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GREEN POLITICAL THEORY

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Preface

This book provides a critical reconstruction of green political theory and defends it in that form. Hopefully my analysis sticks closely enough to the core concerns of actual green parties and of self-styled green activists to warrant the label 'green'. Explicating their self-conceptions is not, however, my principal aim.

This book is not intended, exclusively or even primarily, as an exercise in political hermeneutics or philosophical anthropology. My aim is not simply to set out, fully and faithfully, what self-styled greens happen for better or worse to believe. Considering the diversity of positions, both across countries and even among activists within any one country, that project would quickly degenerate into taxonomic tedium even if it did not prove altogether impossible.

The best I have been able to do – and, for the purposes of a theoretical book like this, the most I need to do – is to operate with a stylized account of a composite green political programme. The details of that rendering are relegated to an appendix. That has been done, in part, on the grounds that it can safely be skipped by readers already familiar with the broad outlines of green politics. But it has also been done on the grounds that that material will both age most quickly and matter least to the overall argument of the book. The politics of the German Greens (Die Grünen) have, for better or (probably) worse, moved well beyond their 1983 manifesto which I still regard as canonical for the green movement worldwide. But no matter: I am not writing current affairs or political history but, rather, political theory; I am interested not in what greens happen to say (still less in what they happen to say *today*) but rather in what they have to say, given their core values.

Thus, my aim in this book not merely, or even mainly, to describe what positions greens actually do take. My aim is instead to show what

positions greens *should* take, given their core concerns – whether or not they actually do so. That is the sense in which my work is intentionally revisionist. It is designed as a guide *for* greens, at least as much as it is a guide *to* them. I hope to show greens how to cast their position in the strongest possible form, even if that means shifting some of their ordinary emphases and perhaps even abandoning (or, anyway, separating out) certain other views that they might happen also to cherish.

This amounts, politically, to an attempt to rescue greens from themselves. I try to carve out and bolster what I find strong in their public-policy positions, while insulating those policy proposals from other more personal-lifestyle aspects of green theory that I – and, more to the point politically, many among the electorate at large – find less persuasive.

Many greens see style as central. Greens of this stripe aspire above all else to be colourful – often quite literally. Their MPs wear bright clothes rather than dreary business suits to the openings of parliament. They take pride in being part of a 'multicoloured list' or a 'Rainbow Coalition'. They call upon us to help 'turn our grey earth green', in the concluding words to the European Greens' 1989 manifesto. The preferred party political contrast, from this perspective, is between parties that are 'green' (bright, lively) and ones that are 'grey' (dull, drab, flat, boring).

The risk with this style of greenery is that the medium will swamp the message, that style will supplant substance. My thesis is that there is a compelling case for taking seriously green public policy demands, whatever one might think of greens' modes of self-presentation. Mine is thus a limited defence of green politics – of its substance if not its stylistic affectations.

As a marker of the limits to my defence of green politics, I deliberately adopt a different way of characterizing the standard party political contrast. For me, the interesting contrast is not between parties which are 'green' and ones which are 'grey'. It is, instead, between ones which are 'green' and ones which are 'brown'. The problem with non-green parties is not so much that they are boringly grey as it is that they are committed to outmoded industrial technologies (brown rust) and consequent environmental despoilation (brown leaves and lakes).

The strategy I adopt is designed to win support for green positions, even at the inevitable risk of losing me friends among greens themselves. A great many of them are, after all, committed to the style as well as the substance of their distinctive political mode; green lifestyles and green political styles matter as much to many of them as green public policies.

Such greens ought not be unduly disappointed, though. My thesis is that green proposals for public policies form a tight, unified package that is compelling in its own right. My main purpose is to mount a positive argument for the policies constituting that package. Other aspects of green theory – recommendations for personal practices or political procedures – just do not form part of that package. The most I really want to say to fellow greens who part company with me on those matters is just that those are separate issues, which must be argued separately.

Although written all in one sitting – and a relatively brief one, as these things go – this book has in reality been long in the making. My first systematic introduction to these topics came as an Indiana University undergraduate in Lynton Keith Caldwell's cellar; there, he kindly coached me for interviews at the State Department and the United Nations, as part of a research project on US preparations for the seminal 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment which eventuated in the UN Environmental Programme. Over the next few years Brian Barry tried, with characteristic prescience but only partial success, to persuade me to devote my doctoral thesis to these topics. In the event the present book has taken some twenty years to appear, but in it evidence of those early influences nonetheless remains strong.

It was Albert Weale who put me up to writing the present text, and I am grateful for his continuing advice and encouragement as it progressed. The project has been powerfully shaped by various discussions – with John Dryzek, Jon Elster, Sheldon Leader, Philip Pettit and Richard Sylvan in its early stages and with John Passmore in its later stages – and by detailed written comments from John Braithwaite, Andy Dobson, Claus Offe and Onora O'Neill.

Its core argument has also been honed on various seminar audiences along the way. At the Economics, Justice and Society Program of the University of California, Davis, I am particularly grateful for the comments of Dick Arneson, David Copp, Mike Glennon, Jean Hampton and John Roemer; at the Conference on Socio-economics in Washington, DC, for those of Tom Donaldson, Bill Galston and Mark Sagoff; at the Australian Academy of the Humanities in Melbourne, for those of Tony Coady, John Mulvaney, John Passmore and Peter Singer; at the Australian Defence Force Academy, for those of Chandran Kukathas, David West and Paul Keal; at the University of Melbourne, for those of Verity Burgmann, Mark Considine, Les Holmes, Bruce Heady and Pete Shearman; and at the Colchester Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research, for those of Wouter

Achterberg, Ted Benton, Alan Carter, Andy Dobson, Judy Evans, Paul Lucardie and Michael Saward.

Various previous articles and conference papers have also been groping towards these conclusions. None of them is literally reproduced here, but many of their central ideas reappear. I ought therefore to record my debt to those who have, over the years, offered me advice on these problems in general and on those other papers in particular. Although there are too many to name, or even now to recall properly, they would certainly include, in addition to those already mentioned: Lincoln Allison, Alan Bellett, David Bennett, Jay Bernstein, Chris Bertram, David Braddon-Mitchell, Geoff Brennan, Tom Campell, Frank Castles, Peggy Clark, James Crawford, Robert Elliot, Debbie Fitzmaurice, Peter Frank, David Gauthier, Russell Hardin, Barry Hindess, Lisa Hooper, Dominic Hyde, Frank Jackson, Jeff Land, Michael Lipsky, Don Mannison, David Miller, Bill Mitchell, Mancur Olson, John Orbell, Elim Papadakis, David Pearce, Andy Reeve, Jack Smart, Peter Self, Cass Sunstein, Michael Taylor, Janna Thompson, Pat Troy, Robert van der Veen, Philippe Van Parijs, Peter Wagner, Ken Walker, Hugh Ward and Oran Young.

With help such as that, I wonder to what extent we really are the sole authors of our own books any more. Still, academic courtesy requires me to stipulate that the standard disclaimer applies. I trust that I can, without discourtesy, pay a fulsome tribute to the marvellous working environment of the Australian National University's Research School of Social Sciences and to the extended community of social and political theorists now centred there. Sad though I was in many respects to leave the once-mighty Essex Department of Government, I can truly say it is a better place to which I have gone.

1

What's New?

1 The Issues

Concern with the natural environment is nothing new. Fears of resource depletion, voiced most powerfully in recent times by the Club of Rome's 1972 *The Limits to Growth*, are in many ways little more than 'Malthus with a computer', as one of that report's early and best critics observed.[1] Like his modern imitators, the Reverend Thomas Malthus had at the end of the eighteenth century expressed fears that population demands would outstrip the earth's resources, his particular concern being its food-producing capacities.[2] Stanley Jevons, at the end of the nineteenth century, had voiced parallel fears that we would soon run out of coal.[3] And President Truman, like many political leaders laid seige to before him, agonized over the adequacy of America's 'strategic stockpiles' of crucial natural resources at the outset of the Cold War.[4]

Or again, we worry today about the unhealthy effects of polluting the air, water and oceans. But in many ways those just echo much older concerns. Anticipating the Garden City movement by fully two and a half centuries, John Evelyn's 1661 tract *Fumifugium* (subtitled *The Inconveniencie of the Aer and Smoak of London Dissipated*) 'humbly proposed . . . to his Sacred Majestie [Charles II] and to the Parliament now assembled' that sweet-smelling trees be planted around the city to freshen its air.[5] Longstanding suspicions about the role of air and water

[1] Meadows et al. 1972; Freeman 1973. See similarly the US Council on Environmental Quality's report, *Global 2000* (US CEQ 1980; 1981), and the reaction to it (Simon 1981; Simon and Kahn 1984).
[2] Malthus 1798.
[3] Jevons 1906.
[4] Paley 1952.
[5] Evelyn 1661.

quality in promoting the health of the general population were confirmed with early nineteenth-century discoveries of the particular mechanisms by which plagues of typhoid and cholera are spread.[6] And when in the early 1950s London's smoke-laden fogs were finally firmly proven to be 'killers', the government promptly required householders to burn only 'smokeless' coal in their grates.[7]

Or yet again, we worry today about despoiling areas of great natural beauty. But many people have long felt a special affinity with and responsibility for nature.[8] Earlier manifestations of this sort of attitude can, for example, be found in the work of the great romantic poets of Germany in the nineteenth century and before; in the work of the great landscape gardeners of England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;[9] and in the writings of mid nineteenth-century American transcendentalists, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson.[10] And such examples are of course illustrative rather than exhaustive. Everywhere, this sort of 'respect for nature' has apparently long been with us.[11] Nor is this attitude prevalent only among artists, essayists and poets. At least since the turn of the century, it has manifested itself in public policy as well as in private attitudes, with certain areas being set aside as 'national parks' and suchlike.[12]

In all those ways, current concern with environmental issues might seem to be 'old wine in new bottles'. Still, something genuinely new does seem to have emerged in recent years.[13] Indeed, the face of the debate seems to have changed twice in as many decades. At the risk of imposing artificial periodizations up on a smoothly evolving process, we

[6] See e.g. Stewart and Jenkins 1867.

[7] Scarrow 1972. And not for the first time: Britons had been prohibited from burning sea coal, on account of the pollution it caused, from 1273 (McCormick 1989, p. 127; Paehlke 1989, p. 24).

[8] Passmore (1980) is of course the masterwork here. But see also Bramwell (1989), who fills in the foreground with detailed accounts of lesser figures in the German and English ecology movements from the 1880s forward.

[9] Thomas 1984.

[10] Nash 1973; Sagoff 1988, ch. 6.

[11] Everywhere, that is, once enough of the wilderness had been cleared for it to stop being threatening and start becoming inviting (Nash 1973, ch. 1).

[12] Beginning, in the US, with the 1864 Act of Congress transferring the Yosemite Valley to the State of California on condition it be held in perpetuity 'for public use, resort and recreation' (it formally became a National Park in 1890) and continuing with the 1872 Act establishing Yellowstone as the first formal National Park in the world (Nash 1970; McCormick 1989, pp. 11–12). In the UK, those were explicitly the aims not only of the National Trust founded at the turn of the century, but also of what is arguably the world's 'first private environmental group', the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society, founded in 1865 (McCormick 1989, pp. 5–6).

[13] For a more personal elaboration on these themes, see Goodin (1992a).

might say that recent years have seen the recognition of not one but two quite distinct 'environmental crises'.

Widespread appreciation of what might be called the 'first environmental crisis' might be dated only somewhat artificially, to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's enormously influential book, *Silent Spring*.[14] Her particular concern, of course, was with DDT and the way in which that and other pesticides impeded the reproductive cycle of bird life: hence the reference in her title to 'silence', the absence of bird song. But Carson was concerned, more generally, about the way in which the indiscriminate use of chemicals of all sorts might poison the environment for humans as well. These themes, and ones related to them, lay simmering for a few years. But by the early 1970s, they had well and truly seized the public imagination. The Cuyahoga River caught fire. Lake Erie was pronounced dead, killed by the indiscriminate dumping of industrial wastes. In the minds of many, that was merely a foretaste of things to come.[15]

While the concern in that first environmental crisis was with global collapse, the appropriate focus for social action and political pressure was nonetheless seen to be the individual state. Lake Erie was 'killed' by pollution almost wholly from Ohio industries, and could be (indeed, subsequently was) resuscitated almost exclusively through the efforts of people in one political jurisdiction. Population pressures were seen as crucial; but population was seen as being best controlled through small-scale policies, and indeed on a personal level as much as on a national one. The suggestion, recall, was principally that couples join the '2.1 club', confining themselves to reproducing themselves but no more.[16]

In that first environmental crisis, there were of course intimations of further, greater disasters to come, if the policies that environmentalists prescribed were not implemented.[17] But at least in the first instance, the policies were principally national rather than international in scope. Or, if international, that dimension just amounted to the replication of good

[14] Carson 1962. See Dunlap (1981) for the subsequent history of DDT and McCormick (1989, esp. ch. 3) for the consequences of that unfolding drama for the environmental movement more generally.

[15] The fate of Lake Erie, for example, formed a chapter in itself in Barry Commoner's influential tract, *The Closing Circle* (1971, pp. 94–111).

[16] Which, given that some would have no child or only one, in practice meant each couple having, on average, 2.1 children.

[17] There was even some anticipation in those years of the risks of global climate change; see Wilson (1970; 1971), Ward and Dubois (1972, pt 5) and the Stockholm Declaration (UN Conference on the Human Environment 1972, art. 1, sec. 7, pp. 1416–21).

national-level policy models in all other jurisdictions one by one.[18] It is good for the United States to stop polluting the Great Lakes; and it is better if Canada stops, too. There was urgency, no doubt. But there was also plenty that each of us – as individuals, small groups or single nations – could usefully do, while waiting for the others to come around.

But all that has now changed once again.[19] The issues presently at the forefront of our attention, in the midst of what might be called the 'second environmental crisis', are more genuinely global in scope. Primary among them are the twin threats of changing the global climate and destroying the ozone layer protecting the earth's plants and people from the sun's ultraviolet rays.[20] When the issue was just ordinary air pollution of the traditional sort, dirty air could effectively be cleaned simply through local regulations such as London's requirement for households to burn smokeless coal in fireplaces and industrial users to install scrubbers in smokestacks. But no such purely local remedies will reliably suffice to patch the hole in the ozone layer.

True enough, the industrialized countries of the First World contribute disproportionately to the problem. The United States produces something like 28 per cent of all the world's ozone-destroying CFC-11 and CFC-12, and West Europe another 30 per cent.[21] But it would be wrong to infer from that fact that if America – or indeed all the member countries of the OECD – singlehandedly banned the use of aerosols, it would in and of itself solve the problem of ozone depletion.

Presumably our goal is genuine stabilization of the ozone layer, rather than merely slowing its rate of depletion. And presumably we want to be reasonably certain of accomplishing that goal. But if so, then we cannot – within the limits of present knowledge – be sufficiently sure of achieving that goal, even through dramatic reductions in emissions by such major producers as the OECD. Initiatives by single countries or small groups of countries can serve as useful starts and important precedents, but they cannot in and of themselves be expected to solve the problem. Unless their lead is followed by others, we cannot be at all sure of stopping the damage.

[18] The best single statement of the international dimension, as it appeared in the 'first environmental crisis', is the Stockholm Declaration as annotated by Sohn (1973).

[19] For illustrative comparisons, contrast Caplan (1990) with Falk (1971), Commoner (1971) with Commoner (1990), or Caldwell (1990) with Caldwell (1971).

[20] For scientific background see US National Research Council (NRC) (1989), Schneider (1989) and Smith and Tirpak (1989). In a more popular vein, see McKibben (1988) and Boyle and Ardill (1989).

[21] Wirth 1989, p. 7.

These new environmental concerns, unlike the core concerns of the environmental crisis, are truly global. These problems are shared, internationally, in a stronger sense. They are not just problems for each nation, taken one by one. They simply could not be resolved by isolated actions of individual nations. The whole world, or some very large proportion of it, must be involved in the solution. That shift from issues which, while recurring the world over, can be resolved on a country-by-country basis to ones which require concerted action by all the nations of the world is what, to my mind, marks the shift from the first environmental crisis to the second. That is the sense in which present environmental concern, and the sorts of social and political theories spawned by it, seem to me genuinely new.[22]

That, anyway, is what I think has given rise to the recent upsurge in support for green causes and green political movements worldwide: in local politics, in national politics and in elections to supranational bodies like the European parliament. It is the need to take a genuinely 'global perspective', as green politics would apparently promise, to which voters seem to be responding.

Whether or not the greens themselves are fully up to this task is, perhaps, another question. Committed as they are to a programme of radical decentralization – 'thinking globally' but 'acting locally' – greens at one and the same time especially require but also singularly lack a theory of how the necessary coordination is to be achieved among all those autonomous smaller units. Absent such coordination, there seems to be a real risk that they might fail to achieve the results that they desire globally.

All this will be discussed more fully in chapter 4, section 4 below. There I suggest that we can, and probably should, accept green policy prescriptions without necessarily adopting green ideas about how to reform political structures and processes. As I conclude (chapter 5, section 2), electing a significant minority of greens to national or supranational legislatures – rather than giving greens their heads, and letting them reorganize those larger political entities out of existence altogether – might actually be just about optimal. That might enable us to secure what is best in the green programme while avoiding what is worst in it.

[22] And it was spawned a whole new sort of international politico-legal response, represented by the Vienna Convention (Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer 1985) and the Montreal Protocol (Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer 1987). I shall return to discuss these again briefly in closing (chapter 5, section 2); for a fuller discussion and an attempt to set those developments in a larger theoretical perspective, see Goodin (1990a).

All those are larger issues for later discussion. My aim in these introductory remarks is merely to emphasize the new, genuinely global orientation. It is what seems to mark the distinctively new class of environmental issues, and what has in turn given rise to the recent upsurge in green politics.

2 The Arguments

With these changes in the nature of the issues have come changes in the nature of the arguments offered for environmentalist measures. The older, and often more theologically tinged versions tended to appeal to notions of humanity's 'stewardship' of nature. Nature's being God's creation, it is not for us to destroy it; it having been bequeathed to us and our posterity jointly, it is for us to use but not to abuse it. Present people were, on these older theological models, little more than custodians or trustees for future generations – and, indeed, for all the other orders of creation. Human beings, as the crowning glory of God's creation, have a peculiar obligation to protect other realms of God's creation that would otherwise stand exposed and vulnerable.[23]

Lingering traces of such sentiments can of course be found in attitudes towards nature down to our own day.[24] But by the mid-nineteenth century, newer more explicitly utilitarian attitudes had gained the ascendancy. Cast in those terms – as the case increasingly had to be, if it was to prove politically persuasive – the most telling arguments were about the ways in which environmental protection was required in order to further human interests. Allowing indiscriminate dumping of industrial effluents into the air or water poisoned people and diminished profits overall (although not of course the polluter's own, at least not for a while). Allowing uncontrolled exploitation of common property resources led to the overuse and ultimately to the utter exhaustion of essential resources. Varied though the details of these arguments might be, their essence always remained the same: inadequate protection of the human environment seriously compromised human interests.[25]

Remedies, too, varied in their detail but not in their basic ethos.

[23] Passmore 1980. For a non-theological development of that latter theme, see Goodin (1985c, pp. 179–86).

[24] In modern restatements these traditional Christian themes are typically given a slightly new twist, be it derived from Eastern mysticism (Spretnak 1986; Capra 1982) or communitarian Catholicism (Daly and Cobb 1989).

[25] Certainly that is true of all the arguments surveyed in Goodin (1976, ch. 14).

Pollution was conceptualized as a divergence between private and social cost;[26] resource depletion was conceptualized as the result of overexploitation of common property resources.[27] Both represented failures of ordinary markets to force people to internalize fully the costs of their choices. The problem, on this utilitarian analysis, was essentially one of market failure. The remedy, in essence, was to correct that market failure.

Some thought that market mechanisms could be suitably adjusted – through privatization, pollution (or, more recently, carbon) taxes, marketable permits to pollute, and suchlike – to cope with the problem.[28] Others thought that the problem would ultimately require non-market controls, typically in the form of tough regulatory regimes of some sort or another.[29] Still others thought that the only thing that would suffice would be full-blooded public ownership, removing as it does the profit motive and with it the temptation to pass private costs of production off on to the public.[30] Diverse though those various remedies may be, all are responses to a problem conceptualized in basically the same terms – ones of making environmental choices better serve human interests.

This strand of argument, like the earlier one, has certainly not disappeared from contemporary environmental debates. A recent self-styled *Blueprint for a Green Economy* works in precisely these terms, urging rigorous application of the principle of 'polluter pays'. Effluent charges, conceptualized more as 'taxes' than 'fines', are recommended in good utilitarian, welfare-economic fashion as the mechanisms of choice for promoting efficient resource utilization and maximal satisfaction of human desires.[31]

[26] Pigou 1932, bk 2, ch. 9.

[27] Garrett Hardin's (1968) image of the 'tragedy of the commons' is echoed in economics literature on property rights (Gordon 1954; Coase 1960; Demsetz 1967).

[28] Kneese, Ayres and D'Arge 1970; Freeman, Haveman and Kneese 1973; Kneese and Schultze 1975; Weimer 1990; Grubb 1990; Epstein and Gupta 1990.

[29] Cf. Lave 1981.

[30] Dryzek (1987, p. 80, n15) recalls in this connection that 'large tracts of forest in the USA and UK are publicly owned,' remarking that 'under a system of communal property, ownership is vested in the community of resource users, who henceforth make decisions about access to the resource on a collective basis.' Zile (1982) provides an account of how such a system might be generalized in a thoroughly command economy, as the Soviet Union then was. The environmental consequences of public ownership in Eastern Europe does not serve as a happy precedent though (Goldman 1972; Ophuls 1977, pp. 203–6; Dryzek 1987, ch. 8).

[31] Pearce, Markandya and Barbier 1989; see similarly *Blueprint 2* (Pearce 1991). Indeed, the first demand in the section of the 1983 *Programme of the German Green Party* devoted to 'Environmental protection' is 'the immediate application of the

While both those older strands remain, there is an important new overlay on them in contemporary environmental debates. Arguments have come increasingly to be cast in terms of the interests of nature itself, rather than in terms of God's or humanity's interests in nature. It is easier to capture the spirit of these new arguments than it is to refine their details. We may well wonder whether self-styled 'animal liberationists' are literally proposing to give animals *rights* in any technical sense.[32] We may well wonder whether the suggestion to 'give trees standing' is just a delightful pun or whether the proposal is, literally, to give oaks (or their human mouthpieces) the legal capacity to bring anyone injuring arboreal interests before the bar of justice.[33] We may well wonder whether self-styled 'deep ecologists' really mean it, or whether it is just a rhetorical ploy, when they say that it is no more than blind prejudice on our part ('specieism', akin to 'racism' or 'sexism') to refuse to regard the interests of natural objects as wholly on a par with those of humans.[34] Still, there is no denying just how influential those models, even in their most exaggerated forms, have been on contemporary green thinking.[35]

Without getting bogged down in details, let us simply note for now the new argumentative style that those propositions represent. However exactly we cast the argument, it is clear that nature is now taken to have an independent role in the creation of value. The value of nature is no longer regarded as wholly reducible to its value to God or to humanity. And it is this insight that drives, most powerfully, the current wave of environmental concern.

Environmentalist tracts of the 1970s can be characterized as 'eco-doom' tracts. The doom in question is, almost invariably, doom for humanity.[36] Concern for the environment as such – for its doom – took

principle that the causer of pollution must pay its costs' (Die Grünen 1983, sec. iv.1, p. 30).

[32] Singer 1976.

[33] Stone 1972.

[34] Routley and Routley 1979; 1980; Naess 1973; 1984; 1989. Nash (1989, pp. 5–7), taking all this really rather literally, represents concern with all living things as the ultimate stage in the expanding scope of moral concerns that started with the shift from a focus on self and immediate family to local and national community; and, perhaps even more tendentiously, he represents recognition of rights of animals (in the Endangered Species Act) as the culmination of the process that started with the recognition of the rights of man in the Magna Carta and carried on through the recognition of rights of women, religious minorities and blacks (the Civil Rights Acts, etc.).

[35] Spretnak and Capra·1986, ch. 2; Sylvan 1985; Luke 1988.

[36] In the justly famous 'Blueprint for survival' printed in an early issue of the

decidedly second place. Environmentalist tracts today are different. Although they are far from sanguine on the subject, the future of humanity no longer seems to be the major issue. In a nice turnabout on the older emphases, there is a certain air of satisfaction evident in the writings of Gaia theorists when they say that Nature will survive just fine – it is merely the survival of humanity that is in doubt.[37]

3 The Organizations

Just as green issues have long been with us in one way or another, so too, organizationally, have green political groupings long been with us in one way or another. People have been organizing themselves into pressure groups devoted to lobbying legislators for better protection of the natural environment for a century or more. In America, the Sierra Club was founded in 1892, with the explicit aim of 'enlisting the support of the people and the government in preserving the forests and other features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains'.[38] In Britain, the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society was founded in 1865, the National Trust in 1893, and the Council for the Protection of Rural England in 1926, all with the avowedly political aims that their various titles suggest.[39] And of course those groups are just the most famous. Various other groups focused on public policies to secure the protection of animals (the various national organizations for the protection of birds and for the prevention of cruelty to animals), of fresh-water fishing (the Izaak Walton League), of the rights of hikers (the Ramblers Association) and so on.[40]

The point about all these older organizations, though, is that they all had – to greater or lesser extents – a narrowly single-issue style. In that, they were very much on a par with other single-issue lobbies, such as veterans' organizations, the Women's Electoral League, and so on. Each was advocating a cause that was undoubtedly important. Perhaps in the view of many of its members it was overridingly so. However much importance adherents attached to their own particular cause, though, each group would in all honesty have had to concede that its

Ecologist, for example, the 'survival' in question was first and foremost that of humankind (Goldsmith et al. 1972).

[37] Lovelock 1987; 1989; Sale 1985, chs 1–3, 12.

[38] Sierra Club, *Articles of Association*, quoted in Nash (1973, pp. 132–3).

[39] McCormick 1989, pp. 5–6; Shoard 1987, pp. 109–10.

[40] McCormick 1989, p. 15, provides a useful table listing many of them.

concern formed only a very small part of the larger political agenda. None could seriously maintain that its interest group offered anything approaching a comprehensive political programme, addressing each and every issue of broader social importance.

That is as true of environmentalist groups as of other single-issue groups. Furthermore, it is as true of the more highly politicized groups founded in the heyday of the 'first environmental crisis' of the early 1970s as of their older counterparts. The Friends of the Earth, for example, was formed in 1969 explicitly to do political work that the Sierra Club was unwilling or unable to undertake; and the still more political group Greenpeace arose shortly thereafter. Both campaigned hard for various politically highly charged environmental causes: against nuclear energy, private automobiles, acid rain, whaling, nuclear weapons testing, and suchlike. But both were still properly regarded, by themselves as well as by others, as being essentially 'single-issue interest groups'. Their job was to lobby governments for environmental protection, and that alone.

With the formation in recent years of self-consciously green parties in various countries of the world, that has notably changed.[41] Anti-abortionists, feminists and even blacks have run party lists of their own only very occasionally – and then only in very special political circumstances, when they could credibly claim that theirs was the overwhelmingly dominant issue then on their society's political agenda. Greens, in contrast, now enter the electoral lists year in and year out, on an utterly regular basis. That in and of itself makes contemporary greens different, both from other 'single-issue' groups and even from their own most highly politicized precursors.

Furthermore, they offer a fully fledged political agenda. The 1983 election manifesto of the German Greens (Die Grünen) contains, predictably enough, a long section devoted to discussing 'Environment and nature'. But alongside that there are also long sections discussing problems of 'Economy and work', of 'Foreign policy and peace policy' and 'Individual and society' (including issues of law, health, education, women, children and the aged). The English translation runs to over fifty pages.[42] That is not as long as some or as comprehensive as other

[41] I shall speak, colloquially, of 'parties' though greens themselves often prefer to avoid the term, styling themselves instead 'movements' or some such. Often it is a distinction without a difference, with green movements politicking in ways indistinguishable from political parties of an ordinary sort. Often such activity is accompanied by (and sometimes it is supplanted altogether by) extraparliamentary action – some aimed at political goals, some not – of a sort that is rarely if ever associated with political parties of a more ordinary sort.

[42] Die Grünen 1983.

parties' manifestos, perhaps. But it is certainly a substantial enough programme to qualify Die Grünen as more than a single-issue party. And other green parties seem to be equally ambitious in this regard.[43]

Of course it is wrong to set too much store by formal pronouncements and institutional structures. Modern political science has taught us that much, at least. It is perfectly possible for manifestos to be mere window dressing. Just because a group organizes a formal political party that purports to take a stand on a wide range of issues does not necessarily mean that it attaches equal importance to, or even that it genuinely cares about all those issues mentioned.[44] Still, such formalisms as party lists and election manifestos can sometimes serve as good guides to what actually is going on. Judging from them, something in the environmental movement has indeed changed with the advent of green parties worldwide.

Formerly, green activists would have been located organizationally in one of two places. Either they were found in special interest groups trying to influence the policies of political parties from the outside; or else they constituted 'factions' or 'sections' within older, more established political parties striving to get particular planks included within those parties' programmes.[45] Now, clearly, greens think that theirs is a sufficiently comprehensive programme of social reform that they can credibly mount a party and a programme all their own.

What makes these new green parties all the more striking, of course, is their electoral success. With the March 1983 breakthrough of Die Grünen into the West German Bundestag, a self-styled 'green' political grouping had for the first time won enough votes to secure substantial parliamentary representation.[46] The numbers might still have been relatively meagre: Die Grünen's 5.6 per cent of the vote translated into a mere twenty-seven parliamentary seats. But the impact on political perceptions was resounding.[47]

From that moment onwards, the green movement seized the political imagination of friend and foe alike. Older, more established parties

[43] See the appendix below for details.

[44] In 1968, for example, many suspected with much cause that whatever else George Wallace's platform might have said, all that really mattered to him and his supporters was the question of race.

[45] Naess, in a 1976 book only belatedly translated into English and only lightly revised in the process, thinks they still should (1989, pp. 154–5).

[46] As distinct from the sort of token representation greens secured in, e.g., Belgium in 1981 election (McCormick 1989, p. 140; Spretnak and Capra 1986, p. 172; Kolinsky 1984; Hülsberg (1985).

[47] Certainly the scene was compelling as theatre, with informally and colourfully clad greens wedged between rows of sombrely clad members of the more established parties (Spretnak and Capra 1986, p. 5).

across Europe, America and Australasia have been desperately striving to put on new, greener faces. They have been busily revamping their electoral manifestos, creating new ministerial portfolios, and generally doing their best to appropriate these new issues as their own.

Clearly, though, those manoeuvres amount to little more than face-lifts, the political equivalents of cosmetic surgery. For all the lip service presently being paid to green causes, virtually none of the established parties is treating the green movement as more than a passing political fancy. Naturally, mainstream parties are only too happy to embrace some of the greens' more popular proposals – reforestation, pollution abatement, and suchlike – in the cynical hopes of stealing the greens' political thunder. But they also feel perfectly free to pick and choose items willy-nilly off the green agenda, merrily incorporating some of its more congenial components within their own programmes while casually discarding all its more radical proposals.[48]

That they should do so comes as no surprise. Such is the standard way of political compromise, in general. Such is the standard way for mainstream parties to try to marginalize single-issue political movements, in particular. And so far as the more established parties can apparently see, that is all that is really involved in the green movement. Virtually none of them seem to regard it as presenting any deeper challenge.

In politics-as-usual, there is always 'room for . . . "earlier-or-later" or "more-or-less" positions between contrasting claims. . . . In principle, there is always a "middle-range solution". . . . Yes-or-no questions which cannot be settled by a compromise are rare occurrences and, when they do arise, they can still be handled through traditional log-rolling, i.e., a yes to one question will assure a similar concession from the opponent on some other question.'[49]

The peculiarity of green parties is that their demands prove so utterly impervious to those ordinary political solvents. 'These groups', Offe remarks, 'cannot be bought off by offering them benefits and concessions in other, less important realms of political action. Traditional patterns of cooptation and patronage simply fail to work.' As Offe goes on to say, 'It is not very helpful to get aggravated over the stubbornness and ideological obstinacy of these political actors. The causes for their lack

[48] The German Greens, particularly incensed by the practice, have even coined a term for the phenomenon: *Themenklau* (Papadakis 1989). Petra Kelly (1989, p. 26), for example, complains that 'other parties have literally copied parts of our programme. But they don't implement them. They only do it cosmetically. . . . What's sad is that, when the Greens act as pioneers and initiate such things, everyone soon forgets that it was us who started it.'

[49] Offe 1983, p. 49.

of tolerance and willingness to compromise is neither individual nor institutional, but rather themes and problems which are, by their very nature, ill suited to compromise. They have to be either ignored or taken seriously.'[50]

Green parties present their agenda as a peculiarly all-or-nothing package. Furthermore, they do so genuinely as a matter of high principle. Other parties might adopt a similar stance tactically, as an audacious (albeit perhaps a high-risk) way of trying to force more concessions from prospective coalition partners. At the end of the day, though, those other parties would always be prepared to take something rather than nothing of what they want. For greens, in contrast, there are reasons of principle rather than mere calculations of political advantage lying behind their all-or-nothing stance. If in the end they are prepared to settle for something rather than nothing (and I argue below that they should be), they would do so with far more genuine regret and far less self-congratulation than would other parties adopting a similar stance out of purely tactical considerations.

4 The Thesis

That the greens do indeed pose a fundamental challenge to the existing sociopolitical order is, in one sense, plain for all to see. Politically, the greens are obviously making some awfully radical demands. They call, predictably enough, for drastic measures to curtail pollution of the air, waterways and oceans, to control disposal of hazardous wastes, to protect the ozone layer, and to conserve forests, landscapes, natural resources and ancient monuments. Beyond all that, though, they would also have us: take steps to protect animals, both individually and especially as species; wind down modern technology generally, and nuclear electricity generating plants particularly; disarm militarily, disposing straightaway of our entire nuclear and chemical/biological weapons arsenals; and change our lifestyles quite generally, especially as regards attitudes toward women, children, elders and 'marginalized groups' in society, such as homosexuals, immigrants and gipsies.[51] Accepting all those demands would clearly commit us, both domestically

[50] Ibid., pp. 49–50. As Habermas (1981, p. 33) puts it, 'the[se] new conflicts are not sparked by *problems of distribution*, but concern the *grammar of forms of life*.' Cf. Papadakis (1988), who is more sceptical of what he calls the German Greens' 'self-limiting radicalism'.

[51] This list is based on Die Grünen (1983). See further the appendix below.

and internationally, to a very basic reorientation of crucial components of the present political, economic and social orders.[52]

What is less obvious and requires rather more argument is the further proposition that the greens' demands really do – as greens themselves say they do – have to be taken on something like an all-or-nothing basis. Showing that that is true is the major burden of the central sections of this book.[53] Once established, that proposition logically militates against picking and choosing items off the green political agenda – breaking apart the package, buying some parts of it without buying all the rest as well. Showing the fallacies that are involved in such magpie-like borrowing from the greens is the political punchline of this book as a whole.[54]

What, at root, makes the green political agenda form a peculiarly tight package is the fact that all the elements within it are informed by a single moral vision.[55] Specifically, all are arguably manifestations of one and the same 'green theory of value'. What makes the green agenda form something very much akin to an all-or-nothing political package is the simple incoherence of accepting the validity of that particular theory of value for some purposes but not for others. A theory of the Good holds good regardless of context: goodness does not flicker on and off like some faulty light switch.

That is not to say that we must always accept green conclusions everywhere if we ever accept them anywhere. Of course we do not. That issue will be discussed more fully in chapter 3 below. For now, suffice it to say that, purely as a matter of logic, it is illegitimate for us utterly to disregard for some purposes considerations which we take to be utterly compelling in others. As I shall argue in my conclusions, that logic might come to have real political consequences for any mainstream political parties that try to defy it.

It is my larger thesis in this book that green political theory is actually

[52] Although their full implementation can come only through collectively enforced political decisions, there is much that individuals can do in the meanwhile – in their roles both as consumers and producers – to further these policy goals. When proprietors of major mining corporations or large agricultural holdings adopt environmentally responsible practices in their own operations, that seems more a case of the incomplete implementation of a public policy than of a green personal lifestyle on the part of private green consumers.

[53] Chapters 2 and 3 below.

[54] I see this principally as a moral problem facing mainstream parties trying to capture the green position, rather than as an objection to greens compromising their own programme by joining in coalitions with other parties. I shall discuss this further in chapter 3, section 6 below.

[55] In this, their programme really is radically different from those of other more established parties, for reasons discussed in chapter 3, section 1 below.