

Lucy Weir

Love is Green

Compassion as responsibility in the ecological emergency

SERIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOCIETY

“This book is unique. It combines pieces of well-developed philosophical thought (analytic ethics, ecological theory, continental philosophy, and Buddhist thought, especially Dōgen) into a novel, coherent, and quite compelling vision. This highly original work reconsiders the problem of ethical agency within an ecological context. In so doing, it provocatively argues that we cannot act on the ecological systems that comprise us as if we were outside of them. What emerges is a profound account of agency as realization that marries contemporary ethics to Zen practice in a manner that understands the roots of the ecological crisis deeply enough to be able to address them.”

Jason M. Wirth

Professor of Philosophy, Seattle University

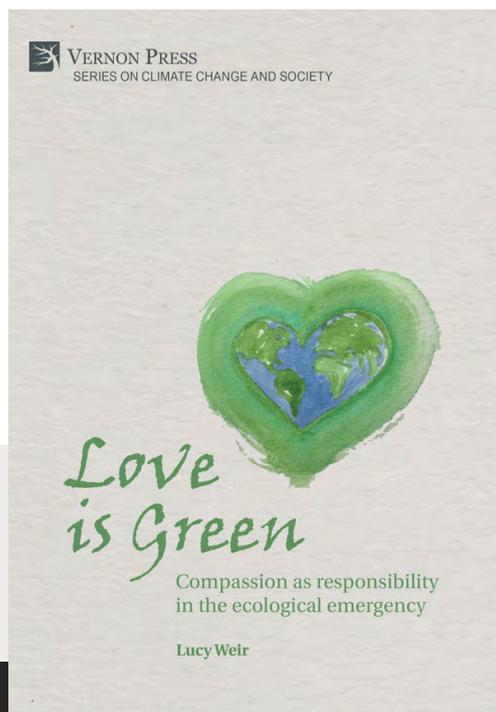
Summary

This book links three themes, non-dualistic agency, ‘the good’ of systems, and compassionate attunement, and relates them to the ecological emergency. The author begins by examining how we currently understand our ability to choose what we do, our agency and conclude that this is dualistic: we think of an action to do, and then we physically act. Yet an understanding that we are enmeshed in context means our capacity to act freely dissolves in the mesh. We evolved capacities for consciousness and awareness, capacities that allow us to realise that we are here, now but that do not inevitably imply choice. Our capacity for ‘realisation’ gives us the ability to elicit an emotional response. When we understand our enmeshment, we can attune to a deep compassion for ourselves and indeed for all systems unfolding through time. Compassionate attunement allows a different set of options for action to become available to us. This then shifts how we respond to ourselves, our human relationships and to the ecological emergency we are currently embroiled in. This work is inspired by the great Kamakura Zen Master Eihei Dōgen. The book’s contribution is to extend and link the notion of practice-realisation with the literature on evolutionary biology and entropy maximisation which allows us to speak of ‘the good’ of

systems. Systems unfold as ‘good’ for us when biodiversity maximisation occurs. By considering the ecological emergency in light of compassionate attunement, we open ourselves to a new array of possibilities for action. Some of these the author outlines in the conclusion, relating them to existing literature on compassionate achievement and compassionate communication, to show how our this practice shifts our relationship to ourselves, to one another, and to the ecological emergency, thus changing the course of human history.

About the author

Lucy Weir was born in the Highlands of Scotland. She went to study in Oxford University under Professor Barbara Harrell-Bond, a woman who had a profound influence on her understanding of social and environmental justice, and on the development of autonomy. When in Oxford, she met, and subsequently married, an Irishman and spent nearly twenty years in the west of Ireland, struggling to survive, rearing two children, teaching yoga, and writing. She researched and wrote a Ph.D. in a hut at the end of the garden and on completion, left to live near Dublin, in order to find work. Her vision is to open an eco-therapeutic community, which would combine work with marginalised people with the ideas of practice-realisation, compassionate attunement, and compassionate communication, as well as helping to show in practical terms how the ideas in this book can be enacted in a practical context.



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