, if sacrifice is in its essence a nearly universal social practice with beneficial effects, then a deeper understanding of its inner meaning and contemporary relevance could cut across the lines that divide greens and antigreens, and perhaps also inspire the guilt-ridden and the immobilized. Yet, as I will suggest, sacrifice in a postindividualistic world will entail significant differences from earlier forms in terms of how it functions both in material and ideational terms.

To the secular mind, introducing any notion of the sacred into the politics of sacrifice can only mean trouble. From this perspective, the superstitious, dangerous, and wasteful sacrificial practices of the past have been supplanted by reason, individual rights, and market exchange. I hope to show, however, that sacrifice has not disappeared in rationalized societies; it has merely gone underground. Far from being an invalid or nonexistent form of human activity, sacrifice in modernity is ubiquitous but largely unconscious. The point, then, is to uncover its dynamics and its manifestations. If sacrifice is, in fact, a nearly universal cultural practice, then there are two crucial questions to ask with respect to an ecological politics of sacrifice. First, what is and has been sacrificed in the name of the modern pursuit of progress? Second, how might we articulate an affirmative vision of sacrifice that is politically relevant in an ecologically full world?

I will first frame sacrifice in terms of a holistic ontology rooted in cyclical processes and the reciprocity of gift exchange, and then consider some possibilities for a scientific grounding of an affirmative perspective

on sacrifice, including earth systems science, the universe story, and the positive psychology movement. Drawing from history, the social sciences, and theology, I then suggest that sacrifice, far from being rare, is actually ubiquitous and serves many of the same crucial functions across cultures. If this is the case, then we should expect to find sacrifice showing up in some surprising places in societies that place a high value on rational choice and individual rights. Ironically, as I will argue, consumptive individualism, rejecting either the existence of sacrifice or its validity (or both), has spawned a global sacrificial economy.

The challenge, then, is to uncover who and what are being sacrificed and in the name of what “gods.” Finally, I cite some concrete contemporary examples of an affirmative sacrificial ontology and relate these to a general outline of a celebratory politics of sacrifice, one that offers a promising proxy to “the end of progress” in an ecologically full world. As Thomas Princen argues in chapter 7, the “sovereign consumer” must be dethroned. While he rightly highlights the possibilities for an affirmative politics of sacrifice implicit in alternative sources of individual identity, such as citizenship, I highlight also the possibilities implicit in ontological sources of meaning making. To revive, in our present context, the ancient meaning of sacrifice as “to make sacred by offering” would be to rejoin the larger community of life that extends to other people and creatures living now and in the future. Under such a cosmology of radical interdependence, the emphasis shifts from consumer society’s preoccupation with *belonging* to a more deeply satisfying focus on *belonging*.

An Alternative Ontology and Its Transhistorical Expression

As we see the world, so shall we act on it. If we fundamentally believe that the world consists of separate, disconnected entities and that the security of the individual depends on his or her ability to protect himself or herself from the vicissitudes of external forces, whether natural or human, then we will construct the social and technological means to gain that protection. The pursuit of consumptive accumulation seems to be an inevitable consequence of such an ontology. This is not necessarily a good or a bad thing. As I will suggest later, individualism has served a noble purpose in constituting the person as a self-aware bearer of rights and responsibilities. Yet its usefulness is wearing thin in an ecologically

full world—most acutely so among the global overconsumers. From the vantage point of an individualistic ontology, sacrifice is generally associated with loss. The dictionary definition⁷ begins with the traditional idea of an offering to a deity in propitiation or homage, at most a marginal practice in secular societies, and then turns to the commercial context of sacrifice as “selling at a loss.” In those cases in which it is seen as surrendering a desired good for the sake of “a higher or more pressing claim,” sacrifice takes on the hue of bargaining by a rational actor. Yet, from what we can glean of traditional cultures and what we can infer from a holistic ontology, the emphasis on loss or bargaining misses the point.

A cosmology of interdependence and wholeness offers a very different perspective. Here, the root impulse behind sacrifice is a devotional movement, a “celebration of consumption and being consumed,” a recognition of cosmic or transcendental forces beyond the individual to which one is indebted for one’s very existence and to which one responds with spontaneous gratitude. To sacrifice, then, is to celebrate these forces and to link oneself intimately with them by returning the gift. The psychology of loss or bargaining associated with sacrifice in the secular mind is quite foreign to the more reverential attitude that we find in a holistic ontology. While the forms that sacrifice has taken traditionally vary greatly, as do the forces and deities to which sacrifice is offered, the deeper psychological and social meaning of sacrifice as participation in a cosmos rooted in gift exchange seems to be universal.

An eloquent expression of a holistic ontology, one that does not revert to what might be perceived by the modern mind as an archaic outlook, is offered by Sri Aurobindo. Because it stands in such contrast to the individualistic worldview, I quote from it extensively:

The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. . . . The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. . . . Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock; out of its mental receipts from Nature or its vital and physical assets and acquisitions and belongings a stream goes to all that is around it. And always again it receives something from its environment in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute. For it is only by this giving and receiving that it can effect its own growth while at the same time it helps the sum of things. At length, though at first slowly and partially, we learn to make the conscious sacrifice; even, in the end, we take joy to give ourselves and what

we envisage as belonging to us in a spirit of love and devotion to That which appears for the moment other than ourselves and is certainly other than our limited personalities. . . . The true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object is not self-effacement, but self-fulfillment; its method not self-mortification, but a greater life.⁸

We find in this passage a profound intermingling of the transcendent and the ordinary. Though Sri Aurobindo's words hearken back to the mystical formulation of the Upanishads, "the eater eating is eaten," they also resonate in very practical terms with the essence of social life. In community and family life, one receives in proportion to what one gives. Similarly, in sports and education, one grows in aptitude to the extent that one gives oneself to the process. We become what we give ourselves to. The scholar becomes a scholar by giving himself or herself to studies; the musical becomes a musician by giving himself or herself to music. Even the secular mind, with its reflexive aversion to the transcendental and cosmic dimensions of sacrifice, is compelled to acknowledge its social and psychological function, although the subsequent instinct is to reduce apparent self-giving to self-interested bargaining. Still, this recognition represents perhaps a small crack in the armor.

Given the modern aversion to sacrifice, one may be surprised to learn of its ubiquity across human culture. While its forms vary widely, ranging from the concrete offerings of human, animal, and plant life to the spiritual sacrifice of self, sacrifice has historically served a range of social, psychological, and religious functions. From a religious perspective, sacrifice is "a gift to a god that establishes a flow between the giver and the god."⁹ It may serve as a vehicle for redemption, expiation, or transcendence. Many traditions, including those of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, posit in their conceptions of sacrifice a direct connection between divine generosity and human generosity. Yet the social and religious aspects of sacrifice are not distinct; sacrifice is foundational to communal living and, in many cultures, confers on the offerer the qualities of a deity.¹⁰ At a minimum, in the minds of its practitioners, sacrifice establishes a crucial relationship and flow of communication between oneself and forces or beings beyond oneself.

From a social perspective, sacrifice and its close relative, gift giving, are rooted in the perception of interdependence and reciprocity in a holistic cosmos. In such a cosmos, the notions of psychological and social independence that are so foundational to modern life are foreign; every

level of existence, from the family, to the community, to the larger sphere of nonhuman nature, is constituted by relationship and reciprocity. M. F. C. Bourdillon finds as a common feature of all forms of sacrifice the ability to bring peace and contribute to social order.¹¹ More generally, gift giving is considered by anthropologists as "a fundamental bedrock of human civilization," which, although "marginalized in the modern context of utilitarian economic exchange," displays an impressive continuity through widely disparate historical periods and cultures.¹²

The social, psychological, and religious dimensions of sacrifice, while conceptually distinct, are in practice intimately interwoven. According to Marcel Mauss, perhaps the most eminent social scientist on the subject, sacrifice simultaneously serves religious, juridical, economic, social, and psychological functions. It is a "total social phenomenon, . . . a paradigmatic engagement of the material, the organic and bodily, the psychological and political in a wider choreography of social form which itself had a lasting historical character."¹³ Because sacrifice serves as an integrative bridge within a holistic cosmos, there are no categorical oppositions between psyche and body, the individual and society, the sacred and the profane. Likewise, sacrifice is a means of both integration and differentiation. Sacrifice is a primary means by which people are brought together and constituted as a community; conversely, sacrifice is believed to separate and protect them from defilement and disease. In this sense, the functions of communion and expiation are interdependent. Communion, a form of integration, and expiation, a mode of differentiating, work together; integration is not possible without differentiation. The community that forges communal bonds, for instance, through participation in a sacrificial meal, simultaneously distinguishes itself from other social groups and perhaps also expiates itself from sin or some negativity.¹⁴ The Christian Eucharist is perhaps the most prominent premodern sacrificial ritual that has persisted alongside secular society.

While the history of sacrifice points to a common underlying ontology of interdependence and reciprocity, that history is not static, but rather, suggests a developmental trajectory. Most anthropological and theological studies concur with Mauss's finding that the earliest forms of sacrifice emphasized physical offerings made according to highly ritualized practices, whereas later modes of sacrifice emphasize consciousness and "attitudes of soul."¹⁵ In many traditions, most obviously Vedic culture,

a given sacrificial ritual could be understood literally and practiced mechanically by the masses, while having an altogether esoteric meaning for spiritual initiates. Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, there was a movement away from earlier pagan "cultic sacrifices" toward a focus on morality and obedience to God's law. In the Psalms, for instance, God demands a total sacrifice of self, rather than any burned offering.¹⁶ With the sacrifice of Jesus and the spread of Christianity, human sacrifice became increasingly rare.¹⁷ Thus the New Testament calls on its readers to be "like living stones built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God."¹⁸ One might wonder if there is any relationship between, on one hand, the dematerialization of sacrifice over time and, on the other, its relative invisibility in modern societies. As I will suggest in the next section, sacrifice did not disappear with modernity, but only went underground.

The developmental trajectory of sacrifice is also associated with widening circles of identification and the enlargement of self. At various points in human history, the family, then the tribe, then the nation became so dear that people were willing to sacrifice themselves for "the greater good." The consequences of consumption in today's economy seem to call us beyond the family, community, and nation to a planetary circle of identification.

Contrary to modernity's embrace of "possessive individualism,"¹⁹ self-giving seems to be built into the human condition and correlated with psychological maturity. Parenting, which for many species is a short-term commitment, is an eighteen-year project, at a minimum, and a lifelong labor of devotion for humans. Developmental psychologists believe that, while the adolescent's task is to establish a clear sense of individual identity, the adult's developmental task is one of "generativity," cultivating and propagating one's creative energies to return the gifts one has received.²⁰ Yet this propensity toward generosity does not only emerge with adulthood. As recent findings in experimental evolutionary anthropology indicate (and any observant mother will affirm), the human impulse toward self-giving shows itself as early as eighteen months in the spontaneous helpfulness of toddlers.²¹ This suggests that the sacrificial ontology of interdependence and reciprocity is not just a relic of primitive cultures, but is endemic to human social and psychological life.

Because there is a close relationship between sacrifice, gift giving, and gratitude, our understanding of an ontology of interdependence would not be complete without some discussion of the nature of gifts and the psychology of gratitude. This discussion will also return us to the seemingly forgotten question of environmental politics. In his wide-ranging investigation into "the gift," Lewis Hyde contrasts gifts, which create and enhance the sense of relationship, with commodities, which are acquired through transactions and tend to erase the perception of bonds. "Gifts," he observes, "do not earn profit, they give increase."²² The potlatch, for instance, was a sometimes extravagant gift-giving ceremony that celebrated the abundance of nature. The tribes of the Pacific Northwest, for instance, believed that salmon took on human form while they lived in the ocean and returned to the rivers as fish to feed their brothers on land. The potlatch not only fostered a sense of social solidarity, but also honored the sacrificial gift of the salmon in a spirit of deference and gratitude.²³ Their relationship to the salmon was a natural consequence of an underlying ontology of interdependence, in which human existence is embedded in a world of gift exchange. Such examples of naturalistic practices of gift giving among native peoples abound and were part of a worldview that generated relatively sustainable consumption in those cultures.

The nature of the gift, unlike goods that can be bought and sold, is that it must be kept in motion. The recipient of a gift may be said to suffer a debt of gratitude until he or she somehow returns the favor or sets the gift back into motion. The logic of gifts, like a river, is one of flow, whereas in a market system, wealth is disengaged from the flow and becomes concentrated in pools. Scarcity appears when wealth cannot flow. Like a river, if the gift flow is dammed up, it will stagnate, and the dam (the one who hoards) will metaphorically burst.²⁴ A similar logic holds for one's personal talents; if we do not offer our inner gifts to something beyond ourselves, then we stagnate with them. Contrary to the logic of possessive individualism, we do not own our gifts, but rather serve only as a channel for their movement. As an example, on a Roman birthday, a person was expected to give a gift that came from his or her *genius*, or his or her endowment at birth. If the gift of one's own talents was not set free during the course of one's life, one's *genius* was thought to be in bondage when one died.²⁵

As I will suggest in the following section, this perspective did not disappear with the rise of secular modernity; it only became marginalized. From the vantage point of radical interdependence, gift flow, which lies at the crux of sacrifice, can never disappear; it can only be occluded or misunderstood. On closer inspection, we see that the market economy actually rests on the foundation of a multilayered gift economy of symbiotic biological and social relationships. Modern societies, like all societies, are built on the accumulated wealth of previous ages. Family, friendship, mutual assistance, and solidarity are the very fabric of society; in the absence of what has been called the unpaid “care economy,” market economies could not function. Indeed, the care economy often repairs some of the social, psychological, and ecological damage done by the commercial and public economy in the name of development.²⁶

The dawning environmental megacrisis, we might say, reveals the hidden existence of natural gift flows on which the global economy depends. The relatively new scientific fields of ecology and earth system science, for instance, encompass the study of the basic cycles of give and take that make human existence possible.²⁷ Under an ontology of interdependence, “natural resources” are not available for exploitation, but rather, are gifts to be received in gratitude and kept in motion indefinitely. A primary message of the environmental megacrisis is that the illusion of human separateness from the rest of creation is becoming increasingly unsustainable, both conceptually and materially. Rather than leading to a dismal sacrificial environmentalism, this realization can engender a celebratory sense of belonging that is also grounded in scientific understanding. In the words of theoretical physicist John Wheeler, “The universe does not exist ‘out there’ independent of us. We are inescapably involved in bringing about that which appears to be happening. We are not only observers. We are participators. In some strange sense this is a participatory universe.”²⁸ A holistic ontology of interdependence and reciprocity depicts a fundamentally participatory universe. As human beings, we can uniquely participate by consciously receiving the innumerable gifts that we could not possibly have earned and, by responding with a spontaneous gratitude, offering our own gifts in return. In receiving the gifts of human relationships as well as earth’s gifts of water, air, food, and warmth, we participate in a “continuum

of personal to cosmic kindness”²⁹ to which gratitude and self-giving are the natural upwelling response.

Premised on a holistic ontology, an ecological politics of sacrifice would not be about compulsion, guilt, or burdened self-sacrifice; rather, it would grow out of a sense of self as interwoven with earth, cosmos, species, and society. Sacrifice, then, would facilitate engagement with a participatory universe and would therefore regain its original meaning of “to make sacred by giving.” Our politics would follow from our sense of who we are in relation to others—other people (perhaps in distant places and perhaps not yet living) and other species. If human development proceeds by the widening of our circles of identification, then an ecological identity rooted in a holistic ontology represents an important developmental achievement and need not entail any loss of individuality. This, in essence, is what Mitchell Thomashow means in saying that “ecological identity is a way of saying grace.”³⁰

Making Sacrifice Visible

In the previous section, I intentionally painted a fairly rosy picture of sacrifice for two reasons: to show that it can be grounded in a celebratory ontology of interdependence and to counterbalance its contemporary association with loss and self-denial. I also painted a rather stark contrast between a sacrificial cosmology of mutuality and the perpetual flow of gifts, and a market economy based on acquisition and the perpetual drive for increased production and consumption. In this section, I will paint a more complex picture. If we live in an interdependent universe, rather than an atomistic one, then existence without self-offering and mutuality is a chimera. The implications for consumerist culture are twofold: first, sacrifice and self-giving cannot disappear altogether, but rather, must somehow exist alongside individualism and consumption. If this is so, then some of the groundwork for a celebratory politics of sacrifice has been laid because sacrifice is not completely foreign to the status quo, even if it is undervalued. Second, and of vital significance to an ecological politics of sacrifice, to the extent that the *belief* in the primacy of consumption creates the *illusion* of getting without giving, *sacrifice goes underground*. Thus, when interdependence is denied or occluded, people tend to be unaware of what actually *is* being sacrificed, to what “gods,”

and to what ends. This is precisely why environmental education can be such a painful process, for it entails becoming “disillusioned.”

In this section, I show first that sacrifice and the modalities of self-giving associated with an ontology of interdependence are not altogether foreign, but are surprisingly widespread, even in secular society. As a consequence, the task for an affirmative ecological politics of sacrifice is more to tap into what already exists as a strong undercurrent than to generate it *ex nihilo*. Establishing a positive grounding in what already exists is important for this section’s second task: to uncover some of the ways in which consumptive individualism conceals sacrifice. The concepts of shadow ecology and ecological debt are particularly helpful in this task of disillusionment. Finally, I explore the possibility that the ontology of individualism has, paradoxically, made a significant contribution to the unfolding of a holistic ontology. The free, rational, and autonomous individual, even if illusory from a holistic perspective, is now a social construction with real effects in political, economic, and psychological life. An affirmative ecological politics offers the opportunity for that individual to enter into a larger sense of self, sacrificing the more destructive expressions of his separative identity on the altar of ecological vitality and global justice. Such a sacrifice need not entail the death of the individual; instead, it represents his entry into ecological adulthood through a sense of deep engagement with a participatory universe.

If there is anything resembling Sri Aurobindo’s perception of a universal law of solidarity pervading the entire universe, then sacrifice cannot disappear even in social conditions that deny its existence or its relevance. Indeed, we find sacrificial practices cropping up both at the margins and even sometimes at the center of modern societies. Similarly, gift economies exist alongside the market economy, both repairing and propping it up. In his comparison of archaic and modern cultures, Mircea Eliade, the pioneering scholar of religions, observed that the sacred persists even in cultural contexts that privilege the profane. Following the logic of the return of the repressed, however, it typically emerges in distorted forms.³¹ Likewise, sacrifice persists in secular societies, though it is often misplaced, misshapen, or unacknowledged.

We are all familiar with the notion of sacrificing a lesser good for a greater good. Though they may be rooted in a rational choice approach,

which follows from individualism, such forms of sacrifice are still worth noting because they suggest that sacrifice persists even in a context that neglects or devalues it. Such common expressions of this sort of sacrifice include the readiness of families to pay the astronomical costs associated with a college education and the willingness of dieters to forego the pleasures of certain foods in the interest of losing weight. Equally common, perhaps, are the more negative forms of sacrifice, in which the greater good is sacrificed for the sake of the lesser. Some examples that come to mind are so-called workaholics, who sacrifice their emotional ties and physical well-being for the sake of productivity, or those with any other form of addiction. Finally, given that most Americans express some sort of religious or spiritual identity, we should not be surprised to find that a wide range of religiously motivated forms of sacrifice continues to coexist alongside secularism. For instance, the *politics of sacrifice* has been used to describe a social movement among conservative Christians to promote sexual abstinence among teenagers. While the circles of identification entailed in these examples are fairly small and none are solidly grounded in an ontology of interdependence, they do help to demonstrate the enduring nature of sacrifice even within secular societies.

Likewise, as Hyde persuasively demonstrates, gift and market systems are not incompatible but often exist alongside one another. The primary concern of his book is the plight of the artist, who “labors with his gift” in a market society. Exploring gifts as a form of property that forges social bonds, he shows how gifts remain central within certain enclaves of a market system. Within the scientific community, for instance, knowledge circulates as a gift. Even if we academics are painfully aware of the degree of egoism entailed in our enterprise, we can still recognize that papers are “given” at conferences and that scientists gain status on the basis of their “contributions” to the field.³² Other examples of gift economies within the larger market economy are blood and organ donation, volunteerism, and philanthropy.³³ The recent freeware movement that offers free software through the Internet offers a window into the coevolution of gift and commercial relations. Depending on how they are interpreted, each of these examples may be plausibly read as a minority representation of an ontology of interdependence persisting within a larger social context that emphasizes individualism and autonomy. Gift systems and market systems foster two distinct yet necessary social

values. Without gifts, community is lost; without the individuality and anonymity of the market, freedom can be lost.³⁴ Hyde emphasizes the importance of gift systems because they have been undervalued, yet he also recognizes that the social bonds entailed in gift systems can have negative consequences. For instance, women and girls in many cultures have been treated as gifts, and even in market societies, gift exchange and the care economy are largely the province of women. The converse is that “generosity makes no one manly.”³⁵

Another common form of sacrifice that persists within secular societies is individual self-giving for one’s country. One of the references to a contemporary “politics of sacrifice” that I have found is an analysis of patriotism and “the generational thesis,” which holds that each generation’s civic engagement is shaped by the degree to which its members encounter events that call them to self-giving.³⁶ A popular version of the generational thesis is Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*, which celebrates “the mobilizing power of shared adversity” and highlights the sacrifices made by Americans in World War II in the name of freedom and equality.³⁷

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and with the growing concern over U.S. dependence on foreign oil, some environmentalists have called on Americans to make sacrifices by reducing their energy consumption. For decades, Europeans have made personal sacrifices in the form of higher taxes to reduce their petroleum dependency, and those taxes have spurred the development of more fuel-efficient vehicles. Polls indicate that Americans are “cautiously open” to increased gasoline taxes, but only if those taxes actually help to reduce dependence on foreign oil.³⁸ Reluctant acquiescence to reduced consumption, however, is a far cry from deeply internalizing a sacrificial cosmology. A crucial conceptual bridge from consumerism to an ontology of interdependence is constructed when people willingly sacrifice the lesser good of egoistic consumption for the greater good of ecological responsibility.

One key element in this ontological shift involves waking up to the myriad levels of sacrifice occluded by the phenomenon of distancing in the global economy.³⁹ Because consumers live at a comfortable distance from the effects of their consumption, they are largely blind to what and whom are being sacrificed. Moreover, their cultural milieu reinforces a negative understanding of sacrifice, providing a further incentive to turn

a blind eye to very real sacrifices. A central theme running through the anthropological literature on sacrifice is that, while it plays a pivotal role in ancient and traditional cultures, it is generally held in disregard in modern societies.⁴⁰ Yet, seen through the lens of an ontology of interdependence, modern consumerism is based on the fantastic idea that there can be life without sacrifice. The innumerable gifts of nature are simply discounted, obfuscated, or appropriated by the global economy. From this perspective, it also becomes apparent that economic prosperity is built on the massive conversion of gift wealth to market wealth.⁴¹ A primary contribution of environmental education is to uncover the dynamics of that conversion.

The notion of *shadow ecologies*, whereby the environmental effects of goods are felt across global lines of production, transportation, and waste disposal, rather than where they are consumed, is a particularly useful concept for uncovering the reality of ecological sacrifice.⁴² Today’s affluent consumers have easy access to a panoply of goods with enormous shadow ecologies: tropical hardwoods, electronic gadgets, petroleum and its countless derivatives, chocolate, coffee, and even green technologies like compact fluorescent lightbulbs. A key (and often disconcerting) facet of environmental education entails learning about the far-flung material and social consequences of our lifestyles. We find ourselves asking, “What is the impact of my lifestyle—the resource extraction, the production, and the waste disposal associated with my consumption habits—on distant peoples and ecosystems?” Likewise, students are increasingly familiar with *ecological footprint* measurements, which consider the amount of land required to sustain a person’s lifestyle.⁴³ Because for affluent consumers, that land is mostly in remote places, the inevitable question arises, whom and what are being sacrificed?

Besides the geographical dimension of ecological sacrifice, there is the generally unrecognized chronological dimension. If there can be no getting without giving, then the vast disparity of wealth between the global North and the global South sparks curiosity about the historical origins of that disparity. If the global economy is premised on an unprecedented conversion of gift wealth to market wealth, then we might ask, from where and whom did the gift wealth of the global overconsumers come, and under what historical conditions? Here, the concept

of *ecological debt* adds a temporal dimension to our understanding of the politics of sacrifice. As Andrew Simms demonstrates, the wealth of the industrialized countries came substantially from the third world, beginning with the vast mineral wealth in gold and silver brought from the Americas to Europe from the sixteenth century onward.⁴⁴ The flow of wealth from the periphery to the core continued with the slave trade; through a vast array of rubber, sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, and banana plantations; right up to today's extractive economies for oil, minerals, and timber in the developing world. In this sense, there is some moral justification for claims by representatives of developing countries that not only should their own developmental trajectory not be threatened by international environmental regimes, but the North actually owes them compensation for the current distribution of global wealth. The fact that 20 percent of the world's population controls 80 percent of the world's wealth, and vice versa, is rooted in a long history of wealth being transferred from South to North. Given that most of that wealth transfer occurred as a consequence of colonialism and military conquest, it is more aptly described as plunder than gift.

The notion of ecological debt is particularly salient with respect to global climate change. Here the question is not so much resources—although the question of peak oil does bring that question to bear—but rather, sinks. The atmosphere is a giant global sink for anthropogenic sources of greenhouse gas emissions, and the fairest way of allocating emission rights is on a per capita basis.⁴⁵ Because increased wealth has been strongly correlated with fossil fuel consumption, and therefore carbon dioxide emissions, developing countries can make a persuasive case that they are owed a *carbon debt* by the affluent countries. Because developing countries will be most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, that debt casts a shadow into the future. Already, the annual number of deaths caused by climate change is estimated at 150,000–300,000—with as many as 99 percent of those deaths occurring in developing countries.⁴⁶ From this perspective, a fair distribution of the world's atmospheric commons would not use a per capita emissions approach, but rather, would issue developing countries a larger per capita share of atmospheric space. This need not mean a literal per capita reduction of industrialized countries' emissions to a level below that of developing countries, but it could mean the North paying its debt by transferring

wealth and technology to the South. Of course, to anticipate such responsible behavior in the current political context is unrealistic, but that is only because the global overconsumers of the world are largely blind to what is being, has been, and will be sacrificed as a consequence of their actions. At a minimum, recognizing that its current wealth is based on past and present sacrifices in the South, the North would owe the South an enormous debt of gratitude.

When we project the consequences of today's consumption into the future, we uncover the unconscious and involuntary sacrifice of the unborn, both human and nonhuman. Carbon dioxide, for instance, lasts for over one hundred years in the atmosphere, which means that our children and their children will be the ones to feel the full impact of today's car culture. Similarly, a host of toxic and radioactive pollutants will persist in our air, water, and soil for generations to come. Two ecological legacies of the cold war, the Nevada Test Site and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in eastern Washington, have been proposed as National Sacrifice Zones.⁴⁷ The mass extinction of species is a monumental sacrifice, one that is largely ignored by societies wedded to a notion of progress as perpetual material betterment. Though it might sound odd to speak of a debt to posterity, consumer society is utterly dependent on a transfer of wealth from the future; the involuntary character of that transfer, however, makes it more a theft than a gift.

Thus sacrifice does not disappear in secular modernity; it merely goes underground. The distancing that occurs as a consequence of global commodity chains only serves to obscure the sacrifices made by a global underclass, past and future generations, and nonhuman nature. Just as ancient and traditional forms of sacrifice often required a scapegoat, so do contemporary forms of ecological sacrifice. According to many scholars of sacrifice, especially those following the work of René Girard, such violent sacrificial rites virtually disappeared with the rise of rationality, juridical process, and philosophy of human rights.⁴⁸ I would argue that sacrifice did not vanish under secular modernity, but was only rendered unconscious, invisible, and involuntary because it disappeared from view in high-consumption societies. A deeper social and ecological analysis of the contours of global commodity and waste chains reveals how the global economy is actually grounded in the persistence of unacknowledged sacrifice.

You may find that all this talk of debt arouses exactly the kinds of morally burdened and despairing attitudes that I promised to circumvent in articulating an affirmative politics of sacrifice. I would, however, respond by saying that these attitudes are only a necessary and painful first step, and that a fuller inquiry will lead us to an affirmative and celebratory politics of sacrifice. If we have been living in blissful ignorance with respect to what is actually being sacrificed as a consequence of our consumption, then the dawning awareness that comes with uncovering ecological debt and shadow ecologies is bound to cause initial discomfort. To the extent that this is so, then perhaps an initial guilt-ridden ecological politics of sacrifice can serve some of the same expiatory functions as ancient sacrificial rituals. But we need not stop there. For when blissful ignorance⁴⁹ is sacrificed on the altar of awareness and integrity, the ensuing sense of wholeness and connection may offer unanticipated gifts.

A deeper inquiry into an affirmative politics of sacrifice raises the further question: to what “gods” are the sacrifices entailed in shadow ecologies and ecological debt being made? In other words, what are the overarching values and purposes that appear to render the wholesale sacrifice of peoples, ecosystems, other species, and future generations acceptable? To the degree that we are not conscious of those values and purposes, then sacrifice is again occluded. While my anecdotal evidence from the classroom hardly constitutes a scientifically valid survey, it is suggestive. When asked what they believe is the purpose of the global economy, my students almost universally respond by saying “progress,” “growth,” or “development.” When pressed to define their terms, most understand these values to be fundamentally about enhancing human material well-being. Among the few who stress more psychological purposes, such as “making people happier,” there is still a prevailing assumption that the means to happiness is increased consumption, even if they are vaguely aware that social scientists find no convincing correlation between material wealth and happiness or overall satisfaction. A bit more inquiry reveals that the deeper values implicit in consumer culture are comfort, convenience, and security. Of course, there is nothing wrong with these values, but articulating them explicitly enables us to ask a number of intriguing questions that can take us some steps further on the path toward an affirma-

tive politics of sacrifice. Among these are, is it worth it? Are these the values on which we want to ground our lives? And what values are lost or compromised by sacrificing to the “gods” of material progress and convenience?

Inquiry into what is being sacrificed, and to what ends, therefore, makes possible something very important that otherwise could not occur: *conscious choice*. Once we are aware of the sacrifices that are actually entailed by our consumption habits, and once we have articulated the values that inform those habits, we can ask ourselves whether this is truly how we want to live. For some people, the answer will be yes. But faced with a growing awareness of the previously hidden and largely involuntary sacrifices perpetuated by the global economy, the answer for many will be no. This second group will have begun to articulate an affirmative politics of sacrifice by situating themselves within an ontology of interdependence. Indeed, a quiet minority has already stepped in the direction of a low-consumption, low-waste lifestyle, opting for such things as bicycles, local and organic food, and thrift stores. What is crucial about this step is that it is not compelled or coerced; rather, it is rooted in a free choice and an ability to apply ethical and practical reasoning to one’s own life situation. Even if disillusionment sometimes feels painful, even if one is not delighted to have one’s eyes opened to what is being sacrificed and to what ends, one can embrace the resulting freedom just as a more mature adolescent can move gracefully into the responsibilities that come with adulthood.

This is the sense in which individualism can, paradoxically, contribute meaningfully to the unfolding of a holistic ontology. The free, rational, and autonomous individual, even if illusory from a holistic perspective, became under secular modernity a social construct with real effects across the gamut of political, economic, and psychological life. An affirmative politics of sacrifice offers the opportunity for that individual to enter into a larger sense of self, offering some of the more shadowy expressions of his or her separative identity on the altar of ecological vitality and global justice. Such a sacrifice does not spell the death of the individual; instead, it represents a developmental achievement for the individual who, as a consequence of extending his or her capacities for reason and care, can now choose to enter into a deeper sense of engagement with a participatory universe.

The choice to embrace an affirmative politics of sacrifice, however, is not an option equally available to everyone. Those in the global underclass, those who are unborn, those who are other-than-human—these are the ones who are *being* sacrificed under the prevailing economic order. Here I part ways with Thomas Princen, who (in chapter 7; cf. chapter 4) understands sacrifice as “the willful, informed ‘giving up’ of something valued for a higher value.” When sacrifice goes underground, as it tends to do in a culture of possessive individualism, much of the “giving up” is neither willful nor informed. To be sacrificed is a very different thing than to sacrifice. When those at the top of the global commodity food chain embrace an affirmative politics of sacrifice, they are consciously rejecting the notion that unknown others should be sacrificed for the sake of their own comfort and convenience. Moreover, if the direst peak-oil or climate change scenarios come to pass, then the ability to make this choice is extremely time sensitive: future conditions will require people to rein in their consumption, whether they like it or not.

Toward an Affirmative Politics of Sacrifice

From the perspective of consumer sovereignty, the transition to an ecological politics of sacrifice is likely to be awkward and unpleasant. Awakening to what is actually being sacrificed in the global economy as well as to one’s complicity in a host of sacrificial rites of consumption is usually a painful process of disillusionment. Acting responsibly on the basis of that awakening, whether through collective political engagement or personal lifestyle changes, requires self-giving—in terms of one’s time and one’s habits. To deny that responsible action requires real sacrifice would be to perpetuate the foundational delusion of consumer society: that getting without giving (beyond monetarily) is possible. The cultural history of sacrifice and gift economics, however, as well as my own experience tell me that sacrifice becomes a more joyful experience as it becomes a more conscious expression of an ontology of interdependence.

This, I believe, is because the environmental megacrisis is not primarily a material phenomenon; rather, climate change, the collapse of biodiversity, and the litany of “environmental” problems are symptoms of a larger crisis of meaning. That crisis raises a vital ontological and

existential question: how do we understand ourselves in relation to the rest of creation? If we see ourselves as separate individuals vying for an ever proliferating number and sophistication of consumer goods, then ecological depletion and social alienation are the inevitable consequences of our instrumental relationship to others. If we see ourselves as integral members of a participatory universe, we gain the courage and integrity to acknowledge what is actually being sacrificed under current conditions. Likewise, our circles of identification progressively widen as we enter into an I-thou, rather than an I-it, relationship with what appears to be outside ourselves.⁵⁰ When we recognize ourselves as recipients of innumerable gifts that make possible our earthly habitation, our natural response is one of wonder, gratitude, and self-giving.

Gratitude entails both a cognitive and an affective dimension: an awareness of being gifted by someone or something beyond oneself and a response of appreciation. Because of its central role in creating and deepening social bonds, gratitude has been described as “the moral memory of mankind.”⁵¹ Yet gratitude entails a sense of being dependent on people or forces outside oneself, which perhaps partly explains the inverse relationship between gratitude and narcissism.⁵² Likewise, gratitude is inversely correlated with envy, an emotion that is actively promoted by advertisement-driven consumer society. While the cultivation of gratitude may not be an explicit aim for most environmental educators, it is often a central but overlooked result of their work. As one learns more about one’s utter dependence on an intricate interplay of solar, atmospheric, hydrological, geological, and biospheric forces, a sense of awe and spontaneous gratitude arises. Affect follows closely on cognition. Dennis Rivers offers this expression of “an ecology of devotion”:

The Universe has labored mightily that we might breathe, and see the light of morning. The calcium, carbon, and iron that support these processes were made in the hearts of ancient stars. The caloric energy that lets us run is compressed starlight, the light of the sun conveyed to us from leaf to corn and wheat through countless hands. Our seemingly mundane existence, looked at from this angle, is a miracle of mind-boggling proportions. However ordinary or unworthy we may feel, we are nonetheless recipients of this galactic grace.⁵³

An ecological politics of sacrifice need not be a dismal process of self-abnegation; rather it can be not only a way of *saying* grace, as Mitchell Thomashow suggests, but also a way of *living* in a state of grace.

Sensing the urgency of the mounting environmental megacrisis, one might ask a valid question: do we have enough time for such a developmental unfolding, or should we perhaps act with greater urgency in the direction of a more coercive politics of sacrifice? This question deserves a more thorough answer than space allows, but my short answer is that it depends on where our deeper commitments lie. To the extent that we embrace an ontology of wholeness and interdependence, a negative and coercive approach may feel contrary to our newfound sensibilities. Likewise, our sense of living in a participatory universe can foster patience and a friendlier relationship with time. To the extent that we value freedom, reason, and care, a coercive approach may also feel violent or disrespectful to those whom we wish to educate. When we find ourselves confronting those whom we might wish to persuade with a vehement attitude or guilt-inducing tactics, perhaps we have unconsciously reverted to an individualistic worldview. Moreover, from a pragmatic perspective, “environmental police”⁵⁴ tactics are unlikely to be persuasive in a culture that values individual freedom. These thoughts are not intended to belittle the very real question of urgency, but rather, to expand the backdrop against which questions of urgency are posed.

One might also wonder, if we focus on ontological and existential questions, don't we risk relegating sustainability to the level of the individual, thereby rendering our responses fairly ineffectual? Here I join Thomas Princen and others in this volume who highlight the sacrificial dimension of citizenship. To sincerely embrace an ontology of interdependence is not to wallow in self-indulgent feelings of oneness with others and nature, but rather, to transform one's whole being into a living expression of that commitment. While changes in one's own thinking and lifestyle may be important elements of that transformation, real solutions will require collective action on every level; indeed, this follows inexorably from the premise of interdependence.⁵⁵ Marcel Mauss's early observations apply equally today: sacrifice is “a total social phenomenon, . . . a paradigmatic engagement of the material, the organic and bodily, the psychological and political in a wider choreography of social form.” The venues for this dance of sacrificial ecology range from families and neighborhoods to legislatures and courts, from voting booths to food shops, from newspapers to blogs, and from churches to classrooms.

Because the crisis is both planetary and ontological, the creative possibilities are innumerable.

An affirmative politics of sacrifice in an ecologically full world is about seeing the bigger picture, which simultaneously enlarges us. While sacrifice has always been about creating bonds, one consequence of our global economy is that we have unwittingly extended our bonds spatially across the planet and temporally into future generations. An ecological politics of sacrifice is therefore about embedding ourselves in the larger community of life that extends to other people and creatures living now and in the future. And because the structure of sacrifice entails that the lesser is offered up for the sake of the greater, sacrifice also contains an evolutionary impetus. While the politics of sacrifice in an ecologically full world may spell the end of progress as it was defined by consumer society, the evolutionary task before us is to recontextualize progress with a deep appreciation for our lives as threads within a vast tapestry of earthly existence.

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Notes

1. Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 41.
2. In this formula, *I* stands for environmental impact, *P* stands for population, *A* stands for affluence, and *T* stands for technologies.
3. For a more comprehensive treatment of the global problematique as a legitimization crisis, please see my article “Towards an Integral Perspective on World Politics: Secularism, Sovereignty and the Challenge of Global Ecology,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32 (Summer 2003): 29–56.
4. Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 157.
5. Memorandum from Michael Maniates to ISA panelists.

6. Jose Thachil, *The Vedic and the Christian Concept of Sacrifice* (Kerala, India: Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1985), 3.
7. These definitions of *sacrifice* are drawn from *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (Avenel, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1992), 1259.
8. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1976), 98–101.
9. Thachil, *The Vedic*, 10.
10. Chilton, *Temple of Jesus*, 32.
11. M. F. C. Bourdillon, Introduction to *Sacrifice*, ed. M. F. C. Bourdillon and Meyer Fortes (New York: Academic Press, 1980).
12. Ilana Silber, "Modern Philanthropy: Reassessing the Viability of a Maussian Perspective," in *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute*, ed. Wendy James and N. J. Allen (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 134.
13. Wendy James, "One of Us: Marcel Mauss and 'English' Anthropology," in James and Allen, *Marcel Mauss*, 20.
14. Nancy Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 18.
15. W. S. F. Pickering, "Mauss's Jewish Background," in James and Allen, *Marcel Mauss*, 53.
16. Thachil, *The Vedic*, 233–236.
17. David Nigel, *Human Sacrifice* (New York: Dorset Press, 1981), 280.
18. 1 Peter 2:5.
19. C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).
20. Erik Erikson, *Youth: Change and Challenge* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), and Erik Erikson, *Adulthood: Essays* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).
21. Felix Warneken of the Max Planck Institute also found that while other primates display spontaneous helpfulness, toddlers do so to an even greater extent. See F. Warneken and M. Tomasello, "Altruistic Helping in Human Infants and Young Chimpanzees," *Science* 3 (March 2006): 1301–1303.
22. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 37.
23. Aafke Elisabeth Komter, "Gratitude and Gift Exchange," in *The Psychology of Gratitude*, ed. Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 199–200.
24. Hyde, *The Gift*, 8, 22–23. Ironically, the term *Indian giver* originates from a meeting of these two worldviews. Apparently, the Native American expected some sort of return for their gifts to the European colonizers, a practice that led to the notion of an "Indian gift." *Ibid.*, 3–4.
25. *Ibid.*, 53.
26. I am indebted to Jean-Yves Lung for this insight.

27. Hyde, *The Gift*, 19.
28. John Archibald Wheeler, "The Universe as Home for Man," *American Scientist*, November/December 1974, quoted in Henryk Skolimowski, *Living Philosophy: Eco-Philosophy as a Tree of Life* (London: Penguin, 1992), 19.
29. David Steindl-Rast, "Gratitude as Thankfulness and as Gratefulness," in Emmons and McCullough, *Psychology of Gratitude*, 284.
30. Thomashow, *Ecological Identity*, 203.
31. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1987).
32. Hyde, *The Gift*, 77–80; Warren O. Hagstrom, *The Scientific Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1965).
33. Richard Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), and Ilana Silber, "Modern Philanthropy: Reassessing the Viability of a Maussian Perspective," in James and Allen, *Marcel Mauss*, 134–150.
34. Hyde, *The Gift*, 38.
35. *Ibid.*, 105.
36. Scott L. McLean, "Patriotism, Generational Change, and the Politics of Sacrifice," in *Social Capital*, ed. Scott L. McLean, David A. Schultz, and Manfred B. Steger (New York: New York University, 2002), 147–166.
37. Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 267.
38. Louis Uchitelle and Megan Thee, "Americans Are Cautiously Open to Gas Tax Rise, Poll Shows," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2006.
39. Thomas Princen, "The Shading and Distancing of Commerce: When Internalization Is Not Enough," *Ecological Economics* 20, no. 3 (1997): 235–253; Jennifer Clapp, "The Distance of Waste: Overconsumption in a Global Economy," in *Confronting Consumption*, ed. Thomas Princen, Michael Maniates, and Ken Conca (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 155–176.
40. E.g., in his cultural history of sacrifice, Chilton, *Temple of Jesus*, 25, finds that the predominant perception in modern societies is that "sacrifice is at best a waste."
41. Hyde, *The Gift*, 280.
42. Jim MacNeill, Pieter Winsemius, and Taizo Yakushiji, *Beyond Interdependence: The Meshing of the World's Economy and the Earth's Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). A detailed investigation of the shadow ecology of tropical timber is offered by Peter Dauvergne, *Shadows in the Forest: Japan and the Politics of Tropical Timber in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
43. William E. Rees and Mathis Wackernagel, *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1995).

44. Andrew Simms, *Ecological Debt: The Health of the Planet and the Wealth of Nations* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).
45. For more detailed discussions of a per capita emissions rights approach to greenhouse gases, see Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), and Tom Arhanasiou and Paul Baer, *Dead Heat: Global Justice and Global Warming* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002).
46. World Health Organization and United Nations Environment Programme, "The Health and Environment Linkages Initiative," <http://www.who.int/heli/risks/climate/climatechange/en/index.html>, and Megan Rowling, "Climate Change Causes 315,000 Deaths a Year: Report," *Scientific American*, May 29, 2009, <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=climate-change-causes-315>.
47. Donovan Webster, *Aftermath: The Remnants of War: From Landmines to Chemical Warfare—The Devastating Effects of Modern Combat* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).
48. For the most trenchant analysis of sacrifice as societal sublimation of violence, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972). Among those influenced by Girard's perspective is Nigel Davies, *Human Sacrifice* (New York: Dorset Press, 1981). Girard warned of a "sacrificial crisis," or the danger of societal collapse as a consequence of the end of sacrifice, yet believed that reason could avert modernity's sacrificial crisis. I would counter that the current "sacrificial crisis" is actually a consequence of the degree to which sacrifice has been occluded and responsibility has been evaded. Yet I would concur that a farsighted rationality, complemented by the affective elements of care and devotion, can play an essential role in averting the crisis.
49. Though if ignorance is bliss, we might wonder why so many people don't seem to be particularly happy.
50. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Free Press, 1971). For an application of Buber's theological and sociological ideas to environmental ethics, see Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
51. George Simmel, "Faithfulness and Gratitude" (1908, 1950), quoted in Komter, "Gratitude and Gift Exchange," 203.
52. Michael E. McCullough and Jo-Ann Tsang, "Parent of the Virtues?" in Emmons and McCullough, *Psychology of Gratitude*, 130. Sommers and Kosmitzki found that Germans were two to three times as likely as Americans to experience gratitude as a pleasant emotion, with American men being the most likely to associate gratitude with unpleasant feelings of vulnerability. See Shula Sommers and Corinne Kosmitzki, "Emotion and Social Context: An American-German Comparison," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 27, no. 1 (1988): 35-49.
53. Dennis Rivers, "Toward an Ecology of Devotion," *Earth Light* 13, no. 4 (2003): 8.

54. Thomashow, *Ecological Identity*, 146.

55. One of my favorite ways of demonstrating this point to my students is to have them first calculate their ecological footprint as an American and then use exactly the same numbers as if they were living in a developing country. They are inevitably puzzled when their footprint as Americans are five to ten times greater, even using the same numbers. As they consider that their individual footprint includes a small portion of the country's entire infrastructure, ranging from highways to military bases, they begin to realize that solutions require political action and not just lifestyle changes.