

**The future of Australian environmental law and governance: politics, reform and community activism" Beyond Anthropocentrism in Environmental philosophy: Is There a Place for Wilderness in Earth Jurisprudence?**

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*Abstract:*

Modern environmentalism worldwide is based in the conceptualisation of wilderness. Wilderness is not just a law or legal framework; it is by and large the foundation of how humans relate the natural world. Biblical references portray wilderness as a place of judgement filled with demons and wild beasts and is where no human should desire to go. In the context of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the chaotic, Biblical wilderness became a "sublime" pure form of nature separate from the destructive influence of humans. The Wilderness Act of 1964 in the United States reads, wilderness is "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Therefore, the modern, conventional conceptualisation wilderness coalesces in the separation of humans from the natural world. However, the philosophy of Earth Jurisprudence seeks to promote an Earth-centred governance system countering the anthropocentric governance paradigm characterising Western society. To frame Earth-centred governance, Earth Jurisprudence draws upon indigenous knowledge. Unlike the modern concept of wilderness, indigenous peoples do not separate themselves from the natural world but rather view themselves as part of the Earth. Therefore, this paper argues that Earth Jurisprudence is thereby distancing its philosophy from the concept of wilderness. While a few proponents of Earth Jurisprudence explicitly use the term wilderness, or even "wildness" or "wild" in a context reminiscent to the wilderness concept, the fundamental basis of Earth Jurisprudence seeks a general separation from the concept of wilderness. Finally, this paper argues that being at odds with the foundations of contemporary environmental philosophy, rooted in the conceptualisation of wilderness, is challenging in an international context of financially wealthy, extractive industries.

*Keywords:* anthropocentrism, Earth Jurisprudence, environment, indigenous, philosophy, wilderness, wildness.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Nathaniel Perry is currently studying a Masters degree in Development Practice in the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland. His research interests are in the field of Political Ecology and how power structures and human agency affect human-environment interactions. He is also a volunteer with the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) working on international projects that includes AELA's engagement with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature. He has also been affiliated with the Sunshine Coast Environment Council and their community engagement and numerous campaigns.