

Rediscovering the Goddess: Applying Core Wiccan Beliefs to the Mainstream Environmental Movement

By Christian Cancino

Thesis Advisors: Dr. Jean Lavigne and Dr. Corrie Grosse

INTRODUCTION

In the face of environmental crises, the contemporary environmental movement has turned to scientific analysis and rationality in order to address the numerous social, economic and ecological problems that have stemmed from global climate change. Although this rationality has aided in the general public's understanding of ecology and environmental challenges, this cold, impersonal and masculinized science lacks an emotional and spiritual connection. It is integral for individuals to foster and sustain an emotional and spiritual connection to the natural world in order for them to effectively mobilize towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. **I argue that the nature-based Wiccan and Neo-Pagan offers a unique spiritual and emotional connection that should be legitimized within the contemporary environmental movement.**



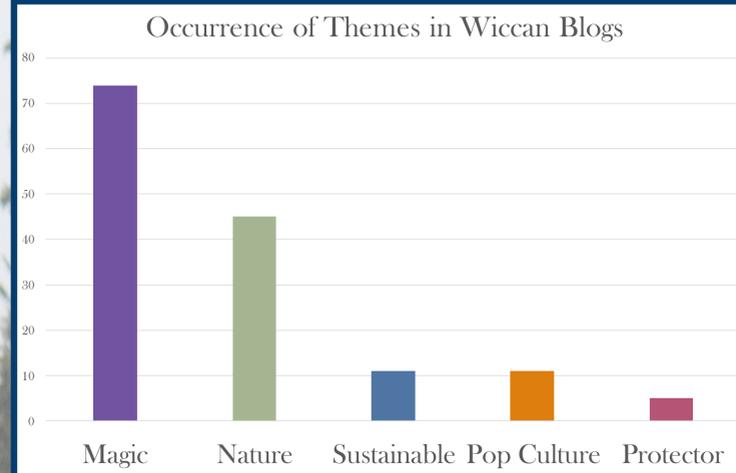
Figure 2: French Walling painting depicting a Rhinoceros with a crescent shaped horn. The crescent is said to symbolize the Mother/Goddess.

WICCAN BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

According to those who identify as Wiccan, the origins of the Wicca faith span back to thousands of years ago. Numerous legends state that the faith can be traced to roughly 35,000 years ago when the last major ice sheets began to melt and nomadic peoples began moving up north. According to these legends, these nomadic peoples were gifted in being more closely connected to the earth and were able to communicate with the elements and plants and animals. This original faith was said to worship the elements, and plants and animals because all of life and nature embodied the Goddess of creation.

From these ancient roots the contemporary Wiccan movement formed. The modern movement still worships nature as Goddess and works to become closer to Nature through the practice of magic. Wiccan magic comprises of herb collecting, crystal/stone collecting, tarot card reading and spell creating and casting. All of these practices are intended to bring the practitioner closer to nature. Wiccan magic is quite similar to Aldo Leopold's Ecological Land Ethic (ELE) in that it strives to respect nature and complex ecosystems but instead uses specific rituals and magic instead of traditional science and observation. The Wiccan faith is also similar to ecofeminism in that it recognizes an intersectionality that extends to non-human entities: Wiccans regard all living beings and natural entities as deserving of respect.

RESULTS



Graph 1: Shows the results of the content analysis

Ecological Land Ethic (ELE)	Wiccan Goddess Immanence (WGI)	Ecofeminist Deep Intersectionality (EDI)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humans are mere "citizens" of the earth Ecological stability is key in order for humans to survive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divine Goddess is immanent within all beings The natural world is sacred and humans must connect with and revere it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep intersectionality that addresses speciesism and calls for interspecies justice Addresses patriarchy's role in oppression of women and the environment

Table 1: Shows the similarities between the three ideologies used in the literature review

METHODS

I began the study with a literature and discussion of Leopold's Ecological Land Ethic, Wiccan Goddess Immanence, and Ecofeminist Deep Intersectionality. I then drew connections between all three of these ideologies and argued that each were similar in their reverence and respect for nature but that the ELE is the only one that has been successful due to the scientific and thus masculine aspects of the ideology. After the literature review, I conducted a content analysis for three self-proclaimed "Wiccan" blogs, looking for prominent themes and messages that are generally resonant within the entirety of the Wiccan faith. The blogs analyzed were "babywitchguide," "witchhaven" and "the-seedling-witch." I chose the thirty most recent posts in each blog, starting on March 24, and then going backwards from there.

These blogs were analyzed for three key themes: "sustainable practices and living," which was defined as any activity or discussion that involves energy reduction or environmentally friendly behaviors, "nature reverence", defined as any language or images being used that convey a protective, respectful and deep connection to the natural world. The final theme analyzed for was "activist rhetoric," defined as any language or image that expresses a push for social and/or environmental activism and change in general.



Figure 2: Example of a post that fell under the "Nature" theme

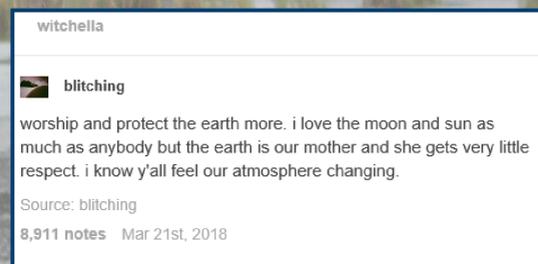


Figure 3: Example of a post that falls under the theme of "Protector"

DISCUSSION

The emotional and mystical aspect of the Wicca faith must be included within the larger environmental movement framework in order to effectively complement and build upon the scientific and masculine aspect of the contemporary environmental movement. As exemplified by my content analysis, the Wiccan faith offers a deep respect towards nature and a sustainable mindset. It is essential for people to develop an emotional tie to the environment. Incorporating Wiccan beliefs of nature being interconnected through complex ecological relationships, the divine being immanent within all, and interspecies respect will foster a more caring and active role when considering environmental issues. Therefore, the mainstream environmental movement should not solely rely on a scientific and rational perspective on climate change.

References and Acknowledgements:

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/chauvet-cave-paintings-confirmed-oldest/news-story/3fa663a9d5cabe74e781b39106eb8501>

<https://the-seedling-witch.tumblr.com/>

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