Global Village Sovereignty: Intergenerational Sovereign Publics, Federal-Republican Earth Constitutions, and Planetary Identities

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Introduction¹

Over the last several decades humanity has been confronted with a complex and growing crisis in its relationship with the natural environment. Environmentally abusive practices, compounded by the sheer weight of human numbers and the power of industrial technology, have increasingly degraded a wide range of vital and interconnected resources that humans had been able to take for granted throughout history. As bad as things have become, they promise to get much worse in the first decades of the next century: Human population is likely to double again, and economic output is likely to increase threefold to fivefold. These developments presage either the collapse of industrial civilization or a far-reaching "green" transformation of all aspects of human life.

The Global Village and World Political Theory

In the face of these developments, the quest for a new political paradigm to conceptualize solutions and frame agendas has immense practical importance. But what should this paradigm be? Perhaps the simplest and most resonant metaphor for the emergent human situation is Marshall McLuhan's "global village." This has become something of a cliché, but is actually a conceptually explosive oxymoron. From the standpoint of the Western tradition of political science and practice centered on the polis, the state, and the nation-state, the prospect of village-like proximity and interconnectedness occurring on a planetary scale demands farreaching theoretical and practical innovations.

The Greening of Sovereignty in World Politics

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To conceptualize the forms of political association appropriate to a global village it is necessary to move beyond social science and return to the fundamental questions of political theory recast as world political theory. Social scientists seek to explain what has happened, but can offer only partial and indirect assistance in responding to the historically unprecedented situation of the global village. Grappling with the pressing practical problems emergent in the rapidly globalizing world requires a return to the type of creative and architectonic theorizing that characterized the project of political science and theory prior to the ascendancy of behavioral social science. It is also necessary to move beyond the antiquarian and marginalist political theory so prevalent in academic circles and rethink, reconfigure, and reemploy the basic conceptual components of political theory and practice.

While boldness is urgently needed, the guiding motto of the world political theorist must be "reuse, repair, and recycle," rather than to begin from scratch. If the task is to rebuild the political ship while at sea, the existing timbers will have to be reassembled rather than completely replaced. Or, to shift analogies, contemporary political garments may be full of holes and grossly ill-fitting, but they contain a wealth of strong threads available for reweaving and reassembling. All practical political theory works with the materials at hand rather than the ideal or the completely new.

It is also particularly important to build wherever possible from the conceptual materials present in the most successful and most hegemonic political traditions and vocabularies. With the exhaustion and collapse of systemic alternatives and competitors to Western liberalism in the last quarter of the twentieth century, this means rethinking and recombining the many disparate pieces of the commonwealth tradition of liberal, federal, republican constitutionalism in ways responsive to the practical problems of political association in the global village.

From Westphalian to Terrapolitan Sovereignty

The problem of sovereignty looms particularly large in the project of world political theory. In contemporary theory and practice sovereignty refers first and foremost to the Westphalian system of mutually recognized autonomous states with sole and final authority over a delimited

territorial space. The Westphalian system of state sovereignty is highly contested in both practice and theory. For many, the state-centered sovereignty system is valued as a bulwark against domination or influence by outside cultural, economic, or political forces which globalization is intensifying.² Others hold that the sovereign state system is a major impediment to international and collective problem solving, and is incompatible with the realization of a range of important values, particularly security from violence, human rights, equitable economic development, and ecological sustainability.³ These divergent assessments have been paralleled in the analyses of social scientists who are in fundamental disagreement about whether the state-centric sovereignty system is waxing, waning, or changing in world politics.⁴

The emergence of major environmental problems and efforts to address them call into question in a very radical way the modern Westphalian sovereignty system because the establishment of environmentally sound ways of life entails the establishment of new configurations of legitimate authority. Systems of authority are particular configurations of restraints and empowerments on individuals and groups. The Westphalian sovereignty system empowers states and restrains nonstate actors. Environmentalist agendas and discourses are hardly univocal, but a fundamental claim of contemporary ecological environmentalism is that natural limits have been transgressed, and that human actors at all levels and scales of world politics must either exercise self-restraint, enter into agreements of mutual self-restraint, or be subject to external restraint.⁵

Diminishing the privileged role of state claims to authority and autonomy thus occupies a pivotal role in the environmentalist effort to establish new forms of authority. Most of this effort centers upon ways to add "responsibilities" to the "rights" of sovereign statehood, to extend sovereign rights to groups deemed more ecologically responsive, or to induce or facilitate sovereign states either to exercise their powers according to norms or rules of constraint, or to divide, share, or pool their authoritative powers in collective restraint systems.⁶

Most of the focus of environmentalist analysts and practitioners has been deconstructive (challenging or overthrowing), or reformist (modifying) the state-centric sovereignty system, rather than constructive of a fundamental alternative. For most environmentalists, sovereignty is

something to be overcome, modified, or captured, rather than something that offers positive insight and guidance for building a sustainable society.⁸

This mainly negative orientation of environmentalists toward sovereignty is somewhat anomalous. Virtually every other major conceptual component of the Western tradition of political thought (democracy, individual and human rights, market capitalism, socialism, and communitarian anarchism) has been analyzed as a source of environmental problems, and reconceptualized and reclaimed as having a potentially positive role to play in environmentally sustainable governance. The underdevelopment of a "green sovereignty" is partially the result of the fact that sovereignty is taken to be inherently synonymous with the autonomy and supremacy of the state, rather than recognized as a more protean concept useful for capturing the generative logic of legitimacy, authority, and identity in political orders more generally. The

There are, however, important strands of environmentalist practice, discourse, and theory that offer raw material for the conceptualization of authority and identity patterns that are consistent from the "ground up" with concerns of ecological responsibility. Over the last several decades, political theorists, ethicists, and theologians have reexamined in elaborate, sophisticated, and far-reaching ways the relationship between political, ethical, and spiritual systems and traditions, on the one hand, and environmental decay and restoration, on the other. Three of the largest clusters of creative ferment have centered upon "green democracy," "ethical extension," and what might be termed "nature theology." On the topic of democracy and the environment, theorists have rethought the roles of participation, representation, decentralization, and accountability in the light of sustainability imperatives. A hallmark of these efforts has been an emphasis upon revitalizing the "grass roots" dimensions of self-governing political associations. By far the largest and most conceptually developed body of work on ethical extension has been in terms of the Western tradition of rights and utility-based ethics. Specific arguments have been advanced to extend rights to nature as a whole, particular parts of nature, individual biological organisms, ecosystem integrity, and intergenerational groups.11 A third large cluster of thinking addresses issues of theology, cosmology, and the sacred, and their relation to ecology and sustainability.¹² A common feature of these efforts is that submerged or marginalized components of the dominant traditions are refurbished and employed in new ways.

Notably absent from these political, ethical, and theological debates has been any positive reconstruction of sovereignty. The implications of green democracy, ethical extension, and nature theology for international politics and large-scale political associations remain to be drawn. To discern the essential political implications of green democracy, ethical extension, and nature theology, it is necessary to examine their possible role in constituting sustainable patterns of legitimate political authority. The missing link between green democracy, ethical extension, and nature theology, and world politics is a reconfigured "green sovereignty."

This chapter sketches the main elements of a theory of sovereignty appropriate to the governance imperatives of the emergent global village. It is obvious that such a conception of the basis of political association must move beyond the pure particularity of the Westphalian state and nation. But it is also necessary to steer clear of the universal, homogenous, and unmediated conceptions of cosmopolitan political association. While the global village is as extensive as a global cosmopolis, it is as immediate and intensive as a village, and must accommodate more complexity and diversity than ever before has been encompassed in single political association. In short, a conception of political authority and community appropriate to the novel configuration of the global village must be terrapolitan rather than either Westphalian or cosmopolitan. By this I mean that the central basis of political association in the global village must be the Earth (terra) and its requirements.

This chapter sketches the rudiments of a terrapolitan conception of sovereignty, legitimate political authority, and communal identity. The heart of the argument is simple and has two main parts. First, sovereignty situated in an intergenerational public provides the basis for a federal-republican Earth constitution. Second, Earth nationality and Gaian Earth religion provides the basis for community and identity necessary to instantiate and maintain this sovereign and the legitimate authorities consistent with it.

The formulation of this argument entails a mixture of conceptual, deductive, and empirical elements. It aims not to provide a blueprint of an ideal terrapolitan arrangement, but rather to reformulate neglected and suppressed components of the commonwealth tradition of Western political thought in ways that mesh with powerful, if disparate, currents in actual environmental practice and in ways that address fundamental practical problems in achieving ecological sustainability.

The argument proceeds in three main steps. The first section, employing the traditional political theoretical distinction between sovereignty and authority, outlines the general relationship between particular sovereigns and particular forms of political authority and communal identity. Then the argument focuses on one particular form of sovereignty—popular sovereignty—and its relationship to authoritative governance that is republican and constitutional, and its problematic relationship to communal identity. The second section employs John Dewey's concept of the public to sketch the nature of an intergenerational sovereign public, and then argues its necessary relationship to a republican Earth constitution. The third section argues that Earth nationalism and Gaian Earth religion together constitute the logical and appropriate communal identities necessary to instantiate and manifest an intergenerational sovereign public.

Sovereignty, Legitimate Authority, and Communal Identity

In thinking and talking about sovereignty, much confusion has arisen from the failure to distinguish consistently between sovereignty, authority, and particular patterns of authority. Sovereignty, in its original and basic meaning, is simply the ultimate and undivided source of all legitimate authority in a polity, while authority refers to the actual exercise of legitimate power. Following Bodin and Hobbes, William Blackstone formulated the classic definition of sovereignty: "There is and must be in all [forms of government] a supreme, irresistible, absolute, uncontrolled authority, in which the jura summi imperii, or the rights of sovereignty, reside." In terms of these distinctions, the external practice of mutual recognition in the Westphalian anarchical society—the state "sovereignty" of international public law—is a particular form of authority.

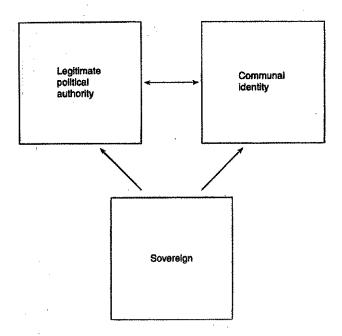


Figure 12.1
The sovereign and patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity

The distinction between sovereignty and authority is necessary in order to frame the two decisive questions at the heart of debates about sovereignty: (1) Who—or what—is sovereign? and (2) Which patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity are consistent with a particular sovereign? (See figure 12.1.)

The first question concerns the location of sovereignty, and it has been answered in a variety of very different ways. Over the last five hundred years in the West, strong claims have been asserted for the sovereignty of God, kings, states, nations, consumers, and the people as a whole.

Different sovereigns are the sources of different patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity. Once the location of sovereignty has been asserted or posited, it becomes possible and necessary to examine the relationship between particular sovereigns and particular patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity. Assertions of sovereignty amount in practice to claims that particular patterns of authority are legitimate, and patterns of identity are authentic. Each sovereign entails a particular configuration of such authorities and identities.

To ascertain which patterns of authority and communal identity manifest and instantiate a particular sovereign, one must examine the fundamental interests of the sovereign body. All possible sovereigns share two fundamental problems: (1) securing the sovereign body from destruction, and (2) avoiding usurpation—the appropriation of sovereignty by some other entity. Thus arise distinctive combinations of sovereignty and patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity. Beyond this generality, the specific features of the patterns of authority and communal identity consistent with a particular sovereign can only be determined by examining the attributes of the sovereign and the particular significant threats to its security. For example, assertions that God or some particular religiously privileged agent or group is sovereign generate a hierarchical structure of legitimate authority (hier = priest), and a communal identity embodied in and reproduced by a "church."

Popular Sovereignty and Federal-Republican Constitutions

Of all the principal sovereignties that have been asserted in the course of Western political history, popular sovereignty is closest to the intergenerational sovereign public emergent in planetary environmental practice and discourse. Therefore, to lay the foundation for the extension of sovereignty to an even broader group, it is useful to review briefly the central arguments in the republican political tradition about the particular forms of legitimate authority and communal identity consonant with popular sovereignty.

The claim that the people as a whole are sovereign was first asserted with significant political consequence in early modern Europe. ¹⁴ The Bostonian revolutionary writer James Otis framed the assertion of popular sovereignty with particular vigor:

An original, supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable earthly power must exist in and preside over every society, from whose final decisions there can be no appeal but directly to Heaven. It is therefore, originally and ultimately in the people; ... and [they] never did in fact freely, nor can they rightfully, make an absolute renunciation of this divine right. It is ever in the nature of the thing given in trust, and on a condition the performance of which no mortal can dispense with, namely, that the person or persons on whom the sovereignty is conferred by the people, shall incessantly consult their good. 15

Popular sovereignty formed the basis for the complex of legitimate authorities of "liberal"—federal, republican, democratic, and constitutional—political orders. It is important to emphasize that popular sovereignty is not equivalent to democracy in the sense of majority rule. For a popular sovereign to manifest itself as a democracy is problematic because this entails a division of the people into at least two parts (the ruling majority and the ruled minority), and sovereignty is by definition indivisible. If a democratic majority has all the authority in a political order, a hierarchy in the form of a "tyranny of the majority" exists between the majority and minorities. Only in the demanding circumstances of enforced homogeneity sketched by Rousseau in the Social Contract is popular sovereignty consistent with democracy.

A central claim in the republican political tradition is that sovereignty situated in the people as a whole must be manifested in political authorities structured so as to restrain hierarchical political authorities. This is particularly true if the people are so numerous and dispersed as to require extensive delegations of power. Popular sovereigns give rise to "republics" in the sense of governments and identities of restraint. ¹⁶ Unlike restraint based on hierarchical domination, republican political orders are complexes of mutual power restraint. At the heart of the system of structural power constraints that arise from a popular sovereign are written constitutions that can only be altered by supermajorities acting over extended periods of time, and judicial systems that have institutionalized vetoes over legislative and executive actions. ¹⁷

The Problem of Community, Identity, and Virtue in Republican Orders The expression of a particular sovereign in authoritative and legitimate governance structures is an incomplete basis for a political order because sovereigns also require manifestation and instantiation in appropriate forms of communal identity. Three essential points about the types of community and identity consistent with an extended popular sovereign and republican constitutions are well known and can be summarized briefly.

First, the primary community and identity feature associated with popular sovereigns and republican constitutions is civic, meaning that citizens have identities divided along a spectrum of private, semiprivate, and civic (or public).¹⁸ In the private and semiprivate realms, identity

differences of great magnitude exist but are buffered or compartmentalized from direct political roles. Civic identity and community are much more universalistic and attenuated in their claims upon individuals. In the modern republican model, patterns of communal identifications and practices are mixed and layered, thus allowing for the partial expression of intense and particularistic communal identities within the private and semiprivate spheres. While lacking the purity and total quality of communal identities in smaller and less diverse polities, this pattern of communal identity has one overriding virtue from the standpoint of a popularly situated sovereignty: the ability to encompass very large numbers of individuals that do not otherwise share common identities.

This pattern of liberal and multiethnic communal identity has, however, two fundamental and chronic problems: maintaining a sufficiently strong sense of common community—fraternity—and inculcating self-restraint—"virtue"—in individuals and groups. Political orders based upon popular sovereigns have not been highly successful in generating their own sources of fraternity and virtue, but have come to depend upon other sources, most importantly national patriotism and civic religion.

In the absence of some sense of fraternal¹⁹ identity, republican political orders are subject to the problems of extreme factionalism.²⁰ National patriotism has served to provide republican political orders with a sense of communal solidarity that they are not able to generate on their own.²¹ Individual and group discipline or self-restraint (virtue) is the second vital, but precarious, component of republican identity. Decentralized political structure and absence of a coercive hierarchy are only possible when the people discipline themselves. Without popular self-discipline, conflicts would be too sharp and passions too extreme to be mediated by the republican constitutional governmental structures. Republican virtue also meant putting the interests of the public over private ones. Republican political theorists have been thus intently concerned with establishing and sustaining virtue against its antithesis, corruption.²²

The long record of illiberal and hierarchical political orders demonstrates the ease with which humans may be socialized or disciplined into obedience. But it is more difficult for individuals to gain the psychologi-

cal practices (or in the language of moral philosophy, "character") of self-discipline that are not reliant upon deference to traditional or hierarchical authorities. Despite the emphasis of republican political theorists on the need for civic education, particularly militias, the key sources of virtue in large, modern, republican constitutional political orders have also been largely outside the programs and practices of republicanism. If Tocqueville and his many followers are correct, republican political orders require particular forms of religion, initially in Protestant Christianity, but subsequently in "reformed" versions of Catholicism and Judaism.

The dependence of popular sovereigns and their republican constitutional structures on certain forms of nationalism and religion poses an even greater problem for an intergenerational public sovereign and a republican Earth constitution, but before these problems and possible solutions to them can be fully understood, it is necessary to examine the notion of an intergenerational public sovereign and its relationship to a republican Earth constitution.

Intergenerational Sovereign Publics and Republican Earth Constitutions

The tools are at hand with which to conceptualize the relationship between a popular sovereign and the patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity consistent with it, but what possible relationship can there be between this federal-republican approach to political association and the environmental problematique arising to define and besiege the global village? The key to this link in the argument is John Dewey's conception of the public. The greatest American political theorist in the first half of the twentieth century, Dewey sought to reconceptualize the nature of democracy in face of the changing material environment produced by the Industrial Revolution and in doing so introduced formulations directly relevant to the emergent global village.

Intergenerational Sovereign Publics

Like most of the important terms of political discourse and theory, public has assumed a range of competing meanings and usages. Most commonly public refers to the nonprivate realm in liberal political orders, or to the people as a whole. More useful in conceptualizing a

green sovereign is John Dewey's spare and distinctive definition: "The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for." The public is a human consequence group, which Dewey sharply distinguishes from both community and government. Dewey's understanding of the public assigns primary importance to indirect consequences of transactions as its constitutive principle. As with any other definition, the problem of grey areas and borderline phenomena exists, and so the consequences must be "lasting, extensive, and serious" if they are to create a public.

An important ramification of this way of thinking about the nature of the public is that material contexts will determine the scope of publics. Dewey explicitly asserts that the extent of a public will vary greatly, depending upon the development of technology: "The consequences of conjoint behavior differ in kind and in range with changes in 'material culture,' especially those involved in exchange of raw materials, finished products, and above all in technology, in tools, weapons, and utensils. These in turn are immediately affected by inventions in means of transit, transportation, and intercommunication." This means that there are potentially many publics and that the size of publics has varied greatly in history.

Dewey provides a radically anticonstructivist and antisociological understanding of the public, and this move sharply poses the problem of a public's relationship to patterns of legitimate authority (which Dewey calls "government") and communal identity (which he calls "community"). Because they are created by indirect consequences, the scope and hence membership of publics are not determined by human intentions, feelings of solidarity, or social traits held in common, but rather by actual, significant, and enduring consequences. Thus, the public is not necessarily equivalent to the members of any actual political community, or subject to the rule of any actual government. The central insight of Dewey's politics is that the discrepancy between the public created by the material forces of the Industrial Revolution and lingering preindustrial forms of government and community underlies the many political problems of the twentieth century.

The temporal and spatial scope of the impacts of modern industrial civilization have created an intergenerational public. Current decisions

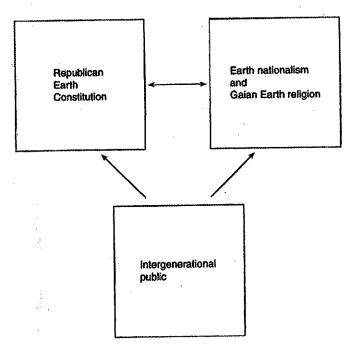


Figure 12.2
Patterns of authority and identity for an intergenerational public

about resource use and abuse — most notably depletion of nonrenewable resources, loss of species and biological diversity, alterations in the Earth's climate, and generation of large quantities of extremely long-lived radioactive and toxic wastes — now promise to affect future generations in ways lasting, extensive, and serious.²⁷

Once this transgenerational public is posited as sovereign—the ultimate and undivided source of legitimate authority—the questions arises as to which particular patterns of legitimate authority and communal identity arise from it and could adequately manifest and instantiate it. The simple answer to these questions is: a republican Earth constitution, and Earth nationalism and Gaian Earth religion (see figure 12.2).

A Federal-Republican Earth Constitution

The reason a republican Earth constitution is the form of government consistent with a transgenerational public sovereign is quite straightforward. Because most of the members of the transgenerational public cannot register their preferences in the present, a system of constraints on the living generation of humans is necessary. Because the essence of a republican constitution is a system of legitimate authorities that restrain, such a constitution can best manifest the interests of a transgenerational sovereign public. A republican constitution for the Earth entails a system of restraints that prevents the living from altering the planet in ways that are inconsistent with the fundamental interests of the sovereign, the intergenerational public.

As with all constitutions, the actual stipulations of such a constitution must be a judicious melding of permanent principles with contingent circumstance. Such a constitution requires an intergenerational balance sheet, and an authoritative mechanism to restrain the appetites and actions of the present through a mix of conservation, preservation, and restoration. Such a constitution would itself not be a specific enforceable law, but rather a set of standards against which specific laws and authoritative actions would be held accountable. Such an Earth constitution would not require and would not be consistent with a centralized and hierarchical world state or government, because such an entity would amplify the power of one group of the living members of the sovereign intergenerational public not only against the future members of the sovereign entity, but against living ones as well.

Such a constitution would not overthrow or replace the large and growing body of existing environmental domestic laws and regulations and international regimes. Rather, it would constitute the central principles of more specific authoritative measures, and establish a system for voiding measures and acts inconsistent with its principles.

It is not necessary for such a constitution to be written and established in one temporally contained act of drafting and establishment (or "founding"). Given the complexities and uncertainties with which it must cope, it would be impractical and undesirable to attempt such a "top-down" founding. The multiple existing processes of environmental governance formation now under way can be viewed as subcommittee meetings of an Earth Constitutional Convention. A full-fledged constitutional founding is appropriate only when environmental governance thickens and elaborates to the point where questions of overlap, priority, and institutionalization emerge as practical problems best solved by the formulation of general principles crystallized as an architectonic structure of legitimate authority.

Earth Nationality and Earth Religiosity

The expression of an intergenerational public sovereign in a republican Earth constitution provides part of the basis of a terrapolitian order, but poses the fundamental problem of what forms of communal identity could manifest and instantiate this sovereignty. It should be immediately obvious that the problems traditionally plaguing republican constitutional orders and extended popular sovereigns are particularly acute for an intergenerational sovereign public and a republican Earth constitution. The problem of community and group solidarity is severe because the future generations that constitute the majority of the members of the intergenerational public sovereign obviously cannot participate in communal activities with the currently living generation. Similarly, inducing virtue in the sense of self-restraint is particularly difficult in modern industrial societies where production capacities and consumptive appetites have been fully cultivated.

In conceptualizing potential solutions to these problems it is most useful to examine the two powerful social forces that extended sovereigns and republican political orders have traditionally been heavily dependent upon (national identity and religion) and attempt to conceptualize reconfigurations of them (Earth nationality and Earth religion) that are more directly and intimately related to the sustainability imperatives of an intergenerational sovereign public.

Planetary Topophilia and Earth Nationality

The specific contents of "national" identities²⁸ vary greatly, but are commonly built upon one or some combination of three elements: (1) an ethnonational identity as member of a group based upon shared attributes (such as language, history, and religion, etc.) that distinguish members from nonmembers; (2) an identity based upon membership in a particular political community or political regime, which gives rise to a regime patriotism; and (3) an identity and loyalty based upon the experiences and feelings of connectedness to a particular place or area, a sentiment dubbed *geopiety* by John Kirtland Wright²⁹ and *topophilia* by Yi-Fu Tuan.³⁰

The "here-feeling" component of national identity has been much less studied and appreciated by recent students of national identity than the "we-feeling" based on group attributes and differences such as language; religion, history, and institutions. I But "here feeling" figures prominently in many of the most seminal political theorists of national identity. In his classic formulation of the sources of patriotism, Edmund Burke speaks of an "instinct" that "extends even to brute creation." This powerful sentiment is "a fondness for the place where they have been bred, for the habitations [they] have dwelt in" that "binds all creatures to their country" and "never becomes inert," and does not "ever suffer us to want a memory of it." Nationalist rhetoric and discourse characteristically claim that national identity is natural or primordial. Assertions about specific places figure prominently in these constructs, as do claims about the character of the relationship between the human and the biological natural, both of "race and blood" and of "soil and land."

The experience of place and sentimental attachments to it can be, and already is being, directed at the Earth as a whole. This constitutes what I have elsewhere analyzed as "Earth nationalism" and "Earth patriotism." This planetary evocation of place is most graphic in the "whole Earth picture," photographs taken of the Earth from outer space. Here the Earth is credibly experienced as a home place that is soft, fluid, and fuzzy. It also seems vulnerable, isolated, and precious. It evokes an aura of a unique and distinctive place.

This "whole Earth" representation is fundamentally different from that of the "globe." A globe is constituted by spherical Cartesian space within which artificial political borders are cartoonishly prominent. In contrast, the whole Earth picture is an actual photograph of what the Earth looks like to those with the most comprehensive positional vantage point. The two most distinctive features of a globe are the presence of a grid of longitude and latitude, and the representation of different nation-states with different colors. Globes are spherical maps, but the whole Earth picture depicts the planet as lacking in sharp lines and angles. And the whole Earth picture does not display the borders of nation-states, because the lines separating state from state are mostly invisible from space. The whole Earth picture thus seems more authentic and "real" than the globe, whose spatial representations seem constructed, arbitrary, unnatural, and conventional—fictions and conceits imposed upon reality or mistaken for reality rather than what is real.³⁴

A crucial ingredient in the experience of planetary topophilia not present in earlier forms of "place-feeling" is the role of modern natural science. Early European nationalist intellectuals and ideologues such as Rousseau, Burke, and Herder attacked the universalistic and rationalistic science of the Enlightenment and championed folk traditions and identities shaped by primitive material circumstances. In contrast, contemporary planetary environmental awareness contains a major element of ecological and Earth systems natural science. Where previous nationalism employs a preecological or antiecological understanding of place and environment, the emergent Earth nationalism integrates scientific ecological understandings of place and human links to place.

A second distinctive and politically significant feature of contemporary environmentalist evocations of place sensibility is that they are diverse, layered, and overlapping. The ideologies of the modern nation-state assert "one place, one people," and proceed to homogenize diverse places and diverse peoples. The "nation building" of modern states usually entails extinguishing or marginalizing the group identities of diverse peoples unfortunate enough to be caught within the internationally recognized borders of a state apparatus with "modern" ambitions.³⁵

In contrast, topophilic environmentalists assert the existence of place claims that are diverse and overlapping as well as distinct. Bioregionalist theory and practice asserts that political borders and identities should reflect distinct natural bioregions. But the borders of different watersheds and ecosystems do not form sharp lines, but rather overlay one another in a complex pattern. Furthermore, the unmistakable political message of ecological science is that the entirety of the Earth is the only fully integral bioregion, and that the "homeland" of all humans is the planet and distinct but overlapping pieces of it.³⁶ Thus, the ideologies of Earth nationality in essence assert "one diverse place, one diverse people." This layered *topophilia* of contemporary bioregionalist theory and practice cannot be politically instantiated by an altered configuration of bionational states, but rather requires federal arrangements.

Sacred Earth and Gaian Religiosity

The last and possibly most important component of a communal identity congruent with the needs of a transgenerational public sovereign

is religion, a topic that is arguably more complex and problematic than all the other issues addressed thus far.37 As noted, contemporary environmental practice and theory have involved riotous conceptual and practical ferment about religion and its relationship to Earth sustainability. Despite the disdain of secular intellectuals and academics, Earth spirituality is ubiquitious in the popular environmental movement. A good index of how strongly this current runs is the prominent role spiritual concerns play in Al Gore's widely read Earth in the Balance.38 Much of this effort has focused upon the relationship between the existing major religious traditions and Earth sustainability.39 Earth religiosity also plays a prominent role in the radical environmental movement.40 A substantial effort has also been made to resurrect older forms of Earth spirituality and religion and to construct Earth religious cosmologies and theologies, as well as ceremonial and ritual practices, consistent with modern Earth system science. A particularly rich source for these efforts are the "living fossils" of marginalized "first nations" and "indigenous peoples." Among the more radical and constructive of these Earth theologies is what might be termed Gaian Earth religion, which is also the most potentially useful for instantiating communal identities congruent with the sustainability imperatives of an intergenerational public sovereign.

In approaching this issue, our central concern is not the substantive merits of the theological, cosmological, or scientific claims of Gaian Earth religion, but rather its potential role as a source of communal identity consistent with an intergenerational public sovereign. Analysis of the functional fit between religions and political orders has a distinguished lineage. Many political theorists have astutely analyzed the relationship between specific religions and specific political orders. For example, Machiavelli famously argued that Roman paganism was a crucial feature in the Roman republic. 42 More recently, John Stuart Mill argued for the utility of theism as a ground for morality.43 Others, most notably Hobbes and Rousseau, have gone further and sketched the features of hypothetical religions that they argue are best suited to establishing and maintaining their visions of a necessary or preferred political order.44 These analyses and constructions have one thing in common: They are not based upon a love or reverence for God, but rather seek to use religion as an instrument for creating and maintaining particular political orders.45

There is nothing about Earth religiosity in general, and Gaian Earth religion in particular, that is not subject to fundamental flux and contestation. But two general features of the emergent Earth religiosity stand out as interesting for their potential roles in a terrapolitan "civic religion" and sources of Earth sustainable communal identities.

First, Earth religion is a relative rarity—a modern worldview with a scientifically credible cosmology. A major limitation of the great premodern theological cosmologies is that modern natural science has undermined their credibility. In the West the recession of Christendom and the rise of modernity were marked by scientific discoveries profoundly subversive of the authoritative religious cosmology: the Copernican displacement of the Earth from the center of the universe, the discovery of deep geological time, the theory of biological evolution, and the emergence of a mechanical conception of nature hostile to supernatural intervention. From the deistic recasting of God into a retired watchmaker it was but a short step to Nietzsche's "death of God" and the decline of monotheistic religion as the axis of identity and community.

A striking feature of Gaian Earth religion as a spiritual and moral system is its ability to make at least a prima facie claim to being compatible with the important natural science of ecology. 48 Gaia is the most salient metaphorical structure spanning the divide between ecological science and Earth identity narratives. *Gaia* is the term employed by the Earth system scientist James Lovelock for the comprehensive homeostatic system of the planet's interacting living organisms and geophysical features. 49 For theologians *Gaia*, denotes an encompassing spiritual reality grounded in nature. 50 Lovelock, after observing that "a separation of life into sacred and secular parts" is not plausible, articulates the central claim of the Earth science-religion fusion: "Thinking of the Earth as alive makes it seem, on happy days, in the right places, as if the whole planet were celebrating a sacred ceremony. Being on the Earth brings that same special feeling of comfort that attaches to the celebration of any religion when it is seemly and when one is fit to receive." 51

Lovelock's carefully hedged formulation acknowledges the existence of a very old and widely encountered "variety of religious experience." The derivation of norms and prescriptions from bodies of modern scientific knowledge remains a deeply problematic undertaking, but when linked with a simple set of normative assumptions, particularly the desirability of survival, ecology comes much closer to seeming to provide a set of broad and important norms.

A second central feature of the new and radical forms of Earth religiosity is the assertion of special sacred places, emotively powerful ceremonies and rituals, ⁵² and cosmological narratives drawn with primordial metaphorical resources and potentially open to wide vernacular accessibility. ⁵³ Premodern religious traditions generated hierarchical space in which special locations were deemed particularly sacred and hallowed. These sacred places served as gathering places for ceremonial rituals and for spiritual encounters with the extrahuman forces giving direction and meaning to human existence. A strong version of this sense of sacred space is found in the wilderness "sanctuary." ⁵⁴ In this "church of the Earth" the great "wonders of nature" constitute the cathedrals and sacred grounds of nature. These sites evoke powerful emotive experiences, and are the destinations of mass pilgrimages, similar to those of Islam and Roman Catholicism.

Judged by functional criteria, Gaian Earth religiosity seems well suited to serve as the "civic religion" for a federal-republican Earth constitution. It potentially could underpin the social norms and behaviors of restraint that are necessary to achieve a sustainable society, but which are very difficult to support on their own right. The effects of many environmental problems are most likely to be felt in the future, or in distant places, while the tasks necessary to achieve a sustainable society involve real, immediate sacrifice and must be performed routinely by vast numbers of people. Reason and appeals to higher self-interest or long-run self-interest may be insufficient to motivate sufficient action. The appeal of Earth religion is that it helps motivate behavior respectful of the Earth which otherwise would be difficult to achieve, by providing a system of meaning that can span generations and foster a sense of transgenerational communal identity.

Conclusions

This brief sketch of the logic of the structures of authority and communal identities consistent with the assertion of the sovereignty of an intergenerational public raises many fundamental conceptual issues that

require further investigation. But to close this first excursus, it is useful to connect the argument advanced here with the practical strategies of the worldwide environmental movement, and suggest several ways in which the assertion of "green sovereignty" can sharpen and strengthen environmentally responsible political practice.

First, the assertion of a green sovereign and its correlative governance and identity programs can add a degree of coherence and unity to the worldwide environmental movement, which is marked by extreme diversity and fragmentation. The assertion of popular sovereignty added coherence and legitimacy to the political emergence of the masses in modern Europe and elsewhere. In a similar manner, the assertion of green sovereignty can help raise the environmentalist agenda to the fundamental political and cultural challenge that it in fact is.

Second, the assertion of green sovereignty can help strengthen and legitimate the practices and discourses of virtue that comprise a powerful part of contemporary environmental politics. Throughout the advanced industrial world, and particularly in the United States, neoconservatives have vigorously reasserted the importance of various forms of virtue in liberal society and have forced a wide-ranging reexamination of the ways in which government policies undermine or foster individual self-restraint.⁵⁶ Notably absent in the tablets of value advanced by partisans of neoconservative "virtuepolitik" has been consumptive and reproductive self-restraint. The "voluntary simplicity" practice and discourse of contemporary environmentalists constitutes a powerful, but underpoliticized challenge to the deadly hidden permissiveness of the neoconservative values agenda.⁵⁷ Given that capitalism has now achieved something approaching an "end of history" ideological hegemony, sovereignty rests not with states, but with the community of consumers—the mythical "consumer sovereignty" of neoclassical economics. The green virtues of voluntary simplicity constitute a radical assault on the sovereignty of consumptive appetites.

A hidden permissiveness also characterizes the dominant culture's reproductive norms. The major organized resistance to reproductive responsibility is squarely grounded in religious claims. Despite the clear links between burgeoning human populations, amplified by technology and affluence, and environmental degradation, the reproductive permissiveness of the various religious "spiritual humanists" has not been

challenged at a fundamental level. The reproductive rate of the "virtuous" Mormons rivals that of the Third World, and the Roman Catholic hierarchy continues to proscribe all forms of artificial contraception and family planning. A powerful international coalition of Islamic traditionalists, Roman Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, and African patriarchal animists has emerged to block the further expansion, funding, and legitimacy of international family planning programs. By grounding reproductive responsibility in the assertion of an Earth religion, opponents of reproductive permissiveness will gain a powerful new political tool.

Third, the assertion of the sovereignty of an intergenerational public can add a potentially powerful component to the environmental challenge to the sanctity of state sovereignty in world politics. Instead of challenging sovereignty as the basis of authority, the assertion of a green sovereignty can put the claims of environmentally sound practices on a more secure footing.

Notes

- An earlier version of this paper was presented at the ISA-West, October 1996. Richard Matthew, Bron Taylor, and Paul Wapner offered helpful comments on earlier versions.
- Hedley Bull, "The State's Positive Role in World Affairs," Daedalus 108, no. 4 (Fall 1979): 101-10; and Barry Buzan, "The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?," in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski, eds., International Theory: Positivism and Beyond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 47-65.
- 3. The most sustained and systematic indictment has been made by members of the World Order Models Project. See Richard Falk, On Humane Governance: Toward a New Global Politics (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995): 79-103; and Joseph A. Camilleri and Jim Falk, The End of Sovereignty? (Aldershot, England: Elgar, 1992).
- 4. James Rosenau, "The State in an Era of Cascading Politics: Wavering Concept, Widening Competence, Withering Colossus, or Weathering Change?," in James Caporaso, ed., The Elusive State (London: Sage, 1989): 17-49; Janice Thomson and S. Krasner, "Global Transactions and the Consolidation of Sovereignty," in Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James Rosenau, eds., Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989); and Stephen D. Krasner, "Compromising Westphalia," International Security 20, no. 3 (Winter 1995-96): 115-51.
- 5. The most powerful treatment of the central role of limits and constraints in

- sustainable governance is found in Garrett Hardin, Living within Limits: Ecology, Economics, and Population Taboos (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 6. Karen Litfin, "Ecoregimes: Playing Tug of War with the Nation-State System," in Ronnie Lipschutz and Ken Conca, eds., *The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 94-117.
- 7. Oran Young, International Cooperation: Building Regimes for Natural Resources and the Environment (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes, The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- 8. For example, Jean Bethke Elshtain calls for a "postsovereign politics" in "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice," Social Research 58, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 560. See also James Rosenau's celebration of the growing importance of "sovereignty-free" actors in world politics, in Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- 9. David Macauley, ed., Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology (New York: Guilford: 1996); Martin O'Connor, ed., Is Capitalism Sustainable? Political Economy and the Politics of Ecology (New York: Guilford Press, 1994); Adrian Atkinson, Principles of Political Ecology (London: Belhaven Press, 1991); Fritz Capra, Green Politics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984); Andrew Dobson, Green Political Thought, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1990, 1995); John Dryzek, Rational Ecology: Environment and Political Economy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Robert E. Goodin, Green Political Theory (London: Polity, 1992); Adolf G. Gunderson, The Environmental Promise of Democratic Deliberation (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); William Ophuls, Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity: Prologue to a Political Theory of the Steady State (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1977); Bob Pepperman Taylor, Our Limits Transgressed: Environmental Political Thought in America (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992).
- 10. F. H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 11. Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
- 12. Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988); Eugene C. Hargrove, ed., Religion and the Environmental Crisis (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); J. Baird Callicott, Earth's Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Theodore Roszak, The Voice of the Earth (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

- 13. William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-69), vol. 1, 156-57.
- 14. Edmund S. Morgan, Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988).
- 15. James Otis, "The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved" (Boston, 1764).
- 16. For extended analysis of this point, see Daniel Deudney, "The Philadelphian System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-Union, ca. 1787–1861," *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 191–228.
- 17. For the relationship between constraints on governmental power and constitutionalism, see Frederick Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); and Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad, eds., *Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 18. Stephen Holmes, Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 19. The strongly gendered formulation of republican communal identity (virtue from vir—Latin for male human being) is a product of the fact that popular citizenship was historically first possible only in small—and therefore militarily precarious—polities that were compelled by these circumstances to cultivate martial virtue (what Machiavelli called virtu) in an armed male citizen class.
- 20. Wilson Carey McWilliams, The Idea of Fraternity in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
- 21. War patriotism played a particularly important role in reinforcing liberal communal identity in the United States, and was able to do so because of the historical accident that the major military adversaries of the United States have always been decidedly less liberal than the United States.
- 22. Among the voluminous literature, two small pieces provide useful overviews: James D. Savage, "Corruption and Virtue at the Constitutional Convention," *Journal of Politics* 56, no.1 (February 1994): 174-86; and J. Peter Euben, "Corruption," in Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 220-46.
- 23. John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems [1927] (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1954): 15-16.
- 24. The opposite of the public is the private: "When the consequences of an action are confined, or are thought to be confined, mainly to the persons directly engaged in it, the transaction is a private one." Dewey, *Public and Its Problems*, 18–19. This formulation is free of the assumptions about gender and domesticity that frequently mar analyses of the differences between public and private.

- 25. Dewey, Public and Its Problems, 67.
- 26. Dewey, Public and Its Problems, 44.
- 27. Edith Brown Weiss, In Fairness to Future Generations: International Law, Common Patrimony, and Intergenerational Equity (New York: Transnational Publishers and United Nations University, 1988); and John Gerard Ruggie, "International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time, and Method," in Czempiel and Rosenau, Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1989).
- 28. For the diverse ingredients of "national" identities, see Anthony D. Smith, Theories of Nationalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); and Benedict Anderson, Imaged Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, 2d ed. (London: Verso, 1991).
- 29. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Geopiety: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place," in David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden, eds., Geographies of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- 30. Yi-Fu Tuan, Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).
- 31. Anthony D. Smith, "Poetic Spaces: Uses of Landscape," in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 183-91.
- 32. Edmund Burke, The Writings and Speeches of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke (Boston: Little, Brown, 1901): 11:422-23.
- 33. Daniel Deudney, "Ground Identity: Nature, Place, and Space in Earth Nationalism," in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Reinner, 1995): 129–45.
- 34. For contestations over the meaning and appropriations of "whole Earth" imagery, see Guy Geney, "Gaia: The Globalitarian Temptation," in Wolfgang Sachs, ed., Global Ecology (London: Zed, 1993); Denis Cosgrove, "Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 84, no. 2 (1994): 270–94; Yaakov Jerome Garb, "The Use and Misuse of the Whole Earth Image," Whole Earth Review (March 1995); and Wolfgang Sachs, "The Blue Planet: An Ambiguous Modern Icon," The Ecologist 24, no. 5 (September-October 1995).
- 35. Jason Clay, "Resource Wars: Nation and State Conflicts in the Twentieth Century," in Barbara Rose Johnston, ed., Who Pays the Price? (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1994):19-30; and Bernard Nietschmann, "The Fourth World: Nations vs. States," in George J. Demko and William B. Wood, eds., Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994): 225-42.
- 36. Sam Love, "Redividing North America," The Ecologist 7, no. 7 (September 1977): 318-19; Ernest Callenbach, Ectopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston (Berkeley: Banyon Tree, 1975); Ernest Callenbach, Ectopia Emerging (Berkeley: Banyon Books, 1981); Kirkpatrick Sale, Dwellers in the

- Land: The Bioregional Vision (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985); and Van Andrews, et al., eds., Home! A Bioregional Reader (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990).
- 37. For the classic statement of the religious-political question and the distinctively modern Western answer to it, see Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965).
- 38. Al Gore, Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).
- 39. For overviews, see Robert Booth Fowler, The Greening of Protestant Thought (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
- 40. Bron Taylor, "The Religion and Politics of Earth First!," *The Ecologist* 21, no. 6 (November 1992): 258-66.
- 41. For the controversies surrounding these appropriations, see Bron Taylor, "Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality," *Religion* 27 (Spring 1997): 183–215.
- 42. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, Walker and Richardson, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), book 1, sections, 11-15, 139-52.
- 43. John Stuart Mill, Nature: The Utility of Religion and Theism, 2d ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1824).
- 44. Terrence Ball, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," and "The Survivor and the Savant: Two Schemes for Civil Religion Compared," *Reappraising Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- 45. "Religion is being recommended to us because it supports morality, not morality because it derives from religion." Joan Robinson, *Economic Philosophy* [1962] (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1964): 15.
- 46. An earlier effort in this direction by the Roman Catholic theologian Teilhard de Chardin was based on views of physics that have been subsequently superseded.
- 47. Alexander Koyre, From Closed World to Infinite Universe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957).
- 48. David Oates, Earth Rising: Ecological Belief in an Age of Science (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1984); and William Irwin Thompson, Gaia: A Way of Knowing: Political Implications of the New Biology (Great Barrington, Mass.: Intertraditions/Lindisfarne, 1987).
- 49. James Lovelock, Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); James Lovelock, The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth (New York: Norton, 1988); and James Lovelock, Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet (New York: Harmony, 1991).
- 50. Dorian Sagan and Lynn Margulis, "Gaian Views," in Christopher Key Chapple, ed., Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth

- Healing (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); and Anthony Weston, "Forms of Gaian Ethics," Environmental Ethics 9 (Fall 1987): 217-30.
- 51. Lovelock, The Ages of Gaia, 204-5.
- 52. Dolores LaChapelle, Earth Wisdom (Silverton, Colo.: Kivaki Press 1978); and Dolores LaChapelle, Earth Festivals (Silverton, Colo.: 1976).
- 53. Max Oelschlaeger, "The Sacred Canopy: Religion as Legitimating Narrative," chapter 3, and "Redescribing Religious Narrative: The Significance of the Sacred Story," chapter 6, in Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
- 54. Linda H. Graber, Wilderness as Sacred Space (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1976).
- 55. For sustained analysis of this point, see Fred Hirsch, "The Moral Reentry," chapter 10, Social Limits to Growth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976): 137-51.
- 56. William J. Bennett, ed., The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); and Mary Ann Glendon and David Blankenhorn, eds., The Seedbeds of Virtue: Sources of Competence, Character, and Citizenship in American Society (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1995).
- 57. Duane Elgin, Voluntary Simplicity (New York: William Morrow, 1981).