

Review: Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment

By Jennifer Clapp and Peter Dauvergne

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Jennifer Clapp and Peter Dauvergne. *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. ISBN 0262532719 \$25.00 Paper \$62.00 Cloth. (327p.)

A contribution to the undergraduate environmental studies literature, *Paths to a Green World: the Political Economy of the Global Environment*, provides a summation of the issues surrounding the global economy and its relationship to environmental issues. The authors, [Jennifer Clapp](#), also the author of *Toxic Exports: the Transfer of Hazardous Wastes from Rich to Poor Countries* (Cornell University Press, 2001), and *Adjustment and Agriculture in Africa: Farmers, the State, and the World Bank in Guinea* (St. Martin's Press, 1997), and [Peter Dauvergne](#), the author of *Handbook of Global Environmental Politics* (E. Elgar, 2005), use four sometimes-competing worldviews to inform *Paths*. Using these four worldviews serves to structure policies and debates that surround globalization, global institutional analysis, transboundary pollution, (free) trade, development, labor, gender equity, investment, debt relief, sustainability, and poverty.

The four general worldviews, which are explained by the authors as “ ‘ideal’ categories exaggerated to help differentiate” are classified as market liberals (“benefits and dynamics of free markets and technology”), institutionalists (“emphasize the need for stronger global institutions and norms”), bioenvironmentalists (“stress the limits of earth to support life”), and social greens (“see social and political problems as inseparable”). In creating these “ideal” categories, the authors state they are simplifying “a seemingly unmanageable avalanche of conflicting information and analysis.” (p. 3). However, in describing the “ideal” categories, it would be useful for undergraduate readers, and readers generally, to be offered a brief theoretical discussion of what constitutes an “ideal,” by which I assume the authors are referring to Max Weber’s concept of *ideal type*.¹ This, and concepts such as *environmental discourse*², are simply not defined by the authors. In the case of environmental discourse, a mere footnote to John S. Dryzek’s *The Politics of the Earth : Environmental Discourses* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2005) is provided, which hardly contributes to an understanding of the theoretical underpinning and methodological application of discourse, or its relevance to the language, politics, policies, and practices of economic players such as the World Bank, International

Monetary Fund, and various transnational corporations.

The criteria for including specific thinkers in *Paths* is explained by Clapp and Dauvergne as limited to those who are “environmentalists – that is, those who write and speak and work to maintain or improve the environment around us.” (p.4) Therefore, it is a surprise to see the work of [Jeffrey Sachs](#) (Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, whose prolific work includes economic reform, globalization, and development), [James D. Wolfensohn](#) (whose tenure as World Bank president correctly brought the Bank into the rights, education, and development conversation), and alternative economist [Hazel Henderson](#) (whose system views of the global “vicious circle” economy, and ideas that tie economics to systems theory and ethics) totally ignored. Brief, informative case studies highlight and support the text; however, in terms of subject coverage, only slightly touched upon in *Paths* is the global trade in hazardous substances, and completely missing from the text is any discussion of nuclear waste, emissions trading, pollution taxes, the impact of security, militarization and war on local economies, and Paris Club creditors (Club de Paris), who play a key part in negotiating controversial debt for nature and environment swaps.

Although *Paths* assumes some previous study of political economy, (for example, the role of Bretton Woods monetary regime, the history of the Less Developed Country (LDC) debt crisis, and so on), by structuring their work around four general worldviews, Clapp and Dauvergne offer the undergraduate reader a broad understanding of the differing views of globalization and environmental policy, as well as the complex role that governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational corporations (TNCs) play in developing global economic policy and standards that impact the environment. *Paths* is a contribution to the undergraduate environmental economics and environmental studies curriculum, as well as academic library collections, and supports its mission of introducing “the debates on the interface between political economy and global environmental change” (xii).

1 Raymond Aron (201) describes an *ideal type* as “an organization of intelligible relations within an historical entity or sequence of events...the construction of ideal types is an expression of an attempt, characteristics of all scientific disciplines, to render subject matter intelligible by revealing (or constructing) its internal rationality” (actions, knowledges, goals). (*Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. vol. 2 Trans., Richard Howard and Helen Weaver. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1970); Lewis A. Coser (223) “an analytical construct that serves the investigator as a measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases. It provides a basic method for comparative study.” (*Masters of Sociological Thought* :

Ideas in Historical and Social Context. Robert K. Merton, ed. New York :
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

2 Among other things, Dryzek (9) defines discourse as a “shared way of
apprehending the world...discourses construct meaning and relationships,
helping to define common sense and legitimate knowledge. Each discourse
rests on assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic
terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements.” Dryzek (9-11)
also says discourses are “bound up with political power...and conditions the
way we define, interpret and address environmental affairs.”

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