

# RISK: Health, Safety & Environment (1990-2002)

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Volume 9 | Number 3

Article 8

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June 1998

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Courtney J. Merrill

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Courtney J. Merrill, *Review of: Leonard W. Doob, Sustainers and Sustainability*, 9 RISK 293 (1998).

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## Review of: Leonard W. Doob, *Sustainers and Sustainability*

### **Erratum**

The citation for this review is 9 *RISK* 291 (1998) in most commercial databases.

Leonard W. Doob, *Sustainers and Sustainability* (Praeger Publishers 1995). Bibliography, index, notes. LC 95-7982; ISBN 0-275-95314-9 [167 pp. \$52.95 Cloth, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881.]

In *Sustainers and Sustainability*, Doob provides a mindful, terrene commentary on individuals who do and do not support sustainability. He illustrates the concept of sustainability through some of its challenges including: endangered plant and animal species, pollution and the ozone layer. He suggests that sustainability has become an urgent challenge as conflicts among people and regions persist or increase and environmental damage accelerates. With this in mind, the book tackles the question: What are the principal, essential attributes of sustainers?

Doob's underlying premise is that human beings possess or must acquire certain attributes to be sustained on this planet. These function within individual, unique personalities. Such attributes, the author notes, are usually referred to metaphorically and detached from people, as in "Ireland is also experiencing the emergence of an ecological consciousness."<sup>1</sup> However, he suggests that much can be gained theoretically and practically from identifying traits as embodied in specific individuals. Doob isolates and analyzes attributes that he considers integral to sustainer consciousness, including:<sup>2</sup>

... renunciation, adequate knowledge, sensitive attitudes, and a conviction concerning controllability. These attributes interact with the sustainers' personalities and then... do or do not lead to appropriate action.

A chapter is dedicated to each "sustaining attribute." Others are devoted, respectively, to understanding challenges, personality, patterning, action and promotion. Having identified essential sustaining attributes, Doob stresses the importance of action in conformity with those ideals. In that regard he quotes Al Gore's *Earth in Balance* for the proposition that "billions of small choices by individuals... add up to an aggregate force completely dwarfing most policy decisions by governments."<sup>3</sup> Actions promoting sustainability include the entire

<sup>1</sup> At 31.

<sup>2</sup> At 111.

<sup>3</sup> At 5.

range of human activity from recycling materials to entering into treaties that reduce the risk of war.

Chapter 8 is especially useful in unmasking questionable behavior patterns and by suggesting ways to improve sustainability. It comprehensively analyzes the interrelation between personality attributes (or lack thereof), and subsequent inclinations toward certain types of inaction or selections. It engages readers by asking them to cast an eye inward — toward their own personal choices and habits — and, in doing so, sheds light on possible motives and consequences.

Overall, *Sustainers and Sustainability* was found thought-provoking. It not only analyzes attributes that promote sustaining behavior but also suggests ways to recognize and encourage them. It invites the reader to increase their awareness, both individually and globally. Doobs maintains that sustainers must possess *gaman*, a Japanese term connoting “patience, perseverance, endurance, forbearance, fortitude, stoicism”<sup>4</sup> and, especially, the ability to defer gratification. His book promotes the virtues of that philosophy and provides practical ways to achieve it.

Courtney J. Merrill<sup>†</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> At 94.

<sup>†</sup> Ms. Merrill received her B.A. (Political Science) from the University of New Hampshire. She is a candidate for the J.D. and Master of Intellectual Property at Franklin Pierce Law Center.