

CREATOR & CREATION



Chapter One

Ecology, Worldview, and Values Toward Nature

Models and the Process of Interpretation

In recent years a new focus has emerged in biblical interpretation: The role played by the natural world in shaping the religion and culture of the ancient Israelites, and their attitudes toward nature. Earlier biblical interpretation precluded this focus. As outlined in the Introduction, scholars interpreted the Bible from an exclusively history-oriented perspective. They focused on the events of human history and God's activity in human affairs, but not on the relationship between humans and the natural world. They claimed that the natural world did not play a significant role in the development of Israelite religion and culture, and the Israelites attributed no divine qualities or importance to nature. Nature was viewed as physical material created by God for human use. Earlier biblical scholars simply did not deem the natural world to be a significant category of investigation. Consequently, readers of the Bible who are interested in ancient Israel's relationship with its environment are faced with a two-fold dilemma: How can this subject be investigated, and how can the data resulting from an investigation be organized into a meaningful interpretation?

At issue in this dilemma are both the methods and the models of interpretation. Methods are the techniques that are applied to the biblical texts in order to extract data. The kind of data being searched for will determine the type of method applied. Methods are like tools in that each tool has a specific purpose. If a reader is interested in isolating the literary strands of Genesis, for example, the reader will apply the methods of source criticism to the text. These methods are effective because they draw the reader's attention to discrepancies and incongruities in a literary text. They produce the desired kind of data. In contrast, the methods of narrative criticism would not be productive for this task because they draw attention to the unity of a text. These methods have a different purpose. Similarly, if a reader intends to investigate Israel's relationship with its environment, the reader should employ methods that are able to extract this kind of data. Although the natural world has been a neglected category of investigation, many of the traditional methods of modern biblical interpretation are still useful in this task. These and some newer methods such as social science criticism will be employed where appropriate in this investigation.

Although the appropriate methods can generate data relevant for understanding Israel's relationship with its environment, methods are insufficient to produce this understanding.

Data by themselves are meaningless. They are isolated “facts.” The data become meaningful – they give rise to understanding – only when they are organized in relation to a meaningful frame of reference. This is the role of models. In other words, a model provides the means for assessing which data are relevant, the quality of the data, and the relationship between the data (Carney: 3-4).

A model is simply an organizing framework for data. It is a symbolic abstraction of reality, a simplification of real-world relationships (Barbour: 34-42). A model functions to select, integrate, and interpret data. First, a model is selective in that it restricts our attention to the kinds of data that are thought to be relevant. Other data are ignored and excluded from interpretation. Each model thus has a specific range of usefulness, determined by the scope of its selectivity. Like methods, different models are appropriate for different purposes. Second, a model is integrative in that it brings disparate data into relationship. It relates one datum to another, and ranks the importance of the data. It establishes a configuration of data much like a conceptual map. Third, a model is interpretive in that it enables the data to make sense. The configuration of data can be explained in reference to the model, and this data can be related to other configurations. Models vary in their type and level of abstraction, but there is no meaning, understanding, or interpretation without models.

Let me return to the example of the literary strands in Genesis. Without a model of literary composition, the methods of source criticism yield only a number of literary discrepancies – that the style of Genesis 1 is different from Genesis 2 and their content is contradictory, that the name of God varies from passage to passage, that the text is needlessly repetitive. However, the relevance of these discrepancies, and the relationship of the discrepancies one to another, or to literary strands, cannot be established. Only when the discrepancies are organized according to a model, such as the documentary hypothesis, can the data make sense. According to the documentary hypothesis, the data resulting from source criticism can be explained in terms of three literary strands that were written over several centuries and edited together. Alternative models, however, would interpret the same data differently, as recent challenges to the documentary hypothesis attest (Rendtorff).

Although the above example is illustrative of the function of models, it might present an unrealistic possibility: the use of methods without models. “The hard fact is that we do not have the choice of whether we will use models or not. Our choice, rather, lies in deciding whether to use them consciously or unconsciously” (Carney: 5). Most models that we use are unconscious. We have either inherited them along with our cultural perception of reality, or we have learned and embraced them as dogma, no longer recognizing them as models. These models, as long as they remain unconscious, restrict the scope of interpretation. They do not allow the interpreter to explore alternative perceptions of reality. Conscious models, on the other hand, free the interpreter from the constraints of his or her own cultural perceptions. Through the conscious use of models, the interpreter is able to perceive the data in new ways, enabling the data to give rise to new meaning.

The dilemma for readers interested in Israel’s relationship with its environment is this: The dominant models of biblical interpretation have not had as their purpose the investigation of this relationship, and so exclude relevant data from interpretation. Because

the role played by the natural world in the religion and culture of Israel has long been neglected by biblical scholars, the models constructed by biblical scholars have not included nature as a significant variable. These models are history-oriented, emphasizing God's activity in human affairs. New models of interpretation are thus needed. In this chapter I will present three models of interpretation, each representing a different level of abstraction, which give explicit attention to the relationship between ancient Israel and its environment.

A Model of Human-Environment Relations

In order to understand ancient Israel's relationship with its physical environment, we need to construct an ecological model that can incorporate the complex interaction between human society and the natural world. The building of such a model, however, has proved to be difficult (Ellen presents a thorough discussion of the merits and failures of various approaches). Early studies of ecology argued for an environmental determinism or an environmental possibilism. Whereas adherents to the former theory claimed that a society's cultural makeup is attributable to its geography and climate – that is, culture is determined by environment – adherents to the latter theory successfully demonstrated that the environment limits but does not determine cultural development. Julian Steward offered a mediating position by arguing that human societies are adaptations to their environment. The purpose of “cultural ecology” is thus “to ascertain whether the adjustments of human societies to their environments require particular modes of behavior or whether they permit latitude for a certain range of possible behavior patterns” (36; cf. Sahlins).¹

None of these approaches to ecology is adequate. Environmental determinists were only able to highlight correlations between variables of environmental configurations and human societies (such as the correlation between mean annual rainfall and population density). But they were unable to demonstrate a direct causal connection in this correlation. Because of the complexity of environmental and human systems, “simple uni-directional causal processes seldom occur in human environmental relations” (Ellen: 20). Possibilists, on the other hand, gave too little weight to the impact of the environment on human societies. They assumed that culture was *sui generis*, and that the immediate cause of all cultural phenomena were other cultural phenomena. However, in acknowledging that the environment limits human society, they failed to recognize that the environment thereby helps to determine the outcome of social development. Possibilism turns out to be the inverted formulation of environmental determinism. Steward's cultural ecology is similarly problematic. Although he emphasized the interaction of human societies and the environment, he assumed a causal correlation between them that could not be demonstrated. Each of these causal theories has failed because in addition to the large number of variables in the interaction between human society and the environment, it must also incorporate the dynamics of human choice which are not always under the control of systemic processes. As a result, recent studies in ecology have refrained from attributing causality to environmental or social configurations. Ecology can only provide a frame of reference, a model, for

¹ Steward's “cultural ecology” has been applied to the study of religions by Hultkrantz. See also the critique by Bjerke.

studying specific aspects of the human-environment interaction, and integrating those studies with one another. It cannot offer an all-encompassing theory of social formation (Ellen: 275-77).

Although ecology cannot offer a general theory explaining the development of Israelite religion and culture, it can provide an appropriate frame of reference for studying ancient Israel's relationship with its environment. In the Introduction I outlined three areas of investigation for understanding the ecology of Israel: The impact of the Israelites on their environment, the influence of the environment on the development of Israelite religion and culture, and Israelite attitudes toward nature. Each of these areas of investigation is sufficiently complex to require a distinct study, including the use of numerous ecological models. In this book I will specifically address the third area, and will employ two complementary models for this task. Nevertheless, ecology can also offer an overarching model that defines the interrelationship between these areas of investigation, and places each of these areas within its broader ecological context. Such a model is diagrammed in figure 1 (adapted from Bennett: 38).

This model of human-environment relations is based on two major premises. First, humans are the major agents of change in both the environment and society, and that this change is motivated by *sui generis*, that is, uniquely human and unpredictable, forces. This premise is based on the observation that the current environmental crisis has resulted from the human capacity to exploit the environment beyond natural constraints. Humans are able to transform nature into energy at exponential rates and to produce goods of symbolic value with no biological necessity (Bennett: 40-49).

Second, the natural world is increasingly incorporated into human affairs. Everywhere humans travel on this planet, they claim the natural world as part of their domain. "Humans are constantly engaged in seizing natural phenomena, converting them into cultural objects, and reinterpreting them with cultural ideas" (Bennett: 4). Consider, for example, our national parks. They represent our federal government's attempt to preserve selected regions of our natural heritage. They are areas of nature, but they have been wholly incorporated into our culture. They are *our* parks, icons of *our* heritage. The parks themselves are human conventions. They are defined by humans, often ignoring ecological boundaries, and managed by humans. Humans are unable to exist in nature without altering and making it their own.

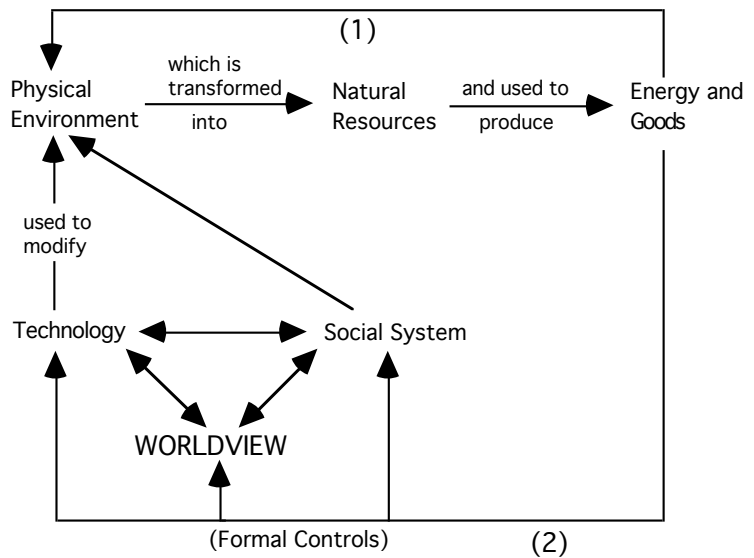


Figure 1. A Model of Human-Environment Relations

Because of the determinative role that humans play in their relationship with the environment, the ecological model of this relationship emphasizes humankind's use of the natural world. The basic component of this model is humankind's transformation of the physical environment into natural resources that can be used to produce both energy and goods. This unique capacity of humans highlights how our relationship to the environment differs from that of other species. Only humans can conceptualize elements of the physical environment as natural resources, and place symbolic value on those resources according to what can be produced from them.

The other major components of the model are technology, social system, and worldview. Technology and social system function as instrumentalities. They are the means by which humans produce energy and goods. Technology, of course, refers to the tools and machines that we use to transform the physical environment into resources. But technology is not sufficient in itself to effect this transformation. "In order to produce goods the society must be mobilized in a certain manner. An adequate population base must be present, labor must be supplied, and talents must be recognized and employed" (Bennett: 51). As a component of this model, the social system represents primarily the population of the society, its differentiation into professions and classes, the channels of interaction among the members of the society, and the structures and vehicles of power. Finally, the worldview component in this model encompasses the dynamics of human choice. Technology and the social system do not act on the environment according to determinate patterns. They are affected by human choice that is an unpredictable variable. Human choice in turn is influenced by value preferences that define the reasons for acting, by desires of the people involved, and by the purposes that have been defined for the actions. Worldview represents the mental functioning that directs human actions.

The lines and arrows of the model represent the interrelationships among the components. They represent lines of influence and causality. Some of the lines point in only one direction, indicating direct, unilateral influence. For example, technology affects the physical environment, but not vice versa. Technology, social system, and worldview, however, are joined by double-arrow lines that indicate that these components have a reciprocal relationship. A people's worldview both shapes and is shaped by its social system and technology. Similarly, the use of technology is limited by the social configuration, whereas the complexity of social system itself is dependent upon the level of technology. The two longer lines represent the major feedback loops in the system. The production of energy and goods impacts the physical environment (feedback loop 1) and influences the worldview, social system, and technology of the people (feedback loop 2). Although feedback of this type generally serves to regulate an ecosystem, in human ecosystems this feedback has been unable historically to prevent human abuse and overuse of the physical environment. As a result, humans have introduced artificial means of regulation (formal controls), such as environmental protection laws, in order to preserve the environment and so protect their capacity to maintain their standard of living.

Although this generalized model of human-environment relations is inadequate for investigating the ecology of ancient Israel, other than at the most abstract level, it does underscore the systemic interrelationship between the diverse components of this ecology. In particular, it emphasizes the interrelationship between the Israelites' impact on their

environment (feedback loop 1), the development of their religion and culture (feedback loop 2), and their values toward the environment (worldview). On the one hand, the Israelites' production of energy and goods both influenced the development of their religion and culture, and impacted their environment. On the other hand, the Israelites' capacity to produce energy and goods was determined by their level of culture (social system and technology) and the condition of the physical environment. As a result, the Israelites' production of energy and goods might have impacted the environment in such a way (e.g., through deforestation and topsoil erosion) that they were unable to maintain their social system without the development of new technologies, which in turn might have further adversely impacted the environment. Or, their impact on the environment (e.g., through soil conservation) might have enabled the Israelites to produce more energy and goods, and so fostered further cultural development.

In the interaction between the Israelites and their environment, the Israelites' worldview would also have played a determining role. According to the model of human-environment relations, their worldview would have been influenced by the level of culture that results from the production of energy and goods, and would in turn have influenced the society's use of technology on the physical environment. An integral component of the Israelites' worldview was their values toward nature. Although these values could have been ignored, they would ideally have governed the Israelites' actions toward their environment. If the Israelites valued the natural world as an exploitable resource, for example, their actions might have been directed toward increasing the production of energy and goods with little attention to their impact on the environment (unless, of course, their impact on the environment directly threatened their capacity for further production of energy and goods). Their actions might have been directed differently – toward maintaining their existence by adapting their society to the environment – if the Israelites valued nature as an unpredictable power to which they were subjugated, or as a replication of their society. In either case, the ancient Israelites' interaction with their environment would have further shaped their values toward the natural world by reinforcing, modifying, or causing a reevaluation of those values. The ancient Israelites' worldview and values toward nature thus served a strategic role in defining their relationship with their environment.

A Model of Worldviews

Because of the complexity of the ecology of ancient Israel, our investigation will be limited to only one component of this ecology: the ancient Israelites' worldview and their values toward the natural world which were rooted in it. However, as the model of human-environment relations illustrates, the Israelites' worldview cannot be treated in isolation, for it was interrelated with the other segments of Israel's ecology. The Israelites' worldview contributed to the formation of their social system and their production of goods and energy, but it was also dependent upon both their social and physical environments. Our investigation of the Israelites' worldview, therefore, must also take into account its ecological context.

Worldview and the Environment

As discussed above, a worldview encompasses the mental functioning that directs human actions. It is the mental basis for human interaction with the social and physical environments. But a worldview also represents a perception of those environments. It is a view of the world, a way of looking at reality.² “It consists of basic assumptions and images” – derived from the social and physical environments – “that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world” (Kearney: 45). A people’s worldview shapes and is shaped by their social and physical environments. A model that highlights these worldview dynamics is diagrammed in figure 2 (Kearney: 120). Similar to the model of human-environment relations, this model emphasizes the interdependence of a worldview and its social and physical environments. Unlike that model, however, this model stresses and gives definition to the strategic role that worldview plays in this interrelationship.

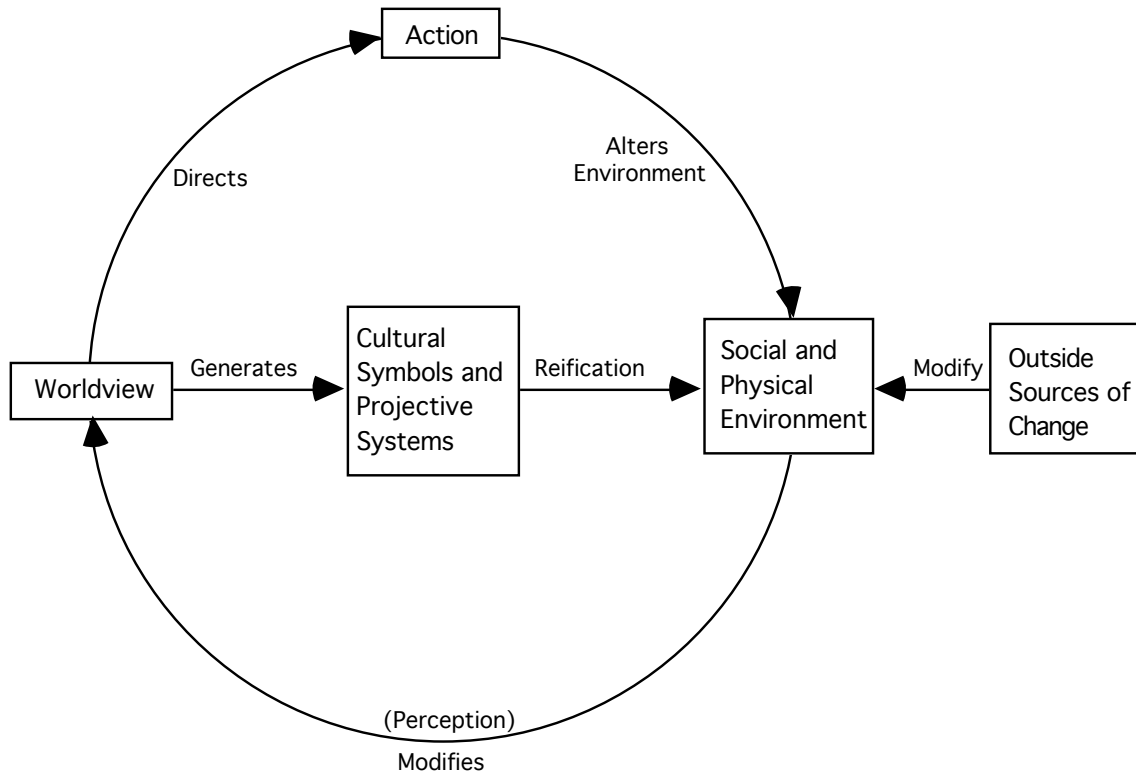


Figure 2. A Model of Worldview Dynamics

According to this model, a worldview is a perception of the environment – both social and physical. Human existence is not lived out in a vacuum but within particular social and physical environments. The ancient Israelites, for example, lived along the eastern Mediterranean sea, between the dominant empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Situated

² Although worldview emphasizes the visual perception of the environment, all sensory contact with the environment is included.

along the major east-west trade corridor, the Israelites were the recipients of both the cultural exchange with and the imperialistic ambitions of their powerful neighbors. Yet their land itself was geographically less conducive to supporting life and fostering civilization than the great river valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Surrounded by desert on the east and the south and by the Mediterranean sea on the west, the narrow stretch of land inhabited by the Israelites represented a wide diversity of ecological niches which made widespread exploitation of the land difficult. Each subregion posed its own possibilities and challenges for agricultural use (Hopkins, 1985: 55-75). The terrain was dominated by rugged hill country, requiring extensive labor for subsistence. Moreover, the land contained few perennial water supplies so that the Israelites were dependent upon the winter rains to supply the precipitation needed for their agriculture and vegetation to flourish. The basic social unit of the society was the nuclear family that was replicated at all levels of the society – the clan (village), the tribe (region), the people (nation). Although some families provided for their subsistence through industries and crafts, most families maintained their existence through cultivating the land and raising sheep and goats. The ancient Israelites could not have lived within this social and physical environment without being affected by it. This total environment determined all their sensory perceptions (the Israelites' sensory perceptions would be different from those of middle-class families in the United States, for example). It would have shaped the way they think about themselves and their neighbors. It would have shaped their actions and their values. It would have shaped the way that they perceived the world – that is, their worldview.

A people's worldview in turn shapes their environment in two ways. The first way is through the people's actions – discussed in relation to the model of human-environment relations – that have a direct effect on the environment. The second, more indirect way is through the generation of cultural symbols and projective systems that are reified as aspects of the environment. Take God, for example. What is God like? If God is absolute (the claim made by all monotheistic religions), then God is beyond comprehension. Yet we want to say something about God, so we employ metaphors such as God is a father. We create a mental image of God to which we can relate. However, when we naively assume that God really is a father – a male individual who has fathered a child – we have reified our mental image. We have assumed this type of God to be an aspect of the real world, when in actuality he (the fathering-male-God) is dependent upon our perception of the world. Through this process of reification, the Israelites' assumed much of the content and structure of their religion, myths, and folklore were real aspects of their environment. These reifications also modified the Israelites' perception of their environment, giving rise to new actions and reifications that further affected the environment.

The unknown variables in this model of worldview dynamics are the outside sources of change that might affect the environment. These include all aspects of change that are not a regular part of the environment, such as the invasion of enemy peoples, the exploitation of the land by foreigners, natural catastrophes, and diseases. These sources of change have a direct effect on the environment, and, as a result, they correspondingly shape the people's worldview.

Worldview Universals

Although discussion of the ancient Israelites’ worldview occurs somewhat frequently in the scholarly literature – especially when comparing the Israelites to Egyptians, Canaanites, Mesopotamians, or even to modern Westerners – no attention has been given to the cognitive categories that necessarily make up a worldview. This has been particularly problematic because of the comparative nature of much of this discussion. How can the Israelites’ worldview be compared to the worldview of another people, including our own, if the fundamental categories of comparison – those cognitive categories that are present in all worldviews – are unknown? Without reference to these fundamental categories, we cannot know whether the conceptual patterns (the content of a worldview) we are comparing are similar in kind, or how these conceptual patterns relate to other conceptual patterns. In order to compare worldviews cross-culturally, we must determine the universal cognitive categories that are essential for any worldview. Fortunately for our purposes, investigation has already begun in this area. Michael Kearney has argued persuasively, building on the earlier work of Robert Redfield, that all worldviews must necessarily include the categories of Self, Other, Classification, Relationship, Causality, Space, and Time (65-107).

The particular content of these universal categories varies cross-culturally, and is shaped in two ways. First, the perception of the external environment gives rise to assumptions about reality. These assumptions make up the content of the universal categories. Although they are rarely articulated or the subject of reflection, these assumptions generate the ideas, beliefs, and actions of a people. Second, the universal categories are dynamically interrelated so that they serve to bring equilibrium and consistency to the diverse assumptions about reality. “This means that some assumptions and the resultant ideas, beliefs, and actions predicated on them are *logically* and *structurally* more compatible than others, and that the entire worldview will ‘strive’ toward maximum logical and structural consistency” (Kearney: 52). As illustrated in figure 3 (Kearney: 106) – the heavy lines indicate direct relationships, and the thin lines indirect relationships – the universal categories and the assumptions that they contain do not vary independently of one another. Assumptions in one category have logical and structural implications for the other categories. Worldview assumptions are thus shaped by the external environment and through logico-structural integration.

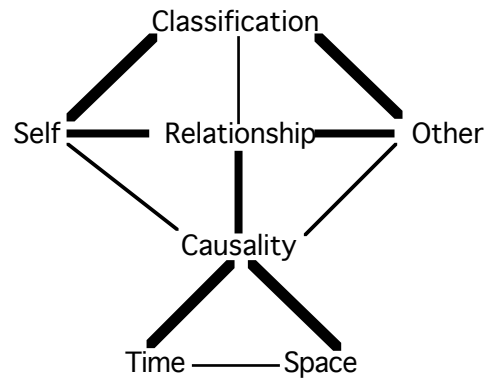


Figure 3. Integration of Worldview Universals

The distinction between the Self (the perceiver of the environment) and the Other (the environment) is fundamental to all worldviews. Yet, how the Self and the Other are understood is culturally specific. In the United States, the majority of the people defined the Self in individual terms. The Self is coterminous with the body, and the individual’s behavior is largely determined by personal goals, though they might overlap with societal goals.

Although pervasive throughout western culture, individualism is rare in the history of humankind (Geertz: 225). It is dependent upon a number of factors, including cultural complexity and affluence, which have not characterized most societies (Triandis: 44-45; Kearney: 75-77). The alternative to individualism is collectivism.³ Collectivism is prevalent among people who share a common fate, notably in agricultural societies (Triandis: 70-72). In collectivist societies, including ancient Israel (Robinson: 1936), the people define the Self in collective terms. A person belongs to a group, and his or her identity is embedded in the group (Malina, 1989b: 128-30; Malina and Neyrey: 72-80). In contrast to individualists, therefore, a group-oriented person's social behavior is largely determined by the goals of the group. Individual desires and values are subordinated to the desires and values of the group.

The Other entails all that is not the Self. It is the external environment. Although the Other is the complement to the Self, and thus will exhibit some of the same individualist or collectivist characteristics as the Self, it is rarely well developed. It is often designated by large domains such as the gods, nature, and society. A schematic diagram of the common, though not necessarily universal, domains of the Other is presented in figure 4. These domains represent the Classification universal. Humans have a universal tendency to name objects and to group them together according to common, general characteristics. In many cultures people are grouped according to whether they are male or female. Animals are grouped according to whether they belong to society (pets) or nature (wild animals). Events are attributed to natural or supernatural causes. The ancient Israelites classified their world according to many of these same domains, but like many collectivist cultures, their major contrasting domains for classifying the world were ingroup and outgroup. An ingroup is simply “a group whose norms, goals, and values shape the behavior of its members,” whereas an outgroup is “a group with attributes dissimilar from those of the ingroup, whose goals are unrelated or inconsistent with those of the ingroup, or a group that opposes the realization of ingroup goals” (Triandis: 53). As a result of this type of Classification, the Israelites would have distinguished between our God and their gods, our nature and their nature, our society and their society, our males and females and their males and females.

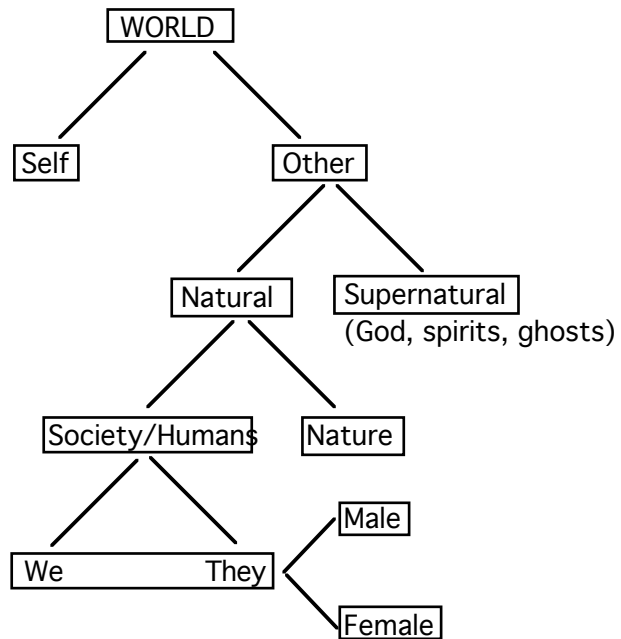


Figure 4. World Domains

³ The dichotomy between individualism and collectivism represents an etic model that does not take into account cultural variations (Triandis: 43-44; Schwartz; Triandis). Nevertheless, it serves as an appropriate model for distinguishing between modern Western and ancient Israelite views of the self.

Ingroup and outgroup are context specific. In the context of international relations, the ingroup for the ancient Israelites comprised all Israelites in contrast to the nations. But there were also ingroup/outgroup distinctions between the Israelites themselves. Within an inter-Israelite context, an ingroup could have been defined in terms of a family, a village, or a geographical region, a profession such as shepherd or priest, or a class such as landowner or peasant. All other Israelites would have been classified in the outgroup. Moreover, many of these classifications overlap so that each Israelite could have belonged to several ingroups. The identification of the Israelites' ingroup and outgroup will thus vary according to the specific context in which they are examined.

Whereas the Classification universal determines how the Self labels and categorizes the Other, the Relationship universal determines how the Self interacts with the Other. The assumptions contained within the Relationship universal define a person's stance toward the world, and direct a person's behavior in the world. Three basic types of relationship between the Self and the Other are possible: positive, negative, and neutral. In a positive relationship the Self acts upon, or is dominant over, the Other. A negative relationship, on the other hand, is characterized by the Self's subordinancy to the Other. Finally, a neutral relationship is expressed as a harmony between the Self and the Other (Kearney: 73).

Reflecting the logico-structural integration of worldview universals, the specific assumptions of the Relationship universal are formed in relation to the Classification assumptions. The Classification universal defines the Other to which the Self relates. A person might relate to a male differently than to a female, or to nature differently than to society. The Israelites, as with all collectivist cultures, related to ingroup members differently than to outgroup members. They emphasized a harmony with ingroup members, but either a dominance over, or a subordinancy to, outgroup members. Their relationship to nature, society, males, and females depended largely on whether these particular domains were included within the ingroup or the outgroup. Their attitudes toward their own land, for example, differed from their attitudes toward the land of their enemies. A similar difference is detected with regard to their attitudes toward society. Yet once this ingroup/outgroup distinction is taken into account, the Israelites' attitudes toward nature and society tended to be consistent, even replicating each other. The content of the Relationship universal is thus contingent upon the Classification universal.

The Relationship universal, which contains assumptions concerning the dynamic interaction between the Self and the Other, gives rise to the notion of causality – assumptions of “an orderly relationship between acts (causes) and desired ends (effects)” (Kearney: 84). The assumptions of Causality are also dependent upon the assumptions of Time and Space, which define the temporal and spatial dimensions in which the Self and the Other interact. Western notions of causality include both personal and natural causality. All persons – humans, but also animals and supernatural beings – are potential agents of change. Our actions in relation to the Other cause direct and indirect effects. I turn a key to open a door lock; I press the brake pedal to make my car stop; I type on a keyboard to write these sentences. Much of the change in our world we attribute to personal agents. But change is also attributed to natural causes, many of which are labeled natural laws. A thunderstorm is explained in terms of atmospheric pressure, convection, and moisture. A dead battery is explained in terms of the law of entropy. The ancient Israelites, in contrast, perceived only

personal causality. All change in the world was attributed to personal agents – to either humans (and animals by personification) or the gods (Malina, 1993: 107-10). Natural events, for example, were manifestations of divine activity. Nature was not a causal agent, but rather the effect of divine agency.

A Model of Value Orientations

In this book primary attention will be given to the Relationship universal of ancient Israel's worldview. This is due chiefly to our ecological focus on the Israelites' values toward the natural world, for these values are most clearly represented by the assumptions of this universal. Nevertheless, because the dimensions of a worldview must be examined within the context of their logico-structural integration, attention will also be given to the other universals and to their effect on the Relationship universal. In order to facilitate our analysis of both the Relationship universal of the Israelites' worldview and their values toward nature, we will employ the value orientation preference model developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck. This model enables us to systematize the ancient Israelites' values and the basic assumptions in which they are rooted.

According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, value orientations are principles that give order and direction to human actions as they relate to solving common human problems. In constructing their model for classifying value orientations, they make three assumptions derived from their empirical investigations: (1) There are a limited number of common human problems to which all people must find some solution. (2) The solutions to these problems are variable within a limited range of possible solutions. (3) All alternative solutions are present in every society, but some solutions are preferred over others (10).

Of the common human problems that Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck identify, the problem that most concerns us in this book is the relationship between humans and nature.⁴ This problem is analogous to the Relationship universal that defines the relationship between the Self and the Other. All cultures must find some solution to this problem, regardless of whether the solution is explicitly articulated. The range of possible solutions is defined by three alternatives: subjugation-to-nature, harmony-with-nature, and mastery-over-nature. According to the first alternative, humans feel helpless against nature. Their actions are unable to alter what nature inevitably deals them. According to the second alternative, humans identify with nature. Because there is no real separation between humans and nature, human actions inevitably affect nature and nature determines human character. Moreover, human actions cause consequences in nature that inevitably affect humans. Humans and nature are simply extensions of one another. According to the third alternative,

⁴ Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck identify five problems that all humans at all times have had to find some solution. In addition to the relationship between humans and nature, these problems include the character of innate human nature (good, evil, mixture), the temporal focus of life (past, present, future), the modality of human activity (being, being-in-becoming, doing), and the modality of human relationships (collateral, lineal, individual). These problems are complementary to, and represent a different level of abstraction from, the worldview universals.

nature is an impersonal object that can be controlled and used by humans. Technology is the key to harnessing the forces of nature. These solutions are summarized in figure 5.

Harmony with Nature	Humans are united with nature in a precarious balance so that their actions affect nature and themselves in turn
Subjugation to Nature	Humans have no control over nature, and are subject to the inevitable effects of nature
Mastery over Nature	Nature is made up of impersonal objects and forces that humans can/should manipulate for their own purposes

Figure 5. Solutions to the Human-Relationship-to-Nature Problem

In each culture, all of these alternative solutions are present and ranked according to preference. One solution is generally preferred, but the other solutions might be chosen under special circumstances or by subgroups within the culture (differentiated by class, profession, gender). In other words, one solution forms a group's primary, or first order, value orientation preference. If that solution, however, proves to be ineffectual or inappropriate for the particular circumstances, then the second and third order solutions serve as backup in turn. The dominant first order preference for Westerners, for example, is the mastery-over-nature solution. They will freely employ technologies to use and exploit the natural world for their own purposes. Yet because of the widespread concern over the environmental crisis, these same people often resort to their second order, harmony-with-nature, solution when they conserve water or recycle their wastes. During times of natural catastrophe, such as flood or earthquake, neither of these solutions is appropriate. Falling back on the subjugation-to-nature solution, some people simply resign themselves to accept whatever nature apportions to them.

Because value orientations are rooted in a worldview, solutions to the human-relationship-to-nature problem reflect the integration of the Relationship and Classification universals. Within collectivist cultures like ancient Israel a group will prefer a different solution in relation to the land of their enemies than to their own land. The land of the ingroup is treated with reverence (harmony-with-nature), whereas the land of the outgroup is treated with contempt (mastery-over-nature). In contrast, peasants own no land and are repeatedly exploited by the land owners. They are powerless before nature, and thus prefer the subjugation-to-nature solution. Similarly, the value orientation preferences of the ancient Israelites were largely dependent upon the ingroup/outgroup divisions of the society, and how the natural world was perceived in relation to the ingroup.

Our Values Versus Their Values

Before we turn to investigate the value orientation of the Israelites, it is helpful to first focus on our own value orientation. Without a clear understanding of our own value

orientation, we face the twin dangers of ethnocentrism and anachronism. Ethnocentrism is “the judging of all persons in the whole world in terms of one’s own culture on the presumption that, since ‘we’ are by nature human, so if anyone else is human then they should and must be just as we are” (Malina, 1986: 29). Our values with regard to the environment are not necessarily the same values held by the ancient Israelites. By assuming that the people of the Bible thought and behaved like us, we run the risk of reading into the biblical texts our own agenda rather than extracting from the texts their messages. This danger is particularly acute with regard to the human-relationship-to-nature problem, for all humans on the planet today face the challenge of the current environmental crisis. Concern for the state of the environment is therefore widespread. However, if we assume that the ancient Israelites had a similar concern for their environment, we are guilty of anachronism – the judging of persons in the past according to standards only relevant to the present (Hobbs: 210-14). Through ethnocentrism and anachronism we impose our own concerns and standards of behavior on the people of the Bible.

One illustration of the twin dangers of ethnocentrism and anachronism is the issue of war. In the United States we have a well-defined understanding of war and the conduct of war. For the majority of Americans, war is justified only if it is defensive or responding to some prior aggression. War should be resorted to only after diplomatic solutions fail. War is fought with high-tech weapons, but has specific rules against the use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Civilian populations are not to be targeted, and prisoners should receive humane treatment. Soldiers and officers can thus be guilty of war crimes. These values are generally assumed. If we read the Bible from this perspective, we are naturally disturbed. Repeatedly, the Israelites engage in war, and often it is offensive (the wars of conquest, David’s expansion of the empire). Rarely do they employ diplomacy (compare Jud 11:12-28 for an exception). In some cases God even commands the Israelites to kill all the Canaanites in the land (Deut 20:16-18). Prisoners are often butchered, and a distinction between civilians and soldiers is never made. As interpreted ethnocentrically and anachronistically, either the Bible would be a source of embarrassment for those who are working for peace in our world, or it could even be used to justify our own militaristic actions. The Israelites, however, did not share our values with regard to war, nor did they fight wars like we do. Without first analyzing *their* values and *their* practices within their own cultural setting (the topic of another book; see the excellent treatment by Hobbs) and distinguishing them from our own, it is impossible to understand ancient Israel’s view of war. Only then can Israel’s view of war be compared adequately with our own view.

Readers of the Bible are never free from the dangers of ethnocentrism and anachronism. Nevertheless, by recognizing one’s own value orientation, through the use of a cross-cultural model such as the model of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, a reader is in a better position to investigate the culturally-specific value orientation preferences of the ancient Israelites. A reader who is critically self-aware is better able to distinguish between the values latent in the biblical texts and his or her own values. Therefore, take a few minutes to reflect upon and answer the following questions that were designed to make a person’s value orientation explicit (adapted from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck: 81-89).

1. At one time a man had a large flock of sheep and goats, but eventually most of them died in different ways. Which response to this situation do you prefer?
 - A. You just can't blame a man when things like this happen. There are so many things that can and do happen, and a man can do almost nothing to prevent such losses when they come. We all have to learn to take the bad with the good.
 - B. The sheep and goats died because the man had not lived his life right – had not done things in the right way to keep harmony between himself and the forces of nature (i.e., the ways of nature like the rain, winds, snow, etc.).
 - C. It was probably the man's own fault that he lost so much of his flock. He probably didn't use his head to prevent the losses. It is usually the case that men who keep up on new ways of doing things, and really set themselves to it, almost always find a way to keep out of such trouble.
2. How is God related to humankind and to the natural conditions which determine whether the crops and animals live or die?
 - A. It is unknown how God will use his power over all the conditions which affect the growth of the crops and animals. It is useless for people to think they can change conditions very much for very long. The best approach is to take conditions as they come and do as well as one can.
 - B. God and the people work together all the time; whether the conditions which make the crops and animals grow are good or bad depends upon whether people themselves do all the proper things to keep themselves in harmony with their God and with the forces of nature.
 - C. God does not directly use his power to control all the conditions which affect the growth of crops or animals. It is up to the people themselves to figure out the ways conditions change and to try hard to find the ways of controlling them.
3. There were three men who had fields with crops, but each had a quite different way of planting and taking care of the crops. Which man acted and believed correctly?
 - A. One man put in his crops. Afterwards he worked on them sufficiently but did not do more than was necessary to keep them going along. He felt that the success of his crops was dependent upon weather conditions, and that nothing extra that people do could change things very much.
 - B. One man put in his crops, worked hard, and also set himself to living right and moral ways. He felt that it is the way a man works and tries to keep himself in harmony with the forces of nature that has the most effect on conditions and the way crops turn out.
 - C. One man put in his crops and then worked on them frequently and made use of all the new scientific ideas he could find out about. He felt that by doing this he would in most years prevent many of the effects of bad conditions.
4. Which response best fits your feelings about the weather and other conditions?
 - A. We have never controlled the rain, wind, and other natural conditions and probably never will. There have always been good years and bad years. That is the way it is, and if we are wise we will take it as it comes and do the best we can.
 - B. We can ensure beneficial conditions by keeping in close touch with all the forces which make the rain, the snow, and other conditions. It is when we do the right things – live the proper way – and keep all that we have – the land, the stock, and the water – in good condition, that all goes well.
 - C. It is our job to find ways to overcome weather and other conditions just as we have overcome so many other things. We believe we will one day succeed in doing this and may even overcome drought and floods.

5. Which statement best reflects your belief about whether people can do anything to make their lives longer?
- A. I really do not believe that there is much human beings themselves can do to make their lives longer. It is my belief that every person has a set time to live, and when that time comes it just comes.
 - B. I believe that there is a plan to life which works to keep all living things moving together, and if people will learn to live their whole lives in accord with that plan, then they will live longer.
 - C. It is already true that people like doctors and others are finding the way to add many years to the lives of most people by discovering (finding) new medicines, by studying foods, and doing other such things as exercise and vaccinations. If people will pay attention to all these new things they will almost always live longer.

If you chose “C” for most of these questions, then you are like most Westerners in giving first order preference to the mastery-over-nature solution. (“A” reflects the subjugation-to-nature solution; “B” reflects the harmony-with-nature solution.) In fact, sociologists have recognized this preference to be a feature of the Dominant Western Worldview. This worldview is represented by the following four assumptions (Catton and Dunlap, 1980: 17-18):

1. People are fundamentally different from all other creatures on earth, over which they have dominion.
2. People are masters of their destiny; they can choose their goals and learn to do whatever is necessary to achieve them.
3. The world is vast, and thus provides unlimited opportunities for humans.
4. The history of humanity is one of progress; for every problem there is a solution, and thus progress need never cease.

This dominant worldview, however, has recently been challenged by concern over the current environmental crisis. The frequent attention that the environment receives has served to alter some of these long held assumptions. As a result, sociologists are beginning to recognize the emergence of a paradigm shift, or a shift in value orientation preference, toward a more ecologically sensitive worldview (Catton and Dunlap, 1978, 1980; Blaikie). Humans are still perceived to be exceptional, but it is also acknowledged that we are interdependently involved in a global ecosystem. Humans are no longer considered by many to be exempt from ecological constraints.

Despite this recent paradigmatic shift caused by concern for the environment, the mastery-over-nature solution to the problem concerning the relationship between humans and nature has not been abandoned. Rather, the incongruities between this solution and the circumstances of the environmental crisis has led many Westerners to try to incorporate their second order preference, the harmony-with-nature solution, with the mastery-over-nature solution. This is borne out in the sociological research by the observation that although there is a high level of environmental concern, there is also considerable confidence that science and technology will be able to solve our ecological problems (Blaikie: 154). If much of the destruction of the environment can be traced to our misuse of technology, then surely the *appropriate* use of technology can solve the crisis! Our faith in science and technology in the Western world is so predominant that some sociologists do not even entertain the possibility of the subjugation-to-nature solution (Albrecht, Bultena,

Hoilberg, and Nowak; Geller and Lasley). Are there any in the United States who would consider themselves to be powerless against nature, unable through science and technology to change their natural circumstances? Perhaps during times of natural catastrophe such as caused by earthquakes, tornadoes, and floods, but these are rare occasions.

In contrast to our Western cultural preferences, mastery-over-nature was rarely ever a primary value for ancient Israelites. Nature was beyond their control; they either felt subjugated to nature, or linked with nature in a precarious balance.⁵ A typical exception to this generalization, however, appears to be the king. The writer of Ecclesiastes, for instance, in assuming the role of the king, states: “I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees” (Ecc 2:5-6). Yet the king’s mastery-over-nature preference was rooted in a different worldview than our own. In the ancient Near East, kings served as the regent of the gods. They acted on behalf of the gods, and through their actions they maintained the order and integrity of creation (Frankfort). Israel’s king was no different. As the king constructed parks and gardens, a common task of kings, he acted toward the natural world in the same manner as God who planted the garden of Eden (Verheij: 113-15).

In the following chapters I will employ this model of value orientation in order to investigate and systematize the ancient Israelites’ values toward the natural world, and thereby contribute toward an ecology of ancient Israel. However, unlike the contemporary cultures for which this model was designed, our investigation of the Israelites’ value orientation is faced with two related problems. An obvious problem is that there are no ancient Israelites around to question. We simply have no way of knowing how the Israelites would have answered the questionnaire listed above. Instead, we must reconstruct their value orientation from diverse sources such as ethnographic data, archaeological evidence, and primarily the biblical texts (although not explicitly articulated, the ancient Israelites’ values are latent in their literature). The second problem is that the Bible presents us with a highly selective view of Israelite culture. Most of the biblical texts, for example, have their origin in learned circles in and around Jerusalem. They represent the beliefs and ideology of the elite and the practitioners of normative (i.e., biblical) Yahwism. All other Israelite voices – the peasants, those practicing non-official forms of Yahwism – are presented only from the perspective of these bearers of the official tradition. The Bible cannot be used for making inclusive claims about ancient Israelites. As a result, our reconstruction by its very nature can only be a generalized abstraction from the available evidence. Nevertheless, I will argue that each of the three solutions to the human-relationship-to-nature problem is reflected in the biblical texts. The different solutions to this problem can be attributed to preferences made by different segments of Israelite society, to ingroup/outgroup relations,

⁵ Although the Israelites did employ a variety of technologies in order to survive in an often hostile environment (Hopkins, 1987) – most notably, agricultural terracing and the hewing out of limestone cisterns--these technologies were not the means by which they could manipulate their environment beyond its natural limits. Their use of technology was not intended to overcome the ecological constraints of their environment, but rather to enable them to subsist in that environment. The use of technology in itself does not necessitate a mastery-over-nature solution to the human-relationship-to-nature problem. All cultures must include some utilitarian attitude toward nature, expressed through technologies, in order to survive in the natural world (Kay, 1985: 128).

and to historical circumstances. Moreover, each of these solutions, I will argue, was rooted in a variation of a single basic worldview. This will enable us to reconstruct at least the full range of the ancient Israelites' values toward the natural world.