

esoteric, dichotomy. Unfortunately, Eckersley refuses the challenge, relying on the common presumption of prior environmental ethicists (and the sociologists who have followed them). “The centrality of [the anthropocentric/ ecocentric cleavage] is reflected in the large number of broadly similar distinctions that have been coined not only in ecopolitical thought and environmental philosophy but also in environmental history and environmental sociology” (p. 26).

For a reader who does not question Eckersley’s premise of a fundamental split among environmentalists, the book may be quite appealing. The author sets out to provide a map of the territory where modern ethical, ecological, and political thought overlap, placing unquestioning faith in the two-dimensional compass, the distinction between anthropocentrism and nonanthropocentrism. Eckersley confidently moves forward to state the most plausible, “common denominator” position of emancipatory ecocentrism and, in Part II, to provide “An Ecocentric Analysis of Green Political Thought.”

Some readers will no doubt find helpful Eckersley’s painstaking work to piece together a political theory that is democratic and ecocentric, *and* would provide a philosophical justification for some form of Green politics, despite the disappointing conclusion that no existing political theory is “capable of standing alone as an adequate ecocentric political theory.” Other readers – this reviewer included – will simply reject the author’s compass. These irreverent readers will insist on some proof that there *actually exist* two significantly different approaches to environmentalism, questioning in the process the implicit dualisms and dichotomies that lead to the oversimplification of the real differences among environmentalists. In particular, it has not been shown by sound social scientific research that modern environmentalists inherently tend toward divisiveness along a single fault line. These readers will not read past the self-imposed semantic gymnastics required to maintain balance on a fault line so shaky.

Personally, I was heartened by the apparent recognition that, despite philosophical appearances to the

contrary, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism are not actually all-or-nothing questions. The fundamental division turns out to be “poles of a wide spectrum of differing orientations toward nature” (p. 33), and the author discusses not exclusive movements, but a variety of “streams” of ecocentrism. But this apparent recognition of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the morality of environmentalism never prompts Eckersley to question the two-dimensional compass, even though it is admitted that there exists an anthropocentric version of emancipatory theory that is hardly different in its policy recommendations from ecocentric emancipatory theory (p. 29, p. 34).

The idea that our problem is anthropocentrism and that a strong dose of something-other-ism will put us back on the straight-and-narrow in our relationships with nature has taken on a life of its own. What has not been proved, however, is that there are two distinct camps of environmentalists that in any sense cluster around the two poles. If not, great divide between anthropocentrism/nonanthropocentrism is a distinction looking for a difference.

If I understand the basic viewpoint of ecological economists, it is “broadly anthropocentric”, meaning that the ecological economics viewpoint begins with a human perspective, but insists that valuation must be conditioned by the human place in a “habitat” or “ecological community”, and that our valuations of nature should encompass the many ways humans depend upon and enjoy nature’s bounty. Since this book examines the political/policy scene from the apparently opposed viewpoint that ecocentrism is a prerequisite of rational policy, I would guess that few ecological economists will find this book of interest.

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## The Politics of Nature

*The Politics of Nature: Explorations in Green Political Theory.* Andrew Dobson and Paul Lucardie (Editors). 1993, Routledge, London, 240 pp., ISBN 0-415-08593-4.

This book addresses some basic questions about the implementation of an ecological world view. Does it

provide the necessary ingredients for a political theory? Does it help us to make decisions about the basic problems of justice and democracy, individual vs. community rights and freedoms, human nature and the role of humans in nature? The answer is a qualified yes. Qualified in the sense that an ecological world view is not *sufficient* to make these decisions, but it is *essential* to inform them in a direction that allows the

system to become sustainable. In addition, the contribution of this world view adds a completely new element to the political debate. In the view of Andrew Dobson, there *is* in fact a new political ideology, called *ecologism*, being formed around the ecological world view, which cannot be wholly spoken of in the languages of conservatism, liberalism, or socialism. To classify as a political ideology it needs to satisfy the three criteria of providing: (1) an analysis of political reality; (2) a picture of the Good Life; and (3) a theory of political action or strategy. Ecologism meets these criteria, or at least holds the promise of meeting them. Obviously, the ecological world view as a political ideology is only in its early formative stages and will require much further development before it can truly function as a political theory.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I (ethical foundations) contains two chapters by Marcel Wissenburg and Paul Lucardie on the ecological world view as a basis for ethical decisions. Part II (Green politics: the state and democracy) contains three chapters by Alan Carter, Michael Saward, and Wouter Achterberg aimed at elaborating how ecologism can function as a political theory. Part III (Green society: economics and welfare) contains the three chapters that are probably the most directly relevant to readers of *Ecological Economics*. Keekok Lee's chapter titled: "To de-industrialize – is it so irrational?" addresses the nature of human welfare and its only very loose connection to material consumption. Breaking this link between material consumption and welfare, at least beyond the point of satisfying basic human needs, is essential to achieving an ecologically sustainable society. Lee ends his chapter by listing four minimum features of an ecological society: (1) it respects the integrity of the biosphere; (2) it recognizes that indefinite growth in the human population is not an unqualified good; (3) it recognizes that material well-being must be constrained by the biosphere's capacities; and (4) it emphasizes creativity both at work and leisure as a source of human fulfillment.

Frank Dietz and Jan van der Straaten in their chapter titled: "Economic theories and the necessary integration of ecological insights" make the case for ecological economics as a necessary component of a green political system. They reason that the classical economists in the first half of the nineteenth century had an integrated conception of ecological and eco-

nomical processes. It was only during the Industrial Revolution that economists began to ignore natural capital in the process of formulating neo-classical theory. But the requirements of sustainable development require us to reintegrate ecology and economics – certainly a message readers of this journal will agree with. The final chapter in this section by John Ferris discusses the issue of "Ecological versus social rationality: can there be green social policies?" What does ecologism have to say about health care, unemployment, housing and urban policy and the many other issues of contemporary political debate? The answer is that ecologism is still incoherent on these issues, but Ferris argues for a pluralistic, pragmatic, and undogmatic approach to avoid the preoccupation with ideologically pure ends that has plagued both liberalism and Marxism.

Part IV (Green political theory: the boundaries) ends the collection with four chapters that explore the limits of the new ecologism. There are chapters on animal rights (Ted Benton), ecofeminism (Judy Evans), critical theory (Andrew Dobson), and green beliefs and religion (Michael Watson and David Sharpe) that shed some interesting new "green" light on these political movements and ideas. An afterward by Andrew Dobson ties the pieces together by asking if ecologism is, indeed, a new political theory. His answer is yes and "the consequences cover much wider swathes of the study of political theory than might be suspected." Green political theory, in Dobson's view, widens the scope of what is considered "political" by a very large margin. While Marxism brought property rights into the political arena and feminism brought gender issues, ecologism brings the entire biosphere into the political arena. It seems this is an essential widening if society is serious about actually achieving the goal of sustainability.

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