

Ecocracy

A global democracy for the care and protection of environmental global commons

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This thesis is a theoretical exercise to derive from deep normative principles and some practical concerns an institutional scheme proposal for the global care and protection of environmental global commons. For such a purpose, it would be based on top of four methodological motivations. Each of them would show one important aspect of the argument in favor of an Ecocracy, which will be considered below. Such motivations would be consistently considered as being methodological, to the extent to which it would define the analytical directions in which the arguments should be considered and presented. Given that this is a thesis on normative political philosophy, the above mentioned four dimensions would be coextensive to the four roles granted to political philosophy by John Rawls (Rawls, 2001).

A first methodological guideline would be to contribute to build a theoretical agreement between different streams of contemporary political philosophy. Rawls would say that “one task of political philosophy -its practical role, let’s say- is to focus on deeply disputed questions and to see whether, despite appearances, some underlying basis of political and moral agreement can be uncovered” (Rawls, 2001, 2). During at least the last century, a disputed question has been to prefer whether universalism or localism, in terms of political legitimacy and convenience. Contemporary cosmopolitanism would have try to supersede such a division, by introducing a “communitarian cosmopolitanism”. Ecocracy would advance in that same direction, with the purpose of proposing an institutional design inside of which a global democracy could be based on autonomous local communities and specific-culture-located individuals.

A second motivation of this thesis would be to serve as a reference point of rational orientation. John Rawls would call this role of political philosophy by the kantian idea of “orientation”. He would say that “the idea is that it belongs to reason and reflection (both theoretical and practical) to orient us in the (conceptual) space, say, of all possible ends, individual and associational, political and social. Political philosophy, as a work of reason, does this by specifying principles to identify reasonable and rational ends of those various kinds, and by showing how those ends can cohere within a well-articulated conception of a just and reasonable society” (Rawls, 2001, 3). This role of orientation would make of a political philosophical work a contribution to reason, by providing to it a direction within which to advance. Ecocracy would open a well ordered and deeply elaborated gate to further elaborations about institutional answers to a particularly cogent social and individual end, which is the care of water, air and earth, at a planetary scale. Ecocracy would provide a well-articulated institutional scheme proposal, which would reflect and reproduce a just, reasonable and diverse world society.

A third methodological concern of this thesis would be a reconciliatory-superseding critic. John Rawls would term this role of political philosophy with the hegelian term of “reconciliation”. According to him, “political philosophy may try to calm or frustration and rage against our society and its history by showing us the way in which its institutions, when properly understood from a philosophical point of view, are rational” (Rawls, 2001, 3). Ecocracy would be based on a particular interpretation of contemporary institutional world. This interpretation, inherited from contemporary cosmopolitanism, would not stand that current national and interstate institutions are exactly rational. Instead, a methodological assumption of this thesis would be that the actual institutional world could acquire a rational prospective. Contemporary cosmopolitanism has quiet incisively insisted on an insufficiency and incapacity of nation states and interstates institutions to take care of environmental global commons, because the intrinsic discreteness of such a system would impede to undertake a needed globally coordinated strategy. Ecocracy would not resign such a critic conception, but it would instead offer an institutional scheme within which national political power could be transformed in a desirable way. This kind of critic would not pledge for a political destruction of the existent institutional world, but instead for a superseding global democracy. This new democracy would embrace and supersede the nation state.

A forth and indeed core methodological motivation of ecocracy is to be a realistic utopia. Normative philosophy could be considered as a reasoned exercise to conceptually pledge in favor of what is good. According to Rawls, “we view political philosophy as realistically utopian” (Rawls, 2001, 4). Political normative philosophy would propose societal orderings that would morally better off human social life (take as greatest examples John Jacques Rousseau or John Stuart Mill). This very essential feature of normative political philosophy would be, in spite of its importance, rather complex. A perplexity would be produced by the seemingly contradictory fact that, on the one hand, none would discuss about a theoretical acceptability of normative political philosophy (which would be intrinsically utopian), even if, on the other hand, a utopia would not

necessarily be accepted as a consistent normative political philosophy. Contemporary political philosophy would ask from a utopia to be *realistically utopian* in order to be theoretically acceptable.

Roughly, the word utopia would refer to a desirable future. Normative political philosophy would be intrinsically utopian, even if it could be whether transformative or conservative. A conservative normative political philosophy could appeal to moral and ethical principles and prefer not to transform actual societies, but to refine them. Normative political philosophy could also prefer whether transformation whether innovation, and would be also utopian. In any case, John Rawls would argue that utopian normative philosophy would be acceptable only if such a utopia would be realistic. It is important to note that, as Rawls would pledge, how realistic a utopia would be, would not be a calculation based on empirical factors, since, conceptually, “the problem here is that the limits of the possible are not given by the actual” (Rawls, 2001, 5). According to him, the main question to ask here would better be: “what would a just democratic society look like *under reasonably favorable but still possible historical conditions, conditions allowed by the laws and tendencies of the social world?*” (Rawls, 2001, 4). In other terms, such a realistic feature of a utopia would be composed of considerations about historical and moral feasibility. Historical feasibility would refer to the legal, political, economic and social conditions that such a utopia would require to be made. Moral feasibility would refer to the existence of observable lines of moral evolution on top of which such a utopia would rest.

Following a simple etymological analysis, utopia would mean both a no-place and a good-place. A conjunction of both would be simplified by the assertion: “a good future”, if one accepts to consider that a reasonable “no-place” would be the future. Nevertheless, some authors would give a pejorative significance to the word utopia. A classical XIXth century debate between proudhonian utopian socialists and marxist scientific socialists would have been a context in which this word would have got a negative connotation. Recently, Thomas Nagel

would reproduce such negative connotation of the word utopia, by pledging that “an ideal, however attractive it may be to contemplate, is utopian if reasonable individuals cannot be motivated to live by it” (Nagel, 1991, 21). In a substantive way, in spite of a terminological dispute, Nagel would not be “anti-utopian”, to the extent to which he would sympathize with political imagination and ethical invention within political philosophy. He would say that “we are then faced with an unsatisfactory situation which calls for the exercise of political, social, and psychological imagination. What generates political theory as a distinct subject is an ethical demand and not just a practical one -and it is the demand for ethical invention” (Nagel, 1991, 32). In the context of this thesis, the word utopian would be freed of any pejorative connotation. Even though, to which extent a utopia would be an acceptable normative excursus would need to be further discussed.

Outside of a discussion about the meaning of the word, Nagel would introduce a compelling argument in front of a normative forward-looking political philosophy (utopia). According to him, “justification in political theory must address itself to people twice: first as occupants of the impersonal standpoint and second as occupants of particular roles within an impersonally acceptable system” (Nagel, 1991, 30). He would emphasize in the fact that an acceptable normative political theory would need to take into account, apart from rational human aspirations, individual motivations bind to what he may call “the stubborn realities of human nature” (Nagel, 1991, 3). In other terms, a normative idea would be unacceptable (or “utopian”, in the sense accorded to the word by Nagel), if it would not be historically feasible (in the sense given to this expression before), morally desirable (in the sense of being theoretically consistent with accepted moral principles), and morally plausible, in the sense that it would need to be compatible with personal “individual choices and efforts and personal attachments” (Nagel, 1991, 120). Historical feasibility and moral desirability would complete an “impersonal standpoint”, whilst moral plausibility would represent a “personal standpoint.

Lets take examples of non reasonable utopias. First: suppose that a utopia would be that human beings would fly and live in the trees. Even if extremely desirable, it would not be theoretically acceptable, since it would not be taking into account human physical nature's constraints. Second: suppose that a utopia would be that human beings would be freed of any conflict because we would all share the same moral convictions and behaviors. This one would not be acceptable because it would be both unsustainable from an impersonal standpoint (as long as diversity would rationally be preferred to unanimity), and unsustainable from a personal standpoint (as long as individuals would have personal motivations to differ from others). A more complex consideration would be needed to test a more elaborated utopia: suppose that a utopia would be to have an ecocracy, a global democracy for the care and protection of environmental global commons, inside of which the state would be embraced and superseded. Would this one be an acceptable one?

Rawls would argue that the acceptability of a (realistic) utopia would need to take into account, not the practical limitations it may find, but the actual tendencies of social life on top of which it would be based. This would be a requisite to some extent coextensive to what Nagel would call an impersonal standpoint. Following Nagel's approach, a personal standpoint would need to be considered also. Notwithstanding, it would not be consistent to impose to a utopian account a limitation on the basis of certain static traits of character that would be called "human nature". The reason is that a normative utopian political philosophy would be referring to a future, and the mentioned "human nature" would be a historical, and variable, configuration of human character. Such a character could evolve. If human nature was considered as a static feature, such a "nature" would be raised as a definite objection against any form of utopia. Therefore, normative political philosophy would be condemned as such.

If human beings were considered as being exclusively selfish, any social prospection which would not be strictly limited to the protection of life and goods of individuals, would be condemned as foolish, and rejected. For any

evolutionary view of human condition, it would be necessary to accept that human morality has been changing along history. Many, many examples of moral evolution can be easily found, in the fields of women's rights, children's rights, the care of the environment, and a long etcetera. A cogent argument in favor of human social and moral evolution would be offered by Steven Pinker, through his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011). With a basis on statistics, Pinker would argue that human society has socially, politically and therefore morally evolved towards a reduction of violence. The raise of the nation state, a feminization of social life, education, and also involuntary social features, would have been historically coordinated to produce such an observable line of human evolution. A necessary assumption for any form of utopia would be to accept the possibility of human moral evolution. If such an evolution would be rejected, almost any utopia would, regardless of how realistic it would be. As long as this would be a *sine qua non* requisite of any utopia, ecocracy would be based on an assumption of human moral evolution.

Moral evolution, nevertheless, cannot be reduced to a vacuum, through which the problem of a realistic utopia would be reduced to a simple *petitio principii*. For a utopia to be considered as realistic, the sense of the alleged moral evolution would need to be considered as realistic. As stated above, Rawls would encourage to answer to the question of a realistic utopia on top of an analysis of the kind of historical requisites and moral tendencies that such a utopia would be based on. A way to answer to Nagel's request about a moral plausibility of a normative political philosophy would be to identify observable lines of moral evolution. The extent to which such lines would effectively exist, would make plausible to assume that an institutional proposal would be morally "personally" accepted.

Ecocracy would be based on top of three moral tendencies. First, an ecological tendency, which could be observed in a growing concern about the care and protection of water, air, and earth, as environmental essentials of the atmosphere and of human life. Second, a cosmopolitan tendency, which could

be observed in a growing acceptance of cosmopolitan feelings of human belongings, and a of humanity as a community, in spite of national boundaries and cultural differences. Third, a post-national tendency, which would consist on a less observable acceptance of a cession of some features of nation states' sovereignty to a non statehood global regime for the care and protection of environmental global commons.

These three moral tendencies would be observable in contemporary social world. An ecological moral tendency would be almost out of any discussion, for it would be extremely strange that a reasonable person would be against the care and protection of water, air and earth. A cosmopolitan moral tendency would also be observable, even if it would be less consensual. In contemporary world, there would be still critics to cosmopolitanism coming, mostly, from localists perspectives. Contemporary cosmopolitan literature would be trying to deal with such critics, by incorporating communitarianism and nationalism inside a softened globalism. Even in spite of those critics, a tendency towards cosmopolitanism is real. It could be seemingly said that a moral contemporary tendency would be to assume an enlarged "we" of humanity. A post-national moral tendency would be indeed a more theoretically sophisticated one, and therefore it would be less assumed by people in general. A challenge of this thesis would be to show the acceptability of such, by proposing a consistent institutional global scheme, that would embrace and supersede the nation state. Such a challenge has been already undertaken by relevant authors like Jürgen Habermas. A post-national moral tendency would also exist. A growing ecological feeling, a growing cosmopolitan feeling and a growing post-national feeling, would be three moral tendencies on top of which a realistic moral evolution would make of ecocracy a realistic utopia.

The extent to which these three moral tendencies could be considered as realistic, would determine, in part, the extent to which ecocracy would be considered a realistic utopia. If these moral tendencies exist, a Nagel's personal standpoint would be satisfactorily taken into account: individuals would have

personal (moral) motivations to accept an ecocracy. The extent to which ecocracy would be considered a sustainable proposal from an impersonal standpoint, would determine the extent to which ecocracy would be accepted as a normative theory. Such an impersonal standpoint would be made of the theoretical consistency of the proposal (which will be exposed along this thesis), and of a consideration of the empirical conditions for its feasibility.

Normative considerations would not need to be strict derivations from empirical conditions. History would give plenty of examples on how human society would evolve in a purely unexpected way. A french liberal revolution from within a huge royalty, would show how interstitial moral tendencies can become effective and unexpected transformations. Moral attachment to revolutionary transformations would be usually be undertaken on the basis of political faith, and not on the basis of rational calculations (which would seemingly tend to free riding and convenient accommodations). Marx and Engels did a relevant effort to give to a revolutionary commitment a scientific basis, by trying to show a supposed inevitability of a communist transformation of capitalist society. Even today, when most of their scientific thesis have been revisited, many people continue to dream to supersede capitalism towards a communist cosmopolitan society. Again, moral attachment to a marxist revolutionary project would be based on top of political faith. In comparison to communism, ecocracy would need to be considered as a *minimalistic* utopia. For sure, ecocracy would not pretend to entail any kind of violent process of transformation, and it would look more for reconciliation than for destruction. As long as ecocracy would not be an all-or-nothing project, as communism could be considered, a blind faith based attachment to it would not be pretended. A half rational, half faith-based acceptance of the plausibility of ecocracy, would be an acceptable starting point.

Assuming that ecological, cosmopolitan and post-national lines of moral evolution are real facts, a synthesis of them three inside ecocracy, would need a prior consideration about the practical plausibility of this project. This would

complete a satisfactory impersonal standpoint. Without an ambition of making an exhaustive feasibility test of ecocracy, which would entail *per se* a complete social engineering dissertation, some prior considerations about legal, economic, political and social requisites for ecocracy's plausibility will be shortly discussed.

From a legal point of view, ecocracy would be independent from nation states, to the extent to which it would be an individuals-based global institution, rather than a states-based one. In that sense, what would give birth to an ecocracy would not be the will of nation states, but the will of individuals around the globe. Never the less, ecocracy would require a cession of some features of current national sovereignty, in regard of the care of water, air, and earth. Such sovereignty features would need to be ceded through national constitutional reforms. In constitutional democracies, to reform a constitution would be the most demanding procedure. It would require the biggest political majorities, whether inside a national senate or a constitutional assembly. A constitutional reform would reflect a national consensus in regard of a topic which has not been considered by an actual constitution. Every constitutional democracy considers the possibility of being reformed through demanding procedures. Formally, a cession of national sovereignty features to an ecocracy would be legally feasible. If it is true that most of contemporary national regimes are democratic, it would be necessary to accept that nation states would cede such sovereign features to an ecocracy, if national majorities would ask them to. If national regimes are democratic only by fake, such a situation would bring a morally evolved population to turn down their respective national regimes. As long as law would be dependent of social dynamics, the feasibility of getting such national majorities to favor an ecocracy will be considered below, in regard of the social feasibility.

Economic conditions for the feasibility of an ecocracy would be of various kinds. A simple aspect of economic considerations, would be the kind of funding that ecocracy would need to work. To the extent to which it would not be a state-

centric institution, any sort of compulsory contribution asked to nation states would not seem logical. It would make sense to expect non compulsory private contributions, whether from private fortunes whether from particular lay individuals around the globe. Also, nation states favorable to the creation of an ecocracy could make economic contributions. Another aspect to consider in regard of the economic feasibility of an ecocracy, would be a very likely clash of ecocracy's global norms against multinational corporations that would be damaging these three goods through their economic production. In general, multinational, or national, environmentally damaging corporations would allege that such injuries to environmental global commons are nothing but negative externalities. If this discourse is rightful, global and national corporations would not reject *per se* global regulations for the care and protection of environmental global commons. A third consideration in regard of the economic feasibility of ecocracy would be related to its scope. It is important to note that ecocracy would have jurisdiction to produce and implement norms for the *care and protection* of environmental global commons, and not for its allocation. Ecocracy would not deal with the (fair or unfair) property of water, air, and earth. It would deal only with its protection. In other terms, it would protect these three goods from any form of violence against them (pollution), and not from any form of appropriation of them. This is a feature that would make of ecocracy, once again, a minimalistic utopia.

Political considerations in regard of the feasibility of an ecocracy would have to do with the plausibility of a multi-layer democratic global governance. Such a model would be deeply presented in this thesis of the thesis. As it will be shown, such a multi-layer governance would be made of local ecopanel, a global ecoparliament and national states. The first ones would represent the communitarian aspect of ecocracy's cosmopolitanism. Those panels would be spontaneously created. As long as it is supposed that proximity ties would be a strongest incentive for popular participation, such would be a plausible institution. A global parliament would not be any political novelty at all. Non the less, for it to be considered a plausible institution, it would need not to be too

big. A chamber made of thousands of people would not seem plausible. That is the reason why such a parliament would be elected through a complete vote, through which every citizen would vote for the entire composition of the chamber, in a way that a little chamber could embody a significant diversity. The way in which these grass-root and top-down institutions would be articulated with nation states, would be a consequence of the partial cession of sovereignty that was discussed in regard of the legal feasibility. Nation states would have an incentive to cede some of its sovereignty functions, related to the care and protection of environmental global commons, to a global ecocracy, in an observation of the well known collective action problems of the interstate system, in contrast with the necessity of globally unified strategies in such a field. For the sake of a most needed ecological protection, morally evolved politicians would agree to cede such sovereign function to an ecocracy. The way in which these three layers of global governance would work together, will be presented in the chapters below.

To consider the social feasibility of an ecocracy would bring us back to discuss about moral evolution. What would be pertinent to add to what have been said, would be a consideration of the mechanisms to promote such a moral evolution, and a subsequent non violent compulsoriness of ecocracy's norms. A moral cosmopolitan sense would be produced, and re-produced, through, first of all, cosmopolitan education. Many schools around the globe do already include a cosmopolitan chair. Many cosmopolitan authors would argue in favor of a worldwide cosmopolitan education in schools. This mechanism, in spite of its relevance, would not be directly handled by an ecocracy. Instead, ecocracy would produce, and re-produce, moral cosmopolitan, ecological and post-national senses through a widest publicity, both regarding agreed (through a global intercultural overlapping consensus) moral principles, and of decision making and policies implementing processes. It will be shown that publicity would be used by ecocracy as an alternative for morally compulsory -whereas no violence-based- ecological regulations.

Based on political philosophy's methodological concerns, observable moral tendencies, and realistic empirical considerations of its feasibility, it would be reasonable to accept ecocracy as a realistic utopia. A core challenge for this thesis would be, non the less, to demonstrate that such an assumption would be consistent, to the extent to which ecocracy would offer a theoretically satisfactory cosmopolitan institutional scheme to take care and protect environmental global commons. By succeeding at this, ecocracy could be considered an acceptable reference point of future normative political philosophy.