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appear to agree on the condition of contemporary America.

In Chapter Eleven, Mary P. Nichols examines the criticisms of American education made by E.D. Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy* and Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Both authors essentially claim that the current weakened state of American democracy is partly due to the failings of American education. Nichols essentially agrees with their criticisms of American education, which she details, but argues that their recommendations are faulty since they include some of the same theoretic elements on which our nation's current system of education is based.

In Chapter Twelve, Robb A. McDaniel presents a systematic analysis of Leo Strauss's anti-egalitarianism. He wants to explore more fully the ambiguities that are part of Strauss's thoughts on natural inequality. For those interested in perpetuating liberalism, a fuller examination of the complexity of Strauss's defense of liberal democracy would be quite useful. McDaniel discusses some of the critical components of Strauss's ideas about liberalism, and reflects on some of the common ground shared by his and communitarian thought.

In Chapter Thirteen, Daniel J. Mahoney wants to "highlight the contribution that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has made to our understanding of the phenomena of ideology and natural right." (p. 210) Mahoney examines Solzhenitsyn's thoughts primarily in regard to his reflections on the meaning of totalitarianism and the worst evil emanating from totalitarianism. He also discusses Solzhenitsyn's political stance and his thoughts on the rearticulation of a natural moral order and compares those thoughts to Leo Strauss's.

In the final chapter of the volume, Brian C. Anderson explores Raymond Aron's thoughts on the prospects of achieving a state of peace for the world community. Anderson points out that Aron categorized two approaches toward achieving this form of peace. Anderson details Aron's thoughts on these two approaches and which one would be the preferred way of achieving a universal peace. The transition between this chapter, which focuses on the notion of international community, and the other chapters that examine community in the American context is somewhat abrupt but does prove to be an interesting extension of reflecting on communitarian thought.

In summary, to more fully appreciate the insights made by the chapters' authors, one needs to have a pretty thorough understanding of the tenets of communitarianism and a basic familiarity with the writings of both classical and contemporary philosophers. For readers with this knowledge base, *Community and Political Thought Today* makes a welcome contribution along a variety of dimensions about communitarian and current political thought and the state of affairs in America.

**Environmental Anthropology: From Pigs to Policies, by Pat Townsend.
Mayfield, IL: Waveland Press (2000), vii, 119 pp.**

**Reviewed by Edward Liebow, Environmental Health & Social Policy Center,
Seattle, WA.**

This is a brief, general survey book with a number of uncommon strengths. It presents a clear history of some key ideas in environmental anthropology, and distills several landmark analyses to a sharp focus. Its story-telling style is engaging, and it presents a glossary and bibliography that

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will be of value in classroom use.

Townsend weaves her own long-standing interest in tropical agricultural systems into the text throughout, and her personalized tales from the field form a nice series of touchstones to which we return several times in our guided excursion across the sweep of continents, times, and anthropology's main sub-disciplines. The chapters are organized in roughly historical sequence, after an introduction that presents a story about Townsend's fieldwork in New Guinea and naming the fields of cultural anthropology, archeology, biological anthropology and linguistics (to which "applied anthropology" is appended as a practical problem solving extension).

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of cultural ecology and reviews the work of Julian Steward from the 1940s and 1950s. Chapter 3 explains the pursuit of ethnobiology, which came into favor in the early 1960s and relied heavily on language to characterize traditional ecological knowledge about plants, animals, and other aspects of the environment. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on work that started in the 1960s and 1970s, and brought concepts and methods into anthropology from other disciplines, especially the biology of ecosystems.

Chapter 4 highlights the work of Roy Rappaport in New Guinea. Chapter 5 features the work of several researchers (e.g., Phillipe Descola, Anna Roosevelt, Eric Ross, and Robert Carneiro) who have examined hunting and gathering and horticultural practices in the Amazon. Chapter 6 describes work that has been done with larger agricultural populations in more complex societies. Works by Frederik Barth in Pakistan, Clifford Geertz in Indonesia, and by Robert Netting and Eric Wolf in Switzerland are featured.

The book's later chapters present more or less contemporary themes that characterize anthropologists' work on environmental problems. Chapter 7 tells about open-pit mining in Papua New Guinea by multi-national firms, and the New Guinea example is rather specifically meant to stand for other mining operations in North and South America. The emphasis here is on the linkages between local environmental conditions and the more encompassing institutions whose impacts reach to far-flung places. Chapter 8 introduces the concept of environmental risk, and shows how anthropologists help deflect "blaming the victim" style arguments by situating risk and hazard in their social context, rather than assuming that threats of environmental degradation are the result of individual decision-making. Chapter 9 focuses on some key concepts in population studies and demography, indicating how the same forces that result in population growth and mobility also account for variation in health and material well-being. Chapter 10 touches on the global loss of biodiversity and its implications for human health.

In the final two chapters, Townsend considers how, as professionals and individuals, we can become engaged in addressing environmental problems. Chapter 11 describes the work of applied anthropologists, like Andrew Vayda's involvement with Indonesian forest fires in the late 1990s. And Chapter 12, the concluding chapter, discusses personal lifestyles and their implications for the global environment.

Despite its brevity, Townsend's *Environmental Anthropology* clearly has enough substance to whet our appetites and, ideally, spur readers to investigate the many original texts that she aptly summarizes. I mention the original texts because I believe such texts (rather than summaries) best demonstrate what the enterprise of fieldwork actually produces. This brief book has an important role to play, however, pointing the way to a provocative series of big questions that have no easy answers, and channeling the development of our critical thinking skills:

- To what extent and under what circumstances do environmental conditions influence, shape, or determine the way we organize ourselves into settlements and political groups?

- Are there finite limits to human population growth, or are we such creative, resourceful, adaptive creatures that as we approach what appear to be such limits, we inevitably are capable of overcoming them?

- Did the "original affluent societies," to borrow Marshall Sahlins' term, contain in their

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traditional ecological wisdom the ingredients for harmonious, sustainable living, or is this just a romantic notion to which we cling, without substantial supporting historical evidence?

- Is the dichotomy between “nature” and “culture” a cultural universal? How can one understand a different construction of “nature” from within a culture-bound setting that holds these two in opposition to one another?

- How do we select from among the ongoing stream of possible environmental, health, and safety hazards the ones that we consider significant? If there is not universal agreement on what constitute the most important sources of hazard, how does this judgment vary from culture to culture?

The book is not without its limitations, some of which are likely to be the result of understandable editorial decisions to keep the narrative short and light on its feet. For example, it is rather surprising to see a discussion of “Risk and Hazard” with no mention whatsoever of Mary Douglas’s signal work in this arena, either on her own (Douglas 1985) or with her political science colleague Aaron Wildavsky (1982). Similarly, one would expect the work of Piers Blaikie and his colleagues (1994) to have warranted a review in Townsend’s book for its exemplary presentation of social processes that produce differential vulnerability to environmental hazard.

A different sort of shortcoming comes not from cutting things out, but from leaving them in. The book aims most directly to address an audience of anthropologists and their students, and it puts forth a meta-message that “studies” are what anthropologists produce. I believe this inward focus is disabling, since it helps to reify disciplinary boundaries at a time when the models to be built and the policy problems to be solved clearly call for interdisciplinary collaboration. I believe Townsend knows this, as she acknowledges the collaboration of her engineer husband, yet the general value of collaboration is under-emphasized, as is the growing practice of collaboration. Because it is likely to circulate widely, this book could take better advantage of the opportunity to reinforce the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative methods, and to point out how the old fashioned “lone ranger” style of ethnographic “studies” no longer serves the communities with which we work.

Further, the first and strongest impression one gets from the work surveyed is that environmental anthropology concentrates on marginal, exotic places. I do not find this a particularly attractive self-image, nor is it necessarily representative of the substantial work that is directly tied to assessing social and environmental impacts of development, designing habitat conservation programs that are sensitive to the social distribution of benefits and burdens, allocating capital improvement budgets, taking regulatory action; in short, the nuts and bolts of policy making. Although acknowledged in the introduction (p. 12), the book does not focus on how findings and interpretations can be taken the next step, to interventions. We have to wait until the next to last chapter (Ch. 11) to have any sort of extended discussion about action and activism. This is particularly ironic because the book’s subtitle, “From Pigs to Policies,” invokes Rappaport’s classic book, *Pigs for the Ancestors*, but overlooks the corpus of Rappaport’s more mature work, in which he dedicated the last decades of his life to the “anthropology of trouble.”

At its best, this brief book is filled with observations worth savoring. One of my favorite passages has to do with the bind in which environmental anthropologists find themselves when they seek to advocate on behalf of the rights of indigenous people:

It is not sufficient that they seek to understand the indigenous people and their environment. The anthropologists also run up against their own culture’s contradictory views of indigenous people. The Noble Savage view of the Inuit is that they are isolated people with superb survival strategies for meeting the challenge of an extreme environment and therefore deserving of paternalistic protection. If they are not that, then they must be fully modern and “just like us.” Part of what anthropologists try to correct this double vision, to create an image of Inuit as bicultural people who fully and flexibly move between two worlds (p. 96).

This same sort of dichotomy pervades the world of anthropology, with the academy-based

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folks cast in the role of the Noble Savage. I cannot think of a better domain than environmental anthropology to show the discipline how, in the next century, to be sustainable it must fully and flexibly move between the two worlds of theory and praxis.

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Disaster Hits Home: New Policy for Urban Housing Recovery, by Mary C. Comerio (1999) Berkeley: University of California Press, xix, 300 pp.

Reviewed by Susanna M. Hoffman, Anthropologist and Co-Editor of The Angry Earth: Disaster in Anthropological Perspective.

In the last one hundred years, population shifts have drawn people to teeming urban centers that lie in regions prone to devastating natural forces. Consequently, Mary C. Comerio states in her straightforward volume, property damage and lives lost to disaster have skyrocketed. While she cites and uses for comparison international examples, she quickly turns to her main focus, the United States and US disaster assistance policy. Even more specifically, she concentrates on California and Florida, with their earthquakes and hurricanes. Whereas the 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake affected a sleepy beach town, the Northridge earthquake of 1994 struck a megalopolis. The dollar cost for damages went from \$6 million for the Santa Barbara earthquake to nearly \$7.5 billion for Loma Prieta in 1989, and \$26 billion for Northridge. The \$7 billion in loss incurred in Hurricane Hugo in South Carolina in 1989 shot to nearly \$23 billion for Andrew in Florida in 1992.

The main cause of these damage cost increases has been housing loss, which constitutes the greatest single component of all loss in an urban disaster. At the same time, housing recovery is necessary to economic recovery. For the first time, Comerio says, American housing losses in catastrophes have reached the same scale as those often experienced in less developed countries. The difference is that in developing countries, the death toll is enormous and the cost to