

a passing nod to more-than-human nature here, let alone its intrinsic value.) His strategy, though, seems to be one of 'more rope!' since the deeper he goes into such models the clearer their limits become, not least because they bleed into broader and fuzzier concerns, including ethics. It becomes clear that deep ethical claims are unavoidably involved which cannot be decided by economic modelling alone. Indeed, ultimately there is no such thing. (None of which amounts to an argument for abandoning economic modelling altogether, he rightly adds.)

Other chapters destroy the credibility of using scientific uncertainty – something which needs careful qualifying in any case – to justify doing nothing; and include an illuminating (if sobering) discussion of the important psychological dimensions of climate change and our responses to it; an explanation of why 'we should not look to the disasters of abrupt change – either the actual experience of them, or increasing scientific evidence that they are coming – to save us' (p. 208); and an excellent analysis of geoengineering, including the worrying dynamics and effects that 'lesser of two evils' arguments fail even to consider.

I have two criticisms. The main one is that Gardiner claims that all our current political institutions and theories have failed, or are failing, to pass the global test of anthropogenic climate change. Such a claim is certainly highly plausible, especially in the case of institutions. However, the bleeding of theories into values and practices cuts both ways: theories cannot be quarantined from values and practices. So generically speaking, there is something odd about a call for a 'robust general theory'. I imagine Gardiner would defend such a call and goal as something that can contribute, though cannot be expected to do more, to a better actual outcome. The problem here is more severe, however. The very interconnectedness he anatomises positions theory itself – including his own and all such accounts, no matter how reasoned and reasonable – as pragmatic, rhetorical and in the broadest sense political: a kind of intervention, not a kind of observation. The same is true *a fortiori* of 'our ways of talking and thinking about moral problems such as climate change' (p. 305). Thus what is needed is a different, less epistemological and rationalistic theory, or meta-theory, than he himself offers.

Relatedly, there is one kind of political theory that Gardiner fails to put to the global test. This omission is even odder, because it is not true that 'we lack a strong philosophical account of corruption' (p. 303). Corruption, the importance of which he rightly emphasises in relation to the perfect storm of climate change, is central to both virtue ethics and its cousin, civic republicanism. I'm not sure why he chose to ignore these traditions but the result is poorer for it. Compared to virtue ethics and civic republicanism, with their pre-modern roots, both consequentialism and deontology (which are much better-represented here, if not uncritically so) are rationalistic and thereby epistemological – and in the context of ecocrisis, given the unmistakable involvement of just those philosophical praxes, debilitatingly so.

My second criticism concerns Gardiner's critique (in an appendix) of Garrett Hardin's analysis of overpopulation as an instance of the Tragedy of the Commons. Again, that critique is acute and valuable, but it is unnecessarily weakened in a number of ways. In particular, Gardiner seems to think that the issue of environmental impact can be cleanly separated from the number of people present on the Earth. This is wrong; however mediated their impacts are, sheer numbers cannot be qualified into irrelevance. Second, emissions are far from the only environmental impact of human population, as he seems to imply. Finally, any difference between the regulation, including self-regulation, that Gardiner calls for and Hardin's 'mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon' is by no means clear.

Neither of these general critical points diminishes the value of the book as a whole. To the extent it has a weakness, however – or more positively, a direction in which it would be good to take it, and the discussion as a whole, next – that direction emerges uneasily in the unspoken implications of such statements as 'The key point is that we should act on climate change even if doing so does not make us better off; indeed, even if it may make us significantly worse off' (p. 68); and 'most of the burdens of this shift away from fossil fuels must be borne largely by the developed nations, and especially the wealthy within those nations' (p. 402). Good luck with that! But in any case, something of Hardin's sensibility – an unflinching willingness to look into the abyss, or rather a number of abysses – seems increasingly necessary.

PATRICK CURRY

Dept. of Archaeology and Anthropology,  
University of Trinity St David

Richard Evanoff

*Bioregionalism and Global Ethics: A Transactional Approach to Achieving  
Ecological Sustainability, Social Justice, and Human Well-being*

London: Routledge, 2011

ISBN 978-0415874793 (HB) £85.00. 300 pp.

In this book Richard Evanoff advocates a radical solution to our environmental problems: bioregionalism. The core idea of bioregionalism, familiar from such writers as Peter Berg and Kirkpatrick Sale, is that relatively small, and mostly self-sufficient, self-governing local communities can best meet the urgent needs for ecological sustainability and satisfying human life-styles which respect the planet's natural limits and are in symbiotic harmony with the co-inhabited natural surroundings (bioregions). From the outset Evanoff develops the bioregional paradigm in opposition to the world's present pursuit of globalisation

and development 'based on neoliberal economic principles and transnational forms of political coordination' (p. 11).

His study provides ample empirical data showing that the current development model, which promises developing countries the (excessive) consumer lifestyles found in the rich developed countries, is neither ecologically sustainable nor socially just nor capable of fostering human well-being: in recent decades, the poorest 80 per cent of the world's population have gotten poorer, while the richest 20 per cent have gotten richer, consuming today about 80 per cent of the world's resources (pp. 144, 163). Hence Evanoff's bioregional call for a massive reduction of consumption on the part of 'developed' countries, for a fairer distribution of resources, and a shift of power and control from global players including transnational companies and global organisations like WTO, the World Bank and IMF, as well as from small elite groups in developing countries, back to local populations. As an alternative economic model Evanoff favours economist Herman E. Daly's 'steady-state' economy, which would limit production and consumption to ecologically sustainable levels (p. 130). In order to achieve these bioregional aims, Evanoff supports the building of 'an international grassroots movement which unites not just the working class, but all non-elite and oppressed groups across racial, cultural, national, gender, and religious lines' (p. 215). The aim of this new internationalism is nothing less than 'the nonviolent overthrow of all current forms of domination, both capitalist and socialist' (ibid.).

Whilst Evanoff's analyses of the causes of today's environmental problems and its strong interrelations with social matters are well-grounded and perspicuous, not to say fairly familiar, his conclusion that bioregionalism would provide a viable solution to all of these problems will certainly raise more doubts among his readers. Although the suggested tendencies towards decentralisation ('local production for local consumption'), democratisation, a severe reduction of overconsumption and the attainment of more social justice are highly necessary, it is not clear how a full-fledged bioregionalist world-order could be installed and work in an already overpopulated planet with innumerable mega-cities, or how bioregions could, for example, better cope with conflicts surpassing their local level. Thus Evanoff's bioregionalism remains vulnerable to criticisms that have already been raised against bioregionalism in the past.

As a theoretical foundation of his position, Evanoff proposes a 'transactional' approach which emphasises the strong interrelationships and interactions between individual, society and the natural environment, making it impossible to treat any of the three poles in isolation from the other two. In his view much of the debate in academic environmental ethics has therefore been too narrowly framed by questions concerning individual values on the one hand, and the preservation of wilderness and Nature on the other, thus (apart from environmental schools of thought like deep ecology, ecofeminism, ecoanarchism or ecosocialism)

often neglecting social issues. He also criticises the strong divide between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism in debates which too narrowly turn around the attribution or non-attribution of intrinsic value towards Nature or natural entities as a precondition of their moral considerability. Evanoff's transactional approach seeks to go beyond these and similar dichotomies and dualisms. Instead of e.g. preserving nature exclusively for anthropocentric *or* ecocentric reasons, he would point out that 'biodiversity should be preserved *both* because of the benefits it affords humans *and* because the autonomy of nature should be respected' (p. 86). His attempt to understand the relationships between self, society and nature in more relational and dialectical terms goes hand in hand with a (moderate) constructivist, communicative and rather pragmatic approach towards environmental ethics, which takes as its guiding objectives social justice, human well-being and ecological sustainability, attributing equal weight to all three of them. Bioregional ethics, as understood by Evanoff, would therefore refrain from embarking in theoretical discussions about 'the right values', 'the true concepts' etc., and rather focus on the consequences that constructed values and concepts have for the possibility of individuals and societies to coadapt themselves to their surrounding environments (p. 57 ff.).

Evanoff's transactional approach certainly raises some questions. To mention just one: if all values are relative to the choices of individuals and local communities, and if they must be evaluated in terms of how they assist communities adapt to their respective environments and the flourishing of both societies and Nature, how would bioregionalism judge bioregional societies which choose to eliminate certain local species, or which indulge in killing members of other species for 'sport', if these actions do not negatively affect the adaptedness of their relationships towards their environment in general? Nevertheless and despite such possible criticisms, Evanoff's book is a valuable contribution to environmental ethics and philosophy. It offers a new in-depth treatment of bioregionalism, discusses at length its accordance and disagreements with other environmental schools of thought, and underlines the need for a yet wider, interdisciplinary debate on the causes and solutions to global environmental degradation, and probably also a debate on the relationship between environmental ethics and political philosophy. The book also provides an impressive and very valuable 63 page topical bibliography covering topics and subtopics from such diverse fields as development, economics, ethics and schools of ecological thought, geography, natural sciences, quality of life and social science. It should therefore be of interest to both its critics and supporters, as well as to those interested in getting a good overview of the current debates in environmental philosophy.

UTE KRUSE-EBELING  
School of Philosophy  
Potsdam University