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**Review of *Our Limits Transgressed: Environmental Political  
Thought in America* by Bob Peperman Taylor**

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**Our Limits Transgressed: Environmental Political Thought in America.**  
Bob Peperman Taylor. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992. xiii + 184 pp. \$25.00 cloth.

In this book Taylor traces the evolution of political thought about the environment from within a dialectic between two traditions: the "progressive" and the "pastoral." These traditions are described as having roots in the philosophies of Gifford Pinchot and Henry David Thoreau, respectively, and while this tracing of ancestry is not new or unique to this book, what Taylor does with this starting point is both creative and interesting.

Most books which entertain the analysis of theory applied to the environment concentrate on single dimensions of humanities' ethical or economic impact on nature, without a sense of how that particular analysis fits into the overall complexity of thought that has evolved in environmental political theory. Taylor improves on this practice in two ways.

First, he uses the Pinchot/Thoreau distinction to set up an evolving theoretical dialectic between consequentialist and non-consequentialist political thought concerning the environment and draws a wide cross-section of contemporary thinkers into this ongoing dialectic who heretofore have not be

organized and sorted in quite this way. Second, he integrates the current vocabulary of environmental discourse (biocentric, deep ecology, anthropocentric etc.) into this evolution so that the reader can see a complete picture of what before seemed to be unorganized and isolated rhetoric. In this way Taylor has changed noise into music and has created a place for this volume as an important contribution to the literature it analyzes. The question is whether the book does more than organize and orchestrate the literature that already exists.

For example, a core concern upon which Taylor focuses throughout the book is the possible conflict between placing intrinsic value upon nature and the need for the instrumental use of nature's resources to fuel the expanding economy that is a central promise of democratic institutions. As the book progresses the reader is taken through a variety of definitions of intrinsic and instrumental value as well as many recommendations, from different theorists, of how a balance between the two can be achieved. One is given the impression, by Taylor's fine critical analysis of each theory, that within this dialogue an evolution of thought is occurring that gives the politics of environmental policy a more and more sophisticated treatment over time. The reader is presented with a narrative that leads them to a point where they are interested in Taylor's own argument about the integration of the progressive and the pastoral, but this, alas, does not appear.

Although the last chapter, "Restoring Political Vision," suggests some original and provocative ideas, here as throughout the book, the ideas and arguments that are analyzed and placed in context, are from others and not from Taylor. On page 150 Taylor asks "How does one account for and integrate an appropriate understanding of nature within a more general theory of politics?" This is a critical question and one, thanks to the clarity and organizational ingenuity of this book, that takes on even more importance than the reader initially assumes. However, one finishes the book wanting another chapter or two where Taylor makes his own argument to answer this question. The irony of this criticism may lie in the fact that the effectiveness with which Taylor constructs the evolution of political thought on the environment puts his own lack of contribution to this evolution in more drastic relief. This however is to the book's, and the author's, credit.

This one criticism does not detract from my contention that this book is the best primer on the evolution of political thought on the environment that presently exists and therefore should have a unique place in the literature for this reason alone. The way it analyzes, organizes, and sets in context the many political theories that attempt to address man's relationship to the environment

is praiseworthy and makes *Our Limits Transgressed*, a perfect text for either an undergraduate or graduate course in political theory and environmental policy. In a concise and complete analysis, Taylor makes the connections that will give the student a sound point of departure for class discussion and the writing of their own arguments.

Overall, Taylor has done a first class job in organizing and relating to one another, the existing lexicon of environmental political thought and one only hopes that he does not stop here, but moves ahead to add his arguments to the ones he has so competently catalogued, analyzed, and integrated in this book. **John Martin Gillroy**, *Public Policy Studies Program, Trinity College*.