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nest in an earthly way. It can also fly up into the sky where the cloud-beings live, its power of flight so easy, so natural. And, most magically of all, not only can it swim and float on water, it can also dive under the water – and come back up again! To a people who likely saw puddles and ponds as an entryway to the underworld, this must have seemed the epitome of magic.

Other water birds such as cranes or coots or herons (or their footprints) are also widely represented in the prehistoric rock art of the desert southwest, not surprising in cultures that were trying to eke out an existence in places where the rainfall was often far below the prerequisite 14 inches a year that are considered minimum for human survival. With the idea of supplication for rain, it is no wonder that water birds images are so prevalent, as are those of clouds, frogs, tadpoles, and fish. Images of turkeys were often associated with rain also, as these birds tended to reside in the mountains where there was more water, next to springs and streams, just as they do today.

It is a logical extension of bird imagery that bird feathers and bird parts served as a metaphor for the whole bird, and there is a long tradition brought forward into the present of using bird feathers in connection with sacred ceremonies, altars, prayer bundles, dances and rituals, and shamanic costumes. “Of all life forms found as decorative motifs in Pueblo art, the bird has undoubtedly enjoyed the most widespread use. Bird designs occur abundantly on prehistoric and historic culture materials from the Pueblo region” (Wellman 1976: 97).

Bird imagery in the Rio Grande style rock art is quite often generic (depending on the site); that is, the idea of birds is presented, though no effort has been made to suggest a specific kind of bird. And just as often, a specific bird image may dominate a site, such as raptors in Tenabo, New Mexico, the duck-men of the San Juan River area in southeastern Utah, the star-faced birds of prey in the Galisteo Basin in north central New Mexico, or the owl-men of Dinwoody Lakes, Wyoming.

And there are some sites that are wonderfully and inexplicably anomalous, such as the premier rock-art site of Three Rivers, in southern New Mexico. This remarkable site, with its many thousands of petroglyphs pecked into the basaltic lava along a hogback rising above the desert floor, hosts at least fourteen separate, identifiable species of birds, as well as birds with eggs in their bodies, bird migrations, seasonal portrayals and even a bird embryo, where the oval shape of the rock forms the egg. Most of the images are portrayed alone, and a few seem to have an overt shamanic context, though certainly the wide variety of images has generated numerous, often conflicting interpretations.

Unraveling the mystery of the many different bird species represented at Three Rivers is an appropriate metaphor for the study of the larger world of rock art. Not only by learning to live with the mystery without having to

explain it rationally on our own terms, but also by accepting it as the essence of the magic inherent in rock art, and learning, each in our own way, how to celebrate (and protect) that mystery, may we come into a true contact with the many people who left them there so long ago.

Brad Draper

Further Reading

Hedges, Ken. “Southern California Rock Art as Shamanic Art.” In *American Indian Rock Art*, vol. 2. El Paso, TX: El Paso Archeological Society, 1976.

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Schaafsma, Polly. “Supper or Symbol: Roadrunner Tracks in Southwest Art and Ritual.” In *Animals into Art*. Howard Morphy, ed. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

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See *also*: Paleolithic Religions; Rock Art (various); Shamanism (various).

P Rock Climbing

Can rock climbing be understood as a religion? As a practitioner and a scholar, I think it can. Surely it entails a sensation of transcendence, an experience of raw nature, and calls forth a kind of reverence. Climbing offers a respite from the constraints of the horizontal world, recreating the *axis mundi* with each new ascent. While such sentiments convey aspects of what I feel when I climb, they serve only to obscure what I see as a scholar. As much as I'm prone to romanticizing my choice of leisure pursuits, here I want to approach climbing with a critical eye, still under the broad category of religion. This entails a shift to ritual. If we view climbing as ritualized behavior, we move beyond platitudes and speculations about the “beliefs” of climbers to analyze the social processes and practices they perform.

Climbing is almost wholly ritualized. This will become readily apparent to anyone who attempts to invent the sport *de novo*, as I did in my hapless early teenage years.

Armed with a bike lock, leather gloves, and an old sailing line, my friend Dan and I decided to “go climbing.” Before we had much of an opportunity to kill ourselves, Dan and I were approached by some “real climbers” who, while chuckling the we-know-better laugh, took us under their wing and initiated us into the esoterica at the heart of the sport. In language and gestures meant to close the gap between our ignorance and their “reality,” we were taught about the acquisition and use of proper ritual paraphernalia (ropes, carabineers, and anchors), appropriate regalia (climbing boots, designer clothes), ritual speech (“on belay”), sacred texts (guide books and various “how to” texts written by “founding fathers”), ongoing revelation (climbing magazines), sacrificial rituals (leisure blood letting by way of cuts and bruises – “badges of honor” – and the occasional involuntary corpse offering), salient ethnic distinctions (sport climbers, traditional climbers, alpine climbers), relevant ancestors and deities (local heroes), heretics (heroes from somewhere else), and most importantly, levels of salvation (grades of difficulty) and ethics (aesthetics – “good style”). More than this, we learned that “real climbing” is established around certain pilgrimage sites (Yosemite being Mecca and Jerusalem both), and only the apostate (independently minded climbers) or the visionary (sponsored climbers) venture beyond the sanctioned and sanctified cathedrals. However, meeting the needs of practitioners who can’t always and everywhere engage “pure tradition” (going climbing), climbers have invented traditions to match their late capitalist predilections (climbing gyms with espresso bars and interactive websites that successfully reproduce the social milieu – which is garden-variety, pecking-order calibration – of the “really real”).

Now, lest my critical view be taken as cynicism, let me point out the positive attributes of climbing as ritual. There is more *communitas* in climbing circles than there are bad dissertations on liminality – which is to say heaps. Climbing is about bonding, and bonding quite beyond the structures and constraints of everyday life. If there was ever “serious play,” this is it. At the level of rope mate, trust is paramount and all ascents are dually authored and doubly experienced. Beyond the sacred duty to one’s partner (holding his or her rope), climbing bonds extend like fractals, taking in ever-greater numbers of people yet linking them in the most intimate ways. Moreover, the very ritualism of climbing is so explicit and marked that it constitutes the primary identity of most adherents. This makes climbers remarkably visible and sympathetic to one another (intra-ethnic strife aside). Thus, to speak personally, I am certain that I have more in common – in terms of passions, appetites, ideals – with climbers from, say, Thailand, than I do with my neighbors. So it is that climbers can travel the world and have ready-made communities waiting to accept them. So, while climbers fashion themselves as radicals, independents, and iconoclasts, what I

find revealing in our ritual analysis is that it is precisely the sub-cultural homogeneity of climbing – produced and reproduced through ritual practices – that renders climbing the social phenomenon it is.

Turning to the sharper edge of my critical knife, I want to address the relationship of climbers to nature by way of exposing one particular class of rituals to analysis: the first ascent. Climbers most often take the first ascent to be the epitome of the sport. It represents the “best and purest” form of climbing. Adventurous, bold, committed, visionary, self-less: these are common ways first ascensionists fashion themselves, and most climbers endorse this discourse through consumption of it. As a first ascensionist myself, I’ve participated in this rhetorical economy, and I think many of the claims and aspirations surrounding first ascents are sincere and harmless. However, I would insist that the quest for the perfect route (climbing’s Holy Grail) by climbers as a whole and the quest for ego gratification by individuals have caused climbing to manifest itself in rather imperial ways. New climbing areas are sought with the fervor of New World explorers, and the consequences to nature (and sometimes natives, as with disputes between climbers and Indians at Devils Tower and Cave Rock attest) are similar in effect, but certainly not in scale, to those of their symbolic predecessors. Trails are cut, vegetation is removed, machinery bolts are drilled into the rock for anchors, erosion exacerbated, and litter is left by climbers “developing” new climbs.

I would also call attention to symbolic features of first ascents that strike me as dubious and revealing. These are signaled by the metaphor often chosen by climbers to describe establishing a first ascent: authorship. Climbers speak as if the act of climbing a rock somehow brings it into being – and so it does, for a certain social world. Beyond this, authorship is viewed to convey moral possession of the route to those who established it. In other words, subsequent climbers are to repeat the route by way of the standards of the first ascensionists, and any modification of the route (the addition of new anchors, for example) requires consent from its “authors.” Moreover, first ascensionists very often understand their act as one that confers entitlement in another sense. Quite literally, climbers have a long tradition of claiming the right to naming based on the first ascent. Even if a rock feature had a name before an ascent, climbers will re-christen the rock upon climbing it. And, in ways reminiscent of the Reformation, climbers will, on occasion, dispute the legitimacy of an ascent, registering their view by climbing it themselves and renaming it upon success. Route names enter climbing discourse swiftly and indelibly, eventually becoming recorded in guidebooks, often along with the “author’s” name. In this way, first ascents are perhaps best viewed in terms of apotheosis – human beings reaching for the gods in order to become them. As with so many human projects to transcend our limitations, in the game

of climbing nature often becomes a means to our ends – even while we purport to be worshipping it.

Yet, if we grant certain ego needs and failures to our kind, perhaps we can view climbing – and things like it – as simultaneously muddled and miraculous. On the latter side, climbing, for all of my skepticism, still affords the chance to gain a celestial view from a terrestrial perch. Doing so, climbing allows for an oceanic experience that inspires a caring rather than a conquering attitude toward the rock. And it must be said that within the climbing community there has always been a vocal environmentalist element. These climbers – from the very beginning of the sport – have maintained a “clean” ethic, seeking to leave no trace on the rocks they ascend. Moreover, their sensibilities extend to the broader context of public land use. Such climbers and the action groups they form and support have been instrumental in advancing low-impact approaches to nature.

Greg Johnson

See *also*: Deep Ecology; Mountaineering; Naess, Arne; Surfing.

Rolston III, Holmes (1932–)

Leading environmental philosopher, ethicist, and theologian, Holmes Rolston III is widely recognized as the “father of environmental ethics” for his central role in developing environmental ethics as a modern academic discipline. Throughout his distinguished career, he has helped make explicit the ethics of nature that have been implicit in philosophical and sacred writings since ancient times. Born in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia on 19 November 1932, Rolston’s multidisciplinary educational career included a childhood spent in contact with nature, an undergraduate degree in physics (Davidson College, 1953), a divinity degree (Union Theological Seminary, 1956), a Ph.D. in theology (University of Edinburgh, 1958), and later a masters in philosophy of science (University of Pittsburgh, 1968). He wrote the acclaimed books *Philosophy Gone Wild* (1986), *Environmental Ethics* (1988), *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* (1987), *Conserving Natural Value* (1994), and *Genes, Genesis and God: Values and their Origins in Natural and Human History* (Gifford Lectures, University of Edinburgh, 1997–1998) (1999). He edited *Biology, Ethics, and the Origins of Life* (1994), and in 1979, helped found the now-refereed professional journal *Environmental Ethics*. Additional works include 80 chapters in other books and over 100 articles, a number of which have been used in college courses and have been translated into at least a dozen languages. A founding member of the International Society for Environmental Ethics (1990) and delegate to the

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992), Rolston has lectured on all seven continents, consulted with dozens of conservation groups, received numerous awards including the 2003 Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries about Spiritual Realities, and currently serves as University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University, his professorial post since 1976.

For four centuries following the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution in Europe, Western philosophy promoted an almost exclusively anthropocentric focus, perceiving nature as mechanistic and only having value in relation to human uses and preferences. In the early 1970s, Rolston acknowledged that nature had instrumental or use-values for medicine, agriculture, and industry. He went further, though, recognizing that nature had other values – aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, scientific, economic, and religious – as well as intrinsic value. Fundamentally, he argued, organisms (including plants, animals, and humans), species, ecosystems, and the Earth have intrinsic value just for the fact that they have evolved and survived for millions and billions of years. Each level also has systemic value (value associated with processes and capacity to produce) that is interwoven with instrumental and intrinsic values. Rolston posits that for all of these reasons and more, humans have ethical obligations to the environment.

An ordained Presbyterian pastor like his father and grandfather, Rolston frequently draws on the Bible, emphasizing in writing and in lectures its implied guidance on environmental ethics. He likes to think of the “swarms of living creatures” brought forth from land and sea (Gen. 1:20, 24) as early references to biodiversity and notes that when God reviewed the display of life he found it “very good.” According to Rolston, the story of Noah’s ark illustrates that God wills for species to continue (Gen. 6:19) and the rainbow is God’s sign re-establishing “the covenant . . . between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations” (Gen. 9:12–13). In addition to the ecological, intrinsic, aesthetic, instrumental, and religious values implied in Genesis and Matthew 6, Rolston highlights biblical passages that speak to economic and other values, as well as human responsibilities.

Rolston promotes the idea that ethics are for people, but not only about people. To whom much is given, much is required, and humans have a rich and ancient inheritance, the Earth and biosphere, to steward. Rolston says that perhaps we make our deepest error “forever putting ourselves first, never putting ourselves in place in the fundamental biosphere community in which we reside” (2000: 83). Through his writings and lectures, he attempts to instill a more profound sense of civic and environmental