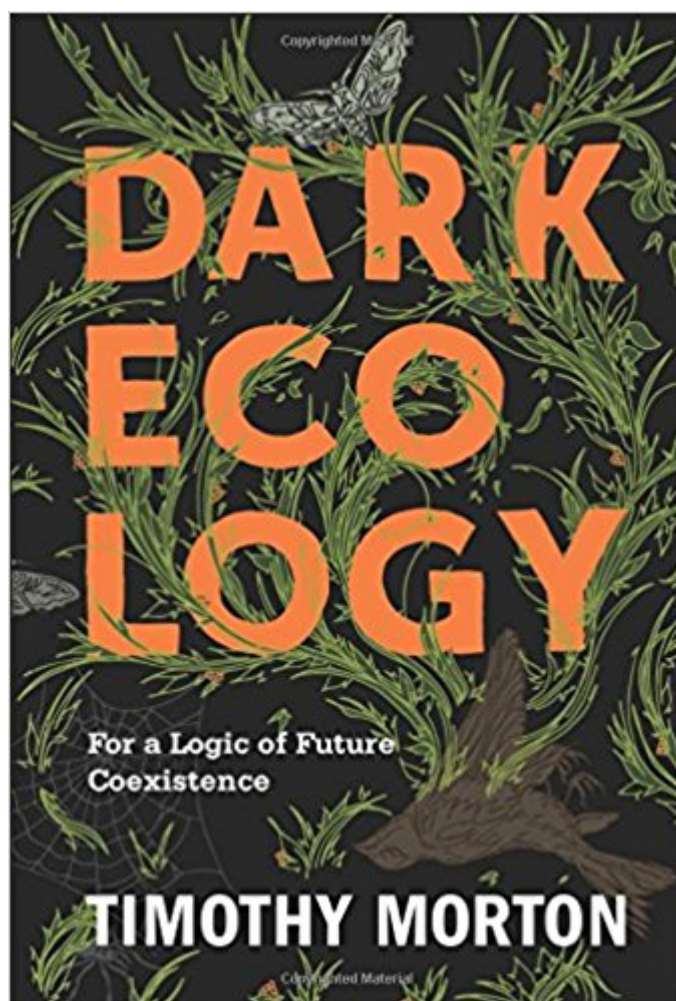


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# Dark Ecology: For A Logic Of Future Coexistence (The Wellek Library Lectures)



## Synopsis

Timothy Morton argues that ecological awareness in the present Anthropocene era takes the form of a strange loop or Möbius strip, twisted to have only one side. Deckard travels this oedipal path in *Blade Runner* (1982) when he learns that he might be the enemy he has been ordered to pursue. Ecological awareness takes this shape because ecological phenomena have a loop form that is also fundamental to the structure of how things are. The logistics of agricultural society resulted in global warming and hardwired dangerous ideas about life-forms into the human mind. Dark ecology puts us in an uncanny position of radical self-knowledge, illuminating our place in the biosphere and our belonging to a species in a sense that is far less obvious than we like to think. Morton explores the logical foundations of the ecological crisis, which is suffused with the melancholy and negativity of coexistence yet evolving, as we explore its loop form, into something playful, anarchic, and comedic. His work is a skilled fusion of humanities and scientific scholarship, incorporating the theories and findings of philosophy, anthropology, literature, ecology, biology, and physics. Morton hopes to reestablish our ties to nonhuman beings and to help us rediscover the playfulness and joy that can brighten the dark, strange loop we traverse.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In often witty and humorous language, Timothy Morton provides a kind of affective atlas for the human era. The book calls for scholars to recognize the structures of entwinement between (the human) species and ecological phenomena and to develop modes of thought for accommodating

them. (Kate Marshall, University of Notre Dame) Dark Ecology is a brave, brilliant interrogation of the presumptions that have driven our approach to the ecological and environmental challenges of our era. Anyone who is willing to ride the rollercoaster of ideas on which Morton takes us will reach the end brimming with new conceptual and intellectual energies with which to face up to our present limits and failures and to shape an alive and joyful future. (Imre Szeman, University of Alberta) Morton is a master of philosophical enigma. In Dark Ecology he treats us to an obscure ecognosis, the essentially unsolvable riddle of ecological being. Prepare to be endarkened! (Michael Marder, author of The Philosopher's Plant and Pyropolitics) Morton commands readers' attention with his free-form style.... [Dark Ecology] extends his previous work to offer a seismically different vision of the future of ecology and humankind. (Publishers Weekly)

Timothy Morton is Rita Shea Guffey Chair in English at Rice University. His books include Ecology Without Nature (2007); The Ecological Thought (2010); Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World (2013); and Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality (2013); and he has published more than 150 essays on ecology, philosophy, art, literature, music, architecture, and food. He has collaborated with several artists, including Björk, Olafur Eliasson, and Haim Steinbach, and blogs regularly at [ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com](http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com).

The book is a tour de force plea/demand for a whole new way of thinking that will let us wake up to the planetary crisis that we are causing (or, more succinctly, that we ARE.) Unfortunately, though, the author seems unable to decide if he is writing, urgently and cogently, for a wide audience, or if he's indulging in a kind of hyper-academic showing-off that makes him construct dense forests of obscure references that will be penetrable only by the most isolated specialists. The book is replete with both kinds of writing.

The most darkly gleaming elucidation of our current predicament. Thought-provoking and elegant. A wonderful augmentation of the usually bleak atmosphere that surrounds ecological consciousness.

One of the biggest ecological problems we face, as I have discovered through the philosophy known as Object-Oriented Ontology, is anti-intellectualism. Those who think that global warming is a purely physical problem, with scientists and others with a "just do it" attitude offering the only possible ways of thinking about it, will hate this book; such prejudices are the wellspring of ecological problems in the first place, which is why scientists and engineers can't solve the problem

without help. For those who understand that thoughts lead to actions which give rise to things (which is actually true), the effect will be more mixed. To one schooled in anthropology, the thought that agriculture is a kind of ecological "original sin" is hardly a startling revelation; what is interesting is that Tim convincingly discusses how and why this is the case, and this is the help science (and policy, no less importantly) doesn't realize it's looking for. My only criticism is that, while many of our fellow human beings commit the sin of excluding such ideas (because they're too "wordy", "long", "scholastic", "esoteric" and other Lovecraftian adjectives people use when they're pretending not to be interested in things they're actually just afraid they won't be able to comprehend), Tim can fairly be said to be guilty of the same sin in reverse: as a writer myself, I see little effort on his part to make his message accessible to those whom it would most benefit: ordinary people who read books and care about our future. It is certainly depressing that people pathologize intellect and so neglect good ideas; it is even more gut-wrenchingly depressing that Tim responds with his own more obscurantist brand of exclusionism. "You exclude me? Fine, I exclude you too, because I can." My point is that no one benefits from this except the petulant egos of the participants in this contest, and we have been treated to yet more evidence that there is no hope of a constructive human response to ecological problems. This personal attitude on his part is no blemish on the writing itself, as careful deep reading is what this book is for. Used in that way, the book is beautiful; be prepared to find joy in darkness, and the book will take you places you've never been.

Dark Ecology is a rant. It is philosophy's take on global warming. It examines human history as if it were all in the present, and applies philosophical tenets to macro trends. Agrilogistics is farming is the villain. From it sprung the raping of the planet. The book is the print version of another in the series of Wellek Library lectures. In a way, Dark Ecology is like poetry. Wrapped in its philosophical onionskin, it begs for peeling and interpretation of one concrete fact: global warming is all ours. Morton provides a lot of argument about species and the effects of their actions. But looking down from outer space, there is a simple truth: there are far too many Homo sapiens in an area that used to be occupied by innumerable species in remarkable balance. If we had had the good manners to control our own numbers while taking ourselves out of that balance, perhaps the biosphere could have dealt with our effluent. Morton's best example is turning the key to his car. Just him doing this has no effect on the carbon level. But four or five billion doing it every day is another story. Wildlife now accounts for just 3% of vertebrate biomass. We are 32%, and our domesticated animals are 65%. This nugget sits at the center of the onion. Getting to it takes a lot of work, and you cry a lot

doing it. The arguments Morton puts forward remind me of the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles, in which the police (defense) attorneys took the video of the beating and dragged the jury through it frame by frame as if each frame were a separate reality. They convinced the jury that no beating took place. In Morton's case, he uses the weapons of philosophy to make everything also not everything. Everything that is is also not. Once that is established, every correlation becomes both meaningless and meaningful. Anything can lead anywhere. It is exhausting. Morton says the data-driven turn science took in 1800 is to blame for climate change deniers (as well as cigarette makers) being able to point to anything as proof there is no such thing. A snowball is proof of no climate change (and a centenarian is proof cigarettes don't cause cancer). He calls agrilogistics a virus, which reminds me of Daniel Wilson's 1991 description of mankind as cancer, spreading billions of cells swarming over the body of Earth, causing abscesses and clouds of disease throughout, wiping out vital organs as it festers and weakens the entire balance. There is far too much discussion of the etymology of words, going back to the ancient Greek, as if our use of words today has any connection there. That and a blur of allusions branching out in every direction, often unexplored or explained, make it tough reading. There were many, many sentences I read several times and still couldn't figure out the point. The book is extraordinarily dense. I don't think I've ever seen the word weird used so much in a book. It was an apt choice. David Wineberg

Amazing in every way

I've been following Timothy Morton's work for well over a decade now (I was a graduate student of his at UC Davis), and it is thrilling to see each new chapter of his ever expanding and ever more urgent ecological thought. Tim gave a talk at my campus, Loyola University New Orleans, when this particular project was in its earliest form, and it is remarkable to see how this book extends and develops what were then emergent ideas. It's important to remember that this book is essentially a lecture series; it helps to hear Tim's voice in your head reading the words and sentences, with his unmistakable and captivating blend of passion, humor, and provocation. The book is a delightful treasure hunt, and as you read it you discover hints, clues, and X's marking spots—but like the shadow-formed X on the beach in Richard Scarry's "Treasure Hunt," the X keeps moving and you realize that you're on a planet, orbiting a sun, moving through space. "Dark Ecology" is nothing less than a cosmic journey, one that lands you right back where you are. Linger there, if you dare.

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