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A Critical Comparison of Two Secondary Sources

INTRODUCTION

This essay critically compares 'Framing the Land and Sky: Art Meets Cosmology in a Sustainable Environment.'¹ by Daniela Bertol and 'Thomas Berry, Buddhism, and the New Cosmology.'² by Christopher Key Chapple. Both authors propose ways that cosmological frameworks may reframe human relationships with the natural world, while they operate through differently: Bertol through a site specific material installation that highlights celestial phenomena, and Chapple through contextual explanations and ethical argumentation. I argue that Bertol offers a practice based approach to engaging with the environment, while Chapple, via the teachings of Berry, supplies a moral rationale for ecological transformation. Assessing both texts comparatively highlights complementarities and evidentiary asymmetries that scholars should address in future interdisciplinary work.

ANALYSIS OF PAPERS

FRAMING THE LAND AND SKY: ART MEETS COSMOLOGY IN A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Daniela Bertol is of Italian descent and is a professional designer and artist.³ Her projects 'explore geometric space and virtual environments, using digital models and organic shapes found in nature', to intersect celestial observation with sustainable architecture.³ As a life long practitioner of yoga, she often integrates eastern philosophy and practices with contemporary architectural research and theories to create art that is both aesthetically pleasing and spiritually grounding.³

Bertol's essay follows a clear and logically structured format. Similar to most research papers, she clearly states in the introduction the intent of the paper, followed by historical context, then her methodologies and analysis, before concluding.⁴ Bertol uses a wide range of resources, from her personal experiences, to primary and secondary sources to explain her rationale in choosing various elements of the Sunset Farm, that are cosmological, architectural, mathematical, and historical in nature.⁴

¹ Bertol, Daniela. 'Framing the Land and Sky: Art Meets Cosmology in a Sustainable Environment.' *Leonardo* 39, no. 2 (2006): 125-130

² Chapple, Christopher Key. 'Thomas Berry, Buddhism, and the New Cosmology.' *BuddhistChristian Studies* 18 (1998): 147-154.

³ "D a n i e l a B e r t o l." n.d. Danielabertol.com <<http://danielabertol.com/danielabertol.htm>> [accessed November 3, 2025]

⁴ Bell, J., Waters, S., & Johnson, H. (2018). *Doing your research project* (8th ed.). Open University Press.

Bertol's article documents the conceptual and material components of Sunset Farm, her Sky Spirals project, which integrates land art, astronomical alignments and renewable energy infrastructures.¹ Bertol opens the project with historical context on megalithic observatories, the Jantar Mantar instruments, and the Land Art Movement of the 1960's, arguing that modern installations can be both a place of spiritual observation, and public art while supporting environmentalist efforts. Bertol describes the East Spiral, Sun Axis and West Spiral use geometric modeling and the natural landscape to create an installation that coincides with solar events to produce a habitat for people to experience cosmological phenomena.¹

Bertol used a practice-based methodology, using design drawings, site plans, photographic documentation, and technical descriptions as evidence for a public instruction that is both aesthetic and practical, creating a beautiful scenery that produces renewable energy, and conserves natural habitats.¹ This framework links an embodied experience (walking through the farm, watching the sunrise/sunset, meditating in the Square field) with civic infrastructures (photovoltaic canopies and energy farming), that ultimately create a unified bond between the material and spiritual world.¹

Bertol's project becomes a therapeutic sanctuary of sorts.⁵ Many of the locations on the Sunset Farm, like the *Square Field*, are designed with meditation practices and agriculture in mind so the space can allow for both to exist without compromise.¹ These interwoven concepts of practical environmentalism, and spiritual ritual can be seen through the entire plot of the Sunset Farm.⁵ The development of this therapeutic landscape, that heals both the human soul and nature, is what seamlessly integrates art and environmentalism into its own living cosmology.⁵ Bertol project does ultimately address the question of whether or not natural megaliths can evolve to create a modernized experience, addressing both spiritual and environmental concerns.⁶

THOMAS BERRY, BUDDHISM, AND NEW COSMOLOGY

Christopher Key Chapple is a 'Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology and founding Director of the Master of Arts in Yoga Studies at Loyola Marymount University.'⁷ He specializes in Indian religions, and has published several books and articles that focus on Buddhism, yoga, and ecological practices.⁷ His works often

⁵ Marques, Bruno, Jacqueline McIntosh, and Hayley Webber. 2022. 'Therapeutic Landscapes: A Natural Weaving of Culture, Health and Land'. Landscape Architecture Framed from an Environmental and Ecological Perspective. IntechOpen. doi:10.5772/intechopen.99272.

⁶ Bertol, Daniela. "Sun Farm: Body, Self, Universe." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 37, no. 1 (2015): 36–48. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26386747>.

⁷ Loyola Marymount University. n.d. "Faculty," Lmu.edu

<<https://bellarmine.lmu.edu/theologicalstudies/faculty/?expert=christopherkey.chapple>> [accessed November 3, 2025]

explore the intersection of religion and ecology, focusing on ways Indian cosmology can influence modern environmentalism.⁷

In his essay, Chapple's paper follows a clear and logically structured format, offering an introduction to cosmology before delving into the work of Thomas Berry.⁴ One of the ways Chapple's paper struggles is his use of limited resources.⁴ The lack of resources diversity could create underlying biases or limited perspectives in his analysis and subsequent conclusions.⁴

Chapple's essay reviews Thomas Berry's ecological thoughts through Buddhist concepts of dukkha (suffering), karuna (compassion), and karma.² He argues that Berry's 'new cosmology' can be better understood and strengthened by connecting them to Buddhist ethical resources.² Chapple approaches his essay from a comparative and expository method that clarifies Buddhist doctrines and shows their connection to Berry's insistence on human interdependence and the collective responsibility to care for the nonhuman community.²

Chapple argues that Buddhist practices of purification, compassion, and paying attention to the environment provide a simple basis for the 'ecozoic transformation' that Berry advocates for.² Chapple uses primarily theoretical frameworks, offering ways that cosmology matters when addressing ethical concerns, and how religious practices could motivate larger behavioural changes.²

Chapple's essay is a modernizing of Buddhist environmentalism.⁸ Chapple often highlights the concept of suffering, one of the signature pillars of Buddhism, as a clear link between human and nonhuman life.² He notes that

'by clearly identifying the source of one's suffering and taking active steps toward purification, the Buddhist moves toward making a broke world whole.'²

Chapple's essay allows for individual introspection based on a larger known framework, which supports both ancient practices and potential expansion into modern times.⁸ The use of suffering as link between the human and nonhuman experience is the most poignant link that can lead to shifting attitudes of individuals. Though he does not explicitly reference specific actions, one can easily derive the Buddhist practices of vegetarianism, and a push back against consumerism as avenues to implement this framework today.⁸

⁸ Smyer Yü, Dan, and Zhen Ma. 2025. Buddhist Faces of Indigenous Knowledge in Highland Asia: Rethinking the Roots of Buddhist Environmentalism. *Religions* 16: 367. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030367>

COMPARISON OF TEXT

Each of their papers aim to use their personal and traditional cosmologies to add meaning to the lived experiences of people.⁹ Although both authors seek to reconnect human life to the environment through cosmology, they differ when it comes to their methodologies and evidentiary support.

For Bertol she does this by affirming,

‘The main intent behind Sunset Farm is to create awareness of our presence in space and time, with architecture framing the land and the sky, evoking ancient cosmologies and promoting contemplative meditation on nature as a means for healing and finding peace.’¹

And for Chapple he states,

‘In this article, I promise to examine Buddhist influences within Berry’s thoughts and suggest ways in which Berry’s style of environmental advocacy might benefit the Buddhist world in Asia, which, due to burgeoning (mal)development, is encountering the sorts of environmental ravage that North America and Western Europe first identified in the 1960s.’²

From these statements, the two papers diverge on the application of an environmentalist cosmology. Bertol focuses on a more pragmatic approach, integrating her landscape architecture at specific locations to highlight the present ecology and celestial phenomena to cultivate a physical first experience that leads to a spiritual experience.¹ Chapple focuses on the inverse, a philosophical approach which requires introspection that can lead to making changes to how the individual lives life in the material world.²

While they overarchingly have similar philosophies, Bertol’s use of physical spaces provide a space for grounding someone spiritually, while respecting the integrity of the natural landscape, which creates a symbiotic relationship that heals both entities.⁵ Chapple’s analysis of Thomas Berry’s work creates a framework interpersonal analysis on the ways to understand Buddhist teachings and derive personalized approaches to environmental activism.⁸ The differing application of the two works provide complementary experiences that can reconnect the human experience to the natural experience. In one sense, using Chapple’s framework as the gateway to personal analysis, and then following with Bertol’s framework of being present in nature could create a link between the two that support both of their goals.

⁹ Campion, Nicholas. 2012. *Astrology and Cosmology in the World’s Religions* (New York University Press)

Bertol's claims are supported by tangible design work, site survey, photographic documentation, as well as historical context, making her evidence a concrete representation of her studies.⁴ This gives her work plausibility, but also limits the results because the success of her project is contingent on the experiences of on site visitors. In contrast, Chapple provides a tight and philosophically sound approach to why people need to shift to an environmentally conscious lifestyle using textual and philosophical evidence. However, his primary use of Berry's writing and a select set of Buddhist sources could limit the claims he makes about behavioural effects and Buddhist practices.

In terms of their strengths and weaknesses, Bertol's primary strength is the integration of design and visualization technologies, with the historical context, to make advancements on ways to create a material environment for people to connect with the cosmos. Her main limitation, would be her lack of results, at the time of publishing, the Sunset Farm was still in the works and had not yet had tangible data points as it does today. Chapple's strength is his ethical analysis of Buddhist principles as a support system for ecological change. Using Berry's cosmology with Buddhist doctrine he supplies a clear moral framework that can motivate the reader to live a more green lifestyle. However, his weakness would be his limited use of sources. He creates potential for a narrow viewpoint of both environmentalism and Buddhist practices.

One overlap that connects these two papers is the way both papers present clear structure for someone to derive meaning from their own experiences. Cosmology studies the ways in which humans have derived meaning from natural and celestial phenomena, which is important to consider whenever reviewing any cosmological framework.⁹ And while both Bertol and Chapple offer a clear form for how to experience certain phenomena (Bertol through using art, and natural landscapes to cultivate therapeutic environments for reflection, and Chapple by providing an understanding of Buddhism which leads to personal reflection), they leave the understanding of said experience open to interpretation of the individual. This adds to the effectiveness of their overlapping intentions to connect people to the environment using cosmological influences.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these papers are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive explorations of environmental cosmology. Bertol demonstrates how cosmology can be grounded in the material world using natural landscapes and built forms to invoke feelings of awe and reflection. Chapple demonstrates how cosmology aids in intrapersonal reflection to justify making behavioural changes.

Combining these two methodologies in future studies would create a stronger understanding of how the material, mental, and cosmological forces can build a symbiotic relationship with each other. Doing so would help answer both the how and why of transformation environmental practices that would connect the human and nonhuman experience, without compromising on one or the other. So future research should evaluate existing cosmologies, test whether site specific experiences shift behaviors, and allow ethical frameworks to inform experiential and material design plans to ensure that any installations or activations are aligned with theoretical philosophies.

Bertol and Chapple each offer valuable contributions to environmental cosmology. Bertol's practice offers a model of lived theory through visual design, landscape architecture, and renewable energy integration. Chapple supplies an ethical framework that can motivate people to make changes in everyday practice. They both strengthen the dialogue between how to apply cosmological theory, and by adding empirical data to site projects and widening the references for ethical claims there is potential for a more comprehensive strategy for reconnecting humans to nature.

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