

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

NEW ANIMISM
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUSITY
AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY THROUGH ACTIVISM
ROOTED IN A NON-DUAL REALITY

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“They see the Self in every creature, and all creation in the Self.
With consciousness unified through meditation, they see everything with an equal eye.”
Krishna, Bhagavad Gita

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The study of religion, to me, has been a journey through dimensions of realities. It has been years of reading about social science, ethics, globalization, communication, history, philosophy, anthropology, political science and worldviews. I have been exposed to ancient texts from different cultures and religions, critical writings on contemporary use and abuse of power, and it has opened my mind to countless perspectives on different issues. I spent little over 3 years of my student life in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Reading about social injustice, human rights, intercultural communication, forces in capitalism and religion while traveling back and forth from Norway to Uganda gave me the opportunity to live and feel what I was reading. I consider myself lucky to have been exposed to this, and it has motivated me to be curious and keep learning.

In addition to my text studies about modern Animism, I had a trip to Peru in December 2014, where I got to participate in the protests surrounding the COP20 meeting in Lima, and traveled to Iquitos, where Shamanism is still a strong force in society. Like many other places in the Amazon, Iquitos has a sad history concerning the local population, gum extraction and colonial rule, but has in recent years seen an increase in ayahuasca tourism, and the city is an attractive destination for people who want to experience a Shamanic ritual in the heart of the Amazon (Harvey 2007). This is a part of the growing interest in experiential spirituality, linked to the new religious movements in modern secular and plural societies, and has been a connector between indigenous Shamanism and Pagan revival, both animistic in nature.

In accordance to ethnographic principals and research methods such as observation, participation and conversation (Hammersley 2007), I believe I have gained some insight that I can reflect on, based on my 3 years in Uganda, and my travel to Peru, and I will make use of these reflections where I believe it can be helpful throughout this thesis.

1.1 Language and reality

What often strikes me when traveling is how different realities people live and how distant the life in Norway becomes when being in Asia, Africa or South-America. The importance of language and how it affects our way of seeing and experience the world became clear to me when I had to use English as my main language, while struggling to learn Luganda, the most spoken language in Uganda after English. English has in many ways made communication easier for the English speaking world, but at the same time created a false belief that we all see the world from the same perspective. English lacks words to describe many Lugandan expressions, and so their ability to translate their reality is limited to what is available in the English language, and this might be the reason why it is common to mix words from both English and Luganda in everyday speech. This realization is a big part of the new approach towards Animism, and with new ways of looking at both language and religion, we find better ways to understand religious and cultural practices.

The importance of religion as a strong force in society also became clear from my experience in Uganda. John S Mbiti, a Ugandan lecturer at Makerere University has written about the importance of understanding that African traditional life can not be separated from religious life, and that they live in a religious drama that keeps unfolding (Mbiti 1999, 15). God, Allah, spirits and Juju, what Ugandans would refer to as African magic, is present in everyday life. Mbiti believes that the “Failure to realize and appreciate this starting point, has led missionaries, anthropologists, colonial administrators and other foreign writers on African religions to misunderstand not only the religions as such, but the people of Africa” (Mbiti 1999, 15). This might help to understand the growing tendency in Uganda and many other African countries, to implement laws drawn from biblical and religious moral conviction like the *anti-gay*-and the “*mini-skirt*” bill in Uganda.¹ We do not have to look outside our borders to see that religion is still a force in our own society. KRF, the Christian peoples party is in parliament, and is getting support by some of its allies to turn the mandatory school subject concerning religion to 50 % Christianity, leaving only the last half to all other faiths. Norway has a history of disagreements on this matter, making it clear that Norway is still far from being a secular country if the Christian party gets to change the curriculum (all though they only had 5,6 % of the votes in the previous election), favoring their own faith over others, while the media argue over the frightening tendency of Islamization in countries with Muslim populations. I believe this is the complete opposite of what is

¹ The anti-pornography bill, also called the miniskirt bill because of its definition on proper dress code for women, where the miniskirt became defined as pornographic.

needed if we are to increase tolerance based on informed empathy, and I will in this thesis argue for a strong secular and plural society, based on tolerance, understanding and mutual respect.

1.2 Motivation

My motivation for writing this master thesis comes from my own engagement in environmentalism and my interest in indigenous religion and culture. My motivation has further been fueled by the process of this thesis, and peaked when traveling to Peru to experience and participate in the protests that found place in Lima, regarding the COP20 meeting. My encounter with people from different cultures and religions motivates me to encourage diversity, religious- and cultural freedom. In this thesis, I wish to introduce something that has for a long time been misunderstood, and argue for its relevance in being a positive force in social and political life.

I will look at how theories on modern secularism and religion in recent years has developed from the belief that religion would have a decreasing impact, to seeing religiosity as a strong and growing force in society, and how we are developing new ways of looking at religion and move on to look at how religion, in this new light, can be linked to what earlier would be seen as secular non religious related political engagement, in this case environmentalism and social activism.

I will therefore in this thesis look at how a widened definition on religion and new perspectives on Animism can help to better understand social and political activism rooted in environmentalism, and how animistic perspectives give attention to- and challenge the Western English dualism as the main research question. Then look at how new perspectives on language can be helpful in understanding the Western cultural expansion and impact, and how this realization can support a pluralistic perspective on religion.

1.3 Preparing for COP21

This year, in December 2015, the COP21 meeting concerning climate change finds place in Paris. There has been preparatory talks, and the one in Lima, which was seen as the foremost and final opportunity for global nations to draft a universal agreement on climate change before a definitive commitment in Paris,² was met with over ten thousand protesters, filling the streets of central Lima,

2 See article :<http://www.cop20lima.org/news-and-updates/nw-there-is-no-paris-without-lima.-what-to-expect-at-cop20> accessed 20 April 2015.

with the slogan “system change, not climate change”, expressing their discontent with the current political system, and the approach towards climate change and human consumption of the natural world. Tribes from the north of Peru, who is fighting against oil companies that is threatening their way of life, had walked to Lima as a way of protesting and to join the event. This political criticism is rooted in a fundamental differences in worldview and disagreement in priorities in future development, between the running system and a growing number of people. The capitalistic consumer system is challenged when being confronted with its unsustainable ways, and faced with the consequences it has had on the environment.

In the light of this political tension, we can see that religion and worldview is present in contemporary political and social life, and with this in mind I will look into how New Animism is contributing to it. The term New Animism is new, and is a part of the new paradigm of modern secularism and religion. Because of earlier descriptions of Animism, it has been seen as something primitive, being a foundation for more civilized cultures. Today, scholars and intellectuals are introducing a new perspective on Animism, separating themselves from earlier writing by referring to New Animism.

All though religion in many ways separate us into faith communities and can be seen as a main component in many conflicts, I have decided not to focus on the differences, but to locate a common interest we all share. On a global scale, the increase in climate change and the acknowledgment that our emission of carbon into the atmosphere is increasing the speed of these changes, and that our consumption of natural resource is unsustainable makes it a pressing matter for political discussion and binding global agreements. We are forced to deal with issues concerning our own consumption, and critically look at the political and social structure that keep this wheel spinning. Climate change, together with the overuse of chemical agriculture, deforestation, accumulation of chemical, heavy metal and nuclear waste and the crisis in biodiversity is a result of unsustainable patterns of consumption and human (ab)use of natural resources. As for the study of religion, it is an opportunity to reflect on how religion can contribute and inspire action towards a more tolerant and sustainable global society.

1.4 Religion and Ecology

Religion as a force in environmentalism is presented by Roger S. Gottlieb, the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (2010), where he writes that there tends to be a spiritual dimension to the environmental movement, something that other leftist and liberal political movements lack (Gottlieb 2010, 14). That is not to say that all environmentalists are religious, but that even in movements completely detached from any religious identity, are often driven by a political ideology, or a moral sensibility with religious overtones (Gottlieb 2010, 15). These can often express animistic values, and the opening statement for The Principles of Environmental Justice's meeting about environmentalism and people of color can be used as an example of this; "Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction" (Gottlieb 2010, 15).

With a widened definition on religion, I believe looking into New Animism can be helpful in understanding the growing discontent toward the current political system and the rise in environmentalism. I have chosen Animism as my subject in this thesis, because I see an increase in animistic tendencies in society, both as a base for spirituality and new religiosity, and in anti-capitalistic movements, activism and environmentalism. Revival in animistic thoughts are first and foremost a grass root movement and can be a strong force in society. Despite this, there is little writing on the matter, and finding a wide academic base for my thesis has not been easy. The subject new religiosity and Animism is a complex one, and I do not intend to deliver a clear and final description on what this is, because it does not fit into a religious box, and it is not my intention to classify it as one either. Animism is not one religion, does not have a dogma, and is dependent on its local environment. Animism can be seen as a foundation, a way of seeing and experiencing the world, a philosophy that encourages re connection and respectful living.

I will look at the rise in new religiosity, focusing on New Animism present in Pagan revival and Shamanism. However, to understand the tendencies in how these new groups organize, or more correctly do not organize, it is important to look at what they do not identify with. This is why I have taken some time to look at Christianity and how it has been a force in the creation of modern Europe, and in the light of this, it is easier to understand the opposition new religiosity and Pagan revival has against organized religion and systems based on hierarchy. Here they create an identity not on what

they are, but on what they do not want to be. In addition, I believe it is important to look at Christianity because it has been a strong force in the creation of the western modern worldview, and gives a historical perspective on religion as an actor in society, at the same time as it can be seen as a base for opposition and change in religious and spiritual activity.

1.5 Mental illness as a global challenge

At the same time as Animism is re-introducing itself on the religious marked, animistic sacraments are being subjected to scientific research (Hopkins, MAPS). The ayahuasca vine and the psilocybin mushroom are known to alter consciousness, and has been used as a religious sacrament through hundreds-, maybe thousands of years (Hopkins). Research concerning hallucinogens almost disappeared in response to the drug use in the 1960`s, and has just recently resumed (Hopkins). It is mostly directed towards the benefits in response to depression, drug abuse/addiction, post traumatic stress and end of life anxiety (Hopkins, MAPS). An extensive research on psilocybin concluded that it in many cases could be identical to a naturally occurring mystical experience, and have a long lasting positive affect (Hopkins). I believe this is a positive development, considering that on a global scale, mental illness such as depression and anxiety is on the rise, and according to a Norad report on mental health and global challenges, more than one in three will experience a mental disorder in the course of their life, and it is estimated that in 2030 depression alone will dominate as a global health issue.³ The research on psilocybin and ayahuasca can be helpful in finding new ways to approach these challenges, at the same time as it acknowledges the importance of knowledge from indigenous communities. All though there is much cultural stigma concerning these substances, if further research shows the same positive results, we should be able to incorporate it in our battle against a growing depressed population.

1.6 Animism as a force in environmentalism and conscious consumerism

I will in chapter four look at how Animism is directly connected with environmentalism in South America, and how the rise of awareness of indigenous rights, climate change and the revival in nature-religions in western societies is affecting consumer patterns. I will look at the Lima conference and the protest that found place as an example of indigenous Animism and its direct connection to environmentalism, and look at cases from Norway, one concerning palm oil use as an example of

³ See : <http://www.norad.no/globalassets/import-2162015-80434-am/www.norad.no-ny/filarkiv/4.-huf-2012---/psykisk-helse-som-global-utfordring.pdf> pg.14 accessed 22 april 2015

conscious consumer patterns, and a growing opposition against the state supported fur industry, that can both be linked to the rise of new religiosity, Pagan-and animistic revival in a Western context. In the case of activism based on animistic perspectives, I will argue that their way of seeing the world is crucial for their strong engagement in ecology and social-and political activism, supporting the theories that see religion as a strong force in social and political life. In the context of animal-rights activism, I will look at how thought provoking use of language gives attention to English dualism, how it lacks the ability to express an animistic worldview, and how that can be helpful in understanding the conflicting attitudes towards the natural world, that is made possible in reality constructed in language, supported by perspectives on language and how it creates reality. This gives attention to the challenges with translation, which I will argue support the logic of the pluralistic mentality within the new religious movements. I will then summarize and draw some conclusions supported by the content of this thesis and reflect on how a wider definition of religion, worldview and new perspective on language can be helpful in deeper understanding and better communication in social and political dialogue.

Chapter Two

MODERNITY AND RELIGION

The globalized modern epoch of fast transport and digital communication has given the rise of the concept of a global village, and is filled with contrasts. There is the super rich and the extremely poor, the materialistic secularists and the deeply religious, all living in a world connected by globalization. This is not to say that all people are globalized, but on a global scale, the number of people interwoven has never been higher (Scholte 2005). Either you are deeply religious, or believe in materialistic science, you have a worldview that affect how you perceive and experience the world (Smart 2000). People of different kind, religion and worldview come together in urban cities, and their ability to interact, integrate or assimilate affect the rest of civil life. Through history, religion and worldviews has been a strong force in cultural and political life and today we see how plural societies has become the space for new cultural and religious practices, based on a wide variety of cultures (Kraft 2011). Buddhist and Hindu influences are visible in the adaptation of meditation, in what has become the concept of 'mindfulness' (Kabat-Zin 2008, Vehler 2010), and yoga, also originally an eastern practice, has become and integrated and culturally accepted practice in modern society (Smart 2000). Not only are people being exposed to different cultures, religions and worldviews, but the digital dimension has intensified the opportunity to cultural and religious exposure beyond psychical space.

In this chapter I will look at religion and how we are moving towards new understandings of what religion is. I will look at Christianity as the main component in the creation of modern Europe, and how it has affected the western modern worldview, then move towards today's plural society and look at how pluralism has become the space for new religiosity and revival in Paganism, and look at how the study of religion is being integrated into the study of ecology as a part of the new paradigm concerning modernization and social religious influence (Gottlieb 2013).

2.1 Religious recreation

No religion has come in a complete package, they have all started as a small movement, shaped by their surroundings and been affected by new cultures when spread to new places (Kraft 2011, 7).

Muhammad did not create what Islam is today, Sunni and Shia was the creation of his followers that occurred in the dispute over how the leadership in Islam should be continued, where Sunni became the doctrine that gave room for others than Muhammad's bloodline to lead, while the Shia tradition would only allow descender of Muhammad himself to be worthy of leadership (Tucker 2008). Sharia law is many times mistaken for laws found in the Koran, but one can find different strains of sharia, and this is the creation of institutions that followed the division of Islam in the centuries following Muhammad's death (Tucker 2008). Itjihad, the time of interpretation, is traditionally closed (Tucker 2008), so disputes over the Quran and the problems with reinterpretation is a contemporary struggle for both Muslim feminists such as Irshad Manji with her book *The Trouble With Islam Today* (2005) and liberals like Tariq Ramadan (2009).

Just as Muhammad did not create Islam as it unfolds in contemporary society, Jesus did not create the institutionalized and divided contemporary Church (Kim 2008). Christianity started as a disorganized faith to include new people, and its institutional form was shaped in the centuries after his death, and it took five centuries to reach agreement on the chosen gospels to create the Bible as it is today (Kim 2008, 14). We can also see how Buddhism split into Theravada and Mahayana in disputes over how to relate to other peoples suffering (Gottlieb 1999, 25).

2.2 Worldviews and civilization

According to Ninian Smart in *Worldviews, Crosscultural Exploration of Human Beliefs* (2000), it is more helpful to talk about worldviews than religion. Either you are a Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Animist, Muslim or a secular atheist, you have a way of seeing the world that affects the way you live it, and what a person believes is an important aspect of his or her reality, no matter true or false (Smart 2000). This again affects the social and is an important aspect of society, and either one likes it or not, worldview and civilization are undoubtedly interwoven with each other (Smart 2004). Without Christianity, would Europe have the same civil life as today? Would India not be different if it was not for the Hindu tradition? How would China be, without Maos secular politics? Max Weber hypothesized that protestant Calvinism was a main factor in the creation of Western capitalism (Smart 2000, 18), if

so, would capitalism still be developed if it was not for the protestant faith and the emigration to the Americas?

It seems there is a tendency to believe that logic and reason is the same wherever you go, and this is evident in the centuries of trying to implement western Christian doctrine to concurred land in the West and the South, and can be seen today in the neoliberal economic model which has been the basis for IMF and World Bank policy for developing countries (Held, McGrew 2008, 188). Many do not share the logic of the Western modern world, but as a major world power, countries and people find themselves in no position to argue its logic (Held, McGrew 2008). The result is in many cases hybrid political systems, that go under the same name. Examples are many, but after living in Uganda for three years, experiencing one presidential election, and the campaigns for a second, it was evident from my perspective that there was no real democracy as I knew it in Norway. Not only was it obvious in the bribes offered to people, for instance, motorbike drivers was offered a full tank of petrol and 20 000 UGS (under 10 dollars), if they agreed to be picked up, taken to the voting office, and vote for the ruling president, but even the visual campaign was controlled. Only the ruling president, who has ruled since 1986, was allowed to have big size poster, in yellow, while the rest was restricted to smaller posters, all in blue, and yet international election observers passed it as a democratic election. The realities of the concept democracy seem worlds apart.

2.3 Language and reality

Language can be reduced to the concept of a list of terms corresponding to a list of things, but there is many objections to this simplistic way of defining it (Saussure 1986). It assumes that there is nothing problematic between the meaning of a word and a thing, not taking into account that the hearer's psychological impression of the sound of the sign, and their understanding of what this sound means (Saussure 1986, 66). Like the word democracy; there is for me a pre fixed understanding of what the concept of this sign means, and while my psychological understanding of this word means one thing to me, a Ugandan, with a different lived experience of what this concept is, have a different understanding of the same linguistic sign. According to Ferdinand de Saussure a linguistic sign is “...not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses”(Saussure 1986, 66). “A linguistic sign, (like the word democracy) is the combination of a concept and a sound pattern.” (Saussure 1986,

67). If we look at language from this perspective, it is not given that the immediate translation of a language will be able to grasp its psychological depths. Language has for a long time been a barrier in understanding others, and I believe it's fair to say that language shapes reality. Terrence McKenna, in his book *Food of the Gods* (1992), while examining the Shamanic culture, comes to the conclusion that language does not just shape reality, but that the world is actually made of language to some degree (McKenna 1992, 6). He finds support in Boston University anthropologist Misia Landau, that explains that the twentieth-century linguistic revolution, "...is the recognition that language is not merely a device for communicating ideas about the world, but rather a tool for bringing the world into existence in the first place. Reality is not simply "experienced" or "reflected" in language, but instead is actually produced by language" (McKenna 1992, 6-7). With our growing knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, we discover that some do not have a word for distant future, some do not differentiate in personhood between animal and a human, some lack the division in language for female and male, others have no word for a person alone. With this in mind, the concept of translation and communication becomes more complex.

2.4 Changing traditions

The modern study of religion and worldviews sees it as an aspect of human existence (Smart 2000). It is like the study of politics- it's not everything, but one aspect of human life. The study also implies looking into various disciplines like sociology, history, anthropology, phenomenology, art history, archaeology and the history of ideas. Because of this, it often overlaps with other studies like economics and politics. In addition, the study of religion and worldviews is essentially cross cultural (Smart 2000). The use of comparison might be an important aspect of the field, but then again, pointing out the differences might be just as vital (Smart 2000). Academic traditions with focus on religion, like sociology and anthropology originates from the colonial period, when European powers invaded and conquered most of Africa and other Southern lands, and when the United States was trying to control the Native Americans (Smart 2000). The division between the two traditions is ideological, sociology directing its attention to big scale, industrial, and technological cultures, while anthropology is concerned with small scale societies and cultures. Another aspect of these traditions is that they are a creation of a Christian society, and has been criticized for ethnocentrism, orientalism and othering. Edward Said writes in the preface of his book *Orientalism* (2004) that "There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for the purpose of co-existing and humanistic enlargement of

horizons, and the will to dominate for the purpose of control and external dominion” (Said, 2003, xiv). I believe this sentence sums up the first period on the study of religion, but luckily, it has evolved and is moving forward in finding new ways of approaching different religions and worldviews.

Ninian Smart concludes that the study of religion is non-finite, meaning that there is no way to define religion that has a determinate boundary, and that it seems most reasonable not to confine what religion is depending on the English definition (Smart 2000). Max Weber believed that science was the disenchantment of the world, but emphasized the importance of change and renewal, and that those who did not wish others to advance had no business in science, believing that development and progress is inevitable and one can not be in this field without wanting someone to do better and advance.⁴ The English language itself is affected by its Christian speaking people, lacking words to explain different worldviews and their reality. For one thing, it is dominated by gender differentiating, dualism, and has words that moves back and forth in time, that again gives room for past, present and future in its way of understanding the world, in contrast to Luganda, the language of the biggest tribe in Uganda, the concept of future came with colonialism and the English language. In Luganda there is no word for the English concept of distant future, similar to the writing of John S Mbiti, in *African Religions and Philosophy* (1999) where he concludes the same on other east African languages (Mbiti 1989, 17).

2.5 Christianity and the West

Our western understanding of religion is historically influenced by Christianity, and we can understand religion and its affect on social society and political institutions by taking a look into the history of the modern West and its relationship to the Christian faith. Seen through the christo-centric paradigm, religion is a moral order, a framework that guides action and consistently influences behavior (Bender, 2013, 5), a definition that is too restricting if we are to research religious activity, as religions plays out today.

Al though the study of religion originates from the colonial period, the European relationship with Christianity has a longer history. I will not exhaust the subject, but try to give a picture of Christianity as a force of the creation of modern Europe. This is essential in understand the new religious

⁴ See online paper *Science as a vocation*, Marx Weber 1922 : <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Science-as-a-Vocation.pdf> accessed 4 February 2015

movements of today, which often sees themselves in opposition to the Christian institutional faith (Kraft 2011, 12).

2.5.1 Christendom and the Reformation

In the medieval period The Catholic Church overtook the ruling of the Roman Empire (Kim 2008). This was the beginning of Christendom, representing an era where the Christian faith was the central justification and organizing force of society (Jenkins 2011, 13). It is interesting to note, that in these times Christendom had a tense relationship to dar al-Islam, the same concept, but from an Islamic perspective, where the Islamic empires and the Roman Empire sparked tension, resulting in the Christian crusade, marking a bloody period in Church history (Kim 2008). The resemblance of today's tension is rather uncomfortable, and ironically, it was at the time of the Crusades that Arab learning was introduced in Spain's new universities built on an Arab model, bringing the teachings building on ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean and West Asia, said to help Europe out of the middle ages (Kim 2008, Watt 2004). Thomas Aquinas drew on Arab translations of Aristotle and Arab scholarship, and while benefiting from Islamic teachings, he was able to argue against Islam on the same foundation, and laid the foundation for secular scientific inquiry (Kim 2008, 31).

In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII stated that there was only one holy Catholic and apostolic church, and there was no chance of salvation outside it (Kim 2008, 30). To obtain salvation one had to subject oneself to the pope, being the successor of St. Paul, Christ's appointed head of church (Kim 2008, 30). The Church's institutional construction became increasingly hierarchical, militarized and developed a more juridical theology (Kim 2008, 30). This new position of the Church proclaimed a new era, where the old Pagan past was rejected and "...the Kingdom of God and millennial light was instituted on earth" (Kim 2008, 31), and the Church persecuted those who held on to pre-Christian beliefs, both Jews and Pagans (Kim 2008, 31). The Churches in north of Europe started to feel miss pleased with the pope, resulting in the Reformation and the creation of the Protestant faith (Jenkins 2011). The Christian reformist, the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, opposed the teaching of the pope and the Catholic Church in his discontent with the Church hierarchy and what he believed was abuse of power and authority. He believed that salvation was an individual thing, laying the grounds for our modern individualism (Jenkins 2011, Kim 2008).

2.5.2 The migration to the Americas

The split of the church was followed by religious wars that ended with the creation of national states (historically seen as the period after the French revolution) (Smart, 2000, 42), followed by the the policy of non intervention and national sovereignty, the creation of one national religion, and the policy of strict Christian rule resulted in that many new small protestant religious societies and movements found themselves in a land they were not allowed to express their faiths (Kim 2008). At this same time, the discovery of the Americas gave opportunity for people to emigrate, and to live out their religious conviction. The American constitution bears witness of this, stating full religious freedom to its citizens. In retrospective, one can argue that its more correctly to say, protestant religious freedom (Jenkins 2011).

2.5.3 Indigenous suppression

From the European historical perspective, this was the time of expansion and development, a chance to start from scratch in a new promised land. From another perspective on history one can say that the New World was already someones homeland, and what we know today as modern western America, is built on mass emigration, the taking of land and indigenous genocide, backed by both the Church and military power (Jenkins 2011, Kim 2008). The discovered land was often rewarded to the conquistadores, with the people living on it, and at Spain's new universities, the conquest was seen in appeal to natural law and Aristotle, justifying the treatment of the indigenous population by arguing that they were “slaves by nature”, and that armed conquest and subjugation was justified from the perspective of natural law (Kim, 2008, 33). Missionaries translated this concept into the *tabula rasa* or the “clean slate” approach, “...eradicating the expression of traditional customs and beliefs in order to inculcate what they believed was the Christian way of life“ (Kim 2008, 33).

The bible was often used to justify the treatment of the native people in the concurred lands, and after the drastic decline in Indian population, hence the loss of a major source of working power, the myth that Africans were descendants of Ham, who was apparently cursed by his father Noah to be the “lowest of slaves” (Gen.9.18-29;10.6) gave biblical justification for the enslavement of the African people (Kim 2008). The story about Ham led to the development of anthropology concerning the “negro” as suited for slavery rationalized on the idea of their savage and barbarous nature (Kim 2008).

With that said, not all missionaries agreed on these points, and some missionaries and bishops protested against the treatment of the indigenous people (Kim 2008). One great example is the work done by Bartholome de las Casa, who campaigned for the rights of indigenous people (Kim 2008). His work was given an academic support by the Roman catholic philosopher Fransisco de Vitoria, that used Casa`s work for an evaluation of Indian culture and by disputing against the conquest as “just war”, and his work can be seen as groundwork for the later European concept of human rights (Kim 2008, 33). The history of violence and persecution against the indigenous population can be seen as ongoing, in the form of human rights violations towards indigenous activists when they go up against international oil and mining companies that is threatening their way of life (RFN 2012).

2.5.4 The Enlightenment

During the Enlightenment, the Church found itself under attack by western Europe's new elite (Jenkins 2011, Kim 2008). It was given the blame for the long period of religious wars after the Reformation, and criticized for unjust governance, self-interested attempts to preserve their privileges, for lack of respect for popular opinion, abuse of trust, and attempt to gain popularity at the expense of truth (Kim 2008). Revelation was no match for reason and Church authority and privileged found themselves stripped from it (Kim 2008). The solution to what was seen as the main reason for problems of intolerance in society, was to downplay the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant faith, and emphasizing the developments in empirical science, believed to offer a universal truth (Kim2008, 44). Charles Darwin`s *The Origin of Species* challenged the story of Genesis, and the Church and the Bible found itself open to scientific investigation, and became the subject to secular methods of historical science (Kim 2008).

This period had a tremendous affect on European societies, but in many cases, it inherited much from the Christian worldview(Kim 2008). The creation of social Darwinism followed the earlier thought of natural law, and biblical justification on the continued treatment of the indigenous people in its colonies, and The Cartesian dualism, the philosophy of the division of mind and matter, human and nature, was in line with the Christian idea of that God created nature, and that nature was for humans to use (Harvey 2005). The work of Rene Descartes and Francis Bacons theories on mechanical science has been criticized for disenchanting nature and backing up the scientific conceptualization of the universe as mere matter, seeing it as a lifeless collection of atoms has affected the western relationship

to nature, resulting in that everything non human was objectified for human consumption and use (Sideris 2010).

2.6 Paradigm shift

In the dominant theories on modernization it was believed that secularization was a necessary component of modernization, but secularization has shown itself to be very hard to define. Secularization according to Brian S. Turner, in the narrow meaning is the decline in church membership and attendance, marginalization of the church from public life and dominance of scientific explanations on reality, but has mostly been the case in Europe, especially in northern Protestant regions and Australia, New Zealand and Canada, its former colonies (Turner 2011). While these societies has moved towards secularism, religion is still a powerful force in the United States (Turner 2011). In Latin America and Africa the rise of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements are growing, and Islam, Christianity and Judaism has seen the rise in fundamentalism (Turner 2011). There is also clear revival of Orthodoxy in Russia and eastern Europe, Islam in China, Buddhist movements in Japan and Shamanism in Okinawa (Turner 2011, 11). While institutional religion is still increasing around the world, the European case seem to have moved in a different direction (Jenkins 2011). Max Weber's sociology of virtuoso-mass religion with his conclusion that “rational and individualistic Protestantism appears to be self-destructive” (Turner 2011, 11) seems comparable with the current situation, while there is still a demand for mass religious service. There has been opposite opinions about the affect of secularization, religious pluralism and modernity and according to Peter Bergers work from the 1960's, organized religious life would decline with the rise of modernity, move into the private sphere, and have little, or no influence on the structures of forming society (Repstad 1996, 2). Others are moving towards the idea of pluralism and talk about a paradigm shift (Repstad 1996), where the focus is on the rise of religiosity in modern secular societies, and this thesis positions itself withing this paradigm.

2.6.1 New time, new faith

In a historical perspective, religion has been something integrated in a social structure, and the idea of choice of faith is relatively new (Kraft 2011). This has become possible because of secular pluralistic societies, that offers a wide variety of both secular-and religious worldviews (Kraft 2011). Pluralism is allowing religions to renew themselves, new movements are taking form, and revival in older religions find place (Kraft 2011). The Church's long history of political power in Europe gave it the possibility to

affected and shaped the modern West, but today society find itself affected by a variety of worldviews. To be able to keep up with the changing religious environment, researchers have to look beyond the traditional and christo-centric definitions of religion. In *Worldviews* (2000), Ninian Smart presents a new model of looking into religion and worldview, widening the definition of what religion is, stepping away from the christo-centric view and creates a tool to exploring religion without the christian backdrop.

To be able to keep up with the changing religious environment we need to use new approaches, such as Smart's six dimension. The Weber definition of religion sees it as something easily distinguished and separated from other aspects of life, focused on aspects such as belief and a worldview orientation that is always grasping for something otherworldly and beyond (Smart 2000). This definition can be seen as a fruit from what goes back to the Enlightenment, and post-Enlightment, in the context of church and secular wings, competing over the meaning of philosophy, religion, law and state authority, and does not represent new religiosity (Smart 2000, Kraft 2011).

With the lift of Christian monopoly and the secularization of societies, we have seen the growth in new religiosity and spiritualism (Kraft 2011). For the ones who are seeking, the plural societies has a wide variety to choose from (Kraft 2011). Eastern religious traditions like yoga and meditation has become an integrated part of the western society, and after becoming the subject of secular scientific research, meditation has been translated into a secular model in what is called mindfulness (Zinn 2008, Vehler 2010). People have the chance to pick and choose, something that is relatively new in a historical perspective and what is common for much of this new religiosity and spiritualism, it that it does not confine withing the older definitions of what religion is (Kraft 2011). Because of the history of institutionalized religion, especially Christianity, and its persecution of natives and Pagans during its time in power, new spirituality often wish to distinguish themselves from what they see as the imperial abuse of power associated with institutionalized Christendom (Kraft 2011). So how do we explore religiosity that wants to avoid the religious radar?

2.7 Aspects of religion

In his approach to religion and worldviews, Ninian Smart presents his model of six dimensions. He argues that the main point of dividing it into these six dimensions is so that we can give a rounded picture of a tradition (Smart 2000, 7). He does acknowledge that these aspects might not be as elaborated as they could be, but they cover most of the major factors that a tradition manifests itself in. He emphasizes that different traditions do not give equal importance to all six dimensions, and point out that they might even differ from one century to another within one tradition (Smart 2000). These dimensions are the doctrinal or philosophical dimension, the narrative or mythic dimensions, the ethical or legal, the ritual or practical dimension, the experiential or emotional dimension and the social or organizational dimension.

2.7.1 The doctrinal or philosophical dimension

Religions and worldviews typically has a set of doctrines. Buddhism has a philosophy that says that all things in the universe is impermanent, Christians believe that God created the world out of nothing, and Hinduism believes that the universe itself is God (Smart 2000). This dimension is often important in relation with the other aspects or dimensions and in earlier approaches to religion, this dimension was believed to be vital and important, but in new religiosity this dimension is close to non existing (Smart 2000)

2.7.2 The mythic and narrative dimension

Religions and worldviews cherish stories about their gods and founders (Smart 2000). The stories of the prophet Muhammad is vital to Islam, and his life told in the Koran and the hadiths are important stories for Muslims, just as the many myths in Hinduism about the gods and goddess is vital to the Hindu tradition (Smart 2000). The narrative of ancient Israel found in the Hebrew Bible and the stories about Christs life in the New Testament is fundamental to the Jewish and Christian faith (Smart 2000). This narrative can also be seen in secular nationalism, like the importance of the founding fathers and the constitution for the United States (Smart 2000).

2.7.3 The ethical or legal dimension

This is an aspect of worldviews that can ether be a personal guidance through life, or in other cases, a fully developed legal system. The Ten Commandments tells to love God and thy neighbor, the Buddha

presents four great virtues- benevolence, compassion, joy in others joy, and equanimity, the stories of Muhammad is examples of good behavior (Smart, 2000, 9), and Pagan ethics are rooted in their understanding of nature and this earth as something holy (Graham 2007). In Europe, churches gained political power in what is know as Christendom (Kim, 2008. 23), Islam created a political body for the structure of social governance, know as sharia and Jews have law written in the Torah (Tucker 2011). A national state has a body of law, implemented and enforced by the government (Scholte 2005).

2.7.4 The ritual or practical dimension

Many religions and worldviews has a strong relationship with rituals (Smart 2000). The Hindus attend temple rituals frequently, and the Mass is a weekly Catholic ritual while Theravada Buddhist show respect to the Buddha by making their way to the temple, and practices such as meditation is a well knows aspect of Hinduism and Buddhism (Smart 2000). For Pagans this dimension is dominated by seasonal celebrations, reconnecting their relationship with the Earth (Harvey 2007).

2.7.5 The experiential or emotional

The origin or many religions has their out spring from a mystical experience (Smart 2000). Muhammad heard the voice of God while meditating, Buddha started his journey into the life of Buddhahood after an inner mystical experience, and the personal experiences of the Hebrew Prophets shaped what later became the Jewish faith, such as Moses and the burning bush (Smart 2000).

2.7.6 The social or institutional dimensions

Many religions create an institution for its continuing practice and message like the Catholic Church or the Sangha Buddhist order (Smart 2000). Even if a religion does not have a strong institution, you can find other cores of religious experts like the Rabbinate and the mullahs in Islam, and in some way or another, religious institutions or religious communities affect social and political life (Smart 2000).

By dividing aspects of religion into these six dimensions, Smart gives a tool to be able to look at religions and worldview in a way that gives room for different definitions on religion.

2.8 Dynamics in plural societies

One of the things pluralism is teaching us about religion, it that religious activity is not so easy to distinguish from everyday life as earlier believed. Pluralism has become the space where subcultures and religiosity is invited to participate in the ongoing accomplishment of everyday religious acts, that “fall under the radar of theological questions and legal disputes” (Bender 2013, 131). The performing pluralism is therefore not only for the liberal and hybrid religious, the non- religious and the anti-religious, but also a space for people with deep religious convictions. Religious acts are not as easy to spot out withing the actors of pluralism, such as a soup kitchens could be run by a Christian group working voluntarily because of religious conviction of helping the ones in need, or it could be run by a secular atheist, driven by a conviction on secular Humanism. What one chose to consume as food can also be an expression of faith and worldview such as kosher, halal and vegetarian (Smart 2000). This is everyday things that before was outside the radar of “religion”, that today can be seen as important aspects of someones religious-or secular worldview.

2.8.1 New religiosity

We have seen growth in what is called new religiosity, a field that is overlapping and complex, and lacks numbers because of its unorganized nature (Kraft 2011). The Christian idea of collective sin is non existing, and the focus lies on personal development, personal responsibility and personal choices (Kraft 2011). It is strong in the experiential and emotional dimension, is anti-dogmatic and mixes different religious traditions into one (Kraft 2011). Eastern elements has for a long time been a part the movement, and the growing interest in the natural and indigenious people has contributed shamanic elements into the religious mix (Kraft 2011). All religions are used as references in the search of a personal- and spiritual/religious path, and there is a pick and chose mentality where one takes what one believes is good from the different religions, and mix them to fit a personal and meaningful spiritual life (Kraft 2011). What they consider bad from the different religions is the elements believed to have been implemented by people for the sake of power and control, rather focusing on that all religion have a spiritual side, and this is mixed and fitted to the persons religious or spiritual life (Kraft 2011). All though it is hard to separate this movement into clear groups, it is helpful to differentiate between New Age and Paganism, all though there is often overlapping elements (Kraft 2011). To understand the difference I want to make a parallel to the split in Buddhism during the third century B.C.E. over the question on how the individual spiritual seeker related to others suffering. The older system, The

Theravada was criticized by the new voices of The Mahayana, for focusing too much on personal enlightenment (Gottlieb 1999). They criticized the earlier teachings to have a distorted view on how to end pain. For the Theravada it was enough to gain personal enlightenment, but the Mahayana asked the question: «If you pursue your own escape from pain, what will become of those left behind? What service is your enlightenment to others?» (Gottlieb 1999, 25). For Pagans, this is much of the same criticism that is fronted towards the New Age movement, in addition to that it is too holistic and concerned with other worldly dimensions. (Kraft 2011). Pagan revival are focused on that humans are at home on Earth, and that it is this physical dimension that should be invested in (Harvey 2007).

2.8.2 Pagan revival

Paganism is a word that is used to describe a wide variety of people engaged in nature-or pre-Christian religiosity and is part of the often unorganized new religious movement (Kraft 2011, 9). Paganism is a polytheistic and/or animistic religion that celebrates life and living, and in contrast to the Christian tradition, which has a strong doctrinal dimension. Paganism has no dogma, mission or evangelism, it is driven by attraction, rather than preaching, and has a strong ethical, ritual/practical and experiential/emotional dimension (Harvey 2007). They do not share the dualism that separates mind and matter, human and nature, that has been the common belief in Christian-and secular views, and is part of a movement that is challenging the logic of mainstream western society (Harvey 2007). People may call themselves Pagans, because there is something about Paganism that speaks to their conviction on what is right, such as its loyal and lively connection to the Earth, and its non institutional and anti dogmatic ways (Harvey 2007). Pagans do not believe that there is good and evil in this world, there is only an unbalance, and this is noticeable in Pagan activity in modern environmentalism (Harvey 2007). From a Pagan perspective, there is an unbalance between the relationship of human activity, and the natural and sustainable circles of life (Harvey 2007). This is a good example that what seems to be a secular and modern activity, such as political engagement in ecology, is in fact driven by a religious or spiritual conviction, not just a logical approach to the crisis of natural destruction and climate change.

2.9 Religion and ecology

In this time, we could say that nature, however it was experienced or looked at before, has today become the *environment*, something non-human, and because of our consumption for what has been called natural resources, its welfare is dependent on human activity (Gottlieb 2010). As said earlier,

environmental activism is not only a secular political activity, it has penetrated the disciplines of religion (Gottlieb 2010). We live in a time where the political landscape is dominated with concern for the changing environment and the challenges concerning climate change and a growing number of the capitalistic consuming population that is rooted in the dissonance between human consumption of the natural world and the consequences following it (Gottlieb 2010). The link between religion and ecology is growing, seen in the increased theological writing on the matter, but the critique towards religion for its role in how we got to this state can be seen in the critique against Christianity by Lynn White, calling it the most anthropocentric religion (Sideris 2010) White argued that in contrast to animistic Paganism and eastern religions, Christianity established the dualism that separated man and nature, justifying the exploration in the belief that it was God's will that nature could be used for mans proper ends, and has in recent years affected the Christian approach to locate-or create- positive environmental teaching (Sideris 2010).

The discipline Religion and Ecology is a rather new one, a sign that the two disciplines overlap and can contribute to positive outcome in the case of the environmental crises. One of the leading figures within this discipline, Roger S. Gottlieb, elaborates on the crisis humans are facing in the aftermath of human activity and separation from nature in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (2010). I choose to quote him in full, where he describes this crisis in eight dimensions;

- *Global climate change* has already damaged, and will damage at an increasing rate, agriculture, wild lands, and animals; raise the ocean level and precipitation more intense storms and worse droughts; expand the range of tropical insects and diseases and kill coral; and in all likelihood have effects that we cannot foresee.
- A staggering accumulation in *chemical, heavy metal, biological, and nuclear wastes* found in every region, no matter how remote, and leads to a plague of environmentally caused diseases- most obviously the dramatic increase in cancer, immune-system problems, and birth defect.
- From overuse of chemical agriculture and the destruction of forests, the *loss of topsoil* threatens the production of food throughout the developing nations and leads to erosion and desertification everywhere. ;Massive erosion can also destroy ecosystem balance in rivers and coastal fishing areas.
- In what some call a *crisis of biodiversity*, the decimation of habitats through expanding human settlements, logging, mining, agriculture, and pollution and the killing of animals for sport, use, or food, have raised rates of extinction to the highest they have been for sixty-five million years. Potential medicines vanish, ecosystems are destabilized, water supplies threatened, and

irreplaceable natural beauties are lost forever. As we witness the harm we are doing we also lose ethical confidence in humanity's own worth.

- *Loss of wilderness* is seen in the increasing rarity of ecosystems that are free to develop without human interference or intrusion. Besides the dwindling of biodiversity that this entail, human beings face a paradoxical loneliness. People are everywhere; yet are haunted by the deep loneliness for those natural others who have been our companions for biological ages.
- The last example of human communities integrated into nonhuman nature are given way to *devastation of indigenous people*. As their environments are poisoned, native peoples lose their land and culture and too often their lives. *Unsustainable patterns and quantities of consumption* deplete natural resources and contribute to global warming and the accumulation of waste. In the underdeveloped world, overpopulation relative to existing technological resources and political organization decimates the landscape.
- *Genetic engineering* menaces us with the dismal prospects of engineered life-forms and the potentially catastrophic invention of insufficiently tested organisms. Given our track record with nuclear waste and toxic chemicals and our political and economic elites' pronounced tendency to shortsightedness and greed, it seems highly doubtful that we are ready to create new life-forms in a cautious and sensible way (Gottlieb 2010, 5).

Gottlieb believes that given the history of religion, one does not need much insight to see how it has to do with ecology. He believe that religion, at turn, has been deeply anthropocentric and has been a, sometimes blind supporters of the idea of progress in more science, more technology and more development (Gottlieb 2010). The first critics on human modern relationship to nature and wilderness was not from religious authority, but from freelance spiritual types, such as secular philosophers, western Marxism and nature lovers (Gottlieb 2010). In time, given the rise of political engagement in the destruction of nature and with the revival of Paganism and New Animism, religion has entered the discussion and there is a growing number of theological writing, and revising in scriptures, to support the religious engagement in ecology (Gottlieb 2010).

Given the social status of many religious institutions, and the possible ability it has to affect its members, this is a welcomed ethical contribution to the field of ecology. Both new -and old religions and worldview are moving towards an awareness about the human impact on the natural world, and find common ground in their concern on the changing environment. In the plural space, this contributes to cross religious dialog, and gives attention to what religions have in common, and gives a common case to fight for, rather focusing on what differs between them.

The crossover between ecology and religion should not just be a welcomed concept in ecology, but also in the field of religion. It is not enough that we accept different beliefs and worldviews in plural societies, it is also vital that we create religious tolerance based on knowledge and dialog, and the common crisis we are facing as a human race brings people together in cross religious dialog with the goal of finding common grounds and work together towards the wanted result.

2.9.1 Arguments against ecological religion

One can argue for the many benefits for ecological religion, but there is also critiques against it. For one thing, it can be argued that there is many other aspects of religion and holy scriptures that is shown hard to put into life. If the concept of loving ones neighbor, turning the other cheek, non-violence, love and compassion for all beings is hard to implement into a globalized society, then how is small sections on ecology going to make the difference? Truth be told, we can not say for sure, we can only give attention to the ones who does, and hope its ethical value creates ripples and affect more people than its scriptural size would entail. All though some religions does not have a special relationship to ecology, others are integrated in the living world, and can easier relate to the concept of religious ecology.

2.10 Animism and ecology

Roughly, tropical rainforests has the last 50-60 years been reduced by 50%, and has become a key focus point, in the approaches towards climate change (RFN 2014). The forests ability to mitigate greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere and its biodiversity is declining, while deforestation continues at alarming rates (RFN 2014, 4). The Amazon is the largest rainforest in the world, and roughly 25 % is formally recognized as indigenous territory (RFN 2014). The richness of the Amazon in natural resources, and a high demand for energy and raw materials is a base of conflict and there is an increased tendency to see human rights violations, directed towards indigenous people (RFN 2014x). The protection of such territories, together with a rights-based approach and a recognition of indigenous knowledge and sustainable practices of rainforest communities, is an important aspect of the complex approach concerning deforestation and climate change (RFN 2014). The same way as Christianity has been a main factor in the creation of modern Western culture, Animism has been the base for Amazonian cultures, and their knowledge of sustainability and their

relationship to the raiforest is a reflection of what values animism cultivates. In a global context, animism is also found in new religiosity, with the rise of nature-religions such as Pagan revival and neo-Shamanism (Harvey 2005). Its special relationship to the natural world and sustainability makes it an interesting subject to look into, when looking at forces behind human activity in the modern world. To better understand the influence Animism has, and can have, I will in the next chapter look into how it presents itself in modern society.

Chapter Three

HOW DOES ANIMISM PRESENT ITSELF IN MODERN SOCIETY?

I will in this chapter present Animism as a modern phenomena, only give some attention to the historical use of the term. To clarify, throughout this thesis, when referring to Animism or an animistic perspective, I am not referring to a particular religion, but a way of seeing the world.

Animism does not fit into any religious box, and it is not my my intention to label it as one. It seems it is a subject not easy to describe in short, since its geographic, ecological and ethnic diversity gives little ground for speaking of one particular way of living as an Animist. Although many different cultures has some animistic features, I will focus my attention on modern Paganism and Shamanism to give both an indigenous and a western perspective, and to show its diverse and pluralistic nature. Pagan “discovery” of native shamanic traditions through anthropologists, and the increasing ayahuasca tourism to the amazon, has given rise to an experimental based Pagan spirituality (Harvey 2005). The revival in shamanic techniques of altering consciousness has also been subject to scientific research, most recently resumed after some decades of stigma, as a result of the hallucinogen abuse in the 1960`s (Hopkins 2011). Resent research is showing interest in the brew’s potential therapeutic value (MAPS), and I will in short present some of the research and its findings.

3.1 What is Animism? Historical use of the word

Theories about Animism has through history been used in the ethnocentric approach towards indigenous cultures and religions, and many academic and Christian mission discourses has used “animist” labels on all or most indigenous religions, often presented as primitive, where more advanced cultures could develop (Harvey 2005, 3). In *A Natural History of Religions* published in 1757, David Hume does not use the term Animism directly, but Harvey comments and summarizes Humes writing, on what we would today call old Animism, that “In short, humans attribute to the world around them signs of human-likeness(.)”, and criticizes its simplistic description as “the imaginative faculty or tendency is beautiful as poetry, but as a religion and a philosophy it is absurd, vulgar and ignorant”

(Harvey 2005, 5).

In 1871, Edward Tylor, often considered the founder of anthropology, adopted animism as the term for central concerns of religion, and to him, animism was a primitive religion, that believed in souls and spirits (Harvey 2005, 5). Animism was central to his view on human development, believing that all religions originated from animism, and evolved through time, in sharp contrast to his Victorian contemporaries, who believed that contemporary religion was a degeneration from earlier ones (Harvey 2005, 6). I might note that Tylor believed that religion *per se* was a “survival” that would and should disappear when confronted with objective scientific facts (Harvey 2005, 6). In 1913, Tylor wrote that “it is a harsher, and at times even painful, office of ethnography to expose the remains of crude old cultures which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction...(T)he science of culture is essentially a reformer’s science” (Harvey 2005, 6). Luckily, there is a growing number of academics that has recently found the term helpful when used in a new and distinctive way.

3.2 New Animism

A foundational figure of New Animism is Irvin Hallowell, through his dialogue with the Ojibwe hosts in central Canada in the early to mid-twentieth century (Harvey 2005, 33). It is from Hallowell, Graham Harvey takes his definition on new animism. Animists, as defined by Harvey, “... is people who recognize that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others” (Harvey 2005, xi). Animists by this definition does not place human persons as superior to the rest, they see human persons and other than human persons as coming from a broad community of life as if they came from the same womb, and other than human persons can be tree persons, stone persons, thunder persons or plant persons (Harvey 2005, 165). Language is important to how we see and experience the world and there is more appropriate local words that would explain much better the animist perspective, like the language of Ojibwe, all though it differentiates between person and object, it does extend the noun person to a number of “non-living” things. It lacks a sex-gender division, like he/she/it, but rather it has a division between inanimate (not living) and animate (living) (Harvey 2005, 35). This does not mean it gives human-likeness to “inanimate objects” but they live in a world where they engage with many persons, only some of whom are human.

With Harvey's definition in mind, one can clearly see the contrast to the western worldview. Being an Animist does not require being a vegan or a pacifist, some animists are hunters, and some eco Pagans are aggressive environmentalists, and will destroy machines to protect the woods they are trying to save (Harvey 2005,117). Not all animists agree on the different approaches, which shows us one of many contradictions within animism (Harvey 2005). Animism is not a religious doctrine, it does not have a straight line to follow, it's about living in interconnectedness with the living world (Harvey 2005). Ecological and demographic differences affect the different ways of responding to this harmonious way of approaching the world, making animism a diverse and plural movement (Harvey 2005).

Animism, with its understanding of the world, that everything is connected and that everything that is, lives, puts into question many of the claimed rational actions of modern society. I will not spend much time on its critique to the modern model, rather present New Animism and modern science as a cultural connector between indigenous shamanistic- and neo-Pagan spirituality.

3.2.1 Shamanism, an animistic religion

Shamanism is an ism that covers a wide variety of cultures (Eliade 2004). The word originates from the Tungu Siberian language, and since Siberian shamans was the first to be widely known to western academics, it became the name used to describe similar cultures and religious traditions (Harvey 1997, 103). Cosmology differs from culture to culture, but commonly, their cosmology tells of a multi leveled world where sky, earth and underworld, sometimes with many different worlds within one level connects through a central axis (Eliade 2004). Shamanism is fundamentally animistic, since they believe that all that is lives, and Harvey suggests that Shamanism is not Shamanism, but animism, because the shaman/medicine man/healer works for animists, and it is therefore not necessary to label it as something new, like it has been with the use of the label Shamanism (Harvey 2005, 139) Violence and murder is inescapable, because eating leaves is just as much a life taking as eating a fish, and therefore they are in the need of a shaman, the community healer, to balance and heal this living world (Harvey 2005,140). The shaman is a healer, and his reputation is purely based on his practical skills and results(Harvey 2005). Their cosmology includes many non physical being and in local languages they have many names, translated to English *spirit* might be the word to describe them (Harvey 2005).

Common in Shamanism people are believed to have more than one soul, and sickness is often understood as a “soul loss”-where some of that person has been detached and lost, and it is the shamans job to find it and get it back to the patient (Harvey 1997, 104, Eliade 2004). This is accomplished in various ways, varying from culture to culture. The shaman purposely induces an altered state of consciousness, then enters into an otherworldly realm, and goes to search for the lost soul, to seek knowledge and healing powers (Eliade 2004). Two methods are widely used to reach this altered state of consciousness, most commonly is rhythmic drumming while others may include cultural drama, singing and dancing (Eliade 2004). The second one include psychotropic plants, cooked together in vines, chewed, smoked, eaten or snorted (Harvey 1997, 104, Metzner 1999, 2).

In *Shamanism* (2004), when writing about Central and Northern Asian Shamanism and its tradition of consuming mushrooms to get in contact with the spirits, Mircea Eliade dismisses ecstasy and meetings with the spirits from intoxication as passive and crude, and as a mechanical and corrupt method of reproducing the ecstatic state, claiming that this method goes back to older traditions and is not true Shamanism (Eliade 2004, 223). To Eliade, Shamanism is reduced to a practice of archaic techniques of ecstasy, and is centered around the shaman and his personal journeys. Other writers, like Ralph Metzner, has no difficulties with combining Shamanism and psychoactive plants. He describes, that many shamanic cultures believe some plants are embodied with conscious intelligence, that only become visible in special states of consciousness (Metzner 1999, 3). Metzner, in contrast to Eliade, points out that the hallucinogenic drink Ayahuasca, “...is widely recognized by anthropologists as being probably the most powerful and most widespread shamanic hallucinogen” (Metzner 1999, 3).

3.2.2 Paganism

“Although every day is sacred and all the Earth is holy, yet there are times and places that seem to be more special” (Harvey 1997, 1).

Another animistic religion is Paganism, an earth bound, often called a nature religion (Kraft 2011). It is a religion that celebrates life and the living, its philosophy is fundamentally green and though not all Pagans are Animist, they do not share the monotheistic dual Christian worldview, and see themselves as at home here on earth (Harvey 2007, Kraft 2011). Some tell of roots going back to pre-Christian times like Druidry and Heathens, other movements are new, inspired by old Paganism and finding new

ways of relation respectfully to the world (Harvey 2007). Ancient and medieval literature is particularly important for the building of identity and the creation of rituals Paganism represents an earth bound experienced based spirituality and new movements include different environmentalist-and feminist groups and eco-Pagans (Harvey 2007). In accordance to Ninian Smart's six dimensions, Paganism is strong in the ritual and practical dimension, played out in how they recognize and reconnect their relationship with the living world and in their celebration of the seasonal changes. In a historical perspective Pagans were mostly farmers, so the festival seasons were naturally linked to crop cycles and seasonal changes reinforcing their relationship with nature and the circles of life (Harvey 2007).

3.2.3 Pagan celebrations

The winter and summer solstice are two central celebrations common for all Pagans. These days are significant because they mark the days with the most light, and the most darkness (Harvey 2007). The winter solstice is usually celebrated on December 21st, the day that marks the sun's return to summer, and the name of this whole festive season is Yule (Harvey 1997, 7). Pagans may go into the woods and collect wood and greenery, to bring the Woodland inside, and to celebrate the darkness and the returning sun. Summer solstice, usually celebrated on the 21st of June, celebrates the longest day of the year, and watching the sunrise on this day is well known for Druids at Stonehenge (Harvey 2007).

Samhain, a Celtic tradition, falls on the night of 31st October going through the night to 1st November, is by many seen as the end of fall, and the beginning of a new circle of life, it could be called the Pagan new year (Harvey 2007). This day is believed to be the day, when the worlds between the living and the dead are closest, and is seen as a day to honor the dead (Harvey 2007).

Other, more recently added celebrations by the revivers of Paganism is the autumn and spring equinox, festivals celebrating the relationship between Earth and Sun (Harvey 2007, 9, 13). These are the two days a year, that night and day are equally long, and when the sun rises and sets at the equator (Harvey 2007, 9). Many ancient sites are built so that the sun rises and sets parallel with the ancient structures on these two days, and because of its ancient origin, this has become an important celebration for many Pagans (Harvey 2007). The 2015 spring equinox fell on the 20th of March at the same day as a total solar eclipse, making it an even more special day to celebrate.

Historically, spring is celebrated on 1st of February, in Irish called Imbolc meaning “lactating” and referees to the lambing season which usually start at this time (Harvey 2007, 8). The spring month April, known to the Anglo-Saxons as Eoster, after a Goddess whose festival was celebrated during the month, is where the Christian festival Easter takes its English name (Harvey 2007, 9).

In these celebrations and rituals they renew their relationship and intimacy with the world, reminding themselves of their relationship with the Earth.

3.2.4 Pagan ecology

Maybe the greatest contribution Pagan animist revival has to offer the status quo, is its perspective on ecology and human activity (Harvey 2007). According to Pagans, there is no evil forces in this world, only an unbalance, caused by human activity, mainly its exploitation of the land, in the form of a broken relationship with the rest of the living world (Harvey 1997). The Gaia hypothesis, the scientific theory that the world is one living organism, a physical system, covered with a biological skin of vegetable and animal organisms (Graham 2008, 204), appeals to many Pagans (Harvey 2007). Some might go as far as saying that humans are an infection or irritation only temporally suffering, because of the self healing mechanisms of Gaia (Harvey 1997, 149). Deities, is not directed into something otherworldly like heaven, but directs their attention to the living world, and encourages action towards reconnecting (Harvey 1997).

3.2.5 Goddess spirituality

Another aspect of the Pagan revival is its focus on feminine energy and Goddess spirituality (Harvey 2007, 70). It is mainly concerned with the embodied living of life by women, and does not referee to a divine being whom women relater to (Harvey 2007, 70). The Goddess can be seen as “the inner most being of women” or “that which exists between women encountering each other”, and is not meant to be equivalent to *woman*, an archetypal universalized being of patriarchy that people might be expected to conform to (Harvey 2007, 70). The Goddess sets focus on the diversity of the life of women, and brings attention to earlier ignored aspects of women life, often marginalized by patriarchal religions through history, enabling women to see the sacredness of menstruation, sexuality and maternity, at the same time giving attention to the significance of women intuition, moods, thoughts, opinions, and desires (Harvey 2007, 70). The Goddess is not only about focusing on the marginalization of women,

it also encourages full participation in life, cultural creativity and activism in social and political life (Harvey 2007, 70).

3.3 The experiential and emotional dimension

Before Shamanism became of great interest in the West, Pagans were already “raising energies”. Heathens were chanting, Druids were already aware of the Otherworld, Witches was raising energy and magicians invited controlled possessions (Harvey 2007, 106). When introduced to Shamanism through anthropology they recognized familiarity between the two cultures. Both in Paganism and Shamanism, energies is not raised for its own sake, but for the purpose of healing and a significant aspect of healing in Paganism is that it encourages change of perception (Harvey 2007). Its meant to be holistic and used for personal and relational growth. In their meeting with Shamanism, and what shamans call teacher plants, Pagans found a connection between themselves and shamanic sacraments and their way of experiencing the world (Harvey 2007). The healing is not just intended to remove `sickness´ but tend towards maturity (Harvey 2007, 115). This is of relevance, not only to show how the increasing interest in these sacraments expands the experimental dimension or new religiosity, but it has sparked an interest in modern science, and these sacraments has become the subject of scientific research.

3.3.1 Teacher plants: Psilocybin mushrooms and ayahuasca

Shamanism talks of some psychoactive plants as teacher plants (Callaway 1999, 95). The ayahuasca vine and the psilocybin mushroom are known to alter consciousness, and has been used as religious sacraments through hundreds, maybe thousands of years (Hopkins, Metzner 1999). Ayahuasca, a vine brewed from the bark of a special tree, and the leafs of a particular bush which contains the psychoactive ingredient DMT, is used in religious ceremonies among Shamans in the amazon (Metzner 1999, Harvey 2005). When ingested orally it “induce several hours of a dream-like altered state of consciousness characterized by intense visual, auditory, ideational and emotional effects” (MAPS). Research with hallucinogens, specially in the field of psychotherapy, almost vanished in the response to the hallucinogen abuse in the 1960, and both ayahuasca and psilocybin was classified as schedule 1 drug together with heroin, cocaine and other hallucinogens, and scientific research just recently resumed (Hopkins). However, ayahuasca is not illegal everywhere and is found in some Brazilian ayahuasca religions, and is also a legal cultural practice in Peru (MAPS). Research is mostly directed towards the benefits of these substances in response to depression, drug abuse/addiction, post traumatic

stress and end of life anxiety (MAPS, Hopkins).

John Hopkins university has done an extensive study on the affects on psilocybin, the active ingredient in magic mushrooms. They describe the “...acute subjective affect include robust changes in perception, cognition, volition, (the process of making and acting on decisions) and somaesthesia (bodily perception)” (Hopkins). In respect of its historical use, all subjects in the study did either consider themselves religious or spiritual, but non had earlier experimented with psychedelic substances (Hopkins). Results showed that the psilocybin experience, conducted in a safe set and setting, was in many cases identical to a naturally occurring mystical experience, generally characterized by a profound feeling of unity and interconnectedness (Hopkins).

Brain imaging (fMRI) on blood flow, which correlates with brain activity, show decrease of blood flow in the part of the brain called the default mode network (also the place which is most active in depression) (MAPS, Iversen 2011). It works as a transit hub, a place where other parts of the brain communicates through, and it is the most active part of the brain (MAPS, Iversen 2011). It is also the most recent revolutionary expansion of the human brain and is active during self reflection, mental imaging, mental time travel and metacognition (knowing about knowing) (MAPS, Iversen 2011). It is active during self reflecting and inwards subjective thinking, also known to be the center for the creation of what we consider to be the `ego`.⁵ In normal awake consciousness, this hub works in competitiveness with another function of the brain, concerning thinking of objective and external things.⁶ Under psilocybin there is a collapse in this competitive activity, and they start to function as one.⁷ Robin Carhart-Harris explains this as the collapse of object/subject differentiating (Harris, MAPS). The decrease of brain activity in the default mode network gives room for changes in perception, and increases the subjects ability to reflect (Harris). Subjective reports from his volunteers tells of ego death, and “..how it was difficult at times to know where I ended and where I melted into everything around me” (MAPS) . Dr. Robin Carhart-Harris which was in charge of the research concludes that this can indicate that consciousness can be explained by different brain activity and does not believe that it

5 See: *Brain Imagine Studies with Psilocybin and MDMA* Video-presentation, available from: <http://www.psychedelicscience.org/18-conference-workshops/48-brain-imaging-studies-with-psilocybin-and-mdma> accessed 4 May 2015.

6 See footnote 5

7 See footnote 5

comes from outside the brain.⁸

According to the findings in these two studies, it is easy to understand the value of the psilocybin experience for animists. It seems as if the psilocybin will strengthen an Animist's perception of the world, and by temporarily transforming the brain activity in others it gives an animistic like perspective during the intoxication. The non dual state of consciousness that is induced by the psilocybin supports the animistic non dual claim to reality. Although research is still in its early stages, its positive affect on depression, drug addiction and anxiety relief in dying patients should challenge the schedule 1 drug classification, thus making it easier and more available for scientific research.

3.3.2 Ayahuasca

Research on ayahuasca is most often linked to cases of drug abuse and addiction and post traumatic stress (MAPS). Research done in Canada, with a group of First Nation volunteers struggling with different drug addictions and stress, is one of many examples of the use of ceremonial ayahuasca with intention of healing. A South American shaman was introduced to the First Nation group of volunteers and the "(A)ayahuasca-assisted addiction therapy was shown to have a significant and lasting positive impact on the lives of many of the retreat participants" (MAPS). Volunteers would report increase of connection with self and connection with others, and being in contact with nature or spirit. One participant reported back that his cravings for crack cocaine and alcohol was completely gone (MAPS).

Going back to Eliade's book on Shamanism, where he claims that it is only the shamans who know how to ascend through the cosmic opening between the different worlds, and that it is only he who can transform the cosmo-theological concept into a concrete mystical experience (Eliade, 265), and with the support of this research I believe it is fair to suggest that ayahuasca and psilocybin mushrooms used in ceremonial context does include the "patient" in the mystical experience.

3.4 Summary

Animist revival, seen through the lens of New Animism, from Pagan traditions to popular Shamanism, introduce an alternative way of looking at the world by focusing on finding better ways to live in

⁸ See: *Brain Image Studies with Psilocybin and MDMA* Video-presentation, available from: <http://www.psychedelicscience.org/18-conference-workshops/48-brain-imaging-studies-with-psilocybin-and-mdma> accessed 4 May 2015.

relationship with our surroundings. Through globalization, different animist religions are being introduced to each other, making animism a trans-national and cross-cultural phenomena that is present in indigenous religions and contemporary spirituality. It re/introduces a perspective on human activity that questions the modern approach to the living world and challenges the Cartesian dualism that has been affecting how we treat it. It challenges the idea of human superiority and our behavior towards domestic animals, forests and the living world and to an animist the Cartesian dualism is nothing but an illusion. It questions our approach towards `natural resources`, and challenges the western worldview and tends toward more eco orientated ways of living, trying to find new ways to reconnecting with the living world.

It might seem natural that people living as farmers many hundred years ago, and indigenous people living off the forest or land, would direct their religious and spiritual attention towards the earth that they live/lived in close relation to. In modern times, the revival of animism might be seen as a logical and rational shift towards a more sustainable living, in response to challenges in contemporary western society. It seems that today's western society has never before been so detached from the natural world, and animist revival seems to be a reaction against this tendency. The Pagan revival, and their celebration of the seasons, and its earth centered deities, contributes in growing awareness about the relationship between humans and the living world (Harvey 2007). It encourages personal and spiritual growth, mixing ancient-and medieval scriptures and new science for their creation of identity and rituals (Harvey 2007). Not many religions presents itself as something to try out, but Paganism influenced by Shamanism does just this (Harvey 2007, 120). By encouraging experimentation and finding new ways of reconnecting with the living world, Animist Pagan revival presents itself as a divers and humble religious movement.

3.5 Humble approaches

When writing on aboriginal law and land Harvey elaborates on his own role in the science of academic religious studies which is worth quoting in length:

I have not become `native`, but I have hopefully ceased being a stranger. Also, this enterprise of guesthood should challenge Western colonialism. In conversation with those who are “other”, we (whomever we are) discover that what is normal for us is not necessarily `unusual, regular, ordinary, sane` -we are also `others`. When `we` are those who benefit from a system (European imperialism and colonialism) that has denied the humanity and attempted (and sometimes

succeeded in) the genocidal destruction of our `other`, it is unsafe to continue to assert the normality, normatively, sanity and decency of what which only appears obvious to us.(...) If lands are subjects in their own right, what room is left for objectification? What if our `other` is a better, more sane and rational observer than we are ? Standing in this place, it is not enough to merely `respect the other`s tradition`, while preserving its exotic distance. The processes or conversation and/or dialogical research are not about comparing an unknown tradition (our other`s) with a tested truth (ours), they are about fumbling towards a richer experience of the world. (Harvey 2005, 69)

His point has clear resemblance to today's new religious movement, backing up the approaches in not claiming any truth, but keep exploring, and incorporate new realities into ones own. It seems that the resumed research on shamanic psychoactive sacraments is also a step in this direction. Western science is taking indigenous knowledge of medicine plants serious, and looking at the possible benefits concerning mental health challenges. Orientalism and ethnocentric tendencies are challenged when science catches the interest of indigenous practices, earlier dismissed as vulgar, crude and primitive. Not only does this research give confidence to the shamans and the indigenous communities, but it also shows the benefits of exchanging knowledge, and having an open mind towards what might first appear as primitive and hard to understand.

As mentioned, in respect of its historical use, all participants in the Hopkins University study on psilocybin considered themselves as spiritual or religious. It would be interesting if they did the same research, but with voluntaries claiming to be atheists, and see how they would describe the experience, knowing they might use other, less religious words describing their experience. Would it still have an outcome similar to a natural mystical experience? Either way, animistic sacraments has shown to be powerful and helpful in research related to drug addiction/abuse, depression, post traumatic stress and end of life anxiety, and this should be food for thoughts on the subject of assumed cultural superiority.

3.6 Conclusion

I have presented in this chapter some features of animistic revival in modern society. From Pagan revival to indigenous Shamanism, Animism is being reintroduced to people either through personal experimentation, the internet, literature, pop culture or through scientific papers. Metzner believes that the revival in Animistic-, neo-Pagan- and Shamanic belief and practices “... including the sacramental use of hallucinogenic or entheogenic plants, represent a reunification of science and spirituality, which have been divorced since the rise of mechanistic science in the seventeenth century” (Metzner 1999, 6).

He believes that spiritual values can again become the primary motivation for scientists. This may seem ambitious, but either way, I believe that animist revival will keep attracting people looking for a greener and more sustainable way of life, and continue to work as a cross-cultural and cross-religious connector.

Chapter Four

ACTIVISM AND LANGUAGE SUPPORTING THE PLURAL SOCIETY

In the previous chapter I presented Animism, both indigenous and Western, who they are and how they approach what they consider holy. In accordance to the writing on New Animism, an Animist is a person, whom recognize that they live in a world full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that they live in a world where everything is connected, and that one should strive to live in harmony and find new ways to reconnect with the natural world. In chapter two I looked into how the concept of religion is widening, and together with the increased knowledge on what language is and can be, modern theories on pluralism and secularization are recognizing religion as a strong and growing force in society. With new approaches towards religion, it is easier to see how religion affects modern society, and with the help of Ninian Smarts six dimension, we can explore religious activity in different sectors, from the ritual to the social, without having to use a cristo-centric definition of what religion is. At the same time as he presents the six dimensions, he argues that it is more useful to speak of worldviews than religion. In the case of Animism, I believe this is especially helpful, since is not a fixed religious concept with doctrine and lacks an institutionalized form and is dependent on its environment to act accordingly, and I wish in this chapter to look into how Animism, in the light of New Animism, is affecting social and political life through direct and indirect environmentalism and activism, as an aspect of the social/practical dimension. I will focus on Pagan environmentalism, indigenous activism, conscious consumerism rooted in contemporary informative campaigns focusing on forest protection as means to tackle the challenges concerning climate change, and animal-rights activism.

I will use the Lima protest to argue that Animism has a direct connection to political ecology, and present two cases from Norway concerning an information campaign on palm oil, as an example of conscience consumerism that can be linked to the rise in Pagan -and animistic revival in a Western context and in the case of animal-rights activism I will look at the opposition against the state

supported fur industry, and look at thought provoking language to highlight English dualism that can help understand how English lacks the ability to express an animistic perspective in proper grammar. I will then reflect on language and how it creates reality supported by the writing of Saussure (1986) and Mc.Kenna (1992), how it can help understand the European and Christian superior attitudes through Christendom and colonialism, and how an expanded understanding of language and reality can be useful in social and political dialogue to increase understanding and respectful engagement.

4.1 Deep ecology

First I believe it is helpful to label a distinction between the Animist worldview with others that care for the environment to be able to differentiate between the different actors in environmentalism and their depths of engagements. There is no reason to suggest that all environmentalists find their motivation in an animistic worldview, and to differentiate, there is an already existing term that can be helpful in this division when comparing animists and other actors with different motivation.

In 1973, Arne Næss coined the term “shallow” ecology and “deep” ecology, where shallow ecology is “the human-centered kind that urge people to save the rainforest because it might contain cures for cancer, or suggest that a reduction in gas emission might prevent cities being flooded as global warming melts the icecaps”(Harvey 2005, 180). Deep ecology is motivated by eco-centric understandings and aims, in contrast to shallow ecology that has an anthropocentric motivation (Harvey 2005, 180-1). Deep ecology is;

...concerned with the `deeper´ philosophical questions that underlies human relationships with the environment. It draws attention to the other-than human communities, needs, desires and rights. It invites the preservation of ecosystems because they are diverse, viable, important and valuable in their own right- not as `resources´ but in themselves and for themselves (Harvey 2005, 180-1).

With these distinction, Animism naturally falls under the term deep ecology which is driven by eco-centric motivation. Additionally, I would like to clarify, that it is not my intention to label all indigenous people as Animists, but I believe it is fair to suggest that many are. Religious syncretism is a common feature of religious life in South America, which can suggest that Animism is still a part of their worldview, even when baptized, I will in this chapter use indigenous and animistic as synonyms.

4.2 Cambiemos el sistema, no el clima (system change not climate change)

The United Nations COP20 conference concerning climate change took place in Lima, Peru in December 2014. It had brought together close to 500 leaders from key United Nations bodies, governments, international and regional companies and leading non-governmental Organizations⁹. The location itself can be symbolic, given the situation the city itself is currently in. Historically, Lima was the political and administrative center of colonial South America, and the city center is constructed in colonial architecture with churches, monasteries and mansions decorated with wooden balconies. The city lies on the coast in a desert area but presents itself as a green oasis, dependent on systematic water systems from a melting glaciers. Peru is also the home for 10% of the Amazonian rainforest, and almost 75% of it is covered by planned or operative oil-and gas concessions (RFN 2014, 5). Peru has also seen the rise in human rights violations towards people going up against oil and mining companies, being one of three countries with the most killing of people safeguarding fundamental human rights, together with Colombia and Brazil (RFN 2014, 5).

4.2.1 Indigenous activism

The protest that found place, was not just a protest against climate change, but a protest against the dangers meet when environmentalist are going up against big companies, where indigenous activists has been killed and harassed, and banners with slogans like *defend the forest, system change not climate change, no fracking*, and anti capitalistic slogans flourished in the masses. News that an Ecuadorian indigenous leader that had opposed a copper and gold mining project in Ecuador, was found dead in the forest with signs of torture before killed¹⁰, became a sad reminder of their struggle. This is not only in South America, and Gottlieb mentions this when writing about environmentalists in general, that “...when environmentalists try to help create the needed changes, they frequently come up against the dominant social structures of industrialized society: profit-orientated corporations and the political elite more interested in preserving power than the environment” (Gottlieb 2013, 7).

The report *Human Rights and resource conflicts in the Amazon* (2014) written by the Rainforest Foundation Norway investigates the alarming increase in human rights violations in the Amazon region, and concludes that all though native people on paper have seen an increase in progress in the

⁹ See: <http://www.cop20lima.org/> accessed 20 March 2015.

¹⁰ See article <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/10/thousands-marchers-demand-just-solution-un-climate-talks-lima> :accessed 20 March 2015.

last decades concerning rights and recognition, in reality the situation is a different one (RFN 2014x, 5). “The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders reports that human rights defenders working on land and environmental issues in the Americas are more exposed to physical attacks than those in other parts of the world” (RVN 2012, 5-6) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights report that “...baseless criminal actors are systematically being brought against human rights defenders in the region” (RFN 2012, 5-6). In addition to the dangers of harassment and physical attacks, there is the possibility of being evicted for the sake of industrial activity, which leads to direct social, cultural and economic consequences (RFN 2014x, 6). The earlier assumption that one had to remove the inhabitants to protect the forest has resulted in forest dwellers being evicted also from national parks (RFN 2012, 10), in contrary to the findings in a new study comparing protected versus community-managed forests for long time maintenance of forest cover in the tropics, concluding that the “..forests management by local communities on the whole exhibited a lower and less variable rate of deforestation than protected forest” (RFN 2012, 10). This is suggested to be because forest communities have an interest in protecting their forest and their knowledge on how to maintain is being recognized as an important aspect in the approach in the challenges concerning climate change and deforestation (RFN 2012, 10).

In the South-American struggle for indigenous people and in the protection of the rainforest and with international human rights, it is easy to see how Animism in the Amazon region is naturally connects to ecology and the environmental movement. The recognition of indigenous knowledge on forest maintenance has become an important element in the approach towards climate change, and this knowledge is based in their worldview, which is reflected in the way they treat the forest and their surrounding accordingly. In other words, Animism is being recognized as an important contribution to the approach concerning climate change.

Where people live in urban cities, far away from a life in a natural world, Animism is played out in a different way. Since Animism is depending on its geographic and ecological surroundings, its affect on society will take different forms, depending on where it is being practiced, or said in a different way, where the worldview Animism is lived out.

4.3 Pagan environmentalism

When looking at animism through New Animism, an animist is a person that recognizes that they live in a world where everything that is lives, that they share this life with other persons, only some of whom are human, that strive to live in harmony with the living world (Harvey 2005). All though Animism, in this new light works as a cultural connector between indigenous amazonian religions and Pagan-revival, Pagan western Animists know that they can not adopt the practices of amazonian Animism because of their different geographical and ecological location, and they need to approach this worldview in a different way and find their own ways to reconnect with their geographical surroundings (Harvey 2005).

Groups such as *Woodland trust* and *British Trust for Nature Conservation* is attractive to many Pagans because of their engagement with the native mixed woodland of Britain and the wilderness of North-America (Harvey 1997, 124). Groups such as *Earth First!* and *Earth Liberation Front* believes in direct non-violent action that can result in eco-vandalism, because of their methods of damaging machinery or other sabotaging techniques (Harvey 1997, 124). Groups such as *Dragon Environmental Network* and *Reclaiming* has been active and in the front line in protesting against destruction of complex ecological environments and central to carnival-style protests against globalization (Harvey 1997, 124).

4.4 Conscious consumerism

All though some Pagans attempt to live sustainable and self-sufficiently (Harvey 1997, 124), in a Western urban context most Animists are most likely not surrounded by deep forest, most live in a human dominated world, surrounded by consumer products. All though Pagan revival directs its spiritual and religious attention towards reconnecting with nature, they are also people who live in a western capitalistic system, and will therefore be a part of a consumer society and need to find sustainable ways to live, through consumer food and products. Animism, in a western context, can therefore be linked to conscious consumerism. To clarify, I do not intend to state that conscious consumerism is animistic, but that Animists will be conscious consumers. This is supported by the Pagan statement, that Paganism is not believing, but doing, and that an Animist is a person that is concerned with learning how to be a good person in respectful relationships with other persons, only some of whom are human (Harvey 2005, xi). In this way, Paganism is offering a worldview that challenges the contemporary culture of consumerism and individualism (Harvey 1997, 138), which

can support my claim that modern Animists are a strong force in conscious consumerism. To support this, I will use the information campaign from the *Rainforest Foundation Norway* concerning palm oil, and later look at the opposition against the Norwegian state supported fur industry, as examples of animistic engagement in social and political life.

4.4.1 Palm oil

To understand the reaction towards the use of palm oil, it is helpful to know some basics. The last 5-10 years there has been a massive public criticism directed towards the palm oil industry, because its role as the main reason for deforestation in Southeast Asia (RFN 2014, 74). Indonesia and Malaysia alone stands for approximately 85% of the global production, and Indonesia intends to double the area of oil palm, and Papua New-Guinea is facing the same threat (RFN 2014, 5). Because of high demands in the global market, and its low-cost efficiency, palm oil stands for around 1/3 of global vegetable oil use and is used in food, cosmetics, industrial products, animal feed and bio fuels (RFN 2014, 5).

Because of political struggle to regulate these activities, other actors are taking on the responsibility to inform the consumers about the destruction and the consequences palm oil production has on the environment, and how they can help push forward change by consciously consuming, therefore lying additional pressure on the industry. The conscious consumer in these cases has to make choices, to ensure that what one believe is right is reflected not only in his/her close surrounding and in local politics, but extends to people that has a strong relationship to the product they are buying and living of. If one believes that plantain workers in developing countries should have the right to organize to insure fair working conditions and a fair salary, it is not enough to disclaim responsibility and hand it over to the forces in politics, when we see how hard it is to make necessary changes when profit often comes before sustainable developments (Gottlieb 2010). In a world driven by business and a neoliberal economy (Held 2008, 186-89), the consumer has the power to withhold money, therefore forcing the production to change, but its challenging to be a conscious consumer when the industries are pushing forward a continues wave of consumer products, often deliberately trying to hide and avoid the truths about their products (Gottlieb 2010). Organizations like *Made in a Free World* is actively informing about modern day slavery and its connection to consumer products, and encouraging people to take action and spend money consciously.¹¹

11 See :<https://madeinafreeworld.com/slavery/> accessed 20 March 2015

4.4.2 Palm oil campaign

In January 2012 *Regnskogfondet (RFN)* together with *Green Living* launched a palm oil guide in Norway, with the slogan “Do not eat the rainforest!”, at the same time gathering signatures for their petition that was sent to food producers to demand they use less palm oil and produce more healthy and environmental friendly food.¹² They collected 21 523 signatures, and in one year, from 2011-2012, the consumption of palm oil had been reduced with 66 %.¹³ *Freia*, a big chocolate company has meet harsh criticism because of its use of palm oil in many of its product, and in March this year (2015) experienced a failed advertisement campaign, *#detnære*, intended to connect their milk chocolate *Melkesjokolade* to precious moments in peoples lives backfired and was overwhelmed with anti-palm oil slogans instead that resulted in them freezing the campaign.¹⁴ What is noteworthy here is that the chocolate connected to the campaign has never contained palm oil, and the reactions from the public was directed to the brand itself.¹⁵

This shows that the RFN informative palm oil campaign and the following debate has had an affect on conscious consumption surrounding products that is causing deforestation. Because *RFN* and its work in rainforest protection has roots in the realization that indigenous knowledge about forest maintenance is crucial in the challenges concerning forest protection makes it clear that they have acknowledge that animistic perspectives are important in the challenges concerning climate change and in approaches concerning natural protection.

By looking at direct indigenous environmentalism in the amazonian region, and indirect environmentalism through the growing awareness of consumer products concerning products linked to deforestation and climate change in the West. It becomes a complex engagement that takes place on many levels, both in direct and indirect activism. Additionally it is fair to assume that both animists and followers of deep and shallow ecology has contributed to the results of this campaign, and in the reduction in palm oil. It is worth mentioning that in response to the criticism, the palm oil industry created a certification system named RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil), and today 14% of palm oil production is RSPO certified.¹⁶

12 See article: <http://www.regnskog.no/no/bevisst-forbruker/underskriftskampanje> accessed 24 March 2015

13 See footnote 12

14 See article: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/sosiale-medier/ekspert-om-freia-en-kraftig-omdoemme-smell/a/23420069/> accessed 30 March 2015

15 See footnote 14

16 See article :<http://www.regnskog.no/no/bevisst-forbruker/palmeolje/sertifisering-av-palmeolje> accessed 13 April 2015

4.5 The animistic objection to Cartesian dualism

If respectful engagement is the central moral imperative of Animism, the human relationship with animals is problematic. Contrary to the Cartesian dualism, which traditionally is associated with the view that animals lack minds, emphasizing the human uniqueness based on the observation of the failure of animals ability and skills to use language rationally, or to reason generally (Standford 2014, 4.4), Animists see animals as conscious beings (Harvey 2005).

René Descartes, the french philosopher, scientist, and an advocated for mechanical science took the Cartesian stand, and his argument for this was not based on any ontological principles but;

“...upon what he took to be the failure of animals to use language rationally, or to reason generally. On this basis he claimed that nothing in animal behavior requires a non-mechanistic, mental explanation; hence he saw no reason to attribute possession of mind to animals. In a sense, therefore, the Cartesian argument for the human-uniqueness of consciousness rests on the premise that material processes are insufficient to account for human capacities for language, rationality, and self-awareness (i.e. the awareness of oneself as, putatively, an essentially thinking thing) — and hence a non-material soul was posited to account for these phenomena” (Standford 2014, 4.4).

There is reason to believe that this mindset and worldview has given way for the industry of livestock, where animal life is reduced to food production. Not only does this conflict with the Animist perspective on how we should approach animal life, but it affects the environment in ways that is unsustainable, and is connected to deforestation in the Amazonian region.

According to the UN supported report *Livestock's Long Shadow*, livestock is responsible for 18% of the global greenhouse gas emission that contributes to global warming, more than cars, planes and all other transport forms all together, whereas the worlds 1,5 billion cattle gets most of the blame.¹⁷ High demand for food products of animal origin has led to an expansion in soybean cultivation, mostly processed into animal feed, and is becoming one of the main threats for deforestation in the southern Amazon region.¹⁸ The cattle industry in Brazil has become one of the largest beef exporters and is responsible for between 61-75% of rainforest destruction in the Brazilian Amazon (RFN 2014, 77).

17 See Report *Livestock's long Shadow* :<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/01/a0701e/a0701e03.pdf> pg.112 accessed 17 April 2015

18 From 1994-2008 soybean production in Braazil increased by approximately 135%. See RFN *State of the Rainforest* pg.75

4.5.1 Animal rights-activism

When writing on modern Paganism and their connection to ecology, Graham Harvey points out that in addition to engagement in ecology and environmentalism, there is many Pagan animal-rights groups (Harvey 1997, 124). This is part of a growing awareness towards animals, and in Norway the livestock industry has had an increased focus on animal welfare.¹⁹ Again, the distinction between shallow and deep ecology can be helpful when looking at the difference between environmentalism and animal-rights, to support the claim that the animal-rights movement has a stronger animistic support group than environmentalism. In the case of ecology, I earlier referred to Arne Næss and the difference between shallow- and deep ecology, where Animism falls under the eco-centrally motivated, compared to the anthropocentric. In the case of environmentalism there is a huge gain for people to be engaged, making it easy to act with anthropocentric motivation. In the case of animal-rights, and especially concerning the opposition against the fur-industry, there is no immediate gain for the individual, suggesting that animal-rights activists are most likely to act out of eco-centric motivation, suggesting a more animistic perception.

4.5.2 Anti-fur, activism based on eco-centri motivation

In December 2014, the documentary *Pels* (fur) was showed on NRK , the state owned channel in Norway, exposing the conditions for fur farm animals, taken with undercover footage.²⁰ The controversy of the content and the methods used to get them, steered up an already heated debate over the state supported industry. Animal rights organizations like NOAH and people opposing the industry are arguing that it is in conflict with Norway's own animal welfare laws, which was strengthened in 2010 by applying that the animals natural need is to be taken into account, and that the animal has intrinsic value in addition to its value for humans.²¹ The documentary shows scenes of animals running around in small metal cages with no possibility to feel solid ground under their feet, wounds that go unattended and exposes that the industry operates with the concept *cannibal period*, a time where the animals has reached a certain age, where they bite themselves and others causing open wounds that in some cases leads to death.²² It also shows slaughter methods such as anal-and mouth electrocution for fox, gas chambers for mink, and insemination techniques with metal equipment that suffocates the

19 See *Landbruksrådet* :<http://www.landbruk.no/Landbruk/Dyrevelferd> accessed 17 April 2015

20 See documentary :<http://tv.nrk.no/serie/brennpunkt/MDUP11001814/09-12-2014> accessed 23 April 2015

21 See <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2009-06-19-97> §3 accessed 16 April 2015

22 See footnote 20

animal.²³ The undercover footage was a new strategy for the activists that for many years intentionally had trespassed illegally into the farms to document the living conditions, facing dangers such as fines and arrest if caught.²⁴

When an activist is willing to face changes, fines and prison for fighting the cause of an animal's right to a meaningful life, there is reason to believe they are not motivated by self interest. Therefore, in the case of animal-rights activism I believe the eco-centri and animistic motivation becomes more clear than in the environmental movement, and by analyzing the way they use language to express their view, we can easier understand where their motivation comes from.

4.5.3 Thought provoking language “To animals, all humans are Nazis”²⁵

Animistic opposition against the fur- and livestock industry can be seen in the animal-rights movement where the livestock industry is compared to the Holocaust (Inhabitat),²⁶ which is undoubtedly offensive to Holocaust survivors, non the less understandable from an Animists perspective, where the suffering of animals do not differ from human suffering. On the Holocaust memorial day 16th of April 2015, animal-rights activists had gathered in New York city to have a memorial for the animals that has died in what they describe as the ongoing Holocaust of livestock animals.²⁷ People with a Cartesian understanding of the relationship between humans and animal can easily be offended by such claims, and with no knowledge of any other view, it can be perceived as misplaced empathy. At the same time their lack of empathy from an Animists perspective towards what they see as a conscious being, an animal person, a sister or a brother, creates an environment where it can be hard to have any real dialog. The thought provoking language definitely hits a nerve in the post-war world and can work both for and against them. Because of the lack in understanding where their motivation comes from, it can be seen as misplaced empathy, and they can be perceived as angry misinformed activists that do not know where to draw a line, and is therefore not taken seriously.

23 See documentary :<http://tv.nrk.no/serie/brennpunkt/MDUP11001814/09-12-2014> accessed 23 April 2015

24 See footnote 23

25 See <http://inhabitat.com/nyc/animal-holocaust-victims-to-be-mourned-tonight-at-memorial-procession-in-nyc/> accessed 15 April 2015

26 See footnote 25

27 See footnote 25

With deeper insight in different worldviews with better communication, much unnecessary tension could be avoided if the majority in society had a better understanding of other worldviews, and was able to approach social tension and conflict with a wide foundation of knowledge.

4.6 New Animism as a useful concept in dialog and understanding

In a globalized world where particular cultures have a history of ethnocentrism and colonialism, dialogue based on common ground can be a challenge. In an article about the animal holocaust memorial the activists comparing the killing of Jews in Second World War to the slaughter of animals for the sake of food and clothing today, are referred to as *animal lovers* (Inhabitat), which gives little ground for serious discussion. Here I believe that the concept of (new) Animism would be more helpful to understand the depth of the conflicting attitude towards an accepted main stream industry. In contrast to *animal lovers*, Animism has more depth and can be seen as a more expressive and direct symbol to explain their perspective. It is important to note, that all though I see their motivation and actions to be based on animistic principals, there is no reason to assume that they would call themselves that. It is not my intention to label a group of people animists, I only intend to suggest that it would be helpful in their cause if they were able to expand their message, and strengthen their language, and with using the symbol (new) Animism, if they could relate to the concept, their message would be supported by a symbol that has more depth and invoke more understanding than *animal lover*.

4.7 Use of language

“Rights now, mother cows are crying out for their kidnapped babies; piglets are being castrated with no painkillers; male chicks are being dropped into shredding machines; monkeys are being tortured (in) laboratories; and millions of farm animals are making the long, terrifying journey to a slaughterhouse. For what?” asks Schuchat. “When footage of factory farms is played side by side with footage of the Holocaust, people can see there's not much of a difference.”
(Inhabitat)

In the first chapter, I wrote on the importance of new understandings of language and how it creates reality. The challenge for a Ugandan trying to express his or her reality in a language that has a different reality structure can be compared to English speaking animist's lack of vocabulary to properly express their perspectives and worldview in depth. The statement above is a good example of an uncommon way to use the English language. By comparing the Holocaust to livestock slaughter, they

are translating their reality into an already existing concept, to be able to express their depth of empathy towards the animals. Although there can be many objections to the comparison, whereas the Holocaust has become a symbol of Jewish genocide, livestock is where an animal's life is reduced to human food production, which indicates that it is not an intention to remove animals from the face of the earth, but this highlights English and its lack of ability to express animistic perspectives, so words will be used in new contexts, when someone is trying to communicate their view of the world. A normalized practice within a Cartesian approach towards livestock animals, such as a calf being taken away from the cow is an industrialized norm, is not comparable within the English language to the kidnapping of a child. Animistic perspectives are in these cases challenging the 'taken for granted' cultural practices of the dominant worldview, and questions the logic of the Western worldview.

4.7.1 English dualism

To understand the use of unfamiliar language by activists it is helpful to look at English dualism and its anthropocentric grammar, and how it therefore lacks the ability to express an animistic perspective in proper grammar. English differentiates in grammar when referring to humans, animals and plants, that place the human person on top of a hierarchy making it easy for humans to separate oneself from the natural world. A human is referred to as *he/she* (is); "she won't make it that far", "he will be back soon", which recognizes gender and personhood, while grammar concerning an animal is most often *it* (is); "it won't make it far", "it will be back soon" suggesting lack of personhood, which is also used in grammar concerning inanimate objects. Although *he/she* (is) can also be used when addressing animals, not to indicate personhood, but to differentiate gender, and plants in English are inanimate and are therefore objectified and go under the grammar *it* (is). Words concerning animal gender differentiation can often operate with different names for the different genders, such as in cattle where the female is *cow* and the male is *bull*, making the *he/she* (is) that indicates personhood less used than *it* (is). But culturally, many make exceptions for pets such as cats and dogs. They are often referred to as *he/she*, that can indicate that they are closer to personhood compared to other animals. This also affects how we legitimize different actions towards the different animals, where a dog or a cat in a cage over a longer period of time can be 'animal abuse', in contrast to fox and mink in fur farming, where this is an accepted industrialized practice.

English also differentiates between action toward animals and humans making it hard to see the action as the same. If a human is killed with no chance to fight back, it is an *execution*, while the same action towards an animal is *slaughter*, which is seen as an acceptable practice, but in the context of a human, *slaughter* can indicate a violent or grotesque murder. After an animal is slaughtered its body is renamed as meat and sold as food products where *pig* become *bacon* and *ham*, *bull* and *cow* becomes *beef*, again making it easy to distance oneself from any chance of personhood in the animal, showing that the language itself is an obstacle to understand the animistic worldview because of its fixed dual grammar.

4.7.2 Language as worldview

In chapter two I described the Ojibwe language and its animistic grammar, and in contrast to English it does not differentiate between a human person and some animal- and plant persons, making it harder for them to see some animals and plants as separate from themselves. Since it also lacks gender differentiation the personhood is not dependent on the recognition of gender or human form like in the English language. With this in mind, it is easier to see how the English language creates a different reality compared to the Ojibwe language, and how it obtains the Cartesian dualism.

If we use the English language to explain animistic perspectives on environmentalism and indigenous activism, where indigenous forest communities are threatened by deforestation and eviction, this is not only a matter of being moved or evicted, there is also the possible mass murder of communal plants and trees. Not only does eviction of human communities have direct social and economical consequences, it also affects the animal and plant life. With less forest, animals are struggling to survive, and with human interference in ecosystems, we are seeing a crisis in biodiversity as a consequence of anthropocentric approaches in modern developments. In contrast to an animistic language, like Ojibwe, we can see how English and European/Christian dualism has created a gap between humans and other living beings, where the understanding of reality and action depend on what the language is able to, or allows to express. Going back to Saussure (1986) and his understanding of linguistics and Ninian Smart (2000) and the understanding of religion as worldview, I believe it is useful to not only expand the definition of religion to see it as a worldview, but also expand the definition of what a worldview is, to incorporate language. In this sense, a language is a worldview in itself, and can not be translated without using expressions or words that are different in meaning, and will therefore not be able to express its reality.

4.8 Lost in translation

With new perspectives on Animism and increased knowledge on language, worldviews and religion, we can see how animistic realities are incapable to properly express itself in languages which follows a dual Cartesian grammar structure. With this in mind, it is fair to assume that this is not only the case with English versus Ojibwe, but with all languages. By seeing a language as a worldview, we are able to understand that translation is problematic. A translation is based on a language's capacity to explain a reality it does not have words for, and in that way a translation itself becomes its own syncretized and hybrid reality, creating a worldview based on concepts from one culture, wrapped in words from another. If this is so, cultural and religious expansion changes reality when being incorporated into a new language and culture. It can at best successfully capture the essence of the other reality, making it non logical to claim a clear understanding of the other worldview. In the case of Christianity, a movement based in a Jewish and Hellenistic context changed profoundly when moving into a Germanic culture in western Europe in the middle ages (Jenkins. 2011, 6). The European Christians reinterpreted the faith through their own social structures and gender relations based on translation, incorporating it into a hierarchical power structure, claiming their specific cultural version as the one true faith with the the Pope in 1302. Had the tradition of Jesus as a messenger of God moved into an eastern tradition at that time, he would most likely take the form of an avatar, a reincarnation of Shiva, a manifestation of the Ultimate God Brahman.

When seeing language as a contextual reality, the many manifestations of different faiths in the light of historical use-and abuse of power, it is fair to suggest that we can not claim to know the true message behind the mystical experience that motivated Muhammad, Moses and Buddha to pursue the prophetic life.

The monotheistic prophets, Jesus, Moses and Muhammad is said to all have come with a message that was controversial in their time, expressing their call to action against an unfair social system (Opsal 2005, 52). Islamic history tells of how Muhammad gave rights to women by giving them right to heritage and divorce, something that was controversial at that time, but as society changed and the culture evolved Arab women lost their status, and a hierarchical patriarchal system developed (Opsal 2005). Although the message was often controversial and in opposition to its contemporary society, religion has been used as a tool for legitimizing suppression and discrimination, conflicting with what

many believe is the core essence of religious and spiritual life (Kraft 2011). The transformations of faith, and its history of social and political suppression is the main reason why new religious movements are avoiding the “R-word”, and identifies with being spiritual, not religious, believing that the essence of every faith lies in the spiritual teachings, not in the doctrinal realities created within politically motivated institutions (Kraft 2011).

4.8.1 The success story of Shamanism and Pagan revival

Pagan revival and Shamanism has in this view successfully gone beyond the structure and realities of language and found a connection in what they believe is the essence of their reality. This is an ongoing accomplishment, and because of changing environments and expansion into new languages and cultures, what it *is* evolves as they find new ways to reconnect to the living community. Although their approaches to reality takes different forms, they see animism as their common core, and is building new relationships with new communities based on an animistic foundation. With the help of Mircea Eliade, and his book *Shamanism* (2004), which he describes as “...the first to cover the entire phenomenon of Shamanism and at the same time situate it in the general history of religions” (Eliade, 2004, xvii) we are presented with North American, South American, Indonesian, Oceanian, Asian and Indo-European shamanism, indicating that animistic tendencies can be found in all corners of the world. He presents parallel myths, symbols and rites, supporting the common worldview, that takes different form on different continents, and links them together through the practices of the community healer. He also notes that “...it must always be borne in mind that an archaic schema is able to constantly renew its spiritual content” (Eliade 2004, 377), which has parallels to the new religious movements and can explain why Shamanism and its animistic nature is so attractive to the Pagan revival movement. In Shamanism, Pagan revival has found a link back to a native worldview that can be found in traditions all over the world, which is all animistic in nature.

4.9 Religion as activism

In this first part of this chapter I have presented some cases to show how Animism is an active force within the environmental movement, and that this can be understood in their eco-centric attitudes toward the natural world. In the case of active resistance shown in indigenous communities when their land and livelihood are threatened, their motivation is complex and can not be explained by animistic perspectives alone. Their struggle against international companies and the human rights violations that

take place is signs of both social and political marginalization, which is being recognized by the international community. This realization has created ripple effects by international organizations that creates awareness about the unsustainable patterns of deforestation and its affect on local social and political life, and when being translated into modern consumer society, it becomes a subject for conscious consumption. Being aware that your everyday purchases affects someone, ether it be a human, a tree or a lake, animists are involved on multiple levels, and their engagement can not be explained by one motivation factor alone, but from a wide perspective on their awareness on how their actions affect the rest of the world. In this way, animists become social and political activist, and their spirituality is reflected in the engagement they take part in.

With a wider definition on religion and religious practices, we are able to understand how the animistic worldview can be a foundation for environmentalism and animal-rights activism. Their religious/spiritual activity is directed towards the natural world and is concerned about reconnecting, making it an everyday act to be aware of their own impact and footprint in a local, but global context. Their awareness toward animals, trees and plant as something that has an intrinsic value in itself, is reflected in how they live their lives. In this sense, it might be more important to speak of what religious or spiritual people do, not what they believe, because it is what people do, that affect the rest of society. In their opposition to the Cartesian dualism, visible in their activism in environmentalism and concerning animal-rights, they are challenging the `taken for granted` cultural, and natural hierarchy that is created in the English language and the Western worldview. In the simple act of using improper grammar, they give attention to English dualism and its anthropocentric grammar structure, which show the limitations within the English language to conceptualize a different reality.

4.10 Benefits with understanding language as a worldview

While Graham Harvey writes that the Pagan engagement in environmentalism might be its greatest contribution to modern society, I believe it is the animistic language structures that is used in these engagements and how it challenges Western dualism that in the long run will play a key role in the re evaluation of the Western worldview. Because of the global focus on climate change and unsustainable human consumption, it is not enough to “understand” and examine the political structures that keeps letting it happen, there also has be a re evaluation of the worldview that made this possible. I believe that the ethnocentric attitudes towards indigenous people, dual language structures, and the Cartesian

dualism is core elements for this development. The anthropocentric approaches toward the natural world, combined with a simplistic and naive attitude toward natural resources and the Earth's capacity to regenerate and heal has not been proportional, and we are seeing the consequences of this today.

By seeing language in itself as a worldview, we can better understand how the European expansion failed to comprehend the realities of the native people, reflected in their simplistic descriptions of the indigenous culture which also gives attention to the complexity of translation. The realization that language and translation is not only a simple concept of a list of terms corresponding with a list of things, but a complex system of concepts and sound patterns suggests that translation itself is problematic. For instance, in Luganda, many words can be used in different contexts, depending on the subject and how you use your tone when expressing it. Because of the different language structures and worldview difference, in the act of translating their reality, it can become simplistic, which can help understand the colonial reasoning of ethnocentrism.

This realization of language helps us understand the opposition by some Animists to anthropocentric approach toward livestock animals, in the Cartesian dualism and in the idea that animals does not have a soul because they lack the ability to speak in human language and use human logic. From an animistic perspective this simplistic definition on animal life, and how they have been treated accordingly, can be a reflection of the same incapability to recognize the value of other beings from an anthropocentric worldview. This suggest that the human incapability to understand other creatures reality or logic should not be an indication that they do not have one, only be a reflection of our own shortcomings in understanding their existence and value. A language and a worldview in this sense can only be aware of this reality, if it can create it within the context of its language. English dualism is in this case an obstacle for expressing animistic logic, which is not to say that that people are trapped in their cultural worldview, and activists that are opposing their own cultural logic can be an example of this. In the case of animist revival within a plural society, we see how language and cultural practices are being challenged through activism.

4.11 Contemporary parallel to the Enlightenment

In an environment where cultural recreation is based on a wide foundation, we see how different cultures and religions are contributing to cultural and social change, while at the same time it can create tension. Opposition towards the running political and social system can be seen through history, such as the secular elite against the Church in the Enlightenment. If we look at the critique that was directed toward the Church in the Enlightenment, we can draw a parallel to the opposition against the modern system today. First, there is a resemblance in the ethnocentric attitude towards other cultures, and its own claim to reason in science. This is also evident in what they named the period itself. In Buddhism, to be enlightened has been translated to mean that you have reached the level of all knowing, and is the ultimate goal (Jacobsen 2000). Naming the split with the Church the *Enlightenment* can suggest that they either truly believed that they had become enlightened because of the adaptation of scientific inquiry, but could also have been a conscious choice of symbol to enforce their claim to universal truth. But in retrospective, we can see that the Christian worldview was adopted in many ways by the new society, and has in time shown to be far from all knowing. Second, the critique against the Church for abuse of power, can be seen today in the opposition to the anthropocentric and capitalistic developments that is put forward by the international community. The political and social marginalization of indigenous communities, and their lack of legal protection shows an uneven balance in power. Third, the critique towards the self interest to preserve privileges can be seen today as the opposition against the extraction of natural resources in developing countries. The capitalistic consumer society and its growing demand for natural resource, is affecting the livelihood of indigenous tribes outside its own borders, which lack legal protection in a system adopted by the colonial rule and the society that is demanding of these resource. By doing this, indigenous people are losing their livelihood with direct social, political and ecological consequences, to make way for industrial mining and oil extraction.

If we look at what happened in the Enlightenment, I believe their lack of ability to break free from the Christian worldview can be explained in their lack of influences from a broad cultural and religious society. The attitude of the Church had for centuries legitimized suppressing of other faiths, resulting in a secular but not plural society. In a simplistic description, we can say that the State replaced the Church, and Scientism replaced Christianity, and the disenchantment of nature and the ethnocentric attitude made it a difficult task to incorporate other perspectives into its reality. To tackle the problems

of intolerance in society, the new elite downplayed the difference between the Catholic and Protestant faith to emphasize development empirical science. The theories on mechanical science conceptualizing the universe as mere matter, combined with ethnocentrism and the need to differentiate themselves from religion can be seen as one of the biggest failures of the time. By doing this, they adopted the same attitude as the Church which they had opposed, and much of the same critique is directed towards the global elite today, such as the abuse of power, and expansion on the expense of ecology and cultural disagreements. The cultural and institutionalized disenchantment of nature, combined with its cultural expansion has resulted in a crisis in biodiversity, and with a growing awareness of its unsustainable ways, it has acknowledged that it needs to find new and better ways. It has reached the point where the Earth is not capable of supplying the modern world demands.

What is different today, is that we have a secular but plural society, making it possible for cultural renewal with a wider cultural and religious foundation, and as much as the West has believed their knowledge is important to be explored by other cultures, the benefits of exchange of knowledge is mutual, supported in the benefits of meditation and yoga, and the acknowledgment of indigenous knowledge in forest protection in new approaches against deforestation and climate change. The importance of expanded definitions and new approaches towards new cultures and religions can help to downplay the tendencies of othering.

In the plural society and with digital communication, people are exposed to different realities and worldviews, and as we can see in the case of Paganism and Shamanism, people are downplaying the role of language, which can help us understand their reasoning for claiming to be religiously related through animism and animistic healing sacraments. This success can be seen as a result of an experimental based spirituality where they do not experience reality withing the logic of cultural linguistics, but based on their own experience of the world. This cultural connection is made possible because of the plural society, and religious freedom, and this is one of the major differences compared to the Enlightenment, and with new perspectives on language, and more humble approaches, I believe the foundation for a global cultural shift is possible. With these new perspectives we can downplay the difference in religious faith without the intention to undermine, which seems to have been the case in the Enlightenment.

4.12 Activism as religion

With a widened definition on religion and new approaches, we are able to see religion from a different perspective than before. The Weber definition on religion, which sees religion as something easily distinguished and separate from other aspects of life, focused on aspects such as belief and worldview orientation that is always grasping for something otherworldly and beyond, can be seen as a creation going back to the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, in the context where Church and secular wings were competing over the meaning of philosophy, religion, law and state authority. With looking into New Animism and social activism, we can better understand how religion can not be separated from everyday life, and if religion itself is a worldview, then actions in social and political life will be a reflection of what the religion gives attention to. With looking at animistic activism, we can see how religion and worldview is a foundation for social and political engagement, which can suggest that religion in society often plays out as activism. This can be supported by looking at history and how religion has been developed. If we put aside the historical description on how Christianity and Islam developed, it started with Jesus and Muhammad opposing a social system that dominated their society. If we see religion as a reaction towards the current system, activism is necessary for that change to take place. Activism can take different forms, it can be active and direct such as indigenous environmentalism, and indirect such as conscious consuming, it can be rooted in violence and in non-violence, and without activism, political and social change is not possible. What is different today, from the time of Jesus and Muhammad is that the current global situation suggests that activism will be rooted in both social, political and in environmentalism. Today, we see an increase between the rich and the poor, rising tension between religious groups, wars fought over natural resources and land, and activism in this global environment will be directed to what people are the most aware of. In the case of Pagan revival and animism, this is evident in their engagement in environmentalism and animal-rights.

If activism based on religious foundation was given more attention in the study of religion, I believe this conclusion will be supported. From my experience in Uganda, much of the Hindu community have traditions of regularly supporting local communities with food distribution, an act that there is reason to believe is based in religious tradition. Much of the Christian mission is also directed towards social development, and in a country where the state support is weak, religious communities becomes a social security for its members. This can support the idea that religion is activism, and depending on the depth of engagement, this will be reflected in how active one is in social and political engagement.

4.13 Religious tension and land marginalization

Activism does not always bring peace and prosperity, which is evident in religious wars and tension between religious groups. The challenge with identity rooted in religious conviction is when the religion and doctrine becomes narrow and creates tension towards other religious groups. In social and political marginalization, as witnessed in Uganda, many find themselves dependent on the religious community for social support. When resources and land becomes scarce, what has been a positive and empowering element in their life becomes a breeding ground for othering and self protection. If we can downplay the religious differences, we can minimize grouping and othering when resources and land is marginalized, so that we can confront the main element in the rise in tension, the marginalization of land and resources. With this in mind, I believe on the subject of political ecology, it can be more helpful to explain politics with ecology, and not ecology with politics. If we look at contemporary conflicts such as Israel and Palestine, we can see how it has become a conflict with religious overtones which started as a conflict concerning land. Mass migration can also be seen as a complex situation, where conflicts over land and resources is combined with the marginalization of a religious group, which is rooted in resource marginalization, which can be supported by Paul Robbins in *Political Ecology* (2004). In most conflicts, it is evident that the religious overtones are highlighted, as this is most visible and can be related to human action and interaction. This can suggest that the underlying cause of resource and land marginalization, is not given the attention that is necessary for the religious tension to wear off. In the case of Israel/Palestine which started as a dispute over land, has today become a complex conflict, and can not be resolved only by land distribution. In the case of indigenous environmentalism and political activism in the Amazon, there is a better chance to downplay the difference in religion and worldview, because of the focus on the land and resource marginalization at an early stage. All though I have given attention to the difference in religion and worldviews, this is only secondary to the conflict over the right to land and the right to live without outside interference. The conflicting attitudes is rooted in a difference in worldview, but would not have be a conflict if their land was not threatened in the first place.

With this realization, combined with new perspectives on language and the complexity of translation which can support religious pluralism, we can see how conflicts rooted in religious tension can be understood as conflicts over land and resources. What has become evident with the global political focus on climate change and human use of resources, is that ecology can be the reason for most

conflicts, where the religious overtone becomes dominant because of religious division. To ease the tension it is not enough to resolve the religious conflict, because this is often rooted in land marginalization, and can not be properly dissolved without a compromise in land disputes.

In this way climate change, land and resource marginalization can be seen as the core element in many conflicts, all though it takes on a religious overtone. In the case of environmentalism and Animist activism, we can see how they are confronting this element by being engaged in the right to land, emphasizing the ecological concern at the same time as they are protesting against the Western cultural expansion, because of its influence in resource extraction in the Amazon region.

4.14 Individualism and consumer society

It is not enough that only a few people understand the complications with an unsustainable cultural expansion and the complications it brings with it, and change in perception and understanding on a massive scale is crucial for it to be a success. In this way, the *Rainforest Foundation Norway's* engagement in translating the amazonian struggle into secular-and consumer language with information campaigns about deforestation and global consequences, shows that when presented with information and tools to act, the modern society is able to act. But because of how the modern Western culture has evolved, information such as the RFN palm oil campaign is competing with other media and entertainment sectors, such as video games, blockbuster movies, television, social media and TV-series. In an environment where informative information is drowning in entertainment, in a culture that cultivates individuality, attaining a wider perspective on ones own impact in a global context can be challenging.

In a global context, where the acknowledgment of unsustainable patterns of consumption, where the modern system of capitalism must take most of the blame, and when action is not taken accordingly, I believe this can be on of the main factors in tension towards capitalism. It is not hard to understand the frustrations from other communities, when they see that their local land and livelihood destroyed or taken from them, to sustain an already unsustainable culture. With globalization, people are exposed to the capitalistic culture, and how it unfolds, which I believe can help understand the growing discontent against it. The entertainment program *Paradise hotel* can be an example of this, where a number of young adults are taken to an exotic luxury hotel where their every move is on camera, which gets

edited into a evening show to entertain the population with the tension and the social drama that unfolds. Seen from an outside perspective, where the elite population is more concerned with what is happening on a TV-show than about their own impact on the local and global environment when it has been acknowledged that it needs to change, can create emotional frustration. It is hard to dismiss opposition against modern capitalism with knowing that much of the global destruction of the natural world is a consequence of its cultural expansion. When people oppose the system, they are often labeled as religious fundamentalists, instead of looking at the critique as social and ecological. With this in mind, much of contemporary tension and conflict could be dissolved if the consumer capitalistic society became aware of the global impact their lifestyle have on a global scale, and acted accordingly. The RFN campaign is a start, but is hardly enough when global trade agreements and political structures still support the capitalistic system, in the combination with an entertainment culture that takes the attention away from pressing matters. The growing tendency of depression and mental-illness on a global scale can suggest that not only is the modern system ecologically unsustainable, it is also failing to stimulate its population in healthy ways.

4.15 Re connection and change in perception

In new approaches towards depression and mental-illness in modern society, research has been conducted on animistic sacraments such as ayahuasca and psilocybin. This can be seen in the increasing acceptance of different cultural practices, and gives attention to the animistic perspective. Findings such as change in perception, increases in ability to reflect, increase in connection to self, others and nature, has shown to have a long lasting positive affect on its participants. The brain imaging on blood flow which correlates to brain activity under the influence of psilocybin shows decreased activity in the transit hub that is used for self reflection, also know to be the center for the creation of what we consider to be the “ego”. The Hopkins University research on psilocybin showed that the psilocybin experience, conducted in a safe set and setting, was in many cases identical to a naturally occurring mystical experience, generally characterized by a profound feeling of unity and interconnectedness.

With these description of the experience of ayahuasca and psilocybin, we can see parallels to Pagans and Shamanic religious activity, which can help understand their connection in the last decades. A significant aspect of healing in Paganism is that it encourages change in perception, and when

introduced to the ayahuasca sacrament, which has been proven to change perception, they found a connection to Shamanism through Animism. The importance of re connection with the natural world is an important aspect of Animism, and the research on psilocybin where the collapse of object/subject differentiation under the intoxication can help explain the dissolution of dualism created in linguistic language structure, making it possible to see and experience reality in a non dual way. This particular state of mind can be seen as something an Animist is always striving for, which can help understand the significance of this sacrament to Animists. Decreased brain activity in the hub that is usually most active, gives room for new type of reflection and perception, and the conclusion that it has a long lasting affect shows that this is not only temporary reflections, indicating it affects the ability to think in this particular way for long period of time after the experience. All though the research is still in its early stage, global exposure is attracting people with an experiential based spirituality, and the research done on ayahuasca with the intention of healing is most likely a reason for the increasing ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos in Peru.

4.15.1 Ayahuasca tourism

Because of its global exposure, people come with different intentions, and ayahuasca tourism has become big business. Some people come for personal development and spiritual growth, while others come for “the ultimate high”. With this in mind, it is important to mention, that the research I have presented in chapter three took extreme precautions with set and setting, knowing that change in perception and cognition can be a frightening experience, rooted in the understanding that if one does not consider the set and setting as a safe environment, this can bring additional stress to the situation (Hopkins, Strassman 2001). In Iquitos, this is not accounted for, and many centers lack a cultural understanding about the Western world. In contrast to the research done by MAPS and Hopkins, ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos is unorganized and there is no system to ensure that the shaman is experienced, making it possible for everyone that knows how to cook ayahuasca to call themselves a shaman, and stories of shamans overstepping intimate boundaries is sadly not uncommon. This has become widely known, and bad experiences has resulted in the creation of an online network called *ayaadvisor.org*,²⁸ where people can share their experience and give advise on how to get around, where to go and what centers they consider safe. For the future developments in research conducted on ayahuasca, I believe it is essential that it is differentiated from the ayahuasca tourism in Iquitos and it is

28 *Ayaadvisor.org* accessed 3 May 2015

important to know that the ayahuasca ceremony is culturally conditioned, and varies from place to place, and can not be compared to the research I have presented. With that said, based on my own experience and the conclusions in recent research, I believe if culturally adapted, ayahuasca can become an integrated part of modern society and can help dissolve cultural boundaries and contribute to obtain positive mental health.

4.16 Conclusion

Based on my conclusions throughout this thesis, I find support in Ninian Smart in his argument for the importance of religious study based on knowledge and understanding. He expresses that “It is vital that we can enter into each others minds so that even if we do not agree, and if some political regimes are evil, we at least do not assault each other out of ignorance” (Smart 2000, 4). Respectful living, in this sense, depends on humble approaches and the accumulation of knowledge.

In this thesis I have presented New Animism, made possible with a widened definition of religion and with new approaches towards religious activity. I have connected religion and ecology to be able to look at social and political activism by looking into indigenous environmentalism and conscious consumerism, which can both be seen as animistic engagement. With this we can better understand how a religious foundation can be a motivation factor in political and social life, and how religion is present in modern society through activism. From what I can conclude from this thesis, is that Animist activism is a reflection of their spiritual and religious beliefs, practices and rituals, which can suggest that activism motivated in a particular religion/worldview will be a reflection of what awareness the religion/worldview empathizes. The geographic location of each culture will also affect this awareness, and a person who is constantly reaching for new connections towards the natural world will be more aware of these realities than others, and if their reality is in conflict with another, it will lead to activism. In the case of Animism, we can see how the non-dual perception of the world, and its focus on re connecting with the natural world in respectful engagements, is reflected in their activism in environmentalism and concerning animal-rights. In the light of animistic perspectives expressed in a dual language such as English, we can see how English grammar is an obstacle in conceptualize other realities, giving attention to the complexity of translation. By expanding the definition of worldview, not only to incorporate religion, but also language can help us understand historical tension based on anthropocentric and ethnocentric structures in reality made possible in language. With looking into

animal-rights activism and their uncommon use of the English language I have explored the English dualism, and argued for this to have been- and still is, an obstacle in understanding other realities. With looking at other aspects of religion, such as social activism, I have argued that what is common in many religions is grass root social activism, and in this sense, religion is dependent on activism and I believe it could be helpful in future developments when it comes to religious, social and political dialog to give more attention to what people do, and not focus too much about what they believe, supported by new understandings on language and translation.

By examining the Enlightenment in the light of these reflections, I have made a comparison to contemporary tension, and compared similarities and difference, arguing that we have a better foundation today for cultural renewal because of the plural society. By connecting activism to religiosity, I have given attention to that this does not always create harmony and prosperity, but can create tension as well. I have argued that traditional view on religion has created unnecessary division, and can be a diversion when conflicts and tension is rooted in land-and resource marginalization. I believe, with support from the reflections and conclusions I have drawn from this thesis, that a plural perspective on religion is vital for respectful and peaceful engagement, and can shift focus point in many conflicts.

New perspectives on language and religion, supported by this thesis can support the logic of the new religious movement, where spiritual scriptures from different religions are seen as coming from that same essence, only that they come from different cultures and is told in different ways. Gottlieb (1999) describes the basic principle of spiritual teachings as;

...the conviction that a deep happiness, a joyous wonder, and an unshakable satisfaction in life is truly possible. Yet to realize these possibilities, spiritual teachings tell us, we need to make some fundamental changes in our lives. We have to live in gratitude, take our hands from in front of our eyes so that we can see the daily miracles spread out before us, and act with a “pure mind”. (...) In this everyday sense of the spiritual, we are not called by an external authority, but an increased attention to our inner truth. (Gottlieb 1999, 9)

How one acts on this is dependent on a person's reality, and how they are able to perceive it. But what creates reality? The physical surroundings can be the same for two people standing next to each other, but their reality is dependent on how they perceive it and what they are aware of, that again becomes

dependent on how language is used to communicate what they are experiencing. With the knowledge that the origin of many religions spring out from a mystical experience (Smart 2000), based on reflections and conclusions done in this thesis, religion can be said to be a creation of experience, perception and translation (language), and will be conditioned depending on its cultural and social environment, which can imply that even if the mystical experience was emotionally the same, it could have taken different forms in different cultures. The essence in this experience and the understanding of it has then been expressed with activism based in the society it takes form.

With a growing interest in the experiential and emotional dimension in new religiosity, people are seeking their own mystical experience, which can help us understand the growing ayahuasca tourism in Peru. In my own meeting with a healing center in Iquitos, I was surprised to see a crucifix of Jesus hanging in the center of the *maloka*, a round building where the ayahuasca ceremonies take place, rooted in my understanding that the local Catholic Church see ayahuasca as a 'devil'. At the center I meet a shaman, who had been in training with the Shipibo center 10 years ago and was back for personal healing, and I was surprised to also see him with a crucifix. He explained it had little to do with the Catholic Jesus, and expressed it as the 'Christ energy', a symbol of Jesus as a spiritual activist, and by having the crucifix on him, he would be reminded of this activist energy. To him, and the people running the center, this was rooted in how they had understood the Christian message by their own experience, and not how the Church was presenting it. In this way, the shamans and the local community has translated what they believed to be the good from the colonial religion, and incorporated it into their own reality, as a positive symbol to encourage activism. This gives attention to the new religiosity that is developing in post-colonial societies, with the growth in Pentecostalism and indigenous traditional churches (Kim 2008), which can be seen as a result of Christian religiosity translated into an animistic culture. This brings attention to the pluralistic nature of Animism, where personal experience shape reality. This can suggest that knowledge about Animism and animistic tendencies will become an important aspect of the study of modern contemporary religion.

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