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**Eco-Emancipation: An Earthly Politics of Freedom.** By Sharon R. Krause. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. 224p. \$35.00 hardcover.

Mathias Thaler, *University of Edinburgh*

In *Eco-Emancipation*, Sharon Krause provides an innovative and wide-ranging account of what is distinctively challenging about the ongoing ecological crisis, and of the practical measures necessary to alleviate its worst consequences. The book offers original contributions not only to the study of environmental politics and ethics, but also to theorizing complex political problems more generally. Krause’s systematic ambitions are vast – to explain the root causes of the current malaise and devise workable antidotes to it – matched only by her admirably charitable practice of engaging with other voices and her exemplarily clear prose. There is, in short, a great deal to admire, learn from, and contend with, in this superb volume.

Chapter 1 sets the stage by identifying the book's key aims in terms of understanding "the dynamics that sustain domination [of nature] and envision[ing] alternatives to them" (4).

Krause shows that this endeavour requires us to recognize the dual character of environmental domination. On the one hand, human beings are involved in trying to rule over nonhuman nature in various, yet to be clarified ways. On the other hand, she claims that it is not only marginalized, but also privileged people who suffer from the domination of nonhuman nature. *Eco-Emancipation* envisages domination as arising from a specific historical juncture in which power is exercised without effective constraints. This implies that we need a thoroughly political approach to respond to environmental domination, one that goes beyond the mere stipulation of abstract principles (as in much of climate ethics) and attends to the mobilization and institutionalization of concrete forms of freedom.

To defend this proposal, Krause constructs her argument from various conceptual building blocks. Chapter 2 begins with a clarification on the notion of agency. The "old exceptionalism" of human action remains tethered to an ideal of sovereignty that makes it appear as if our species were ontologically separate from, and inherently superior to, nonhuman nature. Since environmental domination results, among other things, from the perception of humankind's separation and superiority, the author seeks to create an alternative vision of agency that forsakes detrimental images of human dominion over nature. Drawing on both Hannah Arendt and Jane Bennett, the chapter holds that human action needs to be radically rethought in a nonsovereign direction. This move enables Krause to insist on our species having an exceptional responsibility for emancipation, which must not be equated, however, with delusional fantasies of complete control over nature.

Chapter 3 extends these reflections to outline the shape of environmental domination.

Through a reinterpretation of contemporary republicanism and Frankfurt School scholars, the author demonstrates that domination structurally affects interpersonal as well human-nature

relations. We therefore require an intersectional approach that not only reveals the varied respects in which marginalized as well as privileged people are subject to unconstrained power and thereby become exceedingly vulnerable to ecological harms, but also shines a light on how the denigrated status condition of nature undermines the capacity of more-than-human beings to flourish on their own terms. At the heart of Krause's comprehensive account of domination lies a thought about what is uniquely harmful about the ecological crisis: not the human use of nature per se, but the complete lack of political constraints on such use, which prepares the ground for exploitation and extractivism.

Chapter 4 takes a first step toward addressing these ills, by directing attention to political respect for nature. Once again turning to stalwarts of the Western canon of philosophy – in this case, Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida – the author explores what it would mean in practice to treat not only humans, but also other Earth dwellers as ends in themselves. In foregrounding experiences of radical alterity in the encounter with others, the chapter prompts a reorientation of our affective frameworks so as to disable the instrumentalizing logic of environmental domination. Importantly, the rejection of pure instrumentalism does not imply that humans would suddenly live in perfect harmony with nature. Conflicts and trade-offs will inevitably endure on an environmentally emancipated planet. But there need to be at least some political constraints on our species' confrontation with more-than-human beings.

Continuing with this line of positive rejoinders, chapter 5 expands on Iris Marion Young's "social connection model" and parses various aspects of responsibility, from culpability to accountability and responsiveness. Paying respect to nature depends on one's ability to effectively respond to environmental domination, which in turn is shaped by relative positions of power. From this diagnosis, a picture of ecological responsibility emerges that is pluralistic and sensitive to different cultural settings. At this point, Krause also celebrates

liberatory impact of social movements, whose interventions do not rely on the illusion of sovereign human action.

Chapter 6 draws the prior arguments together and restates the book's central objective. The author asserts again that the emancipation of human beings is inextricably intertwined with the emancipation of nonhuman nature, given the dual character of environmental domination. The book ends with some general reflections on how people could be mobilized to participate in emancipatory efforts and on which types of institutions would be best suited to combat domination. An epilogue discusses current initiatives that successfully prefigure the open-ended struggle for politically constraining the use of nonhuman nature.

There are two respects in which this book could be further interrogated. The first has to do with Krause's method of reworking pivotal terms of political thought – agency, domination, respect, etc. – to render them more helpful for inhabiting a more-than-human world. *Eco-Emancipation* pursues this goal by mining canonical figures, like Kant, Arendt and many others, for insights into the wider problem she wishes to illuminate. Frequently, this proves a powerful strategy for also bringing out their intrinsic shortcomings, since, apart from Jane Bennett, almost all the authors Krause analyzes in depth start from anthropocentric premises. But sometimes Krause seems to underplay the analytical and normative depth with which prominent thinkers such as, for example, Val Plumwood and Murray Bookchin (whose works are cited, but not fully integrated into the argument) have grappled with the very concerns that also animate *Eco-Emancipation*, like the urgent need for an intersectional perspective. One may thus express doubts about returning once again to authors whose anthropocentric presuppositions have been so powerfully called into question by numerous environmental philosophers and activists over the past 60 years. To be sure, the voices of these critics are present on these pages, but the book's primary anchoring in the mainstream of political theory sometimes overshadows their perceptive observations.

The second challenge speaks to possible lacunae in the argument. In light of Krause's scepticism about ethical approaches and despite considerations of animal rights and the democratic representation of nonhuman nature, it is surprising to find relatively little about the real politics of ecological emancipation in this book. Moreover, related economic questions are largely absent. This is an intriguing omission given the book's consistent stress on domination and emancipation. Not only conversations around post-growth, but also discourses on multispecies justice and feminist engagements with care work are fundamentally concerned with the critical notion of freedom that Krause embraces. Upon hitting the end of this densely argued and beautifully written volume, I thus wished *Eco-Emancipation* had at least 100 pages more, to develop the core argument further and connect it more directly to the real politics of ecological emancipation across different conceptual axes.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I am convinced that *Eco-Emancipation* will become a reference point for debates not only among students of environmental ethics and politics, but also political theorists more generally.