

ANDREW DOBSON (1995): GREEN POLITICAL THOUGHT, Routledge, London.

When he wrote this book, Andrew Dobson was Professor of History at the University of Keele in the UK. "Green Political Thought" is a superb analysis of how politics works. Dobson has clearly served his time and acquired a deep knowledge of political theory and a deep understanding of political thought in his study of history.

In this important book, Dobson turns his attention to the meaning of the Green movement as a social and political force. Although his sympathies clearly lie with the Green movement, his critique does not shy away from addressing the high passion and extreme views that occasionally surface in Green discourse.

This work is impeccably structured from an academic point of view and offers an even-handed exposition of the diverse and often contentious literature associated with Green politics. Throughout the text, Dobson subtly projects a sympathetic understanding of the enormous task that lies ahead for those who would serve as agents of change in the theatre of political ecology. He identifies with great skill the weaknesses in the deep green political project and offers thoughtful and informed suggestions about how to deal with political reality for those who have the staying power. Dobson's deep understanding of political theory complements the deep historical and cultural understanding offered by such commentators as Leopold Kohr, Fritz Schumacher, and Thomas Berry.

Dobson understands the essential divide that separates political ecologists from pragmatic environmentalists. He strongly re-affirms the paradigmatic nature of ecological understanding which can neither be subsumed by, nor assimilated into the current dominant political style. The issue is not one of patching up industrial civilization. It calls for a complete reevaluation of the priorities and methods of technological civilisation. Primary among these are the wanton squandering of the earth's resources and the deadly consequences of consumerist automatism.

This book is an essential resource for all who would project and promote green values in political theatres. It brings to the foreground the fluid and as yet indeterminate character of many elements within Green thought. Andrew Dobson is a capable guide and ally for those would traverse the new intellectual terrain whose mission is to revolutionise the way that we think and the way that we live upon the earth.

VDS, July 2001

Introduction

I believed (and still do) that environmentalism and ecologism are so different as to make their confusion a serious intellectual mistake - partly in the context of thinking about ecologism as a political ideology and partly in the context of an accurate representation of the radical green challenge to the political, economic and social

consensus that dominates contemporary life. In respect of what is to come, the following can be taken as a rough and ready distinction between environmentalism and ecologism:

- *Environmentalism* argues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption, and,
- *Ecologism* holds that a sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life.

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Environmentalism is so easily accommodated by other ideologies and ecologism is so different from those ideologies that we need to be very careful before allowing environmentalism to be a strand within ecologism. A belief in ecocentrism (for example) serves to distinguish ecologism from the other political ideologies, and as environmentalism does not subscribe to it either, it can only hybridize ecologism at the cost of radically altering it.

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Green politics self-consciously confronts dominant paradigms, and my task here is to ensure that it is not swallowed up by them and the interests they often seem to serve. . . .

Marien [Michael Marien] writes that there are “two completely different modes of usage: ‘Post-industrial society’ as a technological, affluent, service society, and ‘post-industrial society’ as a decentralized agrarian economy following in the wake of a failed industrialism” (Marien, 1977, p. 416), and suggests that the former is dominant with respect to the latter. Clearly the second usage constitutes a challenge to the first usage in that it calls itself by the same name while reconstituting its meaning. Using his typology, Marien sensitizes us to the variety of possible interpretations of post-industrial society. This variety would be invisible if we were to pay attention to the dominant interpretation: that of an affluent, service economy.

Analogously, I have suggested that dominant and subordinate understandings of green politics have emerged from discussion of the topic as well as its political practice. The point is to remain open to the existence of these understandings rather than to let the bright light of the dominant one obscure the subordinate one behind.

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There is now a perfectly respectable claim to be made that green politics can be a part of a technological, affluent, service society - a part, in other words, of Marien's dominant version of what post-industrial society both is and might be like. This is the green politics of carbon dioxide scrubbers on industrial chimneys, CFC-free aerosols and car exhausts fitted with catalytic converters.

In this guise, green politics presents no sort of a challenge at all to the twenty-first century consensus over the desirability of affluent, technological, service societies. But my understanding of the historical significance of radical green politics is that it constitutes precisely such a challenge and that we shall lose sight of that significance if we conceive of it only in its reformist mode: a mode that reinforces affluence and

technology rather than calling them into question. Radical green politics is far more a friend of the subordinate interpretation of post-industrialism - a decentralized economy following in the wake of a failed industrialism - than of its dominant counterpart. Jonathon Porritt and Nicholas Winner assert that,

the most radical [green aim] seeks nothing less than a nonviolent revolution to overthrow our whole polluting, plundering and materialistic industrial society and, in its place, to create a new economic and social order which will allow human beings to live in harmony with the planet. In those terms, the Green Movement lays claim to being the most radical and important political and cultural force since the birth of socialism. (Porritt and Winner, 1988, p.9)

p 9

In a sense Porritt and Winner do the movement a disservice by likening the profundity of its challenge to that of early socialism. Much of socialism's intellectual work, at least, had already been done by the time it came on the scene. Liberal theorists had long since laid the ground for calls of liberty and equality, and socialism's job was to pick up and reconstitute the pieces created by liberalism's apparent failure to turn theory into practice. In this sense, the radical wing of the green movement is in a position more akin to that of the early liberals than that of the early socialists - it is self-consciously seeking to call into question an entire world-view rather than tinker with one that already exists.

pp 9-10

Baconian science has helped produce its technology and its material affluence, and the Promethean project to which the Enlightenment gave birth in its modern form is substantially intact. Now the historical significance of radical green politics as I see it is that it constitutes a challenge to this project and to the norms and practices that sustain it. This ecocentric politics explicitly seeks to decentre the human being, to question mechanistic science and its technological consequences, to refuse to believe that the world was made for human beings - and it does this because it has been led to wonder whether dominant post-industrialism's project of material affluence is either desirable or sustainable. All this will be missed if we choose to restrict our understanding of green politics to its dominant guise: an environmentalism that seeks a cleaner service economy sustained by cleaner technology and producing cleaner affluence.

pp 10-11

Its [modern green politics] challenge most generally takes the form of an attempt to shift the terms of the burden of persuasion from those who would question the dominant post-industrial embodiment (an affluent, technological, service society) of politics and society, on to those who would defend it.

p 12

Thinking about Ecologism

Many of the people and organizations whom we would want to include in the green movement are environmentalist rather than political-ecologist, and defining ecologism as strictly as I want to can obscure this very important truth about green politics. (On the other hand, of course, overstressing the environmentalist credentials of the movement can hide ecologism from view.)

p 14

Ecologism makes the Earth as physical object the very foundation-stone of its intellectual edifice, arguing that its finitude is the basic reason why infinite population and economic growth are impossible and why, consequently, profound changes in our social and political behaviour need to take place. The enduring image of this finitude is a familiar picture taken by the cameras of Apollo 8 in 1968 showing a blue-white Earth suspended in space above the moon's horizon. Twenty years earlier the astronomer Fred Hoyle had written that "Once a photograph of the Earth, taken from the outside, is available . . . a new idea as powerful as any other in history will be let loose". He may have been right. p 15

Political ecologists will stress two points with regard to the sustainable society: one, that consumption of material goods by individuals in "advanced industrial countries" should be reduced; and two, (linked to the first), that human needs are not best satisfied by continual economic growth as we understand it today. Jonathon Porritt writes: "If you want one simple contrast between green and conventional politics, it is our belief that quantitative demand must be reduced, not expanded." (Porritt, 1984a, p.136). Greens argue that if there are limits to growth then there are limits to consumption as well. The green movement is therefore faced with the difficulty of simultaneously calling into question a major aspiration of most people - maximizing consumption of material objects - and making its position attractive. p 16

Some deep-greens argue that the sustainable society that would replace the present consumer society would provide for wider and more profound forms of fulfillment than that provided by the consumption of material objects. This can profitably be seen as part of the green contention that the sustainable society would be a spiritually fulfilling place in which to live. Indeed, aspects of the radical green programme can hardly be understood without reference to the spiritual dimension on which (and in which) it likes to dwell. Greens invest the natural world with spiritual content and are ambivalent about what they see as mechanistic science's robbery of such content. They demand reverence for the Earth and a rediscovery of our links with it: "It seems to me so obvious that without some huge groundswell of spiritual concern the transition to a more sustainable way of life remains utterly improbable" (Porritt, 1984, p. 210). In this way the advertisement for frugal living and the exhortation to connect with the Earth combine to produce the spiritual asceticism that is a part of political ecology. pp 17-18

The . . . more serious consequence of the movement's reliance on gloomy prognostications is that its ideologues appear to have felt themselves absolved from serious thinking about realizing the change they propose. This, indeed, is another feature of the ideology that ought to be noted: the tension between the radical nature of the social and political change that it seeks, and the reliance on traditional liberal-democratic means of bringing it about. It is as though the movement's advocates have felt that the message was so obvious that it only needed to be given for it to be acted upon. The obstacles to radical green change have not been properly identified, and the result is an ideology that lacks an adequate programme for social and political transformation. pp 20-21

It is undoubtedly a central feature of ecologism that it identifies the 'super-ideology' of industrialism as the thesis to be undermined, and it has been relatively easy for

green ideologues to point to high levels of environmental degradation in Eastern Europe to make their point that there is little to choose - from this perspective - between capitalism and communism. It makes no appreciable difference who owns the means of production, they say, if the production process itself is based on doing away with the presuppositions of its very existence. p 30

The scope of concerns in the modern age is new. Most of the resource, waste and pollution problems that were raised in earlier times had a fundamentally local character. Modern ecologism rests a large part of its case on the belief that environmental degradation has taken on a global dimension - most obviously in cases such as global warming and ozone depletion, but also in view of the potentially global climatic implications of deforestation. Humans have always interacted with their environment, of course, and not always wisely. But greens believe that in the modern age the scale of human activity relative to the biosphere's capacity to absorb and sustain it has increased to the point where long-term human survival and the biosphere's integrity are put in doubt. This view - right or wrong - helps to distinguish ecologism from its more *ad hoc* environmentalist past and present. . . .

Political ecologists believe that single-issue approaches to dealing with environmental problems do not address their seriousness at a sufficiently fundamental level. Greens campaign against acid rain, deforestation and ozone depletion, of course, but they do so by arguing that these problems stem from basic political, social and economic relations that encourage unsustainable practices. This systemic analysis leads to systemic prescriptions for change, and the interrelated and wide-ranging nature of the critique is a characteristic of modern ecologism missing from its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century progenitors. pp 32-33

This is a book about ecologism and not about environmentalism. The reason that this needs to be stressed is that most people will understand environmentalism - a managerial approach to the environment within the context of present political and economic practices - to be what green politics is about. I do not think it is - at least in its political-ideological guise. Ecologists and environmentalists are inspired to act by the environmental degradation they observe, but their strategies for remedying it differ wildly. Environmentalists do not necessarily subscribe to the limits to growth thesis, nor do they typically seek to dismantle 'industrialism.' They are unlikely to argue for the intrinsic value of the non-human environment and would balk at any suggestion that we (as a species) require 'metaphysical reconstruction' (Porritt, 1984a, pp. 198-200). Environmentalists will typically believe that technology can solve the problems it creates, and will probably regard any suggestions that only a reduction in material throughput in the production process will provide for sustainability as willful nonsense. In short, what passes for green politics in the pages of today's newspapers is not the ideology of political ecology, properly understood. p 35

Philosophical Foundations

What sets ecologism apart from other political ideologies is its focus on the relationship between human beings and the non-human natural world. No other modern political ideology has this concern. p 36

If twentieth-century physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg are popular figures in the green pantheon, then Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton are their complementary opposites. These three, according to the analysis of most green theorists, produced a world-view at variance in virtually all respects with that demanded by ecological survival in the twentieth century. Briefly, Bacon developed methods and goals for science that involved (and involve) the domination and control of nature; Descartes insisted that even the organic world (plants, animals, etc) was merely an extension of the general mechanical nature of the universe; and Newton held that the workings of this machine-universe could be understood by reducing it to a collection of 'solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, movable particles'. pp 38-39

Social ecology's position on anthropocentrism and biocentrism is to refuse to choose between the two: "An 'anthropocentrism' that is based on the religious principle that the Earth was 'made' to be dominated by 'humanity is as remote from my thinking as a 'biocentrism' that turns human society into just another community of animals" (Bookchin, 1991, p. 128). Bookchin prefers to speak of a 'first' and a 'second' nature, evolving from first nature in the form of the human species. Second nature (humanity) is:

a product of evolution that has the fullness of mind, of extraordinary communicative abilities, of conscious association, and the ability knowingly to alter itself and the natural world. To deny these extraordinary human attributes which manifest themselves in real life, to submerge them in notions like a 'biocentric democracy' that renders human beings and snails 'equal' in terms of their 'intrinsic worth' (whatever that phrase may mean) is simply frivolous (Bookchin, 1989, p. 201).

pp 52-53

The Sustainable Society

There are three principal thoughts related to the limits to growth thesis that have come to be of prime importance to the radical green position. They are, first, that technological solutions (i.e. solutions formulated within the bounds of present economic, social and political practices) will not in themselves bring about a sustainable society; second, that the rapid rates of growth aimed for (and often achieved) by industrialized and industrializing societies have an exponential character, which means that dangers stored up over a relatively long period of time can very suddenly have a catastrophic effect; and third, that the *interaction* of problems caused by growth means that such problems cannot be dealt with in isolation - i.e. solving one problem does not solve the rest, and may even exacerbate them. pp 62-63

If the green movement believes technological solutions to the limits to growth problem to be impossible, then it will have to argue for more profound changes in social thought and practice - changes in human values and ideas of morality. These changes will involve accommodating social practices to the limits that surround them, and abandoning the Promethean (in this context, technological) attempt to overcome them. It is in this kind of respect, once again, that the dark-green sustainable society is different from the environmentalist one, and why the latter can sit only uncomfortably

with the former. All of this is a result of the idea that technological solutions can have “no impact on the *essential* problem, which is exponential growth in a finite and complex system” (Meadows *et al.*, 1974, p. 45). p 65

The nature of the rate of growth produces a false sense of complacency: what appears to be a safe situation now can very quickly turn into an unsafe one. A recent French riddle for schoolchildren goes like this:

Suppose you own a pool on which a water lily is growing. The lily plant doubles in size each day. If the lily were allowed to grow unchecked, it would completely cover the pond in 30 days, choking off the other forms of life in the water. For a long time the lily plant seems small, and so you decide not to worry about cutting it back until it covers half the pond. On what day will that be? On the twenty-ninth day, of course. You have one day to save your pond. (Meadows *et al.*, 1974, p. 29; 1992, p. 18)

P 66

Greens claim that we are stunted ethically by the growth economy’s refusal to take the quality of life of future generations seriously and by its easy preparedness to take the Earth as resource rather than as blessing. We produce indiscriminately and consume voraciously, and our status and aspirations are largely judged and dictated by the wealth at our disposal. Greens believe that lives in the growth economy will tend away from the elegant and towards the grubby and materialistic. Conversely, they suggest that a society orientated around sustainable growth would be a less greedy and more pleasant place in which to live, and if this seems hard to credit, then greens might quote John Stuart Mill as a temporary bulwark against disbelief:

It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living and much more likelihood of its being improved. (in Meadows *et al.*, 1974, p. 175)

pp 76-77

The picture of the Good Life that the political ideology of ecologism paints for us is differentiated from most other pictures precisely because of its arguing for less consumption. Not only does this mark off ecologism from most other political ideologies but it also helps to distinguish it from light-green environmentalism. Jonathon Porritt, for example, writes in dark-green rather than light-green mode when he says that “A low-energy strategy means a low-consumption economy; we can do more with less, but we’d be better off doing less with less” (1984, p. 174). In this context, to concentrate on consumption and its implications is both to help mark out ecologism’s proper territory and to keep in mind that in this respect at least it comprises ‘a sharp break with the principles of the modern era’. p 77

Although much attention has been focused on green attitude to technology, greens are likely to want the spotlight turned elsewhere: more specifically towards the moral (and sometimes spiritual) changes that they conceive to be necessary for the practice of sustainable societies. We should remember that greens are forever suspicious of the ‘technological fix,’ and to this extent suspicion towards technology in general is a fundamental feature of the green intellectual make-up. p 84

While there is some ambivalence over the green attitude to technology's capability of dealing with the problem of limited resources, there is even more disagreement over its general role in the sustainable society. We might wonder, for instance, what kinds of technology will be allowed in order to cope with the demands of defending green societies from potential or actual aggressors. Some green thinkers will side-step the issue, of course, by arguing that sustainable societies will be basically peaceful ones anyway. Others will advocate non-violent civil resistance, drawing on practices followed, for example, during the 1980s anti-nuclear actions and demonstrations. This is fine as long as one is not fired upon, or is prepared to die defenceless if one is. p 86

Political ecologists have a specific view on the value of work and they also question the dominant tendency to associate work with paid employment. Such an association can lead us to believe that if a person is not in paid employment then they are not working. This, for greens, is simply untrue, and their renegotiation of the meaning of work leads them to suggest ways of 'freeing' it from what they see as restrictions founded on the modern (and archaic) sense that work is just paid employment.

pp 91-92

If it were simply a question of eating healthy food, living in a lead-free environment or using biodegradable detergent, then environmentalist strategies such as green consumerism would probably do the job. But greens suggest that green consumerism is no more sustainable - in the long run - than grey consumerism: both are subject to limits to growth. This state of affairs needs to be addressed by a specifically different set of habits and practices from those that we presently follow, and green consumerism is too tied in to present rates of depletion, production, depreciation (involving consumption) and pollution to constitute the new set of habits and practices that dark-greens say we need.

p 98

When diversity is privileged, one is obliged to admit to (and underwrite) the possibility that

truly autonomous bioregions will likely go their own separate ways and end up with quite disparate political systems - some democracies, no doubt, some direct, some representative, some federative, but undoubtedly all kinds of aristocracies, oligarchies, theocracies, principalities, margravates, duchies and palatinates as well. (Sale, 1984, p. 233)

At this point the wider green movement is likely to lose its bioregional nerve. Its members will want to subscribe to Sale's declaration that "Bioregionalism . . . not merely tolerates but thrives upon the diversities of human behaviour" (ibid., p. 234), but, as images of slavery and sexism come to mind, misty eyes will snap into focus and greens will remember that they are as much the heirs of the Enlightenment tradition as its committed critics. They most certainly believe that "their model of post-industrialism will maximise democracy, freedom, tolerance, equality and other rationalist values which made their appearance in Europe a few hundred years ago" (Frankel, 1987, p. 180), and in this respect the bioregional imperative of diversity is tempered by the desire to universalize messages most often associated with liberal democracy.

p 103

Strategies for Green Change

Green movements in most countries are attached to recognizably green parties which seek election to national legislatures. Green movements in all countries that have them see it as at least part of their role to try to influence the legislative process, either while policy is being drawn up, while bills are being debated, or during their execution. The principal assumption behind both kinds of activity (broadly speaking, party political activity and pressure group activity) is that the liberal-democratic decision-making process and the economic structures with which it is engaged are sufficiently open to allow the green agenda to be fulfilled through them. It seems to be accepted that even if a green party is not elected to government then sufficient pressure can be brought to bear on the incumbents to bring about a sustainable society. p 124

The first problem for any green party (in some countries, and certainly in Britain) is that of getting elected in the first place - by which I mean not necessarily being elected to government but garnering sufficient votes to gain even minimal representation in the legislature. . . .

A green party's political problems clearly do not end with getting elected. It would be faced with confronting and overcoming the constraints imposed by powerful interests intent on preventing the radical political and social change that a radical green movement would seek. Even at the level of relatively minor changes, opposition would most likely be intense. . . .

The central question in this context is whether a sustainable society can be brought about through the use of existing state institutions. p 125-126

In 1985 Rudolf Bahro, then the most famous 'fundamentalist' in Die Grunen [German Green Party], left the party. He argued that by then the party had "no basic ecological position" because "what people are trying to do . . . is to save a party - no matter what kind of party; and no matter for what purpose. The main thing is for it to get re-elected to parliament in 1987" (1986, p. 210). Bahro is here articulating the experience of a fundamentalist green who has seen the party colonized by the demands of the very system that it originally sought to overcome. His conclusion ran as follows:

At last I have understood that a party is a counterproductive tool, that the given political space is a trap into which life energy disappears, indeed, where it is rededicated to the spiral of death. This is not a general but a quite concrete type of despair. It is directed not at the original project which is today called 'fundamental,' but at the party. I've finished with it now. (Bahro, 1986, p. 211)

p 129

In 1973 Fritz Schumacher wrote, "Everywhere people ask: 'What can I actually *do*?' The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order" (1976, pp. 249-50). The theme is consistent: that personal

transformation leads to altered behaviour; which in turn can be translated into sustainable community living p 131

What seems common to these lifestyle strategies as I have treated them is that they mostly reject the idea that bringing about change is a properly 'political' affair - they do not hold that green change is principally a matter of occupying positions of political power and shifting the levers in the right direction. In Chapter 1, I noted that spirituality is of greater importance to the green perspective than is probably publicly realized, and this has made a significant impression on some activists in the movement with regard to how change might come about. Rudolf Bahro's writings from the period of his increasing disillusionment with Die Grunen and the parliamentary strategy are the *locus classicus* of what we might tentatively call the 'religious approach' to green change. p 133

Bahro's contention is that a modern-day Benedictine-style movement would provide the points of light and the conversionary zeal necessary to engineer the changes required by what he conceives to be the profundity of the present crisis. The missionary sense is never far away: "There should be some initiators (men and women) who make a personal decision, begin by preparing themselves and a project and gather round them a circle of fellow-strivers" (Bahro, 1986, p. 91). The end result, hopes Bahro, would be an overbalancing of the spirit in favour of green reconstruction: "The accumulation of spiritual forces . . . will at a particular point in time which can't be foreseen exceed a threshold size. Such a 'critical mass,' once accumulated, then acquires under certain circumstances a transformative influence over the whole society" (ibid., p. 98). p 134

It is simply not in the immediate interests of everybody to usher in a sustainable society. The *Limits to Growth* report remarks that:

The majority of the world's people are concerned with matters that affect only family or friends over a short period of time. Others look farther ahead in time or over a larger area - a city or a nation. Only a very few have a global perspective that extends far into the future. (Meadows *et al.*, 1974, p. 19)

This captures the problem of persuasion with which the green movement is confronted. Somehow people are required to begin to think in global terms and with respect to events that might or might not occur generations hence. p 147

It appears self-evident that a parliamentary presence, or pressure through the lobby system, can bring about a cleaner, more sustainable environment. It appears self-evident that we can lead more environment-friendly lives by buying the right things and refusing to buy the wrong ones. It also appears self-evident that sustainable communities are vital as sources of inspiration for the rest of us to live more lightly on the Earth.

But from ecologism's point of view all of these strategies must be measured in terms of the radical green critique of present practices developed in Chapter 3, and the kind of life it is suggested we need to lead to overcome them. Bringing about that kind of

sustainable society is an infinitely more difficult task than simply putting environmentalism on the political agenda. p 162

Ecologism and Other Ideologies

I regard attempts by liberals, conservatives and socialists to appropriate ecological thought for themselves to be chimerical, for as I pointed out in the Introduction, ecologism is as different from each of them as they are from each other. The examination carried out in this chapter should drive home this point. p 163

My own view is that the answer to the compatibility question depends entirely on one's terms of reference: environmentalism and liberalism are compatible, but ecologism and liberalism are not. The tensions between liberalism and ecologism are by now well rehearsed. Martell himself pointed out that:

there is a lot in liberal political theory that runs counter to radical ecology. Individualism, the pursuit of private gain, limited government and market freedom are contradicted by radical ecology commitments to the resolution of environmental problems as a collective good and to intervention and restrictions on economic and personal freedom to deal with them. (Martell, 1994, p. 141)

p 165

The guiding idea of political ecology is that this is an *ecological* place rather than an *evolutionary* place, with all the implications this entails. Most particularly, the ecological view talks of 'climax states' of relative stability, while the evolutionists' motif is that of 'progress.' Malthus's ecological view was superseded by that of Darwin and Wallace, whose ideas were grasped with alacrity by progressive thinkers such as Marx, who:

welcomed the new biological outlook and the support it gave to an evolutionary - and by implication, progressive - view of human society. The idea of general, and perhaps unlimited, progress so strongly attacked by Malthus had been restored as a dominant theme in social and political theory. (Wells, 1982, p.12)

With the restoration of the ecological idea in politics, battle with the evolutionary view of political progress has once again been joined. p 173

One thing the present generation can be sure of, they say, is that our actions will affect the conditions under which future people live their lives, and this generates a responsibility for us of which other political ideologies have no conception. Conservatism is interested in the conserving and preserving *of the past*; ecologism is interested in conserving and preserving *for the future*. Herein lies a signal difference between the conservative and ecological political imaginations. p 177

The first area of contention between ecologism and socialism is over the source of the ills of contemporary society. Socialists identify capitalism as that source, while political ecologists are much more likely to refer to 'industrialism.' We know by now that one of the reasons the green movement considers itself to be 'beyond left and right' is because it believes this traditional spectrum of opposition to be inscribed in a

more fundamental context of agreement: a 'super-ideology' called 'industrialism.' Greens "stress the similarities between capitalist and socialist countries" (Porritt and Winner, 1988, p.256) in that they are both held to believe that the needs of their respective populations are best satisfied by maximizing economic growth. p 180

Joe Weston argues that the green movement as presently constituted is an expression of the ennui of a particular section of the middle class - the professional, educated section. Green politics is "an attempt to protect the values - rather than simply the economic privilege - of a social group which rejects the market-orientated politics of capitalism and the materialistic analysis made of it by Marxists" (Weston, 1986, p 27). These values are reflected, partly, in the 'green' definitions of the environment most often advanced by the movement, referred to above. To the extent that this is "a political perspective which is specific to a particular social group" (ibid., p 28) and, moreover, a social group that is of limited size, no mass movement can be formed around it. On this reading ecologism will not progress beyond its minority, subordinate status until it speaks to the kinds of environmental problems suffered by the masses of people, and "that means developing ways to conceptualise and represent ecological issues in ways that speak to the aspirations of the working class movement" (Harvey, 1993, p 48). This it will never do, suggests Weston, unless it breaks out of its middle-class laager and recognizes that "rather than conserving the environment in which most people now live, the inner city and the shanty town need destroying" (Weston, 1986, pp 14-15). p 185

We have already identified the ambiguous relationship that the green movement as a whole has with Enlightenment traditions, and it is entirely consistent that some ecofeminists should see a link between the Baconian impulse to dominate nature and the subjection of women - especially once similar characteristics have been conferred on both. The modern scientific project, which has its roots in Francis Bacon, is held to be a universalizing project of reduction, fragmentation and violent control. 'Difference' ecofeminists will counter this project with the feminine principles of diversity, holism, interconnectedness and non-violence. 'Deconstructive' ecofeminists will argue that the Enlightenment further rigidified a set of dualisms that were in place long before the Enlightenment period began, and which need to be transcended rather than re-evaluated. p 195

Hazel Henderson remarks that "Biologically, most women in the world do still vividly experience their embeddedness in Nature, and can harbour few illusions concerning their freedom and separateness from the cycles of birth and death" (1938, p 207). Maori women bury their afterbirth in the earth as a symbolic representation of the connectedness of women as life-givers and the Earth as the source and fount of all life. p 196

Conclusion

Ecologism seeks radically to call into question a whole series of political, economic and social practices in a way that environmentalism does not. Ecologism envisages a post-industrial future that is quite distinct from that with which we are most generally acquainted. While most post-industrial futures revolve around high-growth, high-

technology, expanding services, greater leisure, and satisfaction conceived in material terms, ecologism's post-industrial society questions growth and technology, and suggests that the Good Life will involve more work and fewer material objects. Fundamentally, ecologism takes seriously the universal condition of the finitude of the planet and asks what kinds of political, economic and social practices are (a) possible and (b) desirable within that framework. p 201

Green reformers need a radically alternative picture of post-industrial society, they need deep-ecological visionaries, they need the phantom studies of the sustainable society, and they need, paradoxically, occasionally to be brought down to earth and to be reminded about limits to growth. Dark-green politics remind reformists of where they want to go even if they don't really think they can get there. On this view there is what we might call a 'constructive tension' between ecologism and environmentalism. p 202

The green movement has spent years trying to get the environment on to the political agenda, and the major political parties have so artfully stitched a green stripe into their respective flags that there seems to be no need for a specifically green (much less *radically* green) politics any longer. As Anna Bramwell has put it: "What is usable in the Green critique has largely been subsumed by the political system" (Bramwell, 1994, p 206). On this reading, radical green politics has disappeared behind brighter lights and louder voices, and the call for radical social, political and economic change is muted - if not silent. pp 204-205

The 'greening' of households, retailing, industry and governments, even of people - however insecure - is the signal achievement of ecologism's first two decades. This is as much as to say that Act One of the green movement's paradise play is over; radical greens will look forward to seeing the curtain lifted on Act Two. p 214

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