

Part One

Why would a WEIRD* person want to become an animist?

Why would a WEIRD person want to be an animist? I don't know. Most don't even know what being an animist entails; I didn't know what being an animist entails...

I don't know why I'm an animist. I wouldn't say that I wanted to be an animist. It's just the way I am.

The following discussion is an articulation of things that I've felt and experienced and thought for years—most of my life, in fact—but never knew for certain that others experienced (with the exception of people I read, such as Nicholas Black Elk, Vine Deloria, and a very few others).

I rarely had reason to talk about it with others until about 2000, and few of those earlier discussions were productive, largely because while I'm good with words, and I've got close friends who are smart and perceptive as well, I mostly found myself at a loss when trying to articulate what I experience and feel.

In 2000, I met a man who is an animist. Well, and I met some other people, too, a whole community of people, all of whom helped understand it was okay to believe and practice a 'faith' that is not at all like those underlying our modern society. But Will is unabashedly pagan, and an animist to boot. He convinced me—although I'm certain that he made no intentional effort to do so—that I, too, am an animist.

[* WEIRD means Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic...a concept I discuss later in this essay.]

But it was still difficult for me to explain it to anyone else.

Not that I needed to do so often for others, as it's mostly invisible to all but those closest to me, but I still felt a need to explain it to myself, at least.

Then, in early 2014, I discovered Graham Harvey's work on "The New Animism" (specifically, his *Handbook of Contemporary Animism*). That led me to reading others, whose work I would likely never have encountered otherwise. And still more.

And finally, I can explain my animism to myself. And, I hope, to others.

In this way, I don't differ much from many Christians who wish to make their faith publicly visible. But most people are familiar with the nature of Christianity, whereas almost no one (in my experience) has any familiarity with the reality of animism. I think I owe the world a positive statement; I am not, however, seeking to convert anyone. I only wish to inform.

Okay, it does take several thousand words; I apologize for that. But it takes that many words, divided into sections, and subsections (hmmmm. maybe I should call them 'chapters') only because I realize that what I believe is very different from the culture in which I was raised, and consequently, very different from the beliefs and practices of almost all of the people around me.

I've got some 'splainin' to do.

So, why would a WEIRD person want to be an animist?

I imagine that other WEIRD people would only want to become animists if their own life experiences tended toward animism, as mine has. I don't know if that is very many people; I would tend to doubt it. As far as I know, I have only met a handful of real animists—that is, people who really experience life in the way I do—although I now know several other people who have animistic tendencies.

So, please read on. I hope it helps you to understand why this is important enough to me to put out the effort to write this, and to post it in public.