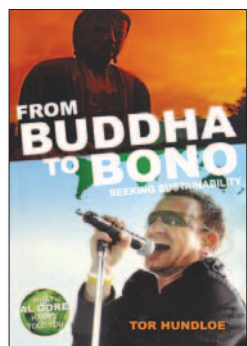


Tracing the origins of sustainability science

With its intriguing image of a Buddha statue juxtaposed against one of rock star Bono, the cover of *From Buddha to Bono: Seeking Sustainability* (what Al Gore hasn't told you) is an astute piece of marketing in an era where *An Inconvenient Truth* has become something of a modern classic.

Despite the mention of Al Gore, climate change is not a central focus of the book, although the belief systems that have contributed to today's environmental problems are. Author Tor Hundloe sets out on a quest to trace the history of the various ideas that have 'coalesced to become sustainable development' through examining the evolution of three disciplines – economics, ecology and ethics.

Hundloe argues that we



From Buddha to Bono
Seeking Sustainability
Tor Hundloe

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need to apply all 'three Es' for sustainable development to align successfully with the key principles of biodiversity

protection: equal access to resources within, and between, generations; the interdependence of the economy and the environment; and the precautionary principle. He argues that our failure to remedy environmental problems is due to the separation of economic theory – and the assumption that a free market will deliver a happier world for all – and ecology.

Of course, he is not the first writer to make these points, but where Hundloe does contribute something new to the debate is the journey he takes through history to show us the roots of today's sustainability science. The journey begins in ancient Greece with Hippocrates, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, then detours through India and China to explore Buddhism,

Confucianism and Hinduism, before continuing through the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and the 'New Enlightenment' of the post-WW2 economic boom, which saw the rise of a young, educated, largely middle-class environmental movement in the mid-1960s.

There's plenty of material here to entertain, educate and provoke. Some readers may find the book a little disjointed and be irritated by the odd factual error, but most I think will relish Hundloe's peripatetic approach and enjoy the ride. The book includes a timeline of ideas at the end, along with a comprehensive further reading section with notes and comments by the author.

● Mary-Lou Considine

Obituary

Peter Cullen – a water sage of practical vision

Evidenced by the many national and international tributes that flowed in after news of his death, Professor Peter Cullen achieved what he'd hoped for: getting the message through to all Australians, in an accessible way, that more intelligent water and river management is an overriding national priority, running behind time.

Over the last two decades of his career, Peter won many supporters with his laconic but firm and eloquent views on modern Australia's need to live with the environment, rather than persisting with trying to tame it. He also advocated a positive view of progress achieved so far, which undoubtedly helped engage his message more broadly.

Peter followed a rural

childhood in Tallangatta with degrees in Agricultural Science and then Irrigation, going on to research and teach water ecology. In 1992 he was appointed to head the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology where he became an adept knowledge broker.

In particular, he quickly championed the environmental viability of the Murray–Darling Basin, a case study that became synonymous with his style and a spearhead for his influential campaigns for national water management with political and industry decision-makers.

In 2001 Peter was named the Prime Minister's Environmentalist of the Year. He then helped found the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists (2002),



Professor Peter Cullen,
1943–2008. The Wentworth Group

and delivered their then-provocative public objectives, 'Blueprint for a Living Continent'. The instrumental 'Blueprint for a National Water Plan' followed in 2004.

It is fitting that just two weeks after his death,

the Council of Australian Governments finally agreed on a National Water Plan for the Murray–Darling Basin, which will start to deliver some of the reforms and allocations he urged for so long.

Awarded an Order of Australia in 2004 for his leadership, he was then appointed a National Water Commissioner in 2005 and went on to initiate or take positions on a number of other key bodies.

Ecós was privileged to have Peter serve on the Editorial Advisory Committee for four years from 2003 to 2008. Poignantly, this issue carries his last contribution, an article for which he urged coverage: the Focus on the need for irrigation reform for the 21st century.

● James Porteous