mention that the progressive "dream of mastery" also implicitly invokes a Christian message. In Marxism, perhaps the extreme example of this faith, humans are alienated (sinful), but the laws of economics as revealed in the workings of the class struggle (a new omnipotent God) will necessarily bring about a cataclysmic earthly conflict (an apocalypse), yielding in the end a new communist paradise (a new heaven on earth). Human beings will then finally be reconciled with their true natures. The goal not only of Marxism but of all such forms of "economic religion" is the same as "environmental religion"—to reunite sinful human beings with their much better and truer natural state that preceded the Fall. Their actual disagreement is over the correct means—whether along an economic path or an environmental path—to the same Eden.

With a few notable exceptions such as Max Weber, the social sciences neglected religion for most of the twentieth century. Many thought that the role of religion in society was declining and might even disappear. By the end of the century, however, it was becoming obvious that this view was mistaken. Increasingly, social scientists are now taking up the study of the determinants of religious belief and the impact of religion on social and economic outcomes.

Wapner, however, is engaged in a different type of project with which social scientists are less familiar and comfortable. He is, in essence, examining economic and environmental thought as religions themselves. Rejecting each of them as inadequate, he proposes the rough outlines of what amounts to a new religious compromise. Because his intended audience is largely secular, however, and might be offended by the idea that he is proposing a new variant on Christian religion, explicitly identified as such, Wapner treads a fine line. He has written a book that is really about religion, even about God, even as he leaves out any explicit references to Christian theology, to the Bible, or to God. It is possible that he is not himself fully aware of the historical religious sources of his own thinking.

Wapner is hardly alone. In the twentieth century, secular religion replaced the traditional Jewish and Christian faiths as the leading religious influences in the public sphere. With traditional Jewish and Christian conversations largely driven out of public policy discourse, they went underground, reappearing as disagreements among forms of secular religion (see, Robert H. Nelson, *The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion versus Environmental Religion in Contemporary America,* 2010).

Secular religions, as Wapner sees both economics and environmentalism, are real religions, not just any idea or belief that may be very strongly (very "religiously") held. As religious books (in only modest disguise) such as *Living Through the End of Nature* become more common (and with mainstream academic publishers such as MIT Press), this will admittedly pose major challenges for political theory. How do we justify, for example, teaching environmental religion in the public schools when any similarly energetic proselytizing of Christian religion would be prohibited there? If the whole idea of separating church and state—like separating humans and nature for American environmentalism—is actually falling apart, what will be the consequences for American political and constitutional thought?

Institutions and Environmental Change: Principal Findings, Applications, and Research Frontiers. Edited by Oran R. Young, Leslie A. King, and Heike Schroeder. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008. 400p. $70.00 cloth, $29.00 paper.
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— Michael E. Kraft, *University of Wisconsin-Green Bay*

One of the most central and enduring questions in the study of environmental politics and policy is the capacity of institutions to resolve environmental problems. These include such widely studied and consequential global challenges as climate change, loss of biological diversity, degradation of oceans and forests, and the adverse impact of population growth and economic development on natural resources. The problems have been with us for some time, and over the past four decades the world's nations have formulated and approved hundreds of treaties and agreements directed at them, and also have built an impressive array of international regimes to further refine and implement the policies, with varying degrees of success.

The questions at the heart of this book concern how much institutions matter in this way and which institutional characteristics translate into effective policies and programs. *Institutions and Environmental Change* is a report from the decade-long Institutional Dimensions of Global Environmental Change project, itself one of the original core activities of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. The editors' purpose is to present the principal findings of the project and to promote further study of global environmental institutions.

The contributing authors also aspire to inform policymakers who are concerned about how to improve the performance of environmental institutions, which by many measures often has been disappointing, particularly in light of the magnitude of the problems with which they deal. Anyone who studies global environmental policy is aware of the dire forecasts and thus the urgent need to devise effective international policies and programs. In some respects, all studies of global environmental institutions need to take into account how the findings can be communicated to the public and to policymakers so that the prospects for smarter decisions in both policy adoption and implementation are enhanced.

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There is little question that institutions matter in addressing global environmental problems. Some international organizations, such as the World Bank, have long been faulted for contributing to environmental degradation by supporting economic development projects without consideration of their environmental impacts. Yet some environmental treaties, most notably the 1987 Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting chemicals, are cited as models of successful international cooperation, particularly in their effective integration of environmental science and policy and their ability to attract broad-based political support.

At the same time, other environmental treaties have fallen well short of their objectives and call into question the likely long-term effectiveness of at least some of the environmental regimes that the world has established over the past few decades. One of the most striking examples is the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change, and the failure of recent efforts to design its replacement in light of continued international disagreement over the goals and the obligations that would follow for both developed and developing nations.

The authors' attention here is directed at the broad institutional arrangements under which such organizations and treaties operate. Drawing from a rich literature on the "new institutionalism" in the social sciences, they seek to understand the complex interrelationships of the component parts of these new governance systems and the mechanisms through which they affect environmental problems. The editors and contributors correctly assume that such knowledge ought to helpful in designing institutions that offer hope of improved performance. Reformed institutions could, for example, be more effective in reaching their goals, more efficient in use of resources, more equitable in the distribution of their costs and benefits, and more likely to be sustained over time even if institutional design and operation can never be completely predictable.

To this end, as in many reports of this kind, there is a summary for policymakers that underscores the dual purpose of the book in advancing scholarship and influencing public policy and environmental governance. I suspect that most policymakers and their staffs will nonetheless find both the summary and the book a little tough to digest given the emphasis on theory and the often subtle methodological concerns that arise in the study of institutional performance. Yet for the determined reader, there is a great deal here that merits close study.

The nine chapters are organized into an introduction, research foci, analytic themes, and policy relevance and future directions. Oran Young's wide-ranging, cogent, and integrative introduction builds solidly on the foundation of existing literature while noting the many contributions that the book and the larger research project make in advancing knowledge of global environmental governance. In the research foci section, Young, Arild Underdal, and Ronald Mitchell delve into questions of causal relations (such as the relationship of institutions to the underlying and proximate variables that are seen as the major causes of environmental degradation), the ways in which to evaluate the performance of environmental institutions, and matters of institutional design or regime building. The three chapters in the analytic themes section deal with questions of fit, interplay, and scale: institutional fit or how well governance regimes are linked to the particular characteristics of biophysical systems; how different institutions interact with one another and either facilitate or obstruct achievement of goals; and problems of scaling or how institutions confront environmental problems with unusual time and spatial dimensions. Finally, in the last section, Heike Schroeder, Leslie King, Simon Tay, and Frank Biermann take on questions of policy relevance, or how the research efforts both summarized and encouraged in the volume can be linked to policy development.

This book contains an unusually broad and sophisticated set of contributions that reflect the frontiers of research on global environmental institutions. The chapters aptly and thoroughly summarize what is known about institutional design and performance, draw deeply from pertinent literature in the social sciences on institutionalism, and point to fruitful areas for future research. The book should be particularly of interest to academics entering the field who seek a summary of what we know and do not know, and to students of international relations who might consider expanding their research into the evolving and increasingly important topics of global environmental governance.

As noted, the chapters may be of interest as well to policymakers and other practitioners who have a serious interest in what academic research can tell them about institutional design, performance, evaluation, and change. In this regard, the last section pulls together the lessons of the project into "insights for policymaking" that emphasize complexities, such as ways to identify the key features of socioecological systems and match them to appropriately designed institutions, the importance of policy discourse in framing problems and choosing solutions, the need to move beyond linear thinking when dealing with complex and dynamic systems, and the need to consider possible unintended consequences of institutional interplay.

In the same vein, the last chapter by Biermann emphasizes the need to improve our understanding of earth systems governance and earth systems science, and how the two relate, and identifies promising long-term research objectives. Altogether, the book should help greatly to stimulate new and creative ways of thinking about how to study global environmental institutional design and operation.

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