Almost every variant of environmental philosophy envisions a world of lower consumption, more modest aspirations, and greater care and attention to the impact of economic and technological choices on the natural world. If humanism is about freedom, the capacity of our species, by self-reflection and political deliberation, to liberate us from reification and blind fate-like processes, then the environmentalist project is perhaps the most humanistic ever conceived.

—Lewis P. Hinchman

Today perhaps it is wise to try to transfigure the old humanisms that have played important roles in Euro-American states into multiple affirmations of entangled humanism in a fragile world.

—William E. Connolly

In a ruling that protects circus animals from abusive treatment, the High Court of Kerala in India in 2000 said: “Though not homosapiens, they are also beings entitled to dignified existence and humane treatment sans cruelty and torture.... Therefore, it is not only our fundamental duty to show compassion to our animal friends, but also to recognise and protect their rights.” There have been a number of other constitutional, legislative, and judicial enactments in several countries that affirm the moral standing and “considerability” of non-human species and natural systems.

Is the ethical space linking the human and the non-human worlds limited to the personal and cultural virtues and sentiments of charity, compassion, and kindness, or does it also include matters of public justice and political obligation? In other words, are ecological policy questions to be left to private decisions made by each individual in the court of his or her own conscience, or are they also public moral decisions to be made collectively as part of political morality and ecological governance? The former involves each of us as private persons, the latter as public persons or citizens.

I think that many would agree that neither the treatment of animals nor broader issues of environmental regulation and policy should be left solely to private self-interest and personal moral or religious belief, although many progressive environmental reforms can be reasonably justified on those grounds. But one may seriously question whether voluntary beneficence and prudence will be sufficient in the face of carbon-intensive global capitalism. Some trends of private governance are encouraging, but unless the ecological crisis of unsustainable practices and institutions is addressed politically, democratically, and constitutionally, then the greening of green will be too little, too late. Does ethical and political argument designed to strengthen discursive democratic citizenship and turn it into ecological citizenship have any promise?

I share Lewis Hinchman’s sense, if not his specific terminology, that the moral and political imagination of ecological philosophy envisions greater care for natural being in the deployment of economic behavior and technological power by human beings. Care means species-appropriate attention to the health, resilience, integrity, flourishing, and beauty of the non-human world and its inhabitants, even as it also means attention to these aspects of human life. There is nothing in the logic or history of the practice of care that limits it to relationality among humans only. Indeed, perhaps even more so than with important normative concepts like rights, justice, and dignity, the concept of care readily brings the mind and heart into situations of interdependence, mutuality, and precarity. Discourse that delimits the idea of care within human-centered and ethnocentric assumptions notwithstanding, care is one of the most promising orientations for the multicultural and transhistorical reclamation effort now underway, in these pages and elsewhere, “to transfigure the old humanisms,” as political theorist William Connolly says, “into multiple affirmations of entangled humanism in a fragile world.”
But an ecological deployment of an ethic of care is but one building block for a new vocabulary of political and moral imagination in the Ecozoic era.\textsuperscript{6} Others include an ecological interpretation of liberty or freedom, community, agency, the public, the private, and the civic.\textsuperscript{7} Moreover, there are several key normative concepts that I would group along with care under the rubric of “relational practices of just recognition” that will be crucial in the reinvention of a humanism of right relationships between humans and nature. These are solidarity, membership, mutuality, empathy, belonging, kinship, reconciliation, and trust.

\textbf{Being a citizen means more than passive security and private productivity or enjoyment; it requires active engagement and participation in joint efforts to promote the common good.}

In this essay I reflect on the notion of citizenship and on what I see as two entangled issues pertaining to it. First, what can the concept of citizenship mean and enable when it is interpreted as a practice of relational recognition of the moral standing of others and of oneself? Such a treatment of citizenship would be aspirational and in the subjunctive mood; it would be “as-if” citizenship, “could be” civic practices.\textsuperscript{8} Second, what are the special demands on the practice of citizenship when entrusted with governing the interaction between humans and nature—in other words, when working to sustain a healthy symbiosis between human collective action and natural Earth systems’ functioning and resilience? Thinking through this question may provide a new angle on what is often referred to as “ecological citizenship.”\textsuperscript{9}

It seems to me that among the varieties of types and theories of citizenship that are powerful and active today, discursive citizenship is the most promising starting point for the emergence of ecological citizenship.

\textbf{CITIZENSHIPS: HISTORICAL AND CONTESTED}

The history of political theory has been, among other things, a perennial restoration of the interconnections among a people’s understanding of the present, their vision of the future, and their memory of the past. All political and economic action that shapes or distorts ecologies and Earth systems is action in time. The interconnections of past, present, and future, their entanglement, form the basis for that repertoire of potential human agency and that constellation of actual social practices—deliberating, judging, agreeing, compromising, rule making, and the conscientious fulfillment of promises and obligations that constitute a political form of life, a \textit{bios politikos}. However, the course of events over the past fifty years, the great acceleration and the great unraveling and unwinding, has called into the question the continuing viability of the normative tradition of political theorizing.\textsuperscript{10} More recently, the rise of authoritarian and nativist populist regimes and movements in many countries calls into question the values and institutions of constitutional democracy itself.\textsuperscript{11}

These developments and trends have abetted the striking dissolution of \textit{civitas} or civic community and the attenuation of the activity of citizenship in our lives—citizenship, that is, as articulated in the work of Aristotle and in its revival in the civic humanist discourse of the Renaissance and in the age of democratic revolutions.\textsuperscript{12} In this discourse, citizenship is not so much what it became for later liberalism—namely, having rights or the promotion or protection of individual interests—as it is the relational praxis constituting our most fully human ethical self-realization. The space of this praxis is the participatory democratic forum, the town meeting, the teach-in—all the consciousness-raising events of the civil rights, feminist, or environmental social movements. It is the voices calling for justification and justice in the Black Lives Matter protests taking place amid the Covid-19 pandemic and the scourge of massive unemployment. Violence, disproportionate risk and mortality, hardship deliberately imposed in the name of freedom—all strike hardest against
those denied moral standing and recognition. Citizens are those who will not turn their heads and pretend that they don’t see. Citizenship in this sense is a lost treasure; it has not flourished in the administrative structure of state capitalism, in the interest-group pluralism of liberal market democracies, nor in the privatization and social-welfare austerity policies of neoliberalism.¹³

Of course, to lose the concept of citizenship in the form that I want to recover here is not to lose the concept entirely. One might argue that citizenship is still understood and practiced in non-democratic countries, but it surely is most fully operative and most normatively important in partnership with what Abraham Lincoln called “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.”¹⁴ Consequently, it is democratic citizenship as a relational practice of just recognition and as a lynchpin of ecological governance that is the focus of my analysis.

However, these background considerations should be pushed one step further. The ethical and philosophical rationales for democratic citizenship as a political identity and as a way of being in the political world have taken several different forms. At present, three modes of democratic membership and practice are predominant. These are liberal citizenship, civic republican citizenship, and deliberative—or, as I prefer to say—discursive citizenship.¹⁵

Liberal (contractarian and utilitarian) theories treat citizenship as a legal status attached to particular rights and privileges. Important among them are the voting franchise, eligibility to stand for some elective offices, and equal protection under the law. One need not exercise these rights to be a citizen so long as they are in the background, providing protection and security against violence, trespass, and unjust discrimination. This is in keeping with the general orientation of liberalism in which politics is primarily an instrument for protecting the interests of individuals—separately or collectively. Republican theories have a more holistic conception of citizenship as a political activity more than a legal status and a more developmental view of citizenship as a learning experience furthering the realization of genuine freedom and self-determination by individuals and communities. Being a citizen means more than passive security and private productivity or enjoyment; it requires active engagement and participation in joint efforts to promote the common good. Finally, discursive citizenship consists in offering reasonable justifications for public policies and patterns of activity through public argument and dialogue between and among fellow citizens. Political theorist John Dryzek defines discursive citizenship as a political practice that is:

pluralistic in embracing the necessity to communicate across difference without erasing difference, reflexive in its questioning orientation to established traditions..., transnational in its capacity to extend across state boundaries into settings where there is no constitutional framework, ecological in terms of openness to communication with non-human nature, and dynamic in its openness to ever-changing constraints upon and opportunities for democratization.¹⁶

Discursive citizenship is pluralistic, reflexive, transnational, ecological, and dynamic. The hallmarks of citizenship that Dryzek identifies provide promising ways of using discursive democratic citizenship as a platform for theory building and incorporating a new conception of ecological citizenship.

Liberal citizenship builds on the root notion that human beings are acquisitive and competitive beings. Civic republicanism builds on the notion that human beings are relational but hesitates to specify the normative content of key political and social relationships, lest doing so would introduce a hierarchy of wisdom or virtue and undermine civic humanism’s strong egalitarian and popular bent. Discursive citizenship sees the communicative dimension of human being and becoming—specifically, the offering of a public and reasoned justification for actions—as the core of citizenship, which is a relational practice of recognition.¹⁷ This emphasis on the process and dynamics of deliberation, argumentation, and justification resolves the dilemma of civic humanism because it brings
substantive ethical norms and standards to bear on social and political relationality via the dynamics of human language rather than via the authority of exceptional individual minds or characters. Governance and justice through the learning and consensus-building power of free and equal political argument and communication obviates the need for a Philosopher King.

A communion of friends reminds us of our interdependence, but an assembly of citizens must be devoted to thinking and acting impartially on behalf of...the common good.

Speaking of Philosopher Kings, prior to modern times, most political philosophers followed Plato in seeing democracies as inherently unstable and self-destructive because both the competitiveness and the relationality of human beings can lead to impulsive actions and self-deluding beliefs. In short, rule of the many (the people; the demos) is prone to becoming rule of the mob (ochlocracy). Then it must give way to rule of the few or the one (oligarchy or monarchy). Mobs don’t really govern; they tear down and end up eventually empowering seductive autocrats or tyrants. The notion of a democratic governance that requires affirmation by a process of consensus building around reasoned public arguments of justification offers a check on the dangers of impulsive and fanatical waves of non-rational, emotional enthusiasm in politics.

For their part, non-democratic conservatives have been open to the charge that their favored mode of politics is overly hidebound and causes the society or people it governs to miss important benefits of innovation and social change. Discursive citizenship may have an answer to this line of criticism, as well, because a genuinely democratic and open political contest between various reasons for justified action can be expected to result in a well-rounded consensus, not one impulsive or skewed. This practice of citizenship preserves social cohesion and continuity and also promotes innovative learning and change.

Moreover, the practice of discursive citizenship shapes a democratic governance, making it functional and stable as well as self-correcting, socially intelligent, and capable of civic learning. The contest of well-reasoned justifications strengthens a mutual recognition among citizens in light of common rights, values, and well-being. Recognizing the commonality of the common good is a precious and hard-won achievement in politics, for it staves off the mistake of projecting particularistic interests onto the notion of the common good. When this projection takes over, politics degenerates into a struggle to control the definition of the common good rather than a contest to determine the best rationale and justification of a proposed contribution to the common good. Discursive citizenship practice promotes the growth of tolerance, cooperation, integrity preserving compromise, respect, and positive regard for individual and group diversity.

This kind of political education involves knowledge, judgment, and character not gained by academic training but only through the participatory exercise of democratic citizenship itself. This makes the judgment of discursive citizens quite different from professional expertise. Citizenship is a practice that can be assessed only by evaluating patterns of judgment and conduct over time. Citizens act toward the future by learning from past successes and mistakes. This makes citizenship dangerous when it becomes absolutist and dogmatic because profound and incorrigible mistakes can be made. On the other hand, civic learning by argument and consensus formation is deliberate but not necessarily speedy. One consideration favoring politically insulated but still accountable expert elite governance over democratic governance is that climate change and other pending crises do not provide enough time for the incremental and pragmatic approach of deliberative citizenship democracy.18

If current conditions are undermining the norms and practices of democratic citizenship in certain ways, how can we reconstruct its norms and repair
THINK HERE

officials often hear citizens in the audience say something like, “Remember, you work for me (us).” And the activity of citizenship is defined by a structure of social rules and norms—ethical and political expectations and responsibilities. Participatory systems of citizenship tend to impose more expectations and duties of this kind than do more passive and liberal systems, but across the board, to be a citizen is to carry responsibilities and duties owed to others and to the nation, city, or town (or watershed, landscape, or ecosystem) to which you belong.

For the civic domain to serve and support any one species, it must include—make civic space for, give moral recognition to—an entire functioning web of many species.

Moreover, social structures and cultural meanings shape the norms and values informing the practices of recognition embedded in citizenship at any given time and place. Some such practices take place among members who are acquainted in commonly defined associations, and some involve mutuality among strangers. What distinguishes citizenship from closely related ties—such as kinship, friendship, and shared life experiences like military service—is its tendency to encompass the impersonal and the general in human life. Citizenship is an idea of connection that cuts across friend and stranger to embrace both those in whom one recognizes oneself and those in whose face one sees the vast diversity of mankind. A communion of friends reminds us of our interdependence, but an assembly of citizens must be devoted to thinking and acting impartially on behalf of the general will or the common good, for that is what a democracy entrusts its citizens with.

Citizenship is a practice of recognition. It is closely aligned especially with two other practices of recognition—solidarity and care. Solidarity involves the affirmation of the moral and the civic standing of others, especially those whose standing is being...
denied or is going unrecognized. It is a recognition of common membership at many levels, as citizens in a polity, as colleagues or comrades in a common endeavor, as fellow human beings, and, in what might be called ecological solidarity, as members of a symbiotic interspecies web of life. On the other hand, care is recognition centered on paying attention to others, tending to their dignity and need. In light of these perspectives, my argument is that citizenship can itself be seen as a practice of recognition through avowal of (that is, by openly embracing and taking responsibility for) the conditions required for other relational practices, such as solidarity and care, to be pursued. Taken together, the social, cultural, and material requirements of all the practices of recognition in a society is the common good of that society. Superintending the affirmation of and attention paid to the common good is the core of the practice of citizenship. Put differently, discursive democratic citizenship as a practice of recognition integrates the values inherent in other modes of moral recognition of others, especially solidarity and care—affirmation and attention—by various modes of avowal and the fulfillment of public trust.

All practices of recognition start with a specific stance and posture. Solidarity is standing up beside. Care is paying attention to. The posture of democratic citizenship is \textit{avowal of rights and obligations of membership in a civic community}—my membership, your membership, our membership.

Avowal connotes both making a commitment (taking a vow) and making a public declaration concerning something (avowing one’s support for someone or something). The stakes of associational civic membership involve taking on a trust, publicly declaring a moral understanding of future action within the context of a particular social and institutional role, and striving to critically assess various arguments of justification against a standard of reasonableness and a discipline of uncoerced consensus.

Like standing up and paying attention, avowing is declaring and enacting in plain sight an attachment of self to others, but unlike other practices of public recognition, the attachment of trust is taken on as a dialogical commitment and is mediated through collective institutional structures. I promise my attachment to my fellow citizens (and to non-citizens whose well-being has also been entrusted to those in public authority), not as a unique individual, nor as a representative of your kind, but as a fellow member of a We larger than either of us, but \textit{not} larger than all of us. When ten people lift a heavy object, it is not ten liftings, but one. Yet the one lift could not exist without the lifting ten. That is the essential insight upon which discursive citizenship rests and ecological citizenship builds.

Membership in a civic association entails the activity of associating or doing one’s fair share as a member of something larger than oneself. As previously noted, this sets discursive citizenship off from liberal citizenship understood primarily as a bundle of personal rights and liberties. The rationale of such membership is not instrumental competition for power, wealth, or status. Nor is it the intrinsic value of doing one’s duty owed to the humanity of others, per se. Instead, it is the moral and political goodness of a civic way of living and the shared promise of human self-realization through interdependence.

Construing membership as a practice rather than a status opens the way to what might be called an “ecological turn” in an understanding of citizenship because it sets aside the claim of evolutionary superiority of the human species and brings to the fore the notion of ontological entanglement or the human immersion in a living world of diversity and plurality. The question asked for centuries—what kind of being is fit to be a citizen (fit to be entrusted with authority and rule)?—gives way to the question of what kind of being does the association need if it is to be both sustainable and legitimate?

The former question has historically excluded many classes of human beings. It has also taken for granted that non-human beings could not be part of the demos and were outside the boundaries of the political community—that they were in
an anarchic “condition of mere nature” vis-à-vis humanity and had no political or moral standing. However, the latter question moves us in an inclusive human direction intentionally and in an inclusive natural direction inadvertently. It suggests that the farmers, craftsmen, artisans, and laborers—who make the political as well as the biological life of the city possible—should, on that account, share in citizenship activity and self-governance. But natural creatures and systems are no less integral to the life of the city; this line of functional inquiry opens the notion of membership to virtually all human beings and to many (if not all) non-human beings, as well.

Moreover, this extension of the recognition of moral standing within a relational community has a clear criterion of justice associated with it. Consider the following formulation by the noted political and legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin: “A person’s right to be treated with dignity... is the right that others acknowledge his genuine critical interests: that they acknowledge that he is the kind of creature, and has the moral standing, such that it is intrinsically, objectively important how his life goes.”21

Dworkin may or may not have been thinking explicitly about recognition of the moral standing of non-human creatures when he made that remark, but on the other hand there is no particular reason why he would have used the term “creature” unless he meant to broaden membership in a community of beings who have moral standing in relation to one another. Whatever his intent, I believe that the criterion he mentions is the basis for a practice of recognition that we can use in the discourse of ecological solidarity, ecological care, and ecological citizenship. With non-human beings and the ecosystems that make their lives (and ours) possible, it is intrinsically, objectively important how their lives go—how well they are allowed to actualize the potential capabilities of their kind. To deny that recognition to other human beings is to take them out of the realm of morality as subjects and to place them as objects in the domain of mere utility—an instrumental worth. The traditional Western worldview has sanctioned doing precisely that when it comes to nature, natural resources, or the “environment.” The core rationale of ecological political theory and ecological citizenship is to reimagine the Earth as a spaceship rather than a slave ship.

The species being and flourishing of all creatures, including human beings, is interdependent and functional within a complex web of biophysical and symbiotic interactions on different scales, from the planetary to the microbiomic. This is an ontological claim about relationality, and it has a clear ethical analogue. A civic association or a democratic community should define membership inclusively, and in this sense embrace the ecological turn in its understanding of citizenship. If one were to predicate membership in a civic association on the biology of one species (let us say, in keeping with the Western tradition, the genetic inheritance and biological traits of human beings) in isolation from this ecological nexus, then the latent potentialities and development of members of that species could not be actualized as functional capabilities within such a grouping or association. Hence, the association would not be able to meet its members’ needs or respect their rights. It would be a moral failure. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum explains the rationale behind this conclusion:

Once we understand that the point of justice is to secure a dignified life for many different kinds of being, why shouldn’t [justice] include nonhuman beings as full-fledged subjects.... The general aim of [a just] human-animal relationship... would be that no sentient animal should be cut off from the chance for a flourishing life, a life with the type of dignity relevant to that species, and that all sentient animals should enjoy certain
positive opportunities to flourish. With due respect for a world that contains many forms of life, we attend with ethical concern to each characteristic type of flourishing, and strive that it not be cut off or fruitless.22

For the civic domain to serve and support any one species, it must include—make civic space for, give moral recognition to—an entire functioning web of many species. To view human beings as citizen members of the political community for the purposes of governmental decision making, it is also necessary to recognize the moral standing of non-human species and ecological systems as citizens for the purposes of meeting the needs and promoting the flourishing of a full range of species-appropriate capabilities.

Ecosystems as functioning entities must be included in this line of argument because they also have potential and actualizable capabilities integral to the flourishing of individual plants and animals and of human beings. Hence, they have needs and vulnerabilities that must be taken into consideration in ecological governance conducted by human citizens on behalf of the entire political community.

The citizenship entitlement of non-human beings flows from the contribution they make and essential role they play in the community of life within which the civic community (including its human members) is nested. But that is what the citizenship recognition of human beings is based upon also. To be sure, non-human citizens do not directly participate in the discursive argument and justification process of democratic governance, although their needs and interests can be represented there, but it is their worldly presence, their metabolism, their agency through evolved biochemical capabilities and behavioral repertoires, that provides the material and substantive value content to those arguments and justifications made by human citizens entrusted with care for the living world and with the maintenance of its resilience and flourishing.

**CITIZENSHIP AND TRUST**

Democratic citizenship—especially discursive and ecological citizenship—is a practice of complex and reciprocal recognition of fellow citizens as bearers and avowers of civic trust. Practices of democratic citizenship foster a sense of trusteeship on the part of all individual members for the well-being of the association as a whole and its exemplification of justice. These practices depend upon a supportive political, social, and cultural environment. Citizenship and trusteeship either shut down or go into hiding during the breakdown of social and political systems—under conditions of excessive fear, anxiety, widespread and reasonable suspicion, mistrust, criminal or military violence, and the arbitrary exercise of state power. Citizenship also falters in the face of economic destitution and social marginalization and under the weight of widespread discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. Supportive conditions, on the other hand, include hope and progress toward human rights, civil liberties, impartial justice, and equality under the law.

Citizenship is fundamentally self-reflexive in a way many other offices and roles are not. It is not limited to a job description comprised of a discrete set of roles and responsibilities. Its responsibility is to define responsibility and set its bounds. To be a citizen is to be entrusted in time, but also in a sense to be entrusted with time. To be a citizen is to face up to or recognize one’s own trusteeship and to avow it in a dynamic and recurring way. Citizens therefore recognize themselves in a temporal line in which authority is handed down to them and must be passed along from them to those awaiting it, tomorrow, in the next decade, and at the end of the current century. Different political issues have different temporalities and geo-physical rhythms. To be a citizen is to be entrusted in many times—time present, past, and to come. Bloggers, voters, and ecosystems all react to the use of political power and authority, but at different speeds.

Citizenship as a practice of recognition is fundamentally entrusted with sustaining cognate practices of recognition and with the common good, which is the focal point where all right recognitions and right relationships in an ecologically embedded political community converge. There is no precise specification of what sustaining
and superintending the common good entails. Practices of citizenship that keep faith with the trust bestowed upon them are dynamic, developmental, aspirational, and circumstantial. But two things, by way of conclusion, can be suggested.

First, the public trust bestowed on discursive and ecological citizenship is intergenerational. Resolute caring for the common good of presently alive beings is not enough; just as present non-humans must be included in the civic body by dint of their intrinsic value, in themselves and to the entire community of life, so, too, not-yet-existing beings—both human and non-human—must be taken into moral consideration, as well. Thus being entrusted with the well-being of the present alone is not a full specification of this burden and expectation of citizenship, for the endowment of trust extends to the realization of a better future, too.

Second, a practical and theoretical merger of discursive democratic citizenship and ecological democratic citizenship is taking place in climate action politics around the world. Heretofore, people have been adept at re-fabricating and utilizing non-human nature to serve human ends. With the advent of discursive democratic citizenship as a just recognition of ecological agency, capability, and goodness, we may learn how to use our talents in more trustworthy ways and live up to that which democratic citizenship avows.

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NOTES

6. Thomas Berry proposed this terminology: “I suggest the name ‘Ecozoic’ as a better designation than ‘Ecological.’ Eco-logos refers to an understanding of the interaction of things. Eco-zoic is a more biological term that can be used to indicate the integral functioning of life systems in their mutually enhancing relations.” T. Berry, “The Ecozoic Era,” Eleventh Annual E.F. Schumacher Lecture, ed. H. Hannum, delivered October 1991 at John Dewey Academy, Great Barrington, MA, https://centerforneweconomics.org/publications/the-ecozoic-era/.
8. My discussion of subjunctive conceptions is drawn from Adam Seligman and colleagues, who have studied two different forms of framing experience: ritual and sincerity. They propose that “ritual and sincerity shape group and individual boundaries to create very different modes of empathy and interaction.” A.B. Seligman, R-P. Weller, M.J. Puett, and B. Simon, Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6. Ritual creates an “as if” or “could be” world of shared aspirations and possibilities—in other words, a “shared subjunctive.” (Ibid., 7-8) They further argue that the pursuit of the good requires a shared subjunctive—a shared sense that things could be otherwise and better—in order to create a political community where people live as if the good were achievable. By contrast, sincerity is an approach to the world, including the political world, based on a declarative “as is” vision rather than a subjunctive “as if” vision. This shared declarative tends to be totalizing and absolutist—an unambiguous vision of reality “as it really is.”

Historical and ethical treatments of citizenship law, naturalization, and immigration policy conducted in a declarative, “as is” fashion reveal a terrible record of racism, favoritism, prejudice, and discrimination. For a study of these matters in the United States, see R.M. Smith, Civic Ideals: Cultural Politics of the American Constitution (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

10. J.R. MacNeill, and P. Engelke, The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); P. Krugman, The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); G. Packer, The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013). At the core of this crisis lies the suspicion that the traditional categories of political knowledge and sensibility have become outmoded by the virtually unprecedented social realities of the modern world. The discourse of the past seems to offer us little, if any, political education; neither does it seem to provide us with that enabling act of mind necessary for an understanding of the present or an aspiration toward the future. Intellectually, we stand poised between the antiseptic language of technocratic jargon on one side and a rhetoric of nostalgia on the other.

14. W.H. Auden in a poem of exquisite irony, “The Unknown Citizen” (1939), shows what a problematic and debased meaning the term “citizen” can have when used merely as a bureaucratic honorific. Couched as an official administrative encomium, the poem reviews the conduct of a man named and remembered by a number. His was a life of passivity, conformity, and apolitical routine. The “absurd” question of human meaning and experience in such a life—“Was he free? Was he happy?”—is answerable only by reference to the system of seemingly benign but essentially totalitarian surveillance (“had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard”). Cosmopolitan humanism would provide one alternative standard of judgment with which to evaluate such a life and such a system; the tradition of civil humanism and citizenship that I am gesturing at here provides another. I am not sure where Auden comes down on this, but as I read the poem, at least, it provides support for saying that JS/07M/378 was not a citizen at all in any meaningful sense of the term. His outer social circumstances did not permit it, and perhaps his inner resources, having never had an opportunity to experience the bios politikos, were not conducive to it, either.


