Review Essay

‘Imagined Autonomy’: or, Any Colour You Like, as Long as it’s Green

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Deliberative Environmental Politics: Democracy and Ecological Rationality

Walter F. Baber and Robert V. Bartlett

MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, x + 276pp.

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Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects

Arun Agrawal

Duke University Press, Durham, 2005, xvi + 326pp.

ISBN: 0-8223-3480-1 (HB), 0-8223-3492-5 (PB).

The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty

Robyn Eckersley

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Literature on the theoretical aspects of environmental politics has fragmented in recent years, as the field has matured and those working on environmental themes have engaged with an increasing range of the concerns that motivate research in political theory. It may have once been the case that we could identify a body of work that could reasonably be called ‘green political theory’, closely related to environmental ethics and engaging with questions about natural value, ecological consciousness, and the relationship between ontology and politics. It may be more useful now to think in terms of a body of political theory that has a central focus upon environmental concerns as these relate to democracy, justice, globalization, political economy, freedom, the welfare state, and other aspects of political life. This body of work is no longer as closely related to environmental ethics and is more integrated into ‘mainstream’ political theory, although at times the echoes of that prior work can be heard. All three of the texts under consideration here fit into aspects of this increasingly diverse literature. One major focus of theorists working on environmental

questions has been on the relationship between democracy and the environment,¹ and a considerable part of that has in turn concerned itself with the relationship between deliberative forms of democracy and environmental outcomes. The Baber and Bartlett book fits squarely within this literature, concerned as it is with justifications of environmental policies in relation to different conceptions of deliberative politics. Robyn Eckersley's *The Green State* is also concerned with the nature of ecological democracy, but moves beyond democratic theory to consider questions of global politics and the status of sovereignty within the context of a 'greening' of international political economy.

Agrawal's *Environmentality* relates to a rather different strand of environmentally concerned political theory, stressing the role of discourses in shaping subjectivity and citizen attitudes towards environmental matters. The work of authors such as Timothy Luke, Maarten Hajer, Jozef Keulartz, and Eric Darier is also centrally concerned with Foucauldian questions of knowledge and power in both the construction of, and policy responses to, environmental problems. These two strands of environmentally focused political theory appear to have few connections, and it is unusual for theorists to work in both the (largely analytic) field of environmental democratic deliberation and within this discourse-theoretic field, although John Dryzek (2000, 2005) has traversed both domains.

One of the perennial dilemmas to haunt environmental political theory has been what to make, normatively, of the relationship between the democratic process, on the one hand, and environmental outcomes, on the other. Is it possible to ensure that democratic processes deliver the desired green outcomes? If so, how might this be accomplished? If not, what must we be willing to sacrifice? There are three possible categories of response to these questions:

1. Seek to ensure 'environmental' outcomes by abandoning (or at least subordinating) democracy (Ophuls, 1977; Westra, 1998).
2. Refrain from seeking to ensure green outcomes and accept whatever people's preferences deliver as that which has been democratically mandated (Miller, 1999).
3. Render together, through some appropriate ideational connection, democracy and ecological politics, such that the 'process' and the 'outcome' achieve the same result. This may entail denying that democracy is a 'process' that can be distinguished from something else called an ecological/environmental/green 'outcome'.

The third approach is one that has been central to the work of Robyn Eckersley for a number of years, and clearly squaring the circle of democracy and ecology is a difficult, challenging (and possibly misguided) intellectual task. One of Eckersley's demands is for a change in people's subjectivity and the embracing of an 'ecological consciousness'; and as well as calling for

deliberation, Baber and Bartlett endorse decentralization as beneficial to achieving environmental outcomes democratically. Agrawal's work constitutes a very useful counterpoint to the first two. His study of changes in forestry management in a region of north India over the past 150 years shows how a decentralized management regime can lead to changes in subjectivity, indeed can lead people towards an 'environmental' subjectivity. This is not, however, a simple confirmation of the environmental benefits of decentralized forms of democratic deliberation; there is a larger question here about the role of the state that we shall return to.

One of the key problems, for environmentalists, with democracy as it currently exists is that *even if* democracy is capable of an aggregation profile that transmutes preferences into policy choices, if and when individuals have the 'wrong' (non-environmental) preference structure, people will not make collective environmental choices democratically. This consideration is what led the likes of Heilbroner, Ophuls, and Westra to abandon hope that liberal democracy could deliver environmental outcomes. Westra, for example, claims that our environmental impasse has been created not just by technology but by 'our belief that the choices and preferences of the majority in democratic, affluent countries are and should be viewed as absolute, beyond discussion' (1998, 3).

One line of attack here is to suggest that it is the 'liberal' variant of democracy that is egregiously at fault and that democracy needs to be rescued from its hybridized relationship with that particular ideology. One of the central problems with liberal democracy on this view is precisely that it treats people's preferences as givens, and does not enquire into either the social processes that bring them to be what they are, nor how they might be changed. This criticism is not of course new, as the authors of these texts would be the first to acknowledge, but all of them see enquiry into the process of opinion, preference, and subject-formation as crucial to an adequate understanding of the democratic process and its relationship to the hope (or lack of it) for an ecological politics.

Democracy, for the purposes of the books under review here, is not, then, 'merely' a process that aggregates the preferences of individuals in a more or less arbitrary manner in order to come to a collective decision regarding the question of who should govern or some specific policy choice. Rather, for Eckersley and Baber and Bartlett, the deliberative model holds sway. Democracy is a mode of political organization that forces us to reason with each other and be swayed by the force of the better argument. As Eckersley argues, the three main features of deliberative democracy — 'unconstrained dialogue, inclusiveness, and social learning' — arguably make deliberative democracy especially suited to dealing with complex and variable ecological problems and concerns.' (p. 117). Agrawal's central problem is somewhat different, and indeed 'democracy' does not figure in his index. His concerns,

however, with how 'democratically' controlled forms of local self-regulation can facilitate shifts in subjectivity that serve the ends of the state is directly relevant to arguments made in the other texts under review, as we shall see.

Robyn Eckersley has been, consistently, one of the most interesting and provocative thinkers in the field of green political theory. She portrays *The Green State* as heralding a move beyond the 'cozy and secluded world of green political theory to the much more sprawling and complex field of global politics' (p. xii). A large part of the book is given over to questions of sovereignty, how his concept can be 'greened', and how the 'green' transnational state should position itself in multilateral negotiations. The 'two sides' of sovereignty — self-determination and non-intervention — can be made to work for democracy and the protection of local ecosystems. For example negative externalities generated by transboundary pollution can be seen as illegitimate interference in self-determination (p. 231). Furthermore, ecological citizenship — the individual as holder of environmental rights and environmental responsibilities — crosses national boundaries, and the green transnational state will seek to secure the confidence of not only its 'own' citizens, but of the entire 'community of the affected', which for some policy areas (such as climate change) may be global in scope. That said, the book clearly builds upon earlier work, and there is as much here for the political theorist as there is for scholars of global politics. Eckersley has always sought to use a reflexive application of critical theory to illuminate problems in environmental politics and guide the formulation of constructive solutions, and this volume continues this theme. Her purpose is to develop a normative theory of the green democratic state, one that will connect the 'moral and practical concerns of the green movement with contemporary debates about the state, democracy, law, justice, and difference' (p. 2). To this end she employs a 'critical political ecology' that 'seeks to rehabilitate the classical Frankfurt School's preoccupation with the links between the domination of human and nonhuman nature' (p. 9).

Where it comes to the democratic aspects of the 'green democratic state', Eckersley engages with two problems that have been high on the agenda for green theorists for a while now: firstly, the relationship between ecologism and liberalism, and secondly (and relatedly) the status of political ecology in a society marked by moral pluralism. With regard to the first she acknowledges that political ecology cannot be a variant of liberalism, but makes the case that critical political ecology is not *illiberal*, but rather *post-liberal*, and this distinction has great significance. The post-liberal builds upon the acknowledged strengths of liberalism in terms of respect for the individual, mutual toleration, and the entrenchment of a comprehensive set of rights that will allow individuals to choose (within limits) their own pathways through life. It goes beyond liberalism in seeking to correct the latter's obvious environmental

weaknesses. To this end, it is willing to politicize the 'private' good, and crucially it is unwilling to take preferences as givens. Thus Marcel Wissenburg's attempt to formulate a green liberalism is seen as 'complacent' for not analysing how social structures play a significant role in constituting individual identities and interests (p. 97). This makes liberalism blind to the effects of great disparities in wealth and power in the formation of beliefs and preferences.

Some democratic theorists are highly nervous of opening up the black box of preference formation to political scrutiny. Getting the state involved in ensuring that we come to believe what we do for the 'right' reasons is seen as opening the doors to government tyranny and welfare-reducing inefficiencies (Ferejohn, 1993), but for Eckersley it is essential to criticize the social and political context in which preferences are formed and exercised (p. 96). The liberal view of preference formation is tied to 'an incoherent and undesirable ontology — that of social and biological detachment' (p. 104). This is where the themes of *The Green State* tie most closely into Eckersley's prior work. There is a relational ontology at the heart of this account that builds directly from the themes of *Environmentalism and Political Theory*. There is a strong sense in which metaphysics comes first in Eckersley's view, we have to decide about the nature of the universe before we can begin to think sensibly about ethical and political matters. Once we understand the world in relational terms, and see that autonomy can only ever be a partial and relative affair, we will understand that the liberal ideal of autonomy is both absurd and dangerous — we are always embedded in (and so never autonomous from) Fritjof Capra's 'web of life'.

From the perspective of relational ontology, we can see that we must consider a range of restrictions on existing freedoms, particularly those 'relating to investment, production, consumption, mobility, and the use of property' (p. 95). The green democratic state will, in this respect, cultivate ecological citizenship and enable public deliberation. If necessary it will enact legal restrictions to ensure that 'economic activity does not encroach upon ecosystem integrity or biodiversity' (p. 95). The freedom to which we should aspire is 'ecological freedom *for all*' (including the non-human, which is very much a part of the 'community of the affected' — the appropriate level for thinking about democratic boundaries), and this 'can only be realized under a form of government that enables and enforces ecological responsibility' (p. 107).

Those who seek to defend a more liberal perspective on environmental matters, such as David Miller, would dismiss the relational ontology and the values derived from it as precisely the kind of comprehensive conception of the good upon which a state should not base public policy in a morally pluralistic society. Ecological democracy violates the demands of state neutrality and the attempt by the state to impose ('enable and enforce') this value upon a possibly

quite unwilling citizenry invites the illegitimate use of state power in the service of a particular conception of the good. Eckersley explicitly grants that the ecological democratic state would not be neutral, but then for her nor is the liberal state. Its promotion of certain forms of freedom smuggles in a comprehensive conception of the good under a cloak of indifference.

This question of the relationship between democratic process and ecological outcome is also taken up by Baber and Bartlett. While our institutions should be fundamentally democratic, they should also 'imbed...environmentally and otherwise reasonable values' (p. 28). Our 'new form of democratic life' should be managed in such a way that 'humankind's relationship to the environment becomes more rational' (p. 33). That said, the 'implications of ecological necessity for democratic practice are not easily explored' (p. 121), nor is it agreed that the effort is well conceived (and here they cite Bob Goodin's well-known distinction between democratic process and environmental outcome).

Well-conceived or not, many ecological political theorists have made the effort of exploring the relationship between democracy and ecological politics, and there has been an almost unanimous turn toward forms of deliberative or discursive democracy, as an at least potentially more environmentally rational form of democracy than the liberal variant. Baber and Bartlett acknowledge this, but suggest that if environmentalists are to profit from the deliberative turn they need a 'better understanding of that turn and its implications' (p. 4) which is what they seek to give through a combination of theoretical discussion and some brief policy case-studies from the American context. Whereas Eckersley tends to draw her model of deliberation from the critical theory tradition, Baber and Bartlett identify three different models of deliberative democracy — Rawlsian, Habermasian and what they call 'full liberalism' which they mainly associate with the work of James Bohman. Each of these models is explored in terms of its potential to deliver an 'ecologically rational' version of democracy.

Baber and Bartlett also stress the need to examine the processes by which people come to hold the preferences that are fed into the democratic system. It lies 'near the heart of deliberative democratic theory' to reject any assumption that 'preferences are determined prior to political interactions and do not change as a result of that interaction' (p. 111). Furthermore 'there is at least some evidence' that deliberation can change opinion. As does Eckersley, Baber and Bartlett consider the problems of achieving environmental reasonableness in a world marked by moral pluralism. Here we need something that can engender the kind of solidarity that religion once did without 'the divisiveness that religion can create' (p. 114). They recommend a form of 'ecological consciousness' in this regard, one which will appreciate the strong interconnectedness of the world's ecosystems. Such a consciousness would broaden our view of the 'range of beings that should be granted moral consideration'

(pp. 115 — again this is something Eckersley would endorse) allowing deliberative democrats to take moral account of non-human nature.

Where Baber and Bartlett part company with Eckersley is in insisting that this form of thinking should not be metaphysical, for them politics must get 'beyond' metaphysics if we are to achieve ecological rationality in a pluralist democratic society. They appear to adopt this view for broadly discursive reasons, as the only source of legitimacy in a pluralist society is unforced agreement and this cannot come from a parochial conception of the world. Legitimacy cannot be provided by a sectarian ideology, but despite this, environmentalists have jumped 'head first' into ideologies such as ecofeminism, deep ecology, social ecology and the Gaia hypothesis (p. 222). None of these (which would presumably include the ecocentrism to which Eckersley is attached) can provide the form of public reason necessary for legitimate environmental policy.

One might quite reasonably ask, given this, how the 'ecological consciousness' that will be necessary to steer deliberative democracy in a green direction might be justified and why it does not itself constitute a sectarian ideology. To map a way into this question we have to enquire into how Baber and Bartlett believe deliberative democracy can be designed to come up with the environmental goods. They list three dangers that may put such an outcome at risk — decentralization, co-optation, and resource inequality. Decentralization runs the risk that local factions come to dominate politics, but the search for a deliberative form of environmental democracy cannot avoid the need for decentralization, because it requires a diversity of voices: 'the vitality of deliberative communication depends on its variety' (p. 194). The dangers of decentralization can be overcome by the diversity of genuinely open and equal public discourse. This leads us to the third potential problem, that such a discourse will be highly unequal given the existing distribution of resources and political power. To address this, Baber and Bartlett recommend the state promotion of organizations to represent the disenfranchised, which could include, one assumes, the non-human. The state might employ non-partisan and non-ideological (can there be such?) boards to decide upon and offer support. The dangers of co-optation can be kept at bay as long as action can be maintained at both the state and civil society level. One way to equalize the playing field is to grant participants mutual veto power, which will tend to force parties towards compromise and consensus, and encourage the seeking out of common ground (note, however, that this institutional innovation is not intrinsically connected to the deliberative form of democracy. Liberal regimes could also employ this technique). Given the generalizability of ecological interests, the representation of non-humans and future generations, and the formation of preferences through open and equal deliberation, a society governed through such a form of egalitarian deliberative democracy will show,

on this view, a far higher degree of ecological rationality than existing liberal democracies, marked as they are by interest bargaining and policy stalemate. This will be true even in the absence of a ruling ecocentric ideology of the sort that Eckersley still appears to endorse.

Could we expect decentralization to work this way in practice? One study that may indicate an answer to this question is Arun Agrawal's *Environmentality*. Of all three volumes under consideration here, this is the most explicitly and centrally concerned with the creations of subjectivities and so, in another idiom, with preference formation. Agrawal takes as his lead (or his 'provocation') Foucault's account of 'governmentality', environmentality being the rationality of government as applied to the environment. What fascinates Agrawal is the way in which a social collective (the hill dwellers of Kumaon in northern India) were transformed from a group in intense opposition to the policies of the colonial Forestry Department to one that not only acquiesces but positively enacts state policy today. It is this process of subjectification, and in particular the creation of environmental subjects, that takes centre stage in this story. In good Foucauldian fashion there is a detailed and engaging empirical story regarding changes to forestry policy in this part of India, with a particular focus on the representational dynamic — how forests are 'created' through their forms of representation, and how the increasing use of statistical information led to the creation of a new form of 'forest' in India.

The introduction of statistical techniques allowed forests to be represented in terms of timber yields, species distribution, growth cycles and a general array of other measurable variables, as well as the interactions between them. This new story of forests 'erased' older, vernacular and narrative representations of forests in India. This form of scientific forestry, particularly when applied to the production of teak, became highly profitable, putting the Forestry Department in a strong position to colonize an increasing proportion of Indian lands. As the reach of the Forestry Department increased ('forests' were whatever the state decreed to be such, regardless of the configuration of flora in the area), so the restrictions that the department placed upon activities within forests impacted on increasingly large numbers of Kumaon villagers, who were prevented from foraging, logging, gathering fallen branches, or grazing their animals in most designations of Forestry Department land. This led to widespread opposition to the policy. There were spontaneous or more-or-less co-ordinated direct action campaigns, involving disobedience of restrictions and also the firing of areas of forest land.

This activity was impossible to control in a centralized fashion. Only a tiny proportion of miscreants were ever brought to 'justice', and the forests could only be adequately monitored with a massive increase in the number of forest guards, which would be prohibitively expensive and which anyway would raise

the further problem of *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Instead the state created a far more decentralized system of forest regulation and bought participation by giving villagers back some of the rights that the state itself had taken away in the previous era, so ensuring that state and community would have at least some interests in common. As a result, Kumaonis have transformed from being rebellious hill dwellers into a decentralized 'government-in-community' (p. 11). The apparent effectiveness of the new form of government is clear, but what is less well understood are the processes through which these new environmental subjects are formed and the relationship between decentralization and questions of social justice. *Environmentality* sets out to explore the links between new forms of environmental governance and larger social processes.

In line with the Foucauldian tone of his research, Agrawal rejects the liberal idea of a prior autonomous sovereign subject, thus villager responses to changes in state strategy are not adequately captured by ideas of resistance, negotiation, or engagement (p. 12) but rather forms of regulation and responses to them are part of a process that reshapes people's understandings of forests and the basis of forest control. The term 'environmental subject' is used to cover socially situated actors who 'care for, act, and think of their actions in relation to something they define as the environment' (p. 164). The question is what makes such subjects? And how do we best understand the relationship between actions and subjectivities? Agrawal expressly rejects the view that actions merely follow beliefs (which might be compared with Eckersley's view that shifts in shared understandings provide the context in which shifts in material practice take place, which seems to imply that, at least in some sense, actions do follow beliefs). Agrawal holds out the prospect rather that people come to act in response to compulsion and can later develop concomitant beliefs that justify those actions. This may hold out some hope for those who want a state to 'enable and enforce' green practice within the context of a democratic regime, for if the rules and regulations of a green state can *in themselves* create the conditions for the development of environmental subjectivity, then the hope of extracting green outcomes from democratic procedures may be a live one.

Engagement in environmental practice is seen as the key link between government regulation on the one hand, and the development of subjectivities on the other. After reviewing the literatures on 'imagined communities' (e.g. Anderson) and 'resistance' (e.g. Scott), Agrawal declares himself to be 'weaving a path' between the opposing conclusions of these two groups of scholars. Technologies of government produce effects by generating a politics of subjecthood where both practice and imagination are crucial. But it is only by playing closer attention to the social practices themselves that we can develop theory more closely related to the social ground where imagination is born (pp. 170–171).

In order to provide an evidence-based account of the relationship between practice and subjectivity, Agrawal employs two sets of interview material, which gives him both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. It includes work with both those involved in forest management through Forest Councils, and those who are not participants in these bodies. Diachronically, between 1989 and 1993, in villages where Forest Councils were established, there was a marked change of views among villagers as to the value of forest conservation, especially among those involved in stewardship activities. Among villagers where no Forest Council has been established, there was very little change in attitudes towards forestry. Furthermore certain forms of participation, where monitoring and enforcement of forestry regulations become specialized activities, seem particularly effective at promoting environmental subjectivity.

There is of course a potential problem here, in that the reporting of positive attitudes towards environmental protection among those involved in stewardship activities may not be as a result of beliefs following from practice, but merely reflect the fact that those with the highest disposition towards the conservation of forests will also be those most likely to volunteer to get involved in stewardship activities. Aware of this, Agrawal insists he is not suggesting a causal relationship between participation in monitoring practice and the development of environmental subjectivity, but that his combination of synchronic and diachronic evidence strongly suggests correlation between practice and variations in environmental sensibility.

It would certainly seem that there is not a straightforward causation here, as some villagers remain resistant to new environmental values even where Forest Councils are successfully established, nonetheless there are certain causal processes that Agrawal suggests are important in developing environmental subjectivity, even if they are not effective in every case. Firstly, villagers who become involved in forestry management come to see the survival of the forest as important to their own long-term interests. They are confronted with scarcity and have to develop strategies for the distribution of scarce resources. They come to experience the social costs of transgression at a personal level, and have to make a decision as to how to respond. This is part of 'intimate government', which works by dispersing rule and scattering involvement in government more widely. This engagement with the practice of regulation is an important element in the development of environmental subjectivities, but Agrawal is keen to reject monocausal or foundational explanations of environmental outcomes. Politics, institutions and subjectivity are linked in everyday life, and rather than seeing any of these as foundation for analysis, it is more fruitful to see how these concepts shape each other and are themselves constituted (p. 203).

To return to the larger picture, what do we learn here regarding the hope of forging a non-contingent relationship between democratic processes and green

outcomes? Agrawal's study appears to suggest that the decentralized systems of democratic government that Baber and Bartlett argue for can be associated with 'green' outcomes. Indeed the causal dynamics that Agrawal specifies suggest that there may well be an inherent connection between participation in regulatory activity at the community level and a realization of the necessity of achieving ecological sustainability. Furthermore, the refusal of both Baber and Bartlett, and Eckersley, to accept the idea of pre-given preferences, the aggregation of which becomes the work of the democratic process, also appears to be justified by Agrawal's study. Environmental preferences do appear to change in the process of participation and deliberation that takes place within the context of intimate government.

So far, so good for the hopes of green democracy. But there is of course a problem of regression here that emerges in any discussion of decentralized political arrangements. More than 50 developing countries have now developed decentralized regimes similar to those found in Kumaon (p. 202), so clearly there is something in this, but for whom? In particular, why does a central state facilitate the decentralization of political institutions if that weakens or is a threat to its own power? The answer, of course, is that it doesn't. Intimate government works for the central state by delivering the policy outcomes that the centre is pursuing, but with massively reduced monitoring and enforcement costs and with the willing co-operation rather than active resistance of the villagers at whom the forestry regulations are aimed. Agrawal's story is one of the creation of the Foucauldian self-policing subject. The ultimate aim of forestry is the generation of profits, and forest conservation is a means towards this end. Localities have a role to play here providing that they serve this ultimate end (p. 102). The state wants the Forest Councils to be subservient to its will, and it has achieved this through redefining the relationship between local government and the state, giving Forest Councils flexibility but making them dependent upon formally appointed state officials for anything beyond their (often highly circumscribed) inherent powers (p. 109). It is telling that the Forestry Department remains the only body empowered to harvest trees and resin.

Villagers operating Forest Councils are in a state of 'imagined autonomy', which is crucial to the success of decentralized forest protection. Intimate government assists state government from a distance, but it does so in ways that residents believe to be defined locally (p. 197). It is this subterfuge that allows the combination of delivery of the policy goals of central government, along with minimized monitoring and enforcement costs and the acquiescence of a once rebellious population. State power is now more deeply entrenched even though the localized authority is stronger (p. 122). It is not, here, as if the villagers are unaware of their relative lack of power, but rather that the state has returned sufficiently some of the rights it once removed that it has created

an element of common interest between state and village. This is decentralization with highly asymmetric flows of power between state and community. Without the state setting the parameters of acceptable behaviour, Forest councils may behave in ways that contradicted the policy outcomes that the state is pursuing.

The dominant partner here is the Indian state, and the role of the state in causing, facilitating, or at least tolerating environmental destruction has been one of the reasons why a significant number of green political activists and theorists (such as eco-anarchists and social ecologists) are dismissive of the possibilities of the state as an institution with any kind of future in an ecologically oriented world. Eckersley takes up arms against this view, arguing that states are not inherently environmentally destructive entities; that it is hard to imagine the kinds of changes that environmentalists want to bring about without the use of state power (p. 6), and that our judgement of states should depend upon how they actually employ their economic and political resources (p. 7). Greens need a state that is both 'strong' and 'good', its goodness representing an embodiment of public virtue. What does 'public virtue' consist in for the state? The answer appears to be that the democratic green state will embody the 'core ideals' of deliberative democracy — unconstrained dialogue, inclusiveness, and social learning. This model privileges the most generalizable interests, such that when the circle of moral considerability is suitably widened, the possibility of displacing ecological costs onto others is foreclosed, including onto non-human nature (p. 120).

The green democratic state will have its 'own form of public reason' which will be critical ecological reason. The green state is not, on her view, any more normatively loaded than the liberal state (and so no less, or more, neutral than it). The 'real' contention between liberals and greens is over which set of rules is more legitimate in highly pluralized societies confronting complex ecological problems. Where liberals highlight the former dimension, greens highlight the latter, but both need to be addressed. One way in which public virtue of the state is realized is in the constitutional entrenchment of the precautionary principle. Whereas it might seem that the precautionary principle will be justified on the grounds of some (ecocentric) green ideology, it is fact warranted on the grounds of fairness. This is the only way in which we can 'represent' the non-human world in political life (p. 136). The precautionary principle is one aspect of a generally risk-averse policy orientation that the democratic green state would adopt.

How do we know that a 'democratic' green state will pursue these policies and goals? The constitutional entrenchment of the precautionary principle would clearly remove it from the sphere of everyday politics, into the realms, presumably, of supermajorities and special constitutional provisions. Further-

more the ideals of deliberative democracy would sometimes have to be actively cultivated by the state 'or even *imposed*' (p. 131), and as we have already seen, the green state will have to be prepared to curtail a range of economic freedoms that we currently enjoy in order to provide us with real 'ecological' freedom.

Baber and Bartlett also look to employ deliberative democracy to extend the range of interests represented in the policy-making process (p. 228). One problem with liberal democracy is that it has 'sacrificed its ecological sustainability' (p. 120). Neither 'true' democracy nor ecological sustainability is possible in the world of competition between conceptions of short-term self-interest that is modern democracy. The embodiment of the precautionary principle represents the kind of precommitment that ensures the realization of ecological rationality. Again, the employment of the precautionary principle is not justified on grounds of green ideology, of which Baber and Bartlett are highly sceptical, but through a Rawlsian conception of justice appropriate to citizens in a democratic state who are free and equal persons.

The texts under review here all have much to commend them. The concerns that motivate both Eckersley and Baber and Bartlett, about the relationship between ecological politics and democracy, and the role of the state (both nationally and internationally) in resolving environmental problems, are vitally important to the search for a sustainable future. Eckersley's work has the broader sweep, but both are conceptually sophisticated and rigorous in their arguments (despite a highly contestable reading of Rawls from Baber and Bartlett that allows them to extract an argument from him for non-interference with 'higher animals'). Our understanding of these problems is more nuanced as we emerge from an engagement with them. Neither work, however, resolves the dilemma raised by the eco-authoritarians writing in the 1960s and 1970s, at least not in the 'democratic' way they seek. The eco-authoritarian response was an uncomfortable one — if the ecological crisis is sufficiently dire we should suspend the niceties of democratic practice. The attempt to use deliberation to resolve this dilemma democratically posits that the politically engaged citizen will be convinced by the argument that most clearly establishes the common good — and ecological goods are common goods *par excellence*. How do we know that deliberation will deliver this outcome? We have to 'imbed such environmentally and otherwise reasonable values and processes in all of our political, social, and economic institutions' (Baber and Bartlett, p. 28). Who or what maintains that these values are reasonable? That will be 'critical ecological reason', or 'environmental public reason' or some other formulation that serves to 'break down, and irreparably so, both the practical and conceptual distinctions between democratic decision-making processes and the substance of decisions' (p. 28). But what if a population doesn't recognize a

green form of public reason as *its* reason? Then the green state 'enables, and where necessary enforces, ecological responsibility on behalf of the broader community at risk' (Eckersley, p. 245), which is pretty much what the eco-authoritarians wanted to do. To the citizen prevented from living their chosen lifestyle it is not clear that the fine distinction between 'illiberal' and 'post-liberal' would mean very much.

Both of these texts, however, do take his discussion forward, Eckersley's treatment of the green state in the context of international political economy is thoughtful, and Baber and Bartlett are refreshingly pluralistic regarding the nature of deliberative democracy, and the on the role of social movements and the non-deliberative within it. Agrawal has a different set of concerns, and the combination of discourse theory and empirical material produces a truly illuminating discussion regarding the relationship between knowledge, institutions, and subjectivities. He leaves us, however, with something of a normative hiatus. Self-regulation may be 'more humane' than centrally imposed coercion, but is that enough?

The question arises as to what, exactly, will distinguish the democratic green state from a contemporary state such as current Indian regime discussed by Agrawal. Doubtless the policy orientation will be different, a good deal more forest for example would presumably be *preserved* for its ability to allow non-human entities to flourish in their own way, rather than *conserved* for resource availability. It may well also foster an open, deliberative form of democracy in which power flows more equitably and currently excluded interests are brought into discussions of normative commitments and specific policy formation. Nonetheless, strategically, the difference may not be so great. It is not clear, for example, that the constitutional entrenchment of the precautionary principle serves the greatest generalizable interest — it is also seen as a 'law of fear', and its application carries risks of its own. Indeed in its stronger forms it is not clear that the precautionary principle can recommend any policy orientation as all paths are risky in some sense (Sunstein, 2005). The argument that the use of the precautionary principle would be based on the grounds of equality rather than a comprehensive green conception of the good is questionable, to say the least. A green democratic state that employs constitutional entrenchment of its favoured principles of preservation and risk-averseness, and then allows deliberation of other political matters is not following a different strategy to the current Indian state, merely applying the same strategy to a different purpose. Its citizens would also be in a condition of imagined autonomy, making decisions about political matters within the confines of a set of constitutional principles handed down from above. This may be no bad thing for greens, if it is true that the very practice of following, monitoring and enforcing environmental practices can itself lead to the development of environmental subjectivities, then greater scope for democracy might be

feasible as time goes by, even if such subjectivities are never completely stable nor permanent. As Agrawal notes, the creation of compliant subjects can be a more humane process than the forcible imposition of regulations from afar on an unwilling populace.

The message from Agrawal's study is a hopeful one for the prospects of a successful marriage of democracy and environmentalism, although within a set of limitations that are not always acknowledged in the relevant literature. This message suggests that a green democratic state may have to be positively undemocratic, at least in some of its aspects and especially towards the early part of its rule. If it is the case that environmental subjectivities can be established through the external constraints under which citizens labour, then there may be an argument for the establishment of a green regulatory framework that encourages decentralization and participation on the part of the citizenry. 'Ecological citizenship' will not emerge from nowhere, but it might emerge as a result of an appropriate institutional structure. Eckersley is right that even a democratic green state will not be a liberal state, whether or not one chooses to consider it post-liberal or merely non-liberal. If Agrawal is right, it may also have to be post-humanist. The justification for the regulatory framework may be on grounds of equality of moral consideration, but this itself will not be uncontroversial if that moral consideration is (a) extended to the non-human and (b) is also based on a generalized extension of risk-averseness. In a morally plural society there will be those for whom either the moral inclusion of non-human nature is absurd, or the generalization of risk-averseness is an intolerable imposition. It is not clear upon what ground either of these views could be labelled 'unreasonable'. 'Ecological public reason' is a form of reason that not all would recognize as public, in that it violates the burdens of judgement upon which Rawlsian public reason places great weight. Ecological reason is non-liberal in the sense that it cannot be a recognizably public form of reason in the liberal sense. The justification of ecological politics relies upon the comprehensive conception of the good that Eckersley has endorsed in earlier works. The possibility that an institutional universe resting initially on such grounds can become a stable regime dependent upon genuine public reason once environmental subjects have come into existence raises intriguing possibilities. As ecological theorists recognize that 'autonomy' is only ever partial and relative to unavoidable ecological constraints, they may also be comfortable with the view that it is imagined rather than 'real'.

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Note

¹ A comprehensive list would be long indeed. For examples, see Gunderson (1995), Smith (2003).

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