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ography, which unfortunately is not always up to date, and an extensive index. It will be of interest to specialists as well as to historians of later periods because many of the cultural and political changes that ushered in the world of the first millennium B.C. were still operating during the Greco-Roman centuries.

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CARMEN BLACKER and MICHAEL LOEWE, editors. *Ancient Cosmologies*. London: George Allen and Unwin; distributed by Rowman and Littlefield, Towata, N.J. 1975. Pp. 270. \$17.50.

This collection of essays originated from a series of lectures that specialists delivered to a general audience in 1972 at Cambridge University. In this collection cosmology refers to any more or less systematic representation of the universe, whether based on religious experience and speculation (such as Christian eschatology, the Buddhist *arūpadhātu*, or "sphere of non-forms"), empirical evidence (such as the Ptolemaic system), or more recognizably individual, creative combinations of these (such as the world of Dante's *Commedia*). The contributors and their topics are J. M. Plumley on the cosmology of ancient Egypt; W. G. Lambert on Sumer and Babylon; Rabbi Louis Jacobs on Jewish use of foreign cosmologies; Joseph Needham on ancient and medieval China; R. F. Gombrich on ancient Indian cosmologies—Vedic, Brahmanic, Jain, and Buddhist; Edith Jachimowitz on the unique Islamic synthesis of its own religious revelation and Greek natural philosophy; H. R. Ellis Davidson on pagan Scandinavian cosmology; G. E. R. Lloyd on the Greeks; and Philip Grierson on the elaborate, not always coherent Hellenic-Judaic-Christian cosmic view developed in medieval Europe and prevalent until after the Renaissance.

Considering that the severe limitations of space and the complexity of the data tax to the utmost any scholar's synthetic powers, and run the risk of superficiality, these synopses are with few exceptions unexpectedly rich. Least successful, perhaps, is the Indian material, which, in its quantity and tangled complexity, simply resists Gombrich's best efforts to compress it into thirty pages; it will require several readings. (I cannot remotely imagine it as a lecture.) More effective is Lloyd's strategy: to concentrate less on narrative exposition of particulars than on generalizing the enduring characteristics of Greek cosmological thought under the proliferation and variety of competing systems—its anthropocentrism, its dialectical nature, its rationalism, its nonpractical bent. What one

misses in this collection is a synthesizing essay, following Lloyd's model, that would not, like Carmen Blacker's introduction, merely summarize the contributions as discrete entities, but would attempt to abstract a general, cross-cultural characterization of cosmological literature and its basic structure, function, and relation to other manifestations of culture.

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JOHN G. EVANS. *The Environment of Early Man in the British Isles*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1975. Pp. xiv, 216. \$12.95.

J. DONALD HUGHES. *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1975. Pp. x, 181. \$9.50.

It is a commonplace that contemporary concerns are often translated into historical research. An unavoidable process, its usefulness can be immense, as the recent impact of the movements for blacks' or women's liberation on various aspects of our historical understanding demonstrates. The dangers inherent in approaching the past through the present are equally obvious. They may be summarized as the inability to grant the past its natural autonomy—the simple projection of present interests and problems back into the past—as if the very form and content of the categories of contemporary society were universal and unchangeable.

It was inevitable that increasing concern with the quality of the natural environment in the mid-twentieth century should spur historical investigation of "human ecology." J. Donald Hughes' *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations* represents an early, synthetic product of these investigations as they concern Mediterranean antiquity. Unfortunately, this volume illustrates the dangers of, rather than the usefulness of, "presentism." After brief (and extremely superficial) explorations of the "Mediterranean ecosystem" and of the relationship to nature of prehistoric and early Near Eastern (especially Hebrew) human beings, Hughes focuses on his main subject matter, the ancient Greeks and Romans, their attitudes toward nature, and their impact on the natural environment. He ends his volume with a brief chapter of uncertain purpose on early Christian views of the environment and a concluding section, "The Ancient Roots of our Ecological Crisis," the very title of which reveals the volume's purpose and limitations.

Following popular views of contemporary ecological catastrophe, Hughes has reduced ecology