Greening Modernity:
The British Greens and the Response to Modern Thought

By

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Introduction

Throughout the Western world, and especially in Europe, politicians of every persuasion are discovering the vote-getting power of the environment. Even the Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who denounced environmentalists as part of the "'enemy within'... unpatriotically gnawing away, like the miners and other agitators, at the sickening heart of British society," changed her attitude in a 1988 speech to the Royal Society.[1] "No generation has a free-hold on this earth," she proclaimed. "All we have is a life-tenancy—with a full repairing lease."[2]

In the light of the newfound weight of environmental issues at European ballot boxes, the parties professing "green" policies have come under increased study. But not all green groups are alike. Although many parties have grafted the environment onto pre-existing political agendas, the platforms of numerous European "Green" parties spring from the environment itself. By placing the welfare of the planet and all its inhabitants as their highest priority, Greens are suggesting not only a new kind of politics, but a radically different way of living. Yet in spite of the attention focused on the viability of Green politics—from the Green Party UK to Germany's internationally-known <u>die Grünen</u>—scholars have written very little to cast the philosophy underlying Green political programs into a broader, more historical light.

Green philosophy is by no means fixed in stone; thinkers in this relatively new movement are still grappling both with basic issues and how to accomplish their goals. However, in the midst of the flux, one characteristic clearly stands out to illustrate both the complexity of Green thought and the mixed heritage from which it comes: Greens reject the philosophical concept of Modernity while simultaneous-

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[1] Andrew Dobson, <u>Green Political Thought</u> (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 2

[2] quoted in Tom Burke, "The Year of the Greens," <u>Environment</u>, 31, No. 9 (1989), p. 18. "A full repairing lease," explains Burke, "requires the return of property in its original condition."

ly embracing it. On the one hand, their world-view denies the goals of the Modern project—to create a more perfect world solely by rational means. At the same time, though, Green ideas incorporate some very fundamental Modern notions to achieve their aims.

In Section I, I describe the development of Modern thought and some of its implications. I then set the Greens within the historical background of Modernity and its critics. Although the Green movement is a world-wide phenomenon, the British Greens—leaders of the movement from its early days in Europe and still quite influential around the world—can serve as a case study to illustrate this philosophical duality. Therefore, Section II provides a brief overview of Green philosophy as described by some leading British Green politicians and thinkers. But the Modern and anti-Modern strains of thought become even more apparent when examining one detail of the Green vision more specifically. How Greens address the issue of work provides great explanatory power for looking at this paradox in the larger philosophy—especially since little of the secondary literature considers Green ideas about work. Section III describes Green attitudes toward work and draws out the dualism between Modernity and anti-Modernism. Section IV places the development of the Green movement within a deeper historical context, illustrating how it represents the intersection of older ideas with post-WWII circumstances; this section also presents two examples of earlier thinkers—John Ruskin and William Morris—whose ideas about work are strikingly similar to the contemporary Greens. Finally, Section V draws some broader conclusions about the Green movement in contemporary society and how its ideas might suggest possibilities for confronting the duality between Modernity and anti-Modernism.

I

Modernity

As the world becomes increasingly aware of environmental issues, a mood of apprehension is giving way to a genuine anxiety over the fate of Planet Earth. Lone voices once murmuring their disapproval over very specific problems are now converging into a chorus of protest and outrage over what we may be doing to the only planet on which we can survive. As new scientific discoveries highlight potential threats to the ecosystem and as people demand the right to live on a clean Earth, an environmental consciousness is being reborn.

In the midst of the polemic about the environment stands a growing number of philosophers, activists, and politicians who have alerted the general public to how easily the Earth's delicate balance can be upset. However, not all such groups are alike. Organizations like Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and the Sierra Club are becoming much better known through their efforts to raise the public consciousness to environmental issues. But some less well-known thinkers go much further than these popular groups in their criticism of how we relate to the Earth; the alternatives they propose are also much more radical. Unlike that of most environmentalists, the philosophy of this group—known around the world as the "Greens"—encompasses not only a new way of treating the planet, but a new way of life for people as well. These "deeper"[3] thinkers place both ecology and society at the center of their world-view and they are evangelizing a new vision of a better, Greener future.

But concern for the environment—whether voiced by Greens or by

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[3] Many people within the Green movement distinguish between "deep" ecology and "shallow" ecology. Specifically, "Deep Ecologists," of whom the Scandinavian philosopher Arne Naess is the best known, are a more spiritually oriented segment of Greens, but the term "deep" also differentiates between Greens and popular environmental organizations. Greens may be considered "deep" because they claim to address the roots of ecological degradation rather than merely its symptoms.

others—does not rest on environmental issues alone. Although many people care passionately about ozone depletion, pollution, and the dangers of nuclear waste, for example, they are also expressing a much deeper angst about the direction of modern life. Environmental concern is linked by a common thread of doubt about society's direction to other problems of contemporary life—anxiety about technology taking controlling our lives, for example, or the fears that mount as the problems of modern cities seem to expand without end. And there are countless other problems in our contemporary age that express this same kind of anxiety—it is not unique to Greens. Yet one can feel the power of such deep seated concerns about society's direction throughout Green rhetoric. "[I]f current trends are allowed to persist," write the editors of the journal The Ecologist, "the breakdown of society and the irreversible disruption of the life-support systems on this planet, possibly by the end of the century, certainly within the lifetimes of our children, are inevitable."⁴ Above all, this kind of worry raises the question: What price must we pay for "progress?"

These criticisms—of which environmental concern is only one of many—reflect a conscious reassessment of the underlying values of modern life. For centuries, the belief in the power of human reason to create a more perfect world has guided society. This "Modern" idea grew out of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment belief that the universe was neither mysterious nor divine but comprehensible through human reason. People could interpret the heavens and the Earth with a new confidence in empirical inquiry. God was replaced with mathematically exact equations; Newton's universe was a huge clock, eternally ticking. With the confidence in human reason came the power to control the world by applying the precision of scientific laws through human action; nature could be molded to meet human specifications. And shaping the world soon became the desire to

⁴ Edward Goldsmith, et. al., "A Blueprint for Survival," The Ecologist, 2, No. 1 (1972), p. 1.

shape human society. The search for a better world—for a utopia of some sort—has long been a theme of history. But instead of looking to an afterlife or hoping to discover an Eldorado, humans believed that they had the power to build a rational utopia—a heaven here on Earth.[5]

This application of human reason—in its most extreme form, nothing but reason—to change society is the essence of "Modernity." To Modern thinking, human development is teleological; despite temporary setbacks, society is always advancing toward something—the future is always better than the past and progress is eternal. Moderns try to shape their world believing that the end product of rational planning will be a more perfect existence. But in order to mold society, one must create new people. Because progress is believed to be logical, solutions to human problems are applied universally, across human distinctions; science only permits one correct answer. Underlying Modernity is the fundamental belief that humans can control themselves and their world.

One of the most powerful manifestations of the Modern mind has been the industrial society in which we still live. By placing their trust in new technological innovations, industrialists increasingly brought the world under a more precise and predictable control. At their disposal, they possessed what appeared to be the endless resources of nature. The rhythm of production was increasingly regularized by internalizing the value and the precision of time into workers.[6] And what workers could not do, machines could. Going hand-in-hand with industrialism, the insight of new economic theories and the rise of Liberalism confirmed and extended

    [5] There are various accounts of Modernity's historical roots including Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity (New York: The Free Press, 1990), Leszek Kolakowski, Modernity on Endless Trial (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), Marshall Berman, All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982). For a discussion of the human quest for utopias, see Isaiah Berlin, The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas (London: John Murray, 1990).

    [6] E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," Past and Present, 38 (1967), pp. 56-97.

human power over life. Although markets may be governed by the "invisible hand" of natural laws, these processes could be known and predicted. The Liberal beliefs in rational self-government and progress bolstered the idea that a better world seemed to be virtually within the grasp of humankind.

Despite its prevalence in Western history, the rational road to a better world has had numerous critics—people who questioned its goals and its assumptions. But Modernity's most devastating critique has been its own dark side—progress has not been achieved without a price. Creating a more rational world may have produced great advances in medicine or in meeting material needs, for example, but it has also produced totalitarian regimes and the shadow of the nuclear age. The belief in a scientifically knowable future has been converted into ruthless ideological blades that have sliced through the souls of individuals who dared to stand in the way of rational, universal "progress." How many people have suffered in the name of the better world to come? Modern utopians fail to recognize, writes the historian and philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, that "life necessarily involves tension and suffering; consequently if we wish to abolish tension and suffering, life is to be extinguished."[7] Today, many people are reviving religious fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism to escape the horror underlying the Modern project. As these rejections of Modernity expand their influence, many thinkers believe that we may be living in the "last Modern century."[6]

Greens join the attack on Modernity by vehemently denouncing "industrialism" as a philosophy that reveals ignorance of human needs and ecological limitations; by its all-encompassing logic, Greens assert, industrialism wants to mold the

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[7] Leszek Kolakowski, Modernity on Endless Trial (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 141.

[6] See New Perspectives Quarterly, Spring 1991 issue entitled "The Last Modern Century." For another discussion of thinkers rejecting the Enlightenment tradition, see Isaiah Berlin, Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas (New York: Viking, 1979).

world into its own version of an idealized form without realizing the costs of achieving that goal. Just as other Modern projects have exposed a darker side when taken to their logical conclusions, Greens argue that as industrialism continues, it demonstrates its own inherent brutality. "The trouble is," says Jonathon Porritt, one of the leading spokespeople for the Green Party UK, "that we have simply taken their [the believers in industrialism] interpretation of progress for granted without realizing that the very forces which have enabled us to make such improvements could, as [Theodore] Roszak puts it, 'overshoot their promise' and bring about a 'new dark age.'"[9] Industrialism, Greens say, is based on the belief in unlimited economic growth, it promotes the centralization of power into rigid hierarchies, it rejects the spiritual or intuitive capacities of humans in favor of pure reason, and it asserts that human happiness lies only in material success—and these characteristics are formed from the Modern mind-set. Industrialism is not just an economic theory or a means of production, Greens insist, it is a world-view—a set of values. Instead, Greens propose a completely different way of thinking beginning with a new paradigm of values designed to respect the Earth and its inhabitants.[10] Greens would decentralize political and economic power to the local level where individuals have the most direct input. They reject unlimited economic growth in favor of "sustainability"—a kind of economic balance that values permanence over expansion. Greens balance rationalism with spirituality and intuition. And they denounce materialism alone as unable to meet real personal needs.

But while Greens try to slip the trap of Modernity in their own philosophy, they do not completely succeed. They want to return individual control and ecolog-

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[9] Jonathon Porritt, Seeing Green: The Politics of Ecology Explained (London: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 19-20.

[10] For discussions of a Green "paradigm" of values, see Stephen Cotgrove, Catastrophe or Cornucopia: The Environment, Politics, and the Future (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1982) and Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak, Green Politics (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984).

ical harmony to the center of human concern, but there is no doubt that Greens are engaged in their own Modern project of social molding; they have one vision, logically constructed, for a new and better world. They advance a new set of beliefs which everyone, they say, must hold in order to protect the Earth and to satisfy human needs. Although Greens shift the emphasis in their construction of utopia, they have unmistakably internalized the values of the Modern world in which they have developed. As much as Greens reject Modern values, they also embrace them.

Greens live as wanderers between these two worlds, sometimes eschewing the power of human rationality and control while at other times basing their hope for the future on it. Although people have long looked to "natural laws" as controlling human behavior, science has also sought to learn these laws in order to use them. Industrialism took advantage of new scientific powers in order to manage and to control nature for its purposes. But Greens reject these Modern concepts by humbling humanity's place to being one among equals with nature rather than nature's controller. They willingly allow the cycles and rhythms of nature to guide human society. Greens also deny the preeminence of reason by balancing it with intuition and spirituality. But at the very same time, Greens incorporate the Modern by devising logical strategies for achieving their goals; they draft blueprints and manifestos, they support their arguments with hard-headed scientific data, they work within the system of parliamentary politics and its methods of logical argument and compromise. Most importantly, like the Moderns, Greens still cling to the notion of progress; humanity will one day, through its own actions, arrive in a more perfect state.

Although the Greens are not the first to hold two seemingly contradictory ideas at the same time, this paradox may take on a larger significance as an emblem of our contemporary age. If, as some thinkers suggest, society is moving beyond

Modernity—beyond shaping the world according to only one logical vision—we must nevertheless realize that our society has been formed by these same Modern values which we are trying to escape. The Greens may, then, represent in micro-cosm a fundamental philosophical challenge which contemporary thinkers may eventually have to confront.

The entire Green movement is too large to examine here, but looking at one part of it will reveal the depth of this paradox—of rejecting Modernity with one hand while latching onto it with the other—in Green thought. Because the British Greens have been part of the philosophical vanguard in many respects and because they exercise international influence, discussing their beliefs in specific will shed light on the larger movement. Although the political manifestation of Green thought is the most visible and has been the subject of the most academic study, I am looking underneath the political parties to the values that they hold; while I may refer to political authors, my analysis is not of Green politics per se, but of the underlying philosophy.

II

Green Philosophy

Green philosophy begins by redefining the relationship between people and the planet. Rather than existing separately, as many people suggest, humans and na-ture are actually parts of one interconnected ecosystem; people cannot exist indepen-dently of the rest of the planet. Therefore, Greens argue, humans do not retain the right to control nature and to use it for their own purposes, but instead are one among equals with other life forms in the ecosystem. Society should be based on this fundamental fact, Greens argue, since values ultimately shape how we treat the planet. Thoroughly disgusted with an industrial society that fails to see the connec-tion between humans and the larger environment, Greens embrace a new ethical

paradigm at odds with contemporary thinking.

This new value system—often referred to as "biocentrism"—must replace the humanistic industrial ethic that has led to environmental degradation and human suffering, Greens argue. Biocentrism begins with the belief that the planet, as itself a living organism, and every life-form on it have the equal right to exist." This belief forces Greens to remove human life from the center of their world-view and to re-place it with all living things. Therefore, if all life has inherent value, no species is significant enough to manipulate another organism for its own selfish ends; the en-tire system of life must be considered in every decision. Eliminating the belief that humanity can exploit the planet for its own needs rebels against Modernity; biocen-trism represents a guiding force outside the bounds of human reason. But in order to implement this anti-Modern ethic, Greens undertake a logical, programmatic, Modern task: the problem does not lie in the natural world, but in humanity; there-fore humans need to be altered by rational action according to new values. Like other Moderns, by seeking to reshape human values Greens hope to construct a bet-ter society.

This double-sided emphasis on human society and on ecology's equal em-brace of all life forms may be the source of the duality between Modernity and anti-Modernism; Greens want to change people for the planet's sake but also for their own sakes. On the one hand, Greens believe that all life in the ecosystem has the in-herent right to exist. Planetary destruction thus becomes a morally offensive act, wrong in and of itself. In the biocentric ethic, people must abandon their egotism and recognize their place in a community of species. But often, the more anthro-pocentric elements of Green thought—which they are consciously trying to es-

" In his "Gaia Hypothesis," the British scientist James Lovelock advanced the conception of the planet as a living organism; see James Lovelock, Gaia: A New Look At Life On Earth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

cape—downplay this larger moral context and emphasize only the purely human necessity for ecological preservation: if we destroy the planet, we destroy ourselves. Here people replace all other species as the center of concern. Greens point out that although industrial values damage the environment, they also damage humanity—people always enter the analysis. Valuing material wealth, for example, compels us to take that wealth from nature without regard for the consequences but it also causes us to base our sense of human worth on how much money we make. Frequently too, Greens address issues—such as reforming the political system, emphasizing spiritual development, and reshaping the workplace—that, while they may have ecological implications, are primarily aimed at improving the quality of human life.

Difficulty in selling the biocentric viewpoint may create this tension between ecology and humanism; it is hard to convince people not to build a much needed dam because snail darters have a fundamental moral right to exist or not to employ animal testing as a means for examining products that might save human lives. Most people, while recognizing some interrelationship between people and planet, see themselves as more valuable than a tree. But this tension also reflects the mixed heritage of Green thinking. By walking a tenuous tightrope between emphasizing people and subsuming humanity within a larger life-ethic, they precariously balance between the humanism of Modernity and the anti-Modern's willingness to look outside humanity for its moral compass.

Fleeing Modernity

Actual rejection of Modernity is perhaps most evident in the idea that forms the foundation for a Green society. The concept of ecological "sustainability" acknowledges that the planet is a finite sphere with a limited amount of resources, space, and carrying capacity. Industrialism is founded on the opposing belief that the

potential for and the benefits of expansion, growth, and the extraction of natural resources are unlimited; even if there are limits, industrialists say, new technology can be devised to circumvent them. But in order to live within the planet's limits, which the Greens staunchly argue are irrefutable and unalterable, they propose replacing society's desire for growth with a value on balance. This change does not simply mean better land management or more recycling, but a transformation of the economic principles of society from industrial expansion to a "steady-state."[12] In the "steady state" economy, waste and non-renewable resource depletion are minimized while renewable resources and local production are maximized. The goal is to achieve a balance between input and output in an economic or productive system and to prevent growth beyond limits. Although a sustainable society "would not be forever frozen at that level...," writes the economist Herman Daly, "the growth (or decline) required to get to the new level would be seen as a temporary adjustment process, not a norm."[13] Without these economic changes and the respect of ecological limits, Greens warn, the planet-wide ecosystem could breakdown and spell the end of our society "against our will, in a succession of famines, epidemics, social crises and wars."[14] By willingly surrendering a measure of human control to the Earth, Greens are rejecting the supreme emphasis placed on human reason by Modernity; when human dreams and ecological reality collide, the planet must always prevail. Because of its inviolable limits, the Earth provides a necessary external boundary to human action. "If we squander our fossil fuels," writes the British economist E. F. Schumacher, "we threaten civilisation; but if we squander the capital

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[12] A term popularized by the economist Herman Daly.

[13] Herman Daly, "The Steady State Economy: What, Why, and How?" in D. Pirages, The Sustainable Society: Implications for Limited Growth excerpted in Andrew Dobson (ed.), The Green Reader: Essays Toward A Sustainable Society (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1991), p. 146.

[14] Goldsmith, et. al., p. 2.

represented by living nature around us, we threaten life itself."[15]

By putting the planet at the center of its philosophy, the characteristics of the Earth itself are often glorified by Greens. The scholar Andrew Dobson believes that much or most of their philosophy is derived by translating their particular interpretations of the Earth into human actions.[16] One of the ecosystem's characteristics most frequently revered by Greens is its holism. The planet is a complex web of interconnections; it does not artificially fragment or separate parts of life from the larger whole but incorporates the parts into something exceeding their mere sum. When the Greens look at industrial "knowledge," for example, they are appalled to see how ideas are separated from a larger context of wisdom; science is supposedly value-free and deeper human sensibilities, such as intuition and spirituality, are proclaimed to be unimportant. But Greens incorporate these non-rational elements into their philosophy and construct a holistic concept of "understanding" that blends both the rational and the non-rational. Modern reason values specialization over attempts to put ideas within a larger philosophical context, but Greens want to return a balance between pure reason—the elixir of industrialism and Modernity—with intuition, spirituality, and ecological wisdom. "[T]he spiritual is not identified with any actual religion, nor confined to religious sentiment," write the Green thinkers Walter and Dorothy Schwarz, "it includes the intuitive, the non-measurable, the aesthetic, the caring and the loving."[17] Greens try to replace the subjective aspects of life into human thinking—including a personal connection with nature—which Modern science and rationality, because it cannot measure or prove them, has removed from our larger consciousness. Greens seems to need to feel a part of something larger than the self, to have a sense of cosmic belonging and

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[15] E. F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 17.

[16] Dobson, Green Political Thought.

[17] Walter and Dorothy Schwarz, Breaking Through excerpted in Dobson, The Green Reader, p. 104.

a "fixed sense of a permanent place in the universe," as the historian Marshall Berman describes the anti-Modern.[18] Some, but certainly not all, Greens carry this spirituality farther than others by embracing pagan rituals or New Age spirituality.

This desire for a balance of reason and intuition also gives a particular kind of feminism—or, as Greens frequently say, "post-patriarchal" values—an important place within Green philosophy. But rather than seeking equality through female similarity to men, "eco-feminism," as it is sometimes called, positively reevaluates the stereotypical female roles and characteristics, many of which Greens see paralleled in the natural world.[19] By balancing traditionally masculine values—"competitiveness, assertiveness, the rational and analytical, the materialistic and intellectual"—with traditionally feminine characteristics—"co-operation, empathy, holistic thinking, emotion and intuition"—Greens are, as Jonathon Porritt puts it, "reclaiming the feminine."[20] Yet this particular conception of women has put eco-feminism at odds with other feminists who charge that the Greens are merely reinforcing the stereotypes which women are trying to overcome.[21]

Industrialism tries to meet human needs with material rewards; happiness, according to the industrial world-view, is found in acquiring more money and material wealth. But Greens shift the search for happiness from the acquisition of material wealth to personal growth and satisfaction which are not rational or measurable quantities. Material wealth is empty because, they say, it lacks deeper personal meaning. Not much in contemporary society provides a sense of "progress and satisfaction in life," writes Ted Trainer in his book <u>Abandon Affluence!</u> "In the alternative situation, there would be far more important sources of satisfaction available

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[18] Marshall Berman, "Modernist Anti-Modernism," <u>New Perspectives Quarterly</u>, Spring 1991, p. 35.
[19] Dobson, <u>The Green Reader</u>, p. 100.
[20] Porritt, pp. 201, 200.
[21] Dobson, <u>Green Political Thought</u>, p. 28.

to all."[22]   But the desire to gain more wealth is not only devoid of deeper meaning, it necessarily harms the Earth. Materialism creates the demand that drives much of industrialism's need to expand; therefore seeking unlimited material wealth violates the Earth's limits. Most of the wealth we create originally comes from the planet itself, but by continuing to exploit "nature's capital," as E. F. Schumacher puts it, we deplete the very sources of the wealth we seek.[23]   By placing emphasis on personal growth and happiness rather than on owning things, Greens argue, we would seek to fulfill our material needs, rather than our material wants; we should choose—for the good of the planet and for our own well-being—to live a life of "voluntary simplicity."[24]

Finally, the Green flight from Modernity is a rejection of the large-scale bureaucratic organizations run by "experts" and "managers" who control much of contemporary society. Greens claim that the industrial world skews the concept of "scale" by organizing society—politics, economics, and most institutions—into enormous, rigid hierarchies. From a human standpoint, large-scale organizations alienate people from each other and deny them input into society; individuals become lost in the masses and have more difficulty making their voices heard against an institutionalized bureaucracy. The Green thinker John Papworth cites large housing projects as an example of the problems with enterprises undertaken on too large a scale: "These blocks [of apartment buildings] were, and are, scenes of inordinate school truancy, vandalism, gangsterism, violence, crime and stress-induced forms of illness.... These estates have proved impossible to superintend, to manage, to police or to maintain in decent order... ."[25] Greens often blame many social prob-

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[22] Ted Trainer, Abandon Affluence! excerpted in Dobson, The Green Reader, p. 85.

[23] Schumacher uses this phrase throughout Small is Beautiful.

[24] the title of a book by Duane Elgin; see Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich (New York: William Morrow, 1981).

[25] John Papworth, "Non-Local Local Government and Local Power," The Ecologist, 18, No. 6, p. 214.

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lems on unmanageable scale of contemporary society. Large activities also harm the ecosystem; environmental damage always has a more intense impact and is far less manageable when it occurs on a bigger scale. Instead, Greens prefer to think in terms of an "appropriate scale" by limiting activities to a humanly accessible and manageable size. "What scale is appropriate?" asks E. F. Schumacher, perhaps the best-known advocate for appropriate scale. "It depends on what we are trying to do."[26] Greens describe decentralizing politics in order to maximize the input that each person has into the process. "In terms of restoring power to the community, nothing should be done at a higher level that can be done at a lower."[27] By keeping things in the correct proportion, individuals and communities can have a greater sense of controlling their lives rather than feeling as if they are controlled by a social machine. In economics, "appropriate scale" means producing and using goods locally rather than shipping them long distances which wastes energy. In general, appropriate scale returns to individuals more direct control over their own lives.

Embracing Modernity

However, human control over life is essentially a Modern issue; while Greens would surrender much of humanity's control over its future to the planet, they never yield it completely. Green philosophy draws upon the Modern half of its intellectual heritage by working through scientific and mathematical means—rather than intuition or a spiritual connection with nature—to define the Earth's limits and to suggest how to live with them. Ecologist often make calculations about the future of the industrial mode of living—they project how much longer petroleum reserves can last, for example, and then call for a transition to renewable energy sources. Greens frequently refer to the findings of a group of scientists known as the "Club of Rome"—which in the early 1970s created a computer model to project the

[26] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 71.
[27] Forritt, p. 166.

effects of continued industrial development—as proof of the need to shift to a more sustainable society. "If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged," wrote the Club, "the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next 100 years."[28] Indeed, science—which Greens malign in its industrial form—has often been at the vanguard of the environmental and Green movements: Paul Ehrlich wrote about the dangers of population expansion in the early 1960s; Rachel Carson's groundbreaking 1962 book Silent Spring alerted the world to the horrors of pesticides such as DDT. Science also frequently leads the Green way out of industrialism. The transition to a sustainable society "will require controlled and well-orchestrated change on numerous fronts," state the editors of The Ecologist in their 1972 proclamation called "A Blueprint for Survival," followed by a 100 year "careful synchronisation and integration;" in each of these cases, the power of reason reigns in shaping the Green future.[29] Oftentimes, Greens propose new technology that works within the Earth's limits such as E. F. Schumacher's "intermediate technology" that makes "use of the best of modern knowledge and experience, is conducive to decentralisation, compatible with the laws of ecology, gentle in its use of scarce resources, and designed to serve the human person instead of making him the servant of machines."[30] In order to make the transition to sustainability, Green politicians frequently suggest a governmental "carrot and stick" approach to encourage a more conservation-oriented society—convincing people where it can, restricting or dictating actions where it must because, supposedly, a Green government would know best. Greens never want to abandon reason in a wild, Romantic flight of emotion. Their critique of industrial rationality centers on what industrialism

[28] Donella Meadows, et. al., The Limits to Growth excerpted in Dobson, The Green Reader, p. 14.
[29] Goldsmith, et. al., p. 8, p. 17.
[30] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 163.

excludes—the subjective—rather than what it includes; "Though we would never be so foolhardy as to assume that reason alone is sufficient to build a caring, civilized society," Jonathon Porritt writes, "the politics of ecology [and the philosophy more generally] is none the less profoundly rational." Ironically, Greens also use rational thought to determine the limits of reason. Perhaps the most vivid vision of humbling humanity from its status as nature's controller to an equal place as one species among many comes from the scientist James Lovelock's "Gaia Hypothesis"—named after the mythological Greek Earth mother. He believes that, independently of humans, the Earth takes whatever measures necessary to protect itself; taken to its logical conclusions, the theory implies that humans are expendable if they threaten the life of Gaia.[31] Lovelock's rational theory proclaims the ultimate futility of human reason to shape the world.

The tension between Modern and anti-Modern values is also apparent in the conflict between the Green view of a decentralized society and a global ecological ethic. Greens appeal for standards of local economic self-sufficiency, direct participation in politics and society, and small-scale communities; life should be organized around the concept of a "human scale" rather than being constructed as a huge machine or enormous cities where individuals become anonymous. Shifting the locus of control over life to individuals denies the kind of large, universal answers that Modernity would try to suggest; Modern answers to human problems encompass everyone, but when people are given direct control of their own lives, each finds a unique way to live. Yet at the same time Greens promote this individuation of life, they also evoke a global ethic built on Modern underpinnings. While people would live in small communities, they must also feel a part of a planet-wide system. People would be encouraged to be individuals, but life would still require certain

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[31] Meredith Veldman, personal communication.

universal actions and thoughts; some all-encompassing ethics must remain in order to "maintain and respect the integrity and viability of nature's life-supporting and life-enhancing ecosystems."[32] "Individualism alone cannot provide people with a yardstick for their own genuine self-interest," writes Jonathon Porritt who believes that true "genuine self-interest" is no longer expressed in the Liberal belief that combining individual action improves the public welfare. "In today's crowded, interdependent world," Porritt states, "these same individualistic tendencies are beginning to destroy our general interest and thereby harm us all."[33] The rights of individuals, therefore, must be balanced with larger responsibilities to the community and to the planet. This tension between individuals and society runs deep within Green thought and no one ever draws a clear distinction of ethical jurisdiction. Indeed, the sociologist Stephen Cotgrove sees this duality as one of the chief distinctions between factions within the Green movement. Some groups promote "the liberation of man;" others are "more likely to seek justification for forms of social control in the more mystical notions of Nature, 'blood and soil,' and the group will."[34] So while Greens denounce the universal standardization of large-scale industrial society, the possibility for Modernity's universalism still exists within their global ethic.

The Greens are often victim to popular misconceptions about their views; such distortions must be corrected. Greens are not Marxian communists: "We are neither left nor right, we are in front," they assert, to delineate their politics from the positions of other groups. Although Greens advocate a more equal distribution of wealth and a communitarian society based on small-scale, local living, they reject the Marxist notions of revolution and the centrality of the proletariat in creating a new society. An analogy to utopian socialism would probably be more (but not com-

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[32] Sandy Irvine and Alec Ponton, A Green Manifesto: Policies For A Green Future (London: Optima, 1988), p. 14.

[33] Porritt, pp. 116, 117.

[34] Stephen Cotgrove, "Environmentalism and Utopia," Sociological Review, 24 (1976), p. 30.

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pletely) accurate. Secondly, Greens are not militant in their advocacy for change. Despite the notoriety of various ecology-centered groups, including the US-based Earth First! which has "asserted that the human species as a whole... is innately destructive to the environment"[35] and which has undertaken acts of "eco-terrorism" to achieve its goals, people who truly fit the definition of "Green" employ peaceful means for change; Greens emulate what they see as the natural world's peaceful and harmonious character rather than industrialism's violence and aggression—although this conception ignores the fact that nature also contains plenty of violence and aggression. Rather than inciting revolution, Greens lobby governments, wage media campaigns, and run for political office. They have also been widely active in the European peace movements in the 1980s such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Britain—neither nuclear power nor nuclear warheads are ecologically or humanly safe. Third, although their political manifestation is most visible, Greens are not simply another party tucked among the high-sounding names on the ballot. They represent a different world-view, a new mode of thought, a set of values whose implications go far beyond politics down to the level of daily living.

Most importantly, though, Greens are not merely environmentalists. In the last few decades, the public consciousness has been saturated with information, statistics, and theories detailing the numerous environmental disasters that we may face. From warnings about overpopulation and the deadly effects of pollution to the horrible scenes from the Chernobyl disaster and the environmental catastrophe in Eastern Europe, concrete instances of ecological degradation have riveted public attention and anger on the planet's welfare. The result has been wave upon wave of environmental activism, protest, and legislation, from groups like Greenpeace, the

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[35] Brian Tokar, "Social Ecology, Deep Ecology, and the Future of Green Political Thought," The Ecologist, 18, No. 4/5, p. 133.

Sierra Club, and various conservation societies, that have forced us to begin confronting ecological threats. But this kind of popular environmentalism must not be mistaken for the Green movement. While environmentalists may be satisfied with recycling, dolphin-safe tuna, and "environmentally friendly" products at the grocery store, Green concern and activism go far beyond these measures. Greens see degradation of the planet not as the problem itself, but as a symptom of a much deeper flaw in contemporary society: the continuing belief in the values of "industrialism." Popular environmentalists (often called "light greens") are willing to work within the industrial mode of life merely to soften its impact on the planet. They are not concerned with changing the values of society, but with adapting industrialism so that it is more "friendly" to the Earth. Greens (often called "dark Greens"—always with a capital "G") however, seek to replace the values of industrialism with a completely new paradigm of thought. Although strictly nonviolent, Greens are, therefore, revolutionaries who are not willing, as are light greens, to work with the industrial system.

Despite the many books, articles, and journals dedicated to the Green cause, Green philosophy is not completely coherent. In The Coming of the Greens, Jonathon Porritt, one of the best known spokespeople for the Green Party UK, and his co-author David Winner describe the Green movement as a "delta" forming underwater at the mouth of an intellectual river; it peeks up above the surface in several different places at once making it appear disjointed and diffuse. But underneath, they say, the islands that have risen above sea-level are all connected to a common base: the set of values to which all Greens subscribe.* Yet while there are common values, the movement is not monolithic. Some groups and individuals differ over which aspects of the philosophy to emphasize. The "Deep Ecologists,"

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* Jonathon Porritt and David Winner, The Coming of the Greens (London: Fontana, 1988).

for example, espouse a more spiritual, somewhat pan-theistic philosophy than most Greens. Even while the Green world-view is being refined, it nonetheless represents a fundamental reassessment of values away from industrial culture towards a lifestyle based on ecology and quality of life issues.

However, despite their differences with communists, eco-terrorists, traditional politicians (whom they call "grey") and popular environmentalists, the Greens do share a belief in "progress." Although the goals of these groups are quite different, none of them doubt their eventual success. Green attacks on "progress" are always on its industrial manifestation, but never on the idea of progress itself. "A Green programme is the only sensible way out of our current dilemmas," write Sandy Irvine and Alec Ponton, "and there are no insurmountable technical obstacles to the construction of what we have called the ecosociety."[67] Yet the new direction in which they want to travel, while it has been shaped by the Modern ideas around them, is tempered by the rejection of these same ideas; they want to strike a balance between the two extremes and blend them into a third alternative.

III

Work

Although the duality of the Modern and the anti-Modern is already evident in this admittedly crude sketch of Green philosophy, an even more direct sense of it appears when examining one specific aspect of Green thought. Of all the ideas Greens discuss, work is perhaps the one that touches people most in their daily lives; while philosophical discussions and abstract moralizing can become quite remote, work is something to which nearly everyone can relate. The activities in which we are willing to engage during most of our waking hours reveal something about ourselves and our society. Indeed, much of a person's identity and self-image

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[37] Irvine and Ponton, p. 134.

are determined—for better or worse—by the job he or she does. And work has often played a crucial role in many philosophies and ideologies such as capitalism and communism. So the issue of work brings a great deal of explanatory power to examining how a society or how a philosophy sees itself and the world around it. Strangely, Greens do not seem to have stressed this part of their agenda compared to other issues; perhaps it is not as glamorous or as attention-grabbing as nuclear waste or protests against industrial polluters. Yet the workplace is one of the essential areas where philosophy becomes action. And, according to Jonathon Porritt and David Winner, with the industrial economy's inability to create enough jobs, work "is one area where the Greens are confidently expecting that their ideas will become increasingly attractive."[38]

E. F. Schumacher

Perhaps the best place to begin a discussion of Green ideas about work is with one of the most important thinkers on the subject, the British economist E. F. Schumacher. Although many Green thinkers address the concept of work, none is better known and none have influenced the thinking of others like Schumacher. His beliefs about work, technology, the planet, and most importantly people, have inspired Greens and others for many years.

E. F. Schumacher was not a traditional economist. Drawing on intellectual traditions as diverse as Gandhi, Christianity, and Buddhism, he challenged the foundations of modern economics and the industrial values that it supports. Schumacher actually transcended economics to present a philosophy that prizes beauty, peace, simplicity, non-violence, cooperation, and permanence rather than the aggression, competition, and fragmentation of industrial society. He saw the intimate connection between humans and the Earth and he warned that by misusing

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[38] Porritt and Winner, p. 154.

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natural resources, we are draining nature's irreplaceable "capital." He also recognized every person's need for personal and spiritual attainment beyond wealth. Schumacher rejected the narrow vision of traditional economics and its obsession with reducing life to mere numbers—he never forgot the human factor. The landmark book in which he asserts these ideas, entitled Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered, has impacted so many people that it must be considered one of the founding declarations of Green thought and, specifically, of Green ideas about work.

Most of Schumacher's efforts during the later part of his life were centered around the Intermediate Technology Development Group, Ltd., whose work continues today. Schumacher observed first-hand how large-scale industrial technology hurt local economies and craft traditions when imported into third world nations. It made little sense to import a piece of high-tech Western machinery into poor, heavily populated countries if the machine only employed a few people and destroyed local skills in the process; Western technology was capital intensive and developing nations required labor intensive machines. Schumacher promoted the notion of an "intermediate" or "human-scale" technology that would assist local producers in their work, not replace the creative energy of human workers.

Much of the idea behind an intermediate technology is seen in Schumacher's philosophy of work. While an economic adviser in Burma, he observed a completely different work ethic than that of the West and he outlined these ideas in the essay "Buddhist Economics" in Small is Beautiful. For Buddhists—or more generally, for people in the East where the Buddhist influence is strong—human existence would be incomplete without some form of work. Work is an integral part of life, not something to be given over to machines in search of greater leisure; in fact, he writes, "work and leisure are complementary parts of the same living process and

cannot be separated without destroying the joy of work and the bliss of leisure."[38]

But work for work's sake was not the answer and work that was meaningless, boring, or alienating would be offensive to Buddhist sensibilities. The functions of work are, as Schumacher writes, "to give [a person] a chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence."[40] Alienating or meaningless work cannot fulfill these purposes and would be "little short of criminal."[41] The intermediate technology he developed assists people in their work and allows them to function creatively without replacing them or alienating them from the process of their work.

Schumacher's observations on the character of the Eastern work ethic, contrasted with the shortcomings of work in the West, formed the basis for what he called "good work." Because labor can serve as more than just an end in itself or as a means to acquire wealth, it should have personal meaning. Good work, if it is "conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, blesses those who do it;" it is "nourishing and enlivening" to people.[42] Above all, the most important component of good work is the human factor. Traditional economics thinks in terms of statistics such as GNP, abstractions like "the labor force," and profits above all else. Schumacher noted that to Eastern sensibilities, considering the product before the people who produce it "and consumption as more important than creative activity," would be wrong. "It means shifting the emphasis from the worker to the product of the work, that is, from the human to the subhuman, a surrender to the forces of evil." [43]

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[38] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 58.

[40] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 58.

[41] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 58.

[42] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 59.

[43] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 60.

Good work would conform to an "appropriate scale" or a "human scale"—the concept which is one of Schumacher's most lasting contributions to Green philosophy. Big things—whether institutions, companies, cities, or machines—alienate individuals because they are less manageable by people. Big things make people feel more isolated and anonymous; individual participation and creative input are eliminated when one is merely a cog in an enormous wheel of industrial production. Every activity has its own "appropriate scale," Schumacher wrote, but "people can be themselves only in small comprehensible groups."[44]

In such "comprehensible groups," workers should be able to inject their own ideas into the work process. Putting his theories into action, Schumacher helped to reorganize a medium-sized British manufacturing firm called Scott Bader Co. Ltd., according to the principles of appropriate size and workplace democracy. The owner and his employees formed a Commonwealth arrangement governed by a constitution. The goal was to decentralize the firm's power structure, to allow the workers to own part of the company, and to limit the size of the the firm. In this arrangement, "the members of the Commonwealth are partners and not employees" and they are able to share in the responsibilities of the company's organization, leadership, and production.[45]

Perhaps the culminating description of "good work" is found in a posthumously published collection of Schumacher's lectures entitled Good Work The issue of "good" or "bad" work, Schumacher says, makes no sense in the modern scientific world which only understands what it can quantify; science can only measure "more" or "less" work. And because Modern society rejects "pre-scientific" or "traditional" wisdom—which confronts metaphysical questions about the purpose of humans and our lives—Schumacher argues, qualitative issues like "good" work

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[44] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 70, 80.
[45] Schumacher, Small is Beautiful, p. 295.

cannot be truly addressed by the values of industrial society.

The traditional wisdom, writes Schumacher, teaches that the task placed before humans is to learn from society; to sort out what was learned in order to become individualized and self-directed; and then to give up egocentric occupations and, in becoming God-directed, to become free. Anything "good" assists this process; therefore, "good work" helps us in this journey of personal liberation and it helps us to find happiness by fulfilling ourselves individually, socially, and spiritually. Good work is part of a process of personal growth and internal development.

Today, without this metaphysical foundation upon which "good work" rests, Schumacher writes, people in contemporary society do not consider work that harms the mind and the spirit to be damaging; employees can only receive worker's compensation if they are physically harmed on the job. Therefore, he concludes, we should teach people to "reject meaningless, boring, stultifying, or nerve-racking work in which a man (or woman) is made the servant of a machine or system. They should be taught that work is the joy of life and is needed for our development, but that meaningless work is an abomination."[46]

Greening Work

Out of Schumacher's writing, several central themes about work emerge that have been picked up and amplified by later Greens. Most basically, Greens assert that humans need work—not as a means of survival, but as an activity necessary to living a good life. "The statement of Thomas Aquinas, 'There can be no joy of life without the joy of work,'" writes Jonathon Porritt, "just about sums it up for me. I'm one of those people who consider work to be a necessity of the human condition, a defining characteristic of the people we are."[47] "It is work," writes

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[46] E. F. Schumacher, Good Work (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 118-119, Schumacher's emphasis.

[47] Porritt, p. 127.

Schumacher, "which occupies most of the energies of the human race and what people actually _do_ is normally more important for understanding them, than what they say, or what they spend their money on, or what they own, or how they vote."[48] With such an important place in our lives, Greens say, society should value work very highly, not as a means to a material end, but as a fulfilling end in itself.

Industrialism, however, does exactly the opposite, they argue; industrial society does not value the act of working, merely its product—the process of working becomes devalued and loses meaning for the people who do it. And this devaluation of work is reinforced by how work is structured. Rigid hierarchies and large-scale technology take away the worker's creative impulse; the division of labor deskills workers, reducing them to cogs in a much larger mechanical wheel. Industrialism places the highest priority on improving output at the cost of worker satisfaction. "Were we really put here," asks David Icke, a candidate and spokesperson for the Green Party UK, "for millions of us to spend most of our waking hours looking at the clock praying for the hands to move a bit quicker because we hate what we do?"[49] In the end, Greens charge, workers become less like people and more like the machines they tend.

Not only does industrial work damage people, it harms the planet as well. One of the goals of the industrial economy has been to provide a job for every worker. But this goal of "zero unemployment," Greens argue, not only puts more people into bad jobs, it relies on unsustainable economic growth to create those jobs; industrialized "zero unemployment" denies the limitations of the planet. Such ignorance of ecological limits also allows industrial companies to create jobs and to use technology that deplete the planet's natural resources. "We must see the differ-

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[48] Schumacher, Good Work, pp. 2-3, author's emphasis.

[49] David Icke, It Doesn't Have To Be Like This: Green Politics Explained (London: Green Print, 1990), p. 41.

ence," says David Icke, "between work that develops human talents and does not threaten the planet and that which is merely a job we are forced to do by the system to serve the system."[50]

The ultimate expression of industrial work is the dominant vision of a "post-industrial" future that expands science and technology to their extremes. Workers would surrender their labor to machines, the theory proposes, and enjoy the benefits of a "leisure society." Such a view of the future is, no doubt, tempting to people who dislike the work they do; this vision has become ingrained in the industrial consciousness through innumerable household gadgets and the popularity of science fiction such as <u>Star Trek</u>. But this view of progress seriously offends Greens. The "leisure society" denies people the work they need and leads to a "corrosion of the human spirit," write Sandy Irvine and Alec Ponton; "People need to feel useful." [51] The industrial view of the post-industrial society denies the fact that work fulfills human needs. To Greens, this techno-future finally lays bare the basic goals of industrial society: economic growth at all costs and the purely material rewards that come with it. Industrialism, they say, has rationalized all the joy out of the process of work.

In response, the Greens offer a different "post-industrial" vision that relies on ecological sustainability and a new way of looking at labor. They begin by redefining the concept of "work" itself. "Work," they believe, should be expanded to include a whole range of activities—paid or unpaid—that satisfy individual needs, that promote individual growth, and that contribute to the social well-being—all while respecting the Earth. "Work is important to us," writes David Icke, "and we should not underestimate how much good work lifts the human spirit."[52] In this sense,

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[50] Icke, p. 41.
[51] Irvine and Ponton, p. 69.
[52] Icke, p. 41.

"work" is not the same as a "job" which one does to make money, but something with a deeper, more personal meaning. Greens want to "liberate" work from its industrial forms so that people can find satisfaction and personal expression in all their activities.[53] And this kind of work would be controlled strictly by individuals rather than by huge organizations or by large-scale technology; they prefer small groups where individuals have direct input into the process and the outcome of work as well as "[b]enign technologies that serve human needs and remain firmly under people's control."[54] The key to this "job liberation" is flexibility; "In the longer term," write Sandy Irvine and Alec Ponton, "we envisage people putting together a 'portfolio' of different activities" rather than simply relying on one.[55] Through many outlets of work, people could express different parts of themselves and meet their different needs. The Green economist James Robertson describes Green work this way in his book Future Work:

> For individuals, this redefined kind of work may mean self-employment, essential household and family activities, productive leisure activities such as do-it-yourself or growing some of one's own food, and participation in voluntary work. For groups of people, [it] may mean working together as partners, perhaps in a community enterprise or a cooperative, or in a multitude of other activities with social, economic, environmental, scientific or other purposes in which they have a personal interest and to which they attach personal importance.[56]

Ultimately, the Greens see a unity between the ends of work and its means. Like industrialism, "good work" has utility—it provides "necessary and useful goods and services."[57] But the means by which these ends are achieved are also ends in themselves; the process of work not only produces something, it also satisfies and benefits

[53] Porritt, p. 127.

[54] Porritt, pp. 129-130.

[55] Irvine and Ponton, p. 71.

[56] James Robertson, Future Work: Jobs, Self-Employment, and Leisure After the Industrial Age (New York: Universe Books, 1985), p. x.

[57] Schumacher, Good Work, p. 3.

the worker thereby reuniting "work" and "leisure."

Changing the process of labor and how we think about it is central to Green ideas about work because the act of working serves two important functions. First, work is a means of personal expression and development. Through the work a person does, he or she should be able to express his or her creative energies; work should have meaning to the person who does it. At the same time, the act of working develops the worker's human potential; it provides, writes Schumacher, a "nourishing and enlivening factor... which nothing can replace."[58] Working helps the worker to grow. In addition to these individualized benefits, work also serves a social function. Implementing this new kind of work is one of the first steps in changing from an industrial society to the Green "sustainable society." In altering patterns of labor, Greens destroy the basis of industrial economics and begin building their own future. Personal development becomes a means of social transformation.

To begin this transition away from industrial economics, Greens have devised a system wherein everyone—regardless of whether they work at a paying job or not—receives a "minimum income" sufficient to meet their basic needs. A person could supplement his or her income by performing paid work without reducing the minimum income payment he or she receives. But, Greens say, that would not be necessary for survival. According to Greens, a minimum income would free people from the economic reliance on "jobs" and give them more opportunities to participate in meaningful "work" for which they may or may not be given money. Minimum income would allow people to be more flexible in their working hours, to spend more time with their families rather than at the office, and it would allow those workers who dislike their jobs to quit them without the fear of slipping into poverty. In addition, providing a minimum income would purposefully reduce the

[58] Schumacher, Small, p. 59.

ecologically unsustainable levels of productivity and consumption.

Duality

Within these attitudes about work, the dual heritage of Modern and anti-Modern thought begins to emerge. First, "good work" must be sensitive to the limits of the planet. No work should be done if it damages the ecosystem. So, unlike the Modern conception of work, Green work is willing to limit itself according to a force outside of humanity. Secondly, Green work rejects the universalism of Modernity by stressing the individualized nature of work. Not everyone would be fulfilled by the same work, so they should have the freedom to find the kind they like best; no one would be forced by the system to perform a job which he or she did not like. The work which one does, Greens say, should be personally satisfying and allow for the individual expression of each person's creative vision; creativity and satisfaction cannot be rationalized out of work when individuals control what they do. And work should contribute to, as Schumacher calls it, "the development of [the worker's] soul or spirit." In the end, Greens are attempting to restore the "uneconomic," subjective qualities of work that industrialism has rationalized out of production.

Yet the means by which they try to achieve these goals are taken from the Modern mind-set. By restructuring work according to a logical plan, they believe that the problems of laborers will be solved. They propose a new set of values about work which they suggest are correct for everyone to follow. The best example of their Modernity is the "minimum income scheme" prevalent in various Green writings about work. Sandy Irvine and Alec Ponton describe this program's anticipated effectiveness in "springing traps" found in industrialism—the "poverty trap;" the "spendthrift trap" which penalizes people for saving money; the "idleness trap" which prevents people from doing "voluntary work, study, or launch[ing] a small

business;" the "cohabitation trap" which penalizes certain living arrangements.[59] "The basic income scheme rationalizes a chaotic system into one that is fair and efficient," they assert in a phrase that could have been written by the most avid social planner. By solving these problems rationally and altering human values, they are molding society to meet their definition of progress.

Although rejecting how industrialism thinks about labor, "good work" is nevertheless supported by some of the same Modern themes; Greens seem to break apart old ideas, but the new ones which they construct are made out of the old pieces and cannot help but bear similarities to the original. If Green work is concerned with individual issues, at the same time it encompasses a goal of universal, social change. Work is simultaneously a process of individual creative expression and of social transformation. The values which Green work promotes contribute both to the personal, subjective development of each worker and to the larger, objective plan of rational social molding. Work provides a concrete way of putting new values into action on the most personal level. Through this new kind of work, Greens promise human fulfillment and happiness; poverty would be solved and wealth more evenly distributed through the minimum income scheme. Control is still an essential element of Green work; whereas governments and huge corporations now control work, Greens would pass that control to individuals. But the notion of rational control is still a Modern one. A new mode of work would contribute to a newly conceived society; personal change would become a means of social transformation. "Good work" incorporates both the Modern desire for a universal future and the anti-Modern ideal of for individualized growth not based on a single norm.

Although Green work presents a tempting vision for a new work ethic, it is not without problems. By removing the incentive of traditional work, there is no

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[59] Irvine and Ponton, p. 71.

guarantee that people will not simply avoid working and live from the minimum income doled out by the government. The Green work ethic rests on the fundamental assumption that people like to and want to work but that industrialism has forced them into less desirable "jobs." Although undoubtedly some people would prefer the Green system, others would more likely prefer not to work if they had the choice; not everyone receives the same life-giving joy from the act of working. The danger, then, becomes the very same thing for which Greens criticize the technological "post-industrial" vision: a divided society. Greens fear that by giving work over to machines, society would become split between those who reap the benefits of the "leisure society" and those highly-skilled technicians who operate the machines; the result would be "a minority working in very well-paid capital-intensive jobs, and the majority forced to become ever more dependent on the state" leading to an authoritarian society.[60] But in a Green society, the same potential for division exists between those who would find joy in their work and those who would find joy in not working but living from the goods and services which others produce.

This realization reinforces a fundamental fact about all of Green philosophy: it is based on values. Both industrialism and Green philosophy are more than just economic, political, or social modes, they are value paradigms. Each views the world through a completely different pair of glasses. But while they may disagree on the final form society should take, Greening society rests on no less daunting a task than changing how people feel and believe, not just how they think—on shaping not just social structures, but humans themselves. And rationally shaping humans into a supposedly better form is at the heart of the Modern project.

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[60] Porritt, p. 81.

IV

The Historical Depth of Green Thought

That the Greens—and specifically the British Greens—should embrace both

the Modern and the anti-Modern is not surprising; the two intellectual traditions

have developed alongside each other over the centuries. The Modern idea has

dominated Western thought for the last few centuries, but many thinkers have con-

tributed to a long history of questioning it. Green philosophy draws—consciously or

not—on a wide range of older historic traditions from both of these schools of

thought to create what Jonathon Porritt calls "an extraordinarily eclectic political

and philosophical ancestry," although he fails to detail exactly what constitutes that

heritage.[61] A brief exploration of the historical roots of Green thought will shed fur-

ther light on its complexity and on its depth.

Modern thought has contributed extensively to the environmental tradition

in the British context. Through rational action people have sought to understand,

shape, control, or manage the environment. The environmental historian John

McCormick notes, for example, the Victorians' growing interest in the English coun-

tryside spurred by their increasing ability to travel and by the popularity of natural

history as a scientific discipline.[62] In the second half of the nineteenth century, at-

tempts to protect and eventually to study various patches of land and species of ani-

mal grew from the enthusiasm of numerous conservation societies; Modern protec-

tion of nature occurred not only for its own sake, but for the sake of expanding

human knowledge. Scientific advancements in which Britain played large role in-

tensified this excitement for preserving nature. From amateur naturalists like

Gilbert White to scientists like Charles Darwin and the contemporary James

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[61] Porritt, p. 199.

[62] John McCormick, The Global Environmental Movement: Reclaiming Paradise (London: Belhaven, 1989).

Lovelock, Britain has made important contributions to the science of ecology.[63]

However, a strong anti-Modern heritage also pervades the larger British intellectual context and has also contributed to British conceptions of the natural world. Many responses to industrialism were cast in ethical terms, lamenting the social and human costs of the new mode of production. But others cringed at industrialism's effects on the natural environment. This sentiment is frequently echoed in the Romanticism of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. By imbuing the environment with moral and aesthetic qualities and by emphasizing intuition, Green thought recalls a tradition that eschews reason and embraces the supremacy of nature's wisdom. And Greens stress a connection with the land reminiscent of that which a farmer might have had in preindustrial times. By calling—sometimes literally, sometimes metaphorically—for a return to the land, like many who have gone before them, Greens exalt the simpler values of supposedly simpler times.[64]

Although Green thought incorporates older ideas, it does not simply reconstitute older ideas or propose returning to the past. Without the specific historical circumstances of the post-WWII period in which the Greens developed, no Green movement could exist. Only after the Second World War could the West begin gathering significant scientific knowledge to increase understanding of how the planet works and how our lifestyles affect it. Until the 1950s, the notion of sending a satellite into orbit to observe the atmosphere, for example, was only a fanciful dream. Scientific discovery that advanced human understanding of the planet was a necessary precondition to contemporary ecological awareness. Ironically, only after a significant acceleration in technology during the post-war period could people begin to recognize where scientific "progress" writ large had led. The atomic bomb, a

[63] Donald Worster, Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977).

[64] See Peter C. Gould, Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to the Land, and Socialism in Britain (Sussex, UK: Harvester, 1988).

technology-driven war, and a mechanized Holocaust forced many thinkers to re-evaluate the foundations of Western values and the direction in which scientific knowledge was leading. Modern science therefore played an important role in undermining Modernity.

However, the mood of post-war European society also set the stage for the emergence of Green values. Europeans increasingly felt as if they were living under the constraints of a "managed society." Politics and economics had become more centralized and bureaucratized. Welfare governments enlarged their sphere of activity to provide reassurance after the traumatic experiences of two World Wars and a Great Depression. Huge corporations that grew in the dynamic post-war economic boom exercised more influence in international affairs. Many felt that life was being operated by technocrats and specialists as if it were simply a huge machine.

Contemporary Green theory combines older questions and ideas with recent scientific and social revelations to address the environmental and social issues of the present day. It generates a new world view and promotes an alternative vision of society influenced by both the Modern and the anti-Modern halves of its intellectual ancestry. Creating the new "sustainable society," not just environmental reforms, is the Green goal; ecological degradation and social decay, Greens say, come from the values that underlie society. They hope people will choose to transcend the industrial modes of thinking—giantism, materialism, over-rationalization, and centralization. And it is a choice that Greens are trying to persuade people to make; they do not claim any historical inevitability in achieving the sustainable society—in fact just the opposite—and are quick to point out the dire ecological and social consequences if a hasty retreat is not made from society's current course.

Just as Green ideas about work demonstrate the duality between Modernity and anti-Modernism, the issue of work also illustrates how Greens combine older

ideas with new ones. On one hand, Greens talk about rediscovering an older work ethic that does not separate "work" from "leisure." In this sense, many of their thoughts hearken back to pre-industrial times when work was conducted in the home or on a farm. Peter Bunyard, one of the editors of The Ecologist, writes of working on his farm, "there is no neat separation of the day into work, home, and holiday." Instead, he feels a holistic connection, "a continuum of existence," and "a unity of purpose" in the work he does.[65] But the Green plan does not seek to return to pre-industrial days; frequently Greens must defend themselves against attacks by critics who liken them to Luddites—a group of British workers in the early 19th century who protested the industrial form of labor by breaking the machines with which they worked. The Green vision is one of a "post-industrial" future—progress, not retreat.

Historical antecedents of Green work

Just as Green philosophy at large contains numerous intellectual predecessors, so do Green ideas about work. John Ruskin and William Morris were among the most intriguing thinkers of 19th century Britain who reconsidered life and labor. Deploring the affects of industrial society on the art, the work, and the lives of individuals, each extended his aesthetic concerns as an artist to the social conditions around him. Although they reflected different political attitudes—Ruskin was conservative while his student Morris was a utopian communist—both valued work, considered it to be a significant factor in the quality of human life, and wanted to restore to work the humanity which industrialism had stripped from it. Both rejoined people with the process of their labor. Although Ruskin and Morris could never have expressed "Green" ideas proper, their conception of work bears more than a striking similarity to what the Greens have now come to say; Ruskin and

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[65] Peter Bunyard, "The Call of the Land," The Ecologist 5(6): 214.

Morris are, therefore, important contributors to a line of thought to which the Greens are the intellectual heirs.

Among their many insights into work, two relevant themes emerge from the writings of Ruskin and Morris. First, each man connected the quality of art with the expression of the creativity that exists within all individuals and with the inner joy and the pleasure of the artist. Creativity and pleasure had been taken from industrial workingmen by the machines to which they were slaves and by the division of labor wherein workers do only a small part of a job which someone else has designed; design (intellectual work) was separated from execution (manual work). In calling for a return to a higher quality of art, they collapse the concepts of "art" and "work" into one. But here the second theme in their thought becomes apparent. Through art, they believed that society could be transformed; human morality was shaped by a person's aesthetic surroundings.[46] Work was therefore not merely a means of individual expression, but of personal and eventually social change.

In these two themes, Ruskin and Morris also reflect the duality between embracing Modernity and rejecting it. For Morris and Ruskin, as well as for Greens, work embodies the individual, unique expression and joy of the worker thereby denying the universalizing project of Modernity; work whose quality is measured subjectively and controlled by each person resists rationalization and uniformity. But as a means for personal and social change, work also encompasses a universal ethic; although by different methods, Ruskin, Morris, and the Greens want to create a new society for all of humankind. A closer look at Ruskin and Morris reveals the historical depth of this philosophical duality and how the Greens connect to it.

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[46] Information about John Ruskin and William Morris based on Richard Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973); P. D. Anthony, John Ruskin's Labour: A Study of Ruskin's Social Theory (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983); E. P. Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1950 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); and Florence and William Boos, "The Utopian Communism of William Morris," History of Political Thought, 7, No. 3 (1986), pp. 489-510.

Ruskin's most important and influential ideas about work are found in his essay "The Nature of Gothic" wherein he illuminates both the form and the character of Gothic architecture. By looking to Gothic architecture, Ruskin saw answers to his fundamental concerns about the problems of industrial society. "Ruskin's admiration for gothic architecture," writes the historian P. D. Anthony, "is based on the reasoned belief that it required forms of social organisation and forms of manual labour that are superior to those of contemporary society and that it reflected a social pattern based upon values which are essential to human development and happiness."[67] Although Ruskin admired Gothic art, he was much more impressed by the process both by which the art was made and by the people who created it. Gothic art reflected something about the society from which it came, characteristics of which Ruskin preferred to those of his own industrial age. But Ruskin did not sentimentalize the Middle Ages nor wish a Romantic return to those times. Instead, he admired medieval artistic processes and wanted to incorporate them into the art of the mid-19th century.

For John Ruskin, art must reflect the creativity and the pleasure of the artist. "Work was an ever-available means of expression," writes the historian Richard Altick describing Ruskin's beliefs, "a daily satisfaction of the imaginative urge which resides in even the humblest of men."[68] Ruskin praised the "Savageness," or inexactitude, of Gothic art; the lines and forms are not perfect in a Gothic cathedral. Rather than seeing these imperfections as flaws, Ruskin saw illustrated in them the humanity and the creativity of the craftsmen: "Out come all his roughness, all his dullness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also."[69]

[67] Anthony, p. 46.

[68] Altick. p. 283.

[69] John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic," in Unto This Last and Other Writings, (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 85.; originally published in The Stones of Venice, Volume II (1853).

For Ruskin, the obsession with perfect lines and forms had come from the increasing use of machines which took creative expression away from the worker. Machines made workers into tools and slaves rather than into artists; a worker ceases to use his or her mind when tending a machine. And this criticism Ruskin extends to the division of labor. "It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men:—" he writes in one of his most renowned passages, "Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail."[70]

Work and art for Ruskin were not only a means of expressing creativity and inner joy, the process of work also developed the worker's abilities and potential. But, Ruskin argues, work must be creative, "summoning up the intellectual and moral—and not only physical and mechanical—powers of the labourer" in order to effect human development.[71] "You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both," Ruskin warned.[72] If a tool is made of workers, "you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of them."[73] But if a man is made of him, if a worker is allowed to think and to create in his work, "out comes the whole majesty of him."[74]

When William Morris read Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic" at Oxford, it changed his outlook forever; many of Morris' attitudes about art and work are more than simply reminiscent of Ruskin. But as Morris' biographer E. P. Thompson writes, "we have in the best of [his] articles and lectures a fusion of Ruskin's finest moments of moral-artistic insight, of Morris's lifetime of historical study, and of the

[70] Ruskin, p. 87.
[71] Thompson, p. 35.
[72] Ruskin, p. 84.
[73] Ruskin, p. 84.
[74] Ruskin, p. 85.

economic and social analysis of Marx.[75] Like Ruskin, Morris admired the ideals of the Medieval era for the opportunities they gave for artistic expression. But whereas Ruskin mainly looked backward for inspiration in constructing a better world, Morris looked forward to the socialist ideal of a perfect society. And in the socialist tradition—here his reading of Marx becomes quite evident—Morris criticizes capitalism for the problems in the workplaces and in the art of his day.

Morris believed that capitalism reduced work to the creation of shoddy goods made for consumers who had been duped by advertising and that it reduced workers solely to the generation of surplus value. Capitalism put profit before use-value and before the workers it employed. The profit motive, Morris believed, robbed work of its artistic content and degraded workers by making them slaves to the bourgeoisie. Machines in a capitalist economy did not reduce boring or dangerous labor, thus freeing workers for more creative work, as Morris thought they should, but instead speeded up only those ventures which were profitable; workers were ultimately serving machines. Morris found capitalist ethics and their results morally offensive and discovered the remedy in his brand of utopian socialism.

For Morris, work should not be done for work's sake; there is a distinction between "useful work" and "useless toil" as he writes in one of his most important essays on work.[76] "One ["useful work"] has hope in it, the other has not," he proclaimed. "It is manly to do the one kind of work and manly also to refuse to do the other." And in that work which we should do is the hope of rest, the hope of product, and the hope of pleasure in the work itself.[77] Indeed, much of Morris' writings condemns the lack of pleasure in industrial working conditions. Only through pleasurable work can a person create art; "the chief source of art is man's pleasure in his

[75] Thompson, p. 643.

[76] William Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," in Asa Briggs, William Morris: News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1962), p. 117-136.

[77] Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," p. 117-118

daily necessary work, which expresses itself and is embodied in that work itself," he proclaims in "The Worker's Share of Art."[78]

Morris also echoes Ruskin's belief that the work process develops the potential of the worker. In times of "healthy conditions... [t]he highest intellectual art was meant to please the eye... as well as to excite the emotions and train the intellect" and if allowed to work with memory, imagination, and "the thoughts of the men of past ages [that] guide his hands... we shall be men, and our days will be happy and eventful." [79] Morris also makes clear his belief that, with the realization of the socialist society, factories and other workplaces will become centers for education, culture, and the fine arts. When "useless toil" is reduced or eliminated, workers will have time to engage in pursuits which were inaccessible before. And workplaces would also be a source of social growth, what Morris called "communion in hopeful work; love, friendship, family affection, might all be quickened by it; joy increased, and grief lightened by it."[80]

As Ruskin and Morris illustrate, thinkers have long grappled with ethical issues surrounding industrialism. And as the Greens' similarity to these earlier thinkers shows, many people have arrived at similar conclusions. Although with somewhat different emphasis, contemporary Greens echo some of the same basic values as Ruskin and Morris. Alongside their flight from Modernity, like Ruskin and Morris, Greens espouse a Modern, human-created universal vision of the future. Like the Greens, Ruskin and Morris looked to the past for inspiration but clearly saw a need to press forward to a new kind of society. And in achieving that better future, work was an essential means of putting theory into practice. In both cases, human values are at the core, but whereas Ruskin and Morris saw aesthetic

[78] Morris, "The Worker's Share of Art," in Briggs, p. 140.

[79] Morris, "Art Under Plutocracy," quoted in Thompson, p. 642; Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil," in Briggs, pp. 118-9.

[80] Morris, "Why Not?", Justice, 12 April, 1884, quoted in Thompson, p. 652.

means for change, Greens see ecological ones.

V

Conclusion

Although it is dangerous to do, if one could sum up the Greens in one word, it would probably be "balance:" humans must realize their relationship with the Earth and balance their goals with the harsh realities of the planet's limits; reason alone skews our understanding because it fails to recognize the subjective side of life. Green writers, seeking a more harmonious existence, employ a tone of moderation throughout their texts: "It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation," writes E. F. Schumacher, "but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them."[1] Perhaps the phrase "think globally, act locally"—now seen on bumper stickers everywhere—best illustrates the equilibrium Greens try to achieve by balancing a universal future with individual needs. This desire for balance seems, more than anything else, to explain the Greens' blending of Modern thought with an anti-Modern response: humans still control their lives, shape their society, and remake human values, but within limits set by the Earth—a force beyond human control and, oftentimes, beyond human understanding. The Greens see no contradiction in this give-and-take relationship, but see instead wholeness and continuity.

Even the most fundamental Modern idea—the belief in "Progress"—is tempered by a kind of balance in Green thought. Teleological change—in terms of inexorably moving onward and upward to a better state of existence—has always been at the core of Modern thinking; newness is equated with improvement as human knowledge supposedly comes ever closer to understanding and shaping the world. Therefore, change has become institutionalized; progress is not just a means for

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[1] Schumacher, Small, p. 60.

Modern society, but an end in itself. Without progress, Modernity could not survive because an end to progress would mean the end of a way of life founded on it. "To be modern," writes the historian Marshall Berman, "is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are."[82] The glorification of unending change underlies the industrial value of continual growth and rests on the faith in the ability of ever-increasing human knowledge to help us acclimate to the change. But the Greens have altered this Modern notion to fit their own ideas. For Greens, change is not an end in and of itself, but a means to an end—it is the process of creating the "sustainable society." Greens do not envision unending change, but change until society reaches the point of balance. Then, the goal becomes maintaining what has been achieved. In a sense, Greens have balanced the Modern idea of change with the anti-Modern need for "a society where life is 'complete'."[83]

Yet this "balance" begs the question of whether or not anti-Modern ends can be achieved by Modern means. By believing in the fundamentality of progress to achieve their vision of a future society, can Greens escape the shadow-side of Modernity which they see in industrialism? If Modernity, taken to its logical extremes, produces terrible results, what might a Green society look like if it cannot escape the need for constant change that also drives industrialism? Although they speak of individual control over life and a concentration on personal, spiritual development, the potential nevertheless exists for a kind of "eco-dictatorship" where strict rationing, new forbidden behaviors, and governmental regulation dominate. Indeed, the Green idea of a minimum income scheme suggests such possibilities: how could such a program be instituted without an enormous bureaucracy and how

[82] Berman, _All That Is Solid Melts Into Air_, p. 15.
[83] Berman, "Modernist Anti-Modernism," p. 35.

might the billions of dollars (or pounds, or deutschemarks) be raised without significant taxation?

By moving away from Modernity, Green thought tries to find a new way of living that incorporates elements of the anti-Modern. But extreme anti-Modernism does not offer a pleasant alternative; just as Modernity has its darker side, so does the anti-Modern. And both extremes bear some striking similarities. While Modern society is accused of exalting the control of "experts" because of their scientific knowledge, the anti-Modern also asks individuals to give control to something outside themselves by "embrac[ing] a fundamentally religious ontology, a world perspective that will wipe out man's delusions of cosmic sovereignty... ."[64] In an eco-society, the Earth could, once again, become sacred. Similarly, many critics charge that in universalizing humanity to eliminate its problems, the Modern mind-set promotes sterile, dead societies that "accept and praise a stagnant world in which all the variety has been done away with and human beings have been reduced to a universal, immobile mediocrity."[65] But the very same criticism is leveled against anti-Modern ideas; by eliminating change and development, anti-Modern thinkers envision a world where "creativity has no place."[66]

Yet if contemporary society is indeed trying to move away from the Modern ideal as many thinkers today suggest, the Greens may offer an insight into how that transition may be made. Greens suggest a kind of third way—between the perils of either the Modern or the anti-Modern extremes. By balancing aspects of both ideals, the deleterious effects could cancel each other out and produce a more workable solution to some of the very real problems which Greens address.

Which of these options will occur, no one—including the Greens them-

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[64] Berman, "Modernist Anti-Modernism," p. 36.
[65] Kolakowski, p. 138-9.
[66] Berman, "Modernist Anti-Modernism," p. 35.

selves—seems to know.

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Whether or not the Green vision of society will come to pass remains to be seen. In many ways, society has already begun moving in that direction, but the movement has been slow. Green parties are gaining some success at the polls and people are more conscious of environmental issues. But the real issue for the future of the Green movement is whether or not people will be willing to abandon one thoroughly entrenched world-view for another that requires sacrificing most of the things that society has worked so hard to achieve. All of the Greens' persuasive abilities and logical arguments may not be enough to convince people to change. And those arguments do not come from a coherent philosophy; Green ideas are still in flux, often difficult to understand. Instead, Greens may have to wait for an ecological disaster to tear down the old society in order to begin making a new one—their social construction project may be forced to become one of social re-construction.

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