

[Miguel] pointed out the stonework he had done on the floor and lower parts of the wall which were all made from flat stones found in the Sierra. I asked him if he had done this all by himself and he said "Yes, and look, this is nature" ("Si, y mira, esto es la naturaleza"), and he pointed firmly at the stone carved wall, and he repeated this action by pointing first in the direction of the Sierra [national park] before pointing at the wall again. Then, he stressed his point by saying: "This [the Sierra] is not nature, it is artificial; this [the wall] is nature" ("Eso no es la naturaleza, es artificial; esto es la naturaleza").—Katrin Lund, "What Would We Do without Biodiversity?"

Who Speaks for Nature?

John O'Neill

THE NATURE OF DELIBERATION

Who speaks for nature? With what legitimacy can they speak? Both questions are of significance for the theory and practice of deliberative democracy and indeed for democratic theory and practice more generally. In this essay I discuss some of the problems deliberative democracy has in taking nature into account in public decision making.

However, before doing so I need to make a few initial comments about the assumptions presupposed by the opening questions. Both questions assume that nature cannot speak for itself. Neither, it should be added, does nature understand our speech. We are not partners in a dialogue. Clearly, there are qualifications one might make to those claims. Certainly, animals engage in activity that requires interpretation. Their activities are not mere movement. Communication can and

does take place between persons and animals through gestures and voice. Moreover, there are various ways one can talk metaphorically about the language of nature, the book of nature, and communication with nature. Some of these are explored elsewhere in this book; see, for example, the discussions in Oyama, Dyke, and Shotter. However, although a number of clarifications and qualifications can be added, and I add some more in my discussion of the idea of taking deliberation into nature, it remains the case that in any literal sense, the nonhuman natural world does not speak to us. Neither does nature listen. It is, as Passmore (1980) notes, indifferent, not in the positive sense of actively not caring, but in the sense of lacking the capacity to care for us or for what we say. That nonhuman beings, like many human beings, are not partners in public dialogue is not to say that they should not count. Nonhuman beings do have interests that need to be taken into account in public decisions. However, in any such public deliberation, the interests of the nonhuman world are voiced by human agents. Hence the questions with which I started: Who speaks for nature? With what legitimacy can they speak?

Those questions are particularly acute for deliberative models of democracy. The theory and practice of deliberative democracy have been particularly developed in the environmental arena (Dryzek 1992, 2000 chap. 6; Eckersley 1999; G. Smith 2003). The deliberative theorist offers a model of democracy as a forum in which judgments and preferences are formed and altered through reasoned dialogue among citizens, in contrast to the economic picture of democracy as a surrogate market procedure for aggregating and effectively meeting the given preferences of individuals. In practice, it is often taken to be expressed in the development of a variety of new formal deliberative institutions such as citizens' juries and consensus conferences, which are often presented as experiments in deliberative democracy. In the environmental sphere, deliberative democracy is often presented as a response to the representational failings of economic approaches to environmental decision making, which leave the poor underrepresented, because willingness to pay is income-dependent, and the interests of nonhumans and future generations are at best indirectly and precariously represented through the preferences of current consumers. However, while such deliberative institutions are claimed to resolve some of the problems of inadequate representation involved in surrogate market

methods, they have their own problems of representation. Willingness and capacity to speak and to be heard is unevenly distributed across class, gender, and ethnicity. The direct voices of nonhuman nature and future generations are necessarily absent. These require others to speak on their behalf. Hence again the significance of our opening questions about representation, about who speaks for nature and with what legitimacy they can claim to so speak.

These questions are not abstract problems of theory. Disputes concerning the legitimacy of claims to represent or speak for nature are at the heart of the actual politics of nature. Consider the politics of nature conservation. Nature conservation bodies and institutions often claim to represent nature's interests. They find their claims contested by those who live in areas designated as natural parks and who have a distinct working relationship with the natural world. These often include groups whose voice is already marginal in public deliberation about environmental goods. Consider, for example, the passage that opens this essay, from a local living by the natural park of Sierra Nevada and Alpujorra, a park that had been granted biosphere status by UNESCO and natural park status by the government of Andalusia. Moreover, different groups who claim to speak on behalf of nature also dispute each other. Nature conservation bodies and animal rights activists speak on behalf of nature in different and sometimes conflicting voices. Professional conservation agencies can find themselves in conflict with direct action movements, each claiming to represent the interests of nature.

DELIBERATION IN THE PRESENCE OF NATURE:
FROM DON ALEJANDRO TO JOHN MUIR

How is nature to be represented in public deliberation? Consider as a starting point a story by Borges, "The Congress." The story begins with the problem of representation:

Don Alejandro conceived the idea of calling together a Congress of the World that would represent all men of all nations. . . . Twirl, who had a farseeing mind, remarked that the Congress involved a problem of a philosophical nature. Planning an assembly to represent all men was like fixing the exact number of platonic types—a puzzle that had taxed the imagination of thinkers for centuries. Twirl suggested that, without go-

ing farther afield, don Alejandro Glencoe might represent not only cattlemen but also Uruguayans, and also humanity's great forerunners, and also men with red beards, and also those who are seated in armchairs. Nora Erfjord was Norwegian. Would she represent secretaries, Norwegian womanhood, or—more obviously—all beautiful women? Would a single engineer be enough to represent all engineers—including those of New Zealand? (1979, 20–22)

The story ends with an echo of a Borges story on the development of cartography, which attains its highest point when the perfect map is identical to the area it maps: "The College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point" (1981, 131). Similarly, the only adequate Congress of the World is discovered to be the world itself:

"It has taken me four years to understand what I am about to say" don Alejandro began. "My friends, the undertaking we have set ourselves is so vast that it embraces—I now see—the whole world. Our Congress cannot be a group of charlatans deafening each other in the sheds of an out-of-the-way ranch. The Congress of the World began with the first moment of the world and it will go on when we are dust. There's no place on earth where it does not exist." (1979, 32)

The characters go back out into the city "drunk with victory," to take part in the life of the Congress in which all people and all things are represented perfectly by themselves.

It would be nice to think that don Alejandro had the last word on the subject, and in the design of institutions for representation the solution should be that we should simply go for a walk outside. In the case of the representation of nature, it might look as if something like an Alejandro solution is both possible and desirable. Consider the success of John Muir's strategy of taking Theodore Roosevelt for a four-day trip in 1903 into some of the Yosemite landscapes he aimed to preserve (Fox 1981). There is a sense in which one might say that the strategy consisted in allowing nature to be represented by itself.

However, Alejandro solutions to the problem of representing nature fail. In the first place, Alejandro solutions are clearly not an adequate response to the problems of representation in general. For all the delightfulness of his solution, Alejandro clearly misses the point of representative institutions just as Borges's cartographers miss the point of

maps. Maps are better when not identical to their original. The Congress of the World is not best represented by the world itself. No representation captures everything about those represented. Every representation is unrepresentative over some dimensions. It could not be otherwise. But that this is the case is not always a problem. It doesn't matter that my ordinance survey map doesn't mark every stone. It doesn't matter that men with red beards do not have a spokesperson in the UK. I do complain when my walking maps are indifferent to scale. It does matter that large groups of the population lack any adequate representation in political life, for example, low-paid and retired workers.

Similarly, any representation of nature for itself, even if it were possible, would necessarily be selective. Consider another Borges story, *The Aleph*, in which the main protagonist is given access to one of what are called Aleph points, a "point in space containing all other points" (Borges 1967, 119), points at which the whole of life is present. There are no such points. Muir took Roosevelt to particular, selected places that were to represent others. Miguel's carved wall represents a different part of nature under a different description from the Andalusian park to which he gestures. The presence of one and the absence of the other in public deliberation matters to its legitimacy.

Consider again the Yosemite landscapes to which Muir takes Roosevelt. They walked not just in the presence of nature but also in the absence of humans. The Ahwahneechee Indians were driven from their lands in Yosemite by Major Savage's military expedition of 1851. They live outside the park boundaries to this day. Their absence made its own mark on the ecology of the park. The grass parklands through which Muir and Roosevelt walked were in part the result of the pastoral practices of the indigenous people, who had used fire to promote pastures for game and black oak for acorn production. After the indigenous tribes were evicted from their lands, "Indian style" burning techniques were discontinued and fire suppression controls introduced. The consequence was the decline in meadowlands under increasing areas of bush. When Totuya, the granddaughter of Chief Tenaya and sole survivor of the Ahwahneechee Indians who had been evicted from the valley, returned in 1929, she remarked on the landscape she found, "Too dirty; too much bushy" (quoted in Olwig 1995). It was not just the landscape that had changed. In the giant sequoia groves, the growth of litter on the forest floor, dead branches, and competitive vegetation

inhibited the growth of new sequoia and threatened more destructive fires. Following the 1963 Leopold report, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, both cutting and burning were used to “restore” Yosemite to its “primitive” state (Runte 1987).

Which part of the world is represented for public deliberation, the state park or the stone fireplace, is a human affair. So also is the description with which it is represented, as a “wilderness” or as a “depopulated cultural landscape.” Which descriptions ought to count? The question is not one of a philosophical nature in the sense that Twirl suggests, that of correctly fixing on Platonic forms. The reason being “a man with a red beard who sits in armchairs” would normally be an irrelevant characteristic has nothing to do with appearing in a theory of forms. The problem of representation is political, not metaphysical. The question requires answers that appeal to normative criteria. There are descriptions in which representation might be objectionable in virtue of the attitudes they embody; consider, for example, the category of “Norwegian womanhood” in the passage from Borges. There are descriptions in which representation ought to be demanded, say, of class or gender. The question of the nature of the description with which the nonhuman world should be represented remains central to the politics of nature.

Nature cannot speak for itself nor represent itself. It has no voice. Nature’s interests are spoken through human utterances. Even its silence requires human voice. Consider its articulation by Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1965). The presence of nonhuman nature in deliberation about environmental choices requires human representation. This is not to say that nonhuman members of the natural world do not or should not count in deliberation. There is no reason to assume that those who are morally considerable should be limited to those who can deliberate. Very young children cannot deliberate; neither can sentient animals. Both ethically matter. However, they require representation by others in public deliberation.

THE SOURCES OF REPRESENTATIVE LEGITIMACY

What are the criteria for saying who or what should be represented and whether representation is adequate and legitimate? Questions of legiti-

mate representation have their own history in political theory (Birch 1972; Pitkin 1967). There are three central answers to the question of the sources of the legitimacy of the representation.

Authorization and Democratic Accountability

The claim that authorization is central to representation is given its starkest formulation in Hobbes (1968, chap. 16), who makes it the whole of representation. However, in a number of democratic theories of representation, authorization is tied to the accountability of the representative to the represented, embodied in democratic election (Pitkin 1967, 42–43; Plamenatz 1938), a feature absent in Hobbes's account. Thus, in one liberal model of representation, the interests of individuals are represented through the act of authorization embodied in the vote. More radically, in socialist and egalitarian politics, authorization is often associated with the representation of class interests through recallable delegates. Authorization is itself agnostic on the question of who does the representing: the representative, when authorized, can be entirely different in characteristics from the person represented. A lawyer can represent children without being a child. In certain contexts, you may prefer that X speaks for you because of features you do *not* share; for example, in an industrial tribunal, X is more articulate than you, as he or she is a shop steward.

Presence

A feature of much feminist and socialist theory is that in the context of political representation, a pure authorization model is rejected. Who does the representing matters. Exemplary is the following statement by women claiming a place in the Estates General in 1789: "Just as a nobleman cannot represent a plebeian and the latter cannot represent a nobleman, so a man, no matter how honest he may be, cannot represent a woman. Between the representatives and the represented there must be an absolute identity of interests" (quoted in Phillips 1997, 175).

The same thought underlay the principle in the socialist movement that the emancipation of the working class must be their own work, and correspondingly that their interests could not be represented by any other class. The thought that particular groups demand representation

by those who share a common identity has become central to what Phillips (1995, 1997) calls "the politics of presence" (see Gould 1996; Kymlicka 1996). It underpins, for example, the demand for quota systems in modern electoral systems.

There are at least three distinct sets of considerations that might be appealed to to defend the need for presence. One concerns recognition. What is wrong with one group being represented by another, of women by men, of the working class by another class, and so on, is the lack of respect and dignity for the group that it entails. The demand for representation is in part the demand of a group for recognition and respect as agents capable of representing themselves. A second consideration is about quality of judgments made in the absence of the presence of all relevant voices. The exercise of sound judgment requires the presence of others so that one can escape the partiality of particular interests and perspectives. Thus, as Arendt (1968a, 220–22) puts it, "[Judgment] needs the presence of others in whose place it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all. As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgement, to be valid, depends on the presence of others."

The third consideration concerns interests. Politics is not just about deliberation; it is also about power and negotiation between different interests. A shared identity might be held to matter in representation on the grounds that similar experiences are a condition of proper knowledge of the interests and aspirations of some group.

A shared identity may be a necessary condition of adequate representation in some context, but it is not clearly sufficient. There may still be a requirement for authorization or accountability. That someone shares an identity with me under some description does not entail that he or she can legitimately represent me in the absence of my authorization.

Epistemic Values

A third source of appeal to legitimacy of representation is the knowledge, expertise, or judgment that is taken to allow an individual to speak or act on behalf of some group. This argument is often developed in ways that are in tension with a representation legitimated through shared identity. Consider, for example, the view that there are certain

individuals who, through knowledge, have a better grasp of the objective interests or good of some group than others in that group and that this knowledge legitimizes their representative status. Versions of that appeal are to be found in theorists as different as Burke (1774/1899, 95–96), Mill (1974, 82), and Lenin (1963, chap. 2). However, although some versions of the epistemic argument are inconsistent with presence, knowledge and presence need not always be in tension. As we have just noted, one reason for presence is that a shared identity is required for knowledge of the interests of those being represented.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND THE SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY

A deliberative theory of democracy is compatible with a number of distinct answers to the question of what constitutes the source of legitimate representation. In its minimal sense, deliberative democracy refers to the view that democracy should be understood as a forum in which judgments and preferences are transformed through reasoned dialogue against the picture of democracy as a procedure for aggregating and effectively meeting the given preferences of individuals. In that minimal sense, deliberative democracy is compatible with competing answers to the question of the sources of legitimacy. For example, Edmund Burke's (1774/1899, 95–96) famous address to the electors of Bristol combines a deliberative account of parliamentary institutions with a narrow account of the range of those who can speak and exercise their judgments within those institutions. Recent accounts of deliberative institutions are taken to be also "inclusionary" of a wider range of voices.

The addition of inclusionary to the concept of deliberative processes links the arguments about representation to some of the themes in the politics of presence, that is, that deliberative institutions should give equal access to all relevant voices by directly including representatives of different relevant identities. Two of the arguments for presence are of note here. The first is that engagement in deliberation defines a particular form of citizenship, and hence that the presence of different groups is a condition of full recognition of their status as citizens, alongside other political rights. The second is that presence is a condition for the exercise of political judgment and deliberation itself. One classic state-

ment of the view is that of Arendt, already noted.¹ The view that wider inclusion is required for proper deliberation in which the widest range of different relevant views are heard has been echoed in more recent arguments for deliberative democracy. Judgments about common interests are properly formed only through confronting a range of arguments and views (Sustein 1997). Whether or not these arguments are adequate—and I will return to them below—there are clear problems in extending this approach to nonhuman nature and future generations.

GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

The central problem for any representation of nonhumans and future generations is the absence of two central forms of legitimation: authorization and presence. For nonhumans and future generations there is no possibility of those conditions being met. Clearly, representation can neither be authorized by nonhumans or future generations nor rendered accountable to them. Hence, Hobbes (1968, chap. 16), for whom authorization is all of representation, argues that because “inanimate” or “nonrational beings” cannot authorize others to act for them, they are outside the domain of representation. The politics of presence that underlies much of recent literature in deliberative democracy also appears ill suited to include future generations and nonhumans. Neither nonhumans nor future generations can be directly present in decision making. That neither authorization nor presence is possible is in one sense unproblematic: it could not be otherwise. The problem lies in the claims to legitimacy of those current humans who claim to speak on behalf of future generations and nonhumans in the absence of sources of legitimation.

What can be said for deliberative models of democracy in the face of those problems of legitimacy? One response is the appeal to the publicness condition on deliberation that has been central to much deliberative democracy: reasons must be able to survive being made public. The publicness condition is taken to force participants to offer reasons that can withstand public justification and hence to appeal to general rather than particular private interests. The point is one that has roots in Kant (1793/1991, appendix II), for whom every moral principle must meet “the formal attribute of publicness”: “All actions affecting the rights of

other human beings are wrong if their maxim is not compatible with their being made public." The test rules out those arguments from principles that appeal to self-interests where this conflicts with just concern with the interests of others, because the persuasiveness of such arguments could not survive publicity.² Hence, reasons for action that appeal to wider constituencies of interest—including those of nonhumans and future generations—are more likely to survive in public deliberation than they are in private, market-based methods for expressing preferences.

Goodin (1996, 844) develops this further and suggests that through such deliberation, wider interests are internalized: we view democracy "as a process in which we all come to internalize the interests of each other and indeed of the larger world around us." Through the internalization of interests of nature, those interests can be virtually represented: "Much though nature's interests may deserve to be enfranchised in their own right, that is simply impracticable. People, and people alone, can exercise the vote. The best we can hope for is that nature's interests will come to be internalized by a sufficient number of people with sufficient leverage in the political system for nature's interests to secure the protection they deserve" (844).

This concept of individuals representing the standpoint of all others might itself be taken to involve a second Kantian move of the kind to which Arendt appeals. Her account of "representative thinking," like that of Goodin, appeals to the idea of deliberation as a process in which the outlooks and interests of others are internalized; also like Goodin (2000), she takes this to involve not just public deliberation, but, to use his phrase, "democratic deliberation within":

Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different standpoints, by making present to mind the standpoint of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. . . . The very process of opinion formation is determined by those in whose places somebody thinks and uses his own mind, and the only condition for this exertion of the imagination is disinterestedness, the liberation from one's own private interests. Hence, if I shun all company or am completely isolated while forming an opinion, I am not simply together with myself in the solitude of philosophical thought; I remain in the world of universal interdependence, where I can make myself the representative of everybody else. (Arendt 1968b, 241–42)

There are, however, clear difficulties in an appeal to an Arendtian and Kantian account of representative thinking in this context. The Kantian argument concerns the reliance of judgments on a wider community of judgment. The power of judgment is social in that it relies on the comparison of judgments with others in order to “escape the illusion that arises from the ease of mistaking subjective and private conditions for objective ones, an illusion that would have prejudicial influence on the judgement” (Kant 1987, 293–94). The escape from prejudice is identified with the escape from passive reason, the failure to think for oneself, and hence is a condition of enlightenment. Therefore, because comparison with the judgments of others is required to avoid prejudice, the maxim “Think for yourself” and the maxim “Think from the standpoint of everyone else” are related (294–95; see also Kant 1933, A820–21/B848–49). This thought is important, but it won’t extend to nonhuman beings. They lack the capacity for judgment and hence do not belong to that community to which judgment must test its soundness.

The idea of internalizing interests, in Goodin’s sense, has then to be independent of this Kantian line of thought. Instead, the argument needs to be that, through the public use of reason, one escapes not just the narrowness of partial judgment but also the narrowness of private interests. Enlarged interests can survive public deliberation and develop a wider perception of what and whose interests count. However, this raises a second problem. Although representative thought can take place even, as Arendt suggests, in solitude, politics is not just about thought, but also includes speech, and representative speech is public and as such answers to demands of legitimation and justification. On what grounds can we hold that you are able to speak for others? The issue remains as to what, in the absence of authorization, accountability or shared identity can legitimate any particular individual or group making public claims to speak on behalf of the interests of others. Goodin may be right here that the internalization of interests is the best one can hope for in terms of representing nature or future generations, but the idea of internalizing interests does not resolve the problems of legitimacy of public representation of those without voice.

SPEAKING FOR NATURE

What response can be made to a challenge of the legitimacy of a claim to speak for others? In the absence of authorization, accountability, and presence, the remaining source of legitimacy to claim to speak in such cases is epistemic. Those who claim to speak on behalf of those without voice do so by appeal to their having knowledge of the objective interests of those groups, often combined with special care for them. Thus, natural scientists, biologists, and ecologists are often heard making special claims "to speak on behalf of nature" where their claim to do so is founded on their knowledge and interests. Environmental lobby groups make similar claims. However, as I noted at the outset, such claims are also commonly disputed.

Two kinds of dispute are of particular significance here. First, there are new versions of a traditional normative debate in political theory about the proper descriptions in which the representation should take place: Is it as individuals or as members of particular groups or as bearers of particular identities? The animal liberation and welfare movements are individualist: it is individual sentient beings that have moral considerability, and it is as such that they should be represented in our decisions. Those involved in the environmental movement and nature conservation are concerned primarily with the conservation of biodiversity, species, and habitats, and it is as members of particular species or as bearers of particular roles within an ecological system that nonhuman nature is to be represented (Callicott 1989, 1998; Jamieson 1998; Rawles 1997; Sagoff 1984). The dispute is normative. The debate is not primarily about particular knowledge claims as such, but rather about which knowledge claims are normatively relevant to the representation of nature—those concerning the welfare of individuals or those concerning the functioning of ecosystems and habitats? The conflict itself is in practice a real and important one. Although it is often the case that what is good for habitats will also be good for individuals, there are a series of practical issues where the two come apart, for example, the culling by conservation authorities of feral animals or nonnative animals to preserve some particular habitat, or the release by animal rights activists of caged animals into nonnative habitats. The spokespersons for nature speak in different voices.

A second set of disputes arises with direct challenges to the epistemic

legitimacy claimed by putative scientific spokespersons for nature. These are of particular significance when representatives of nature have too much voice rather than too little, for example, when they conflict with communities speaking with an already marginalized voice who are policed in and excluded from nature reserves justified by natural scientists. Consider again the remarks of Miguel quoted at the outset of this essay. They are typical of a number of disputes between the representatives of nature and the communities they aim to police in nature's name. The disputes are particularly evident in the export of nature reserves to the third world. They are at their most acute where nature is evoked to justify the exclusion of people from their homes. Consider the fate of some of the Masai in Africa who have been excluded from national parks across Kenya and Tanzania.³ Attempts to evict indigenous populations from the Kalahari reveal the influence of the same wilderness model: "Under Botswana land use plans, all national parks have to be free of human and domestic animals."⁴ The history of exclusion is illustrated in the conflicts surrounding the Batwa in Uganda. They were "officially" excluded from forest reserves during the British colonial period of the 1930s, although in practice they continued to use the forests as a means of livelihood. Since the establishment of national parks in 1991, their exclusion was made effective, which has led to continuing conflicts (Griffiths and Colchester 2000). Similar stories are to be found in Asia, where the alliance of local elites and international conservation bodies has led to similar pressures to evict indigenous populations from their traditional lands. In India, the development of wildlife parks has led to a series of conflicts with indigenous populations; there has been a series of much discussed evictions and resettlements of local populations in the creation of parks and sanctuaries. Consider, for example, the resettlements of Maldheris in the Gir National Park (Choudhary 2000), the proposed and actual exclusions of local populations in the Melghat Tiger Reserve and Koyna Sanctuary in Maharashtra, and the conflicts around the Nagarhole National Park, where there have been attempts by the Karnataka Forest Department to remove six thousand tribal people from their forests on the grounds that they compete with tigers for game (Griffiths and Colchester 2000; Guha 1997; Jayal 2001). The moves are supported by international conservation bodies. Hence the remark of one of the experts for the Wildlife Conservation Society in the Nagarhole case: "Re-

locating tribal or traditional people who live in these protected area is the single most important step towards conservation" (quoted in Guha 1997, 17). Even where they are not excluded, those whose relation to a place is as a place on which their livelihood depends can come into conflict with the representatives of nature. Consider the comment from a person in the Makala-Barun National Park and Conservation Area in Nepal, reported by Ben Campbell (1998): "This park is no good. They don't let you cut wood, they don't allow you to make spaces for paddy seed-beds, they don't permit doing *khoriya* [a form of slash-and-burn agriculture]."

Conflicts exist between international conservation bodies speaking on behalf of the interests of nature seeking to protect "natural landscapes" and the socially marginalized groups whose lives and livelihoods depend on working within them. Places matter to such groups in ways that conflict with the goods defended by the representatives of nature. Such groups have particular local knowledge of place, which gives them a distinct voice in its future different from that of the scientific expert who claims to speak on behalf of nature. The well-discussed arguments in political epistemology about whose knowledge claims count in environmental decision making are in part arguments about the legitimacy of representation founded purely on epistemic authority: Who can claim to speak on behalf of others, where the only claims for legitimacy are knowledge claims and where authorization, accountability, or presence is impossible?

To raise those questions is not to offer any solutions. Indeed, I suspect there are no solutions as such. However, it does point to a need to shift from one traditional justification of deliberative democracy. Recent accounts of reasoned deliberation, especially those that have their roots in Habermas, define successful deliberation in terms of the convergence of judgments under ideal counterfactual conditions in which all have equal voice and "no force except that of the better argument is exercised" (Habermas 1975, 108). However, it may be that there is no possibility for convergence even in ideal conditions. I say this not because of the common argument that for normative questions there are no truths of the kind found in science on which one could expect convergence through reasoned debate (B. Williams 1985, chap. 8). I remain unconvinced by this argument (O'Neill 2001). Rather, it is because there can exist conflicts between different goods themselves,

which give reasons for skepticism about the possibility of convergence even under ideal conditions. Values are plural and can conflict in ways in which no resolution is possible. Different human goods fostered in distinct practices by different groups may themselves be in conflict: thus, for example, the ways in which good husbandry of the land within a marginal farming community can come into conflict with the aims of conserving biodiversity. Such conflicts may be unresolvable. Conservation does not have some lexicographic priority in such cases over the value of community or the internal goods of husbandry. Nor are there simple trade-offs between commensurate values. There are real human goods that demand realization but that conflict. Even under ideal conditions, hard and sometimes irresolvable choices between values that contingently conflict cannot be eliminated from ethical and political life (O'Neill 1997a, 1997b). Moreover, under the nonideal conditions of actual deliberation in political and social life, the existence of consensus can be a sign of personal or structural power that is exercised to keep various voices and conflicts out of the realm of public discussion, rather than an indication of the exercise of the power of reasoned public conversation.⁵

The virtue of deliberative democracy may lie not in claims that it resolves conflicts but in its tendency to reveal them. The publicness condition forces participants, in at least some conditions, to justify their claims. Public deliberation in this respect differs from expressions of private preference in market behavior, which does not require justification. But publicness here is a virtue because it opens up space for contesting claims, not, as is often suggested in deliberative theories of democracy, because it is a condition for consensus. For that reason, there is as much a need for dissensus conferences as consensus conferences, for places where hidden conflicts are made explicit and silenced voices are heard.

NOTES

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1 Arendt (1968b, 241) clearly can be counted as a deliberative theorist for whom "debate constitutes the essence of political life." However, the version of deliberative politics she offers is different from that which comes from Rawls and Habermas. What unites all three is a common Kantian heritage.

2 For developments of this point, see Elster (1998) and Rawls (1996, 66–71). The rejoinder sometimes made is that deliberation in this sense forces participants to mask private interests as public interests and in that sense to make the process less rather than more transparent.

3 See Monbiot (1994, chaps. 4 and 5). Consider, for example, the Masai suffering from malnutrition and disease on scrubland bordering the Mkomazi Game Reserve, from which they were forcibly evicted in 1988 (*The Observer*, 6 April 1997, 12).

4 "Bushmen Fight to Stay on in Last Botswana Haven," *The Times*, 5 August 1996, 11.

5 It is worth noting that the arguments just outlined are not incompatible with Habermas's own theoretical position as such. The last highlight the place of deliberative institutions in conditions of conflicts of power and interest in the actual world. The first raises conflicts in what Habermas would count as ethical and evaluative domains rather than the domain of morality.

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How Nature Speaks

The Dynamics of the Human

Ecological Condition

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