other issues as well (although demonstrating this would require a considerably longer and more systematic study). None of this entails that Green ideology employs a whole new political vocabulary, far from it. It employs a language of politics that anybody reasonably acquainted with conventional western political discourse can understand, although it has formulated a few neologisms as well, such as the commitment to ecocentrism that Dobson places in the core. From the perspective of this chapter there is a Green interpretation of social welfare. Although the policy recommendations (at the ideological periphery) may not be specific to Greens, the path of justification for this policy (the derivation of policy from the ideological core) is unique to this ideology.

4
Green Democracy and Ecosocial Welfare

Tony Fitzpatrick

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to sketch the outline of a theory of ecosocial welfare (also, Fitzpatrick with Caldwell, 2001). This theory lies at the intersection of three lines of inquiry. The first line concerns the meaning of, and the prospects for, a Green democracy. Here, I contend that any Green democracy must be rooted in the values and goals of liberal democracy, both for reasons of principle and of expediency, but that only a ‘radical liberal democracy’ can realise ecological values and goals. The second inquiry concerns the relationship between democracy and the welfare state. Is this one of mutual support, conflict, or a bit of both? A later section will review the main arguments in this respect. The final line of inquiry concerns Green critiques of the welfare state, critiques that Michael Cahill and myself have already outlined in Chapter 1 and which are dealt with throughout this book. Having laid the groundwork, the final substantive section will then discuss the main features of ecosocial welfare: a commitment to radical reformism, to ‘discursive reflexivity’ and to the democratization of the ownership and control of both social and natural resources. Before proceeding, however, we need to identify the ideological sources of ecosocial welfare and this is the task of the next section.

Post-Marxist liberalism, anyone?

There is only space here to deal with three of ecosocial welfare’s ideological sources. The most important omission is feminism, though significant elements of this appear within Fitzpatrick (1998).
Anarchism is also omitted, but this is less of a hardship given the anarchist tendency to somehow both overestimate the importance of politics (by treating the economic as an effect of the political) and to underestimate that importance (by proposing to abolish the state) (Carter, 1999).

The title of this section is therefore deliberately playful as there is little need to essentially a debate whose strengths are its openness and eclecticism. Even so, I wish to underscore the importance of each of the following.

**Liberal democracy**

The liberal democratic state is now the accepted model of political organisation in more areas of the world than ever before because the complexity and inter-relatedness of that world makes pluralism - the dispersal of power across multiple centres of interest and representation - more suitable than any of its alternatives. In truth, actual liberal democracies embody a form of 'restricted pluralism' since some centres are obviously more powerful than others. Nevertheless, liberal democracy aims at the ideal of a level playing-field upon which each player can mobilise, contest and/or co-operate with others in order to promote their values, interests and agendas. Some individuals and groups may be more powerful than others at any one time, but no-one on this field should have an unfair advantage.

The liberal democratic state is supposed to underwrite this equality of political conditions: by acting as a neutral umpire and as a defender of minority rights, the state prevents majorities from wielding despotic tyranny over others. Such neutrality implies a series of checks and balances to ensure that those who are winning the political game at any one time are still open to challenge within the political arena. In reality, liberal democratic states are rarely neutral in that they inevitably reflect the religious, historical, ethical and national contexts within which they developed. Even so, liberal neutrality remains the ideal and, as such, there are basically two models to which this state may conform. First, there is the minimalist model where the playing-field consists of free and unregulated market relations and a residual state guarantees private property and contractual exchange (Nozick, 1974). Secondly, there is the managerial model where the state effects the fair and just distribution of social goods and benefits that the free market violates (Rawls, 1972). The welfare state derives from the latter model.

We shall be examining the debate concerning Green liberal democracy in the next section. It is worth pointing out here, though, that many within the ecological movement have supported a radical re-organisation of liberal democratic precepts and institutions. Sagoff (1988) believes that liberal democracy can be preserved only if our altruistic and long-term preferences as citizens are given priority over our selfish and short-term preferences as consumers. Ophuls and Boyan (1992), though, believe that this trick cannot be achieved without going beyond the current democratic system, where the political marketplace is dominated by the key actors within the economic marketplace. Two approaches to social policy therefore suggest themselves: if Sagoff, Ophuls and Boyan are correct then a new approach to social welfare systems has to be devised, an approach that, whilst building upon the existing system, may take us in directions currently difficult to imagine and conceive; but if they are wrong (as Wissenburg believes, see next section) then social policies become a means of reconciling our Green aspirations to the existing institutional order. In its present formulation, the theory of ecologically welfare is agnostic as to which of these approaches to Green social policy is superior.

**Marxism**

Marxists contend that the state in a capitalist society is biased towards the needs and interests of capital. Far from being a neutral umpire, the state is that which (1) conspires to ensure that the playing-field of market capitalism maintains a steep gradient, and (2) tries to convince us that the weaker players are responsible for their own misfortune. In short, the state is concerned with securing the conditions for the accumulation of capital and with the moral legitimation of social injustice and exploitation (J. O'Connor, 1973; Habermas, 1975). However, Marxists are then torn between two elaborations of this basic interpretation.

The 'functional model' treats the state as an unassailable citadel that both socialises us into the performance of capitalist imperatives and suppresses dissent (e.g. Althusser, 1969); the 'conflict model' treats the state as a site of struggle and therefore as a potential means of securing social justice within capitalism and of transforming society beyond it (e.g. Gramsci, 1971). While these models once generated a great deal of argument, many are now content to draw upon both. Offe's (1984) famous observation that the welfare state is both necessary for, and a threat to, capitalism expresses this compromise succinctly.
Eco-Marxists have taken the debate one step further (Benton, 1996). In its classical formulation (Marx, 1977: 388–91) major historical transformations result when the contradiction between productive forces and production relations becomes irreparable, and the state is overthrown when one system of property ownership must be replaced by another. According to James O’Connor (1998), though, this captures only the first contradiction of capitalism. The second contradiction is that between the forces/relations on the one side and the ‘conditions of production’ on the other. In essence, capitalism is self-destructive since the profits and the over-production that it feeds upon must eventually drain away the natural resources upon which any society ultimately depends. Capitalism has survived so far by producing and distributing an immense affluence, but this has only had the effect if externalising and displacing its first contradiction onto the second by which the natural conditions of its own future survival are undermined.

And what of the state? Quite simply, the state mediates between nature and capital by regulating capitals’ access to, use of and exit from production conditions (J. O’Connor, 1998: 148–55). The capitalist state brakes and steers the depletion of resources and the pollution of the environment, though it cannot change the overall direction of society. But just as many Marxists have argued that the state can be a force for social justice and progress, so eco-Marxists insist that it can be a force for environmental justice and sustainability. If capitalism is characterised by two contradictions then so is the state: the first emerges through the systemic conflict between accumulation and legitimisation; the second between the desire for accumulation and the need to both observe and preserve natural limits. Therefore, just as the first contradiction can be exploited by those class movements committed to socialism, so the second can be exploited by those who are or should be committed to eco-socialism, i.e. all radical class and social movements. Capitalist social and property relations cannot create sustainable conditions of production to the extent that is necessary because this will require a degree of bottom-up, democratic planning that is inconsistent with even the most forward-looking proposals for Green capitalism (J. O’Connor, 1998: 246–7).

One implication of this is that if the state possesses a second contradiction then so does the welfare state. The first contradiction is that the welfare state is both radical and reactionary since it exhibits progressive and regressive features, corresponding to the imperatives of legitimisation and accumulation, respectively; the second contradiction is that the welfare state helps to regulate the depletion of the very resources, and the degradation of the very environment, upon which it itself depends.

One problem with eco-Marxism (see Chapter 3 also) is that we are left with no clear prescriptive reforms with which to work. O’Connor recommends the democratisation of the state, but does this imply anything more than liberal proposals for strengthened local government, citizens’ juries and parliaments, etc? Are we talking about the kind of direct democracy that some Marxists have long favoured? In which case, how are the oft-noted problems of direct democracy to be surmounted? Or is some form of associative democracy more appropriate (Hirst, 1994; Cohen and Rogers, 1995)? If so, then does eco-Marxism really have anything distinctive to offer such proposals?

Post-structuralism

Some ecological theorists have found it more intellectually profitable to draw upon post-structuralism and, more specifically, a Foucauldian analysis (e.g. Darier, 1999). This is because post-structuralism makes two potential contributions to ecological thought.

First, it usefully directs our attention away from traditional conceptions of power and sovereignty (Foucault, 1975, 1977). Both liberals and Marxists are guilty of identifying power as a unitary, centralised, repressive and centripetal force; but according to Foucault, power is productive and decentralised, present at every node and relation of the social network as the capillaries of the social body. Therefore, we should abandon familiar theories of the state and of political sovereignty which, by focusing upon the ‘centre’, construct power at a far-off, impersonal distance (indeed, this construction is itself an effect of power). We should instead of governance, or the ‘conduct of conduct’, i.e. the way in which we are made as subjects (both as subjectivities and as the subjects of power). Two points follow from this. First, we are all of us ‘deviants’ organising and organised around a series of norms. Governance is therefore discursive and so is not captured by the traditional sociological distinction between agency (‘we govern’) and structure (‘we are governed’): disciplinary governance consists of norms discursively reflecting back on themselves through practice and habituation. Secondly, freedom and governance are inseparable, each depends upon the other (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999a). Modern society consists of the simultaneous empowerment and disempowerment of both individual and collective bodies. In short, post-structuralists insist that ecologists cannot afford to limit their analysis to traditional theories of state power.
The second contribution is the post-structuralist injunction to avoid deterministic interpretations of nature and of environmental crises. One such interpretation contends that Green values have developed in response to an increasing consciousness of environmental problems and hazards. However, this common-sense view overlooks the extent to which the environment is the means for the 'carceral' management of bodies and populations. This does not simply mean that humans create the crises that they then see themselves as responding to, but that the signifier 'crisis' is itself a discursively constructed meaning. Ecologism is therefore called upon to question its self-image as a naturalistic philosophy, unpolluted by existing ideologies; indeed, ecologists are urged to excavate the negativities that lie at the heart of their critique, e.g. the possible racism and occidentalism that inspire the literature on population control. Nevertheless, eco-governance cannot imply a transcendence, merely an enhanced awareness of the power relations within which the human/nature matrix is implicated. The 'human', nonhuman nature and the 'social' are bound together discursively and cannot be separated out according to some normative blueprint, whether liberal or Marxist.

And this may be the problem with post-structuralism. By eschewing any notion of a 'regulatory ideal' it enjoins us to do what we already do, only with greater understanding, and deprives us of a practical radicalism where society a can be preferred to society b even at the risk of re-masking the power that post-structuralists labour to unmask (though with what end in mind is not always clear). More specifically, although Foucault (1984: 51–75) is correct to argue that the state cannot and does not occupy the entire territory of power, he perhaps underestimates the extent to which power retains a centralised and visible demeanour: for instance, if capital is regarded as nothing more than another discursive face of power then we seem to have done nothing more than return to the playing-field pluralism of liberalism (cf. Hindess, 1996). For instance, it is not clear whether Torring's (1999: 225–41) discourse analysis has anything to say about the welfare state that is particularly distinctive and so, by extension, whether it has anything to contribute to the greening of social policy.

Liberal democratic, Marxist and post-structuralist ideas all, then, have something to contribute to an ecosocial welfare theory. Liberal democracy is an indispensable starting-point due to its basic principles (of autonomy, especially), its adaptability and its popularity; though one that can and must be disengaged from its origin as a philosophical system for the defence of male property-owners. Marxism continues to remind us that liberal democratic societies achieve a limited form of freedom in the absence of any democratic ownership and control of resources. Post-structuralism warns against any attempt to force our ideas into intellectual totalities, and it draws attention to the inescapable presence of disciplinary norms and strategies of governance. Having laid the groundwork, then, we can proceed towards a theory of ecosocial welfare by first investigating the debate concerning Green democracy.

**Green democracy**

Could there be such a thing as a Green democracy and, if so, what form should it take (Doherty and de Geus, 1996)? According to Robert Goodin (1992: 116; cf. B. Barry, 1995: 149–51) the problem is as follows. Democracy refers to a set of procedures the outcome of which cannot be known until those procedures have actually been carried out. If we polled a room full of 100 people as to whether they support the implementation of a proposed Green reform then the procedure (the voting) takes place prior to the outcome (the majority's approval or rejection of the proposal). The trouble is that ecologism is extremely consequentialist, i.e. it focuses upon the outcome rather than the means. If there is no guarantee that electorates will support Green proposals then what should Greens do? They either have to ignore the principles of democratic proceduralism, which implies adopting authoritarian and, perhaps, terroristic strategies, or they have to support principles which may require them to accept the non-implementation of Green reforms wherever the majority does not vote in their favour. Green democracy is therefore impaled on the same dilemma that all political radicalisms face: either a Leninist approach needs to be taken, or else democracy needs to be prioritised above one's cherished beliefs and values.

However, it could be argued that the dilemma is not this severe after all on the grounds that there is no such thing as a pure proceduralism. Voters do not exist ex nihilo, in a social and ideological vacuum, but are embedded in a particular culture into which they have been socialised. Equally, political and economic elites are able to shape the flow of ideological opinion, whether deliberately or not, so that the votes of the majority may do nothing more than reflect the interests of the powerful. Finally, it can be argued that procedures and their consequential implications change depending upon whether the system is one of representative, direct or participatory democracy. The
civic competence of actors in a participatory democracy may well be higher than that of existing voters so that the procedures of such a democracy would be more conducive to Green reforms than that of a representative one. If, in other words, procedures are always skewed in one direction or another - if all democratic systems are ends-oriented - then there is nothing self-contradictory in ecologists trying to skew them in Green directions away from the non-Green directions that currently prevail.2

What might this imply? At the theoretic level it could imply the enlargement of the moral community. Both nonhuman species and future generations of humans and nonhumans might be regarded as the objects of moral and political consideration, giving the democratic system less of an anthropocentric facade. Just as prior democratic revolutions have shifted the centre of political gravity away from male property-owners, so a further revolution could shift it away from its overwhelming domination by the interests of the present generation of just one species, ours. For instance, Dobson (1996) suggests that legislatures can be revised to incorporate specific representatives of future generations and this proposal could be extended to cover nonhuman species also. In addition, some have argued for a category of environmental rights (Benton, 1993; Saward, 1996): the rights of humans to live in and enjoy a clean, sustainable ecosystem and the rights of animals to be free from cruelty. If such a category of rights is deemed acceptable then democratic institutions must represent and preserve them no less than civil, political and social rights. Committed democrats therefore have an incentive to support ecologism and ecologists have an incentive to support democracy. So, there is a prima facie reason for believing that, yes, there can be such a thing as Green democracy: for just as democracy is always aimed at particular ends, so ecologist values can be incorporated within majoritarian procedures.

However, what form might this Green democracy actually take? There are five basic possibilities. First, we might favour a Green market liberalism where environmental costs are factored into the price mechanism. Secondly, we might favour a Green social democracy where redistributive and managerial means are employed according to the requirements of social and environmental justice. Thirdly, we might favour ecosocialism where the popular control and ownership of the economy is extended to the environmental preconditions of economic activity. Fourth, we might favour some kind of eco-centralisation within which there is only a limited form of democratic representation and participation. Finally, we might favour an anarchism where the state is abolished and replaced by ‘horizontal’ networks of egalitarian, democratic and autonomous communities.1 I shall rule out the first of these options on the grounds that markets must always be regulated if they are to contribute to socially desirable ends; the fourth option is also dismissed because it harks back to the survivalist discourse of the 1970s which is now both scientifically and politically outdated (Dryzek, 1997); and the final option is rejected for the reason noted briefly at the beginning of this chapter. This leaves us with two alternatives, then: either a Green social democracy or an ecosocialism. In order to decide between them we need to revisit the debate concerning liberal democracy.

The most persuasive recent case for simply greening the status quo has been made by Marcel Wissenburg (1998). Wissenburg does not argue for a Green social democracy himself (cf. Jacobs, 1996, 1999), but he does offer a theoretical defence of a Green liberalism that would need to underpin any Green social democracy. On the plus side, he offers a necessary corrective to those who are casually dismissive of liberal democracy on the grounds that it is too anthropocentric a system (Wissenburg, 1998: 103–6). Nevertheless, crucial parts of his argument rest upon some shaky foundations. Basically, Wissenburg offers too restrictive and limited a definition of liberal democracy, allowing him to polarise the relevant debates and overlook various conceptual distinctions that are subtler than those with which he works. There are three specific problems with his approach.

First, Wissenburg (1998: 63–5) makes a crude distinction between the piecemeal engineering of ecological modernisation and the more radical engineering of ‘ecological utopianism’. Setting up the terms of the debate in this simplistic fashion loads the dice against those who believe that piecemeal reforms must take utopian goals as their regulatory and long-term ideals if we are to achieve not so much utopia as what James Meade (1993) refers to as ‘agathotopia’, i.e. the best possible world rather than the perfect world. Although probably correct in his observation that ‘liberalism is compatible with reformist policies only’, Wissenburg (1998: 200) then identifies reformism with the ‘least socially disruptive policy that empirical circumstances allow’ and so social democracy is the furthest left that he allows us to go. In short, he is equating reformism with ‘conservative reformism’ and airbrushing from the picture the possibility of a ‘radical reformism’ that derives from a reflective equilibrium between principles of justice and the practicality of given circumstances. In other words, Wissenburg neglects the possibility of what Christoff (1996) calls a
'strong ecological modernisation' which would be more discursive and less technocratic than the 'weak ecological modernisation' of current environmental policy-making.

This relates to a second key problem. Wissenburg (1998: 191-4) treats liberal democracy as a system for the aggregation of preferences rather than as that which shapes the norms, expectations and very identities of preference-holders in the first place. Not only does this underestimate the extent to which liberal democracy 'governs the self' - the insight provided by post-structuralists and many Marxists – but it over-states the extent to which interference in the formation of preferences necessarily leads us to 'far less attractive political systems'. We face a policy choice not between interference and non-interference in individuals' preferences but between (a) reflexive interference, and (b) autonomous interference: the latter deriving from the logic of economic and political systems, the former referring to the inter-relational deliberations of autonomous citizens – which is precisely why some insist that liberal democracy must subsume into a discursive democracy (Fitzpatrick, 2002). If preferences are constructed rather than given then we have reason to believe that free choices can be made more Green whilst still remaining free - just as consumerism also represents a type of free choice, if a highly limited type according to Greens. Engaging with this problem of preference-formation means discussing what, later on, I shall refer to as 'discursive reflexivity'.

Finally, Wissenburg's economy (1998: 212-19) consists of individuals, of producers and consumers, but not of classes, strata, groups and structures. So although it is not clear what his defence of 'economic liberalism' amounts to – by this he does not necessarily mean laissez-faire – his methodological individualism suggests a preference for deregulatory exchange and trade. Wissenburg (1998: 213) distinguishes between markets and market preferences as if the former have got nothing to do with the latter:

if 'the' free market is to be blamed for environmental problems, it cannot be blamed because of its being a free market; it is because there are consumers and producers who are looking for a market – any kind of market.

While in an abstract sense it is true that consumers could choose to pay higher prices for Green goods and so alter the outcomes of free market exchange (as some choose to purchase more expensive organic foods) there is a significant constraint on the widespread adoption of such preferences. The immense income inequalities that accompany free market capitalism both inhibit the spending patterns of the poorest and motivate the non-poor to spend their disposable income on (1) positional goods, and (2) savings and investment, to insure against the ever-present possibility of downward mobility. Wissenburg (1998: 218) acknowledges that government regulation can ameliorate environmental cost evasion and corporate short-termism but he neglects to say how this can be done given the power of global capital – indeed, he seems dismissive of arguments that draw attention to the latter. So whereas Green capitalists can certainly find a niche or two (witness the continued success of The Body Shop), these are unlikely to expand into anything more without effective state regulation. Textbook economists can construct perfect models of Green capitalism, just as market equilibrium can be demonstrated mathematically, but, in the real world, how can we transform the economy from here to there without more extensive state and inter-state action to alter the very preferences (of producers and consumers), geared to self-interest and short-termism, which Wissenburg demands that we leave alone?

Wissenburg's defence of a Green liberal democracy therefore runs up against certain problems, the resolution of which allows a case for a more radical political economy to be made – as Sagoff et al. want to suggest. It is in this context that ecosalism becomes relevant. Rather than pursuing this here, though, my aim is to design and defend a theory of ecosocial welfare, a theory that lies between Green social democracy and eco-socialism. Before doing so, however, we must first review the second line of inquiry mentioned in the introduction.

Democracy and the welfare state

Having argued that there can be such a thing as Green democracy and that liberal democracy represents a convenient and principled starting-point, we can start to introduce social policy into the frame. First, what is the relationship between democracy and the welfare state?

The previous section has offered a deliberately upbeat assessment of the potentially mutual benefits for ecology and democracy. It may well be, however, that attempts to Green liberal democracy will miscarry and electorates will democratically decide not to avoid environmental degradation, whether due to ignorance, deception or sheer perversity (see Chapter 2, however). Democracy is no panacea, therefore. That democracy may enhance but cannot guarantee higher levels of social
welfare is a lesson that social policy commentators have long appreciated and it is worth pausing briefly to appreciate why.

The welfare state has often been accused of being too bureaucratic and dependent upon the unaccountable opinions of faceless administrators and experts. The further back in time we go the less this accusation surfaces, though. Indeed, the earliest architects of the welfare state made a strict distinction between the voluntary and mutual aid sectors, where the efforts of non-experts would be required, and the state sector, where services would be run for people but not, by and large, by them. The idea that those who received state services could have a considerable voice in their design and operation did not gain a firm foothold until the 1970s, by which time it was too late as the consumerist reforms of the Right were gaining in popularity. Nevertheless, the idea that the welfare state requires a democratisation has remained popular on the Left ever since, and deservedly so (Fitzpatrick, 2002). However, it would be counterproductive to over-emphasise the role that further political democratisation could play, as Claus Offe (1996) makes clear.

Offe observes that there are four ways of conceptualising the interaction between political democracy and the welfare state. First, we can think of the former as supporting the latter. For instance, the achievement of a universal franchise both reflected the growing strength of the working-class and, in turn, encouraged the labour movement in its social and political struggles against the dominance of the market and of employers. Secondly, the welfare state can be supportive of political democracy, e.g. by humanising liberal capitalism and so integrating most people into the political mainstream by reducing the attractiveness of ideological extremism. Thirdly, however, the welfare state may possess anti-democratic implications by facilitating the kind of top-down corporatism that seems less than conducive to political accountability and accompanies impersonal forms of bureaucratic power. Finally, political democracy may threaten the welfare state under certain circumstances; for instance, by enabling the formation of anti-welfare coalitions, e.g. in the form of taxpayer revolts, that override considerations of justice, equity and a fair redistribution of resources. Since democracy, at least in its modern liberal variants, appeals to individualistic self-interest much more than to the common good (unless expressed in crude nationalistic terms) then the collective goods of the welfare system are constantly on the defensive. The lesson might well be that whereas democracy can assist in the formation of welfare systems when the power of labour is increasing relative to that of capital, when there is an anti-labour backlash (as there has been for several decades now) democracy may militate against further expansion and may encourage retrenchment.

Short of falling back on authoritarian solutions we are left with the conclusion that if there are inherent limits to the justice-enhancing potential of political democracy (environmental as well as social justice) then there are basically two things we can do. First, we can either resign ourselves to these limits and set about engaging the right and the anti-environmental left in a form of political trench warfare where all sides expend a great deal of time and energy in capturing a few yards from their enemies. This implies that any gains in social and environmental justice are likely to be vulnerable to attack and may short-lived. Secondly, we can revive arguments for radical forms of both political and economic democracy. The problem, in short, may not be democracy per se, but the kind of political democracy that is detached from its citizens and from the collective ownership and control of both social and natural resources. The theory of ecosocial welfare is an attempt to think through the implications of this second alternative.

Ecosocial welfare

Here is the argument so far. In order to secure a future of both social and environmental justice it is necessary to strengthen the theoretical and practical (policy-oriented) links between democracy and ecologism. However, limiting ourselves to a Green liberal and social democracy may be insufficient. The subject of social policy suggests that democracy and social justice are only mutually enhancing when capital’s power is balanced out against the countervailing imperatives of oppositional movements. More than ever, then, we need to think beyond liberal democracy to some form of eco-socialism. The theory of ecosocial welfare represents a compromise between Green social democracy and eco-socialism, a means of effecting the transition from the former to the latter (Fitzpatrick with Caldwell, 2001) by discursively constructing a political position around which contemporary oppositional movements could be invited to mobilise. I have outlined the ideological sources of this theory and, in a critique of Wissenburg, I alluded to three elements of this theory: radical reformism, discursive reflexivity, Green economic democracy. In this final section we shall review each of these in turn.
Radical reformism

A politics of radical reformism stretches across several camps. For instance, it is concerned with the practicable and the ‘do-able’ but also with the utopian and the visionary; it looks to the short-term as well as the long-term; to the abstract and hypothetical as well as to the concrete and down-to-earth; to the macro-engineering of the state and to the micro-engineering of civic experimentation. In short, the policies of radical reformism are not developed as blueprints that then require translation into practical reality, nor are they about following the status quo; instead, radical reformism implies the attempt to connect revolutionary ends with pragmatic means. It is not so much a set of prescriptive policies — although these can be obviously be proposed — as a project that is not afraid of being simultaneously conservative and extremist.

The key lies not in overturning existing systems but in identifying their emancipatory potential and taking that dynamic logic to its radical conclusions. For instance, Basic Income is a resilient idea (see Chapter 8) because it offers a minimum income guarantee without the Right-wing insistence upon means-testing and it offers a form of social insurance without the holes and inadequate coverage of contribution-based schemes (Fitzpatrick, 1999a). Existing social policies may well be janus-faced, concerned with social control and social justice to varying degrees, but a post-contradictory state of affairs can be imagined if we strategically confront politicians, taxpayers and clients with the contradictions of the existing system and offer possible paths to their resolution. Radical reformism therefore proceeds by identifying and exploiting the systemic infirmities of market capitalism.

Yet at the same time as revolutionising the logic of conservative means so radical reformism also seeks a de-radicalisation of utopian ends. This means aiming at an agathotopia. Agathotopia represents a necessary compromise between realism and idealism: without the latter the former has little purpose or direction, but without the former the latter has little meaning and significance. For example, this may mean introducing into the ideal of renewability an acceptance that the depletion of renewables and non-renewables can be slowed but perhaps never eliminated (Fitzpatrick, 2001a). If this compromise still allows the projection of human civilisation several millennia into the future (and how much longer can we realistically plan for anyway?), until such time as the future can be left to apply reforms currently unimaginable, then existing forms of socioeconomic activity can be adapted to this long-term but finite time-horizon.

In less abstract terms, radical reformism involves the convergence of certain theoretical priorities with the experimental and innovations implemented on an often hesitant and fragmented basis by activists and citizens within the third sector — or what I prefer to call the ‘fifth sector’ (Fitzpatrick, 1999b). This convergence occurs through the understanding that each is the condition for the other. For instance, the main priority that has emerged from within ecosocialism concerns the redistribution of domestic work and paid employment so that the former is less the province of women and the latter less the province of men (Little, 1998). In addition, such redistribution may enable an overall reduction in the amount of paid employment that we collectively perform, freeing up time for people to participate in fifth sector activities (leaving open the question as to whether incentives and disincentives are required if widespread participation is to be encouraged). Such activities presently take the form of a range of civic experiments, many of which localise and collectivises economic exchange. One such experiment revolves around local currency schemes (Offe and Heinze, 1992) and both this and work/employment redistribution are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10 respectively.

In conclusion, radical reformism implies a reflexive project whereby conservative means are revolutionised and utopian ends are de-radicalised through the mutual convergence of theoretical priorities and civic experiments. The term ‘ecosocial welfare’ is therefore meant to capture two arguments. First, that ecosocialism is a goal at which we should aim but which we may never achieve. It could very well be that a Green social democracy is the most we can ever hope to achieve, but this conclusion should be the result of the political imagination engaging with civic experimentation and not, as for most contemporary social democrats, a fait accompli that stilles debate and more radical visions of society. Secondly, ecosocial welfare expresses the intuition that both the concept of welfare and the state provision of welfare are likely to remain central to any strategy of reworking our productivist societies. The welfare state has usually failed to meet the expectations that many have had for it, but rather than assist the right in its dismantlement the Green movement should surely engage with social policy in the hope that a declining environment may provide an impetus for radical reform.

Discursive reflexivity

There are two aspects to this. First, we need to follow Torgerson’s (1999) Arendtian distinction between functional, constitutive and
performative types of politics. Functional politics corresponds to Arendt's (1958) category of ‘labor’ (sic), that is, of instrumental and rationalistic economic activity. The ends of functional politics are extrinsic to it and, in Green terms, takes the form of weak ecological modernisation, i.e. a reform strategy whereby ecological imperatives are adapted to established goals such as the expansion of GDP growth. Functional policy-making therefore tends to be administrative and technocratic, concerned with mechanisms rather than morals. Constitutive politics derives from Arendt’s category of ‘work’ and is also an instrumental politics of extrinsic ends: the maintenance of the existing socioeconomic system. However, constitutive politics is also concerned with the cultural ground of civilisation and civilised practice and so is open to a greater degree of radicalisation than that of functional politics. This, then, represents the sphere of strong, or discursive, ecological modernisation (Hajer, 1995: 280-1): one where ends and means are open to at least a limited form of reciprocal negotiation and redefinition, as suggested in the previous section. So, if functional politics treats social reform as a ‘hard’ technocratic enterprise, for constitutive politics society is ‘softer’, more malleable and plastic in its values and cultural identifications.

By contrast, the ends of a performative politics are intrinsic to political action itself: they are neither given nor stable, but emerge repeatedly in different motifs, in and through the exercise of political practice and discourse. Performative politics is the modern equivalent to Aristotelian phronesis: that which connects worldly affairs to its original roots in ontology, morality and contemplative philosophy. It is the source of individuals’ mutual recognition of each other as citizens who share the same fate. There is, then, no such thing as performative policy-making; rather, the performative public sphere is the space to which we ascend once we have laid the functional and constitutive foundations. The performative public sphere therefore consists of self-referential debate whose object is the public and private good.

To introduce the concept of the good is not necessarily to get caught in the interminable liberal/communitarian discussion. For instance, one of the least remarked upon aspects of Macintyre’s (1982) work concerns his notion of internal practice. To simplify, internal practices are those performed for their own sake whereas external practices are performed for reasons and objectives unrelated to the essential characteristics of the practice itself. For Macintyre, virtue (the constant attempt to realise the good) is such an internal practice: if a morally-justifiable action is performed for money then it is, by definition, not virtuous, however beneficial its consequences. It is the ‘internality’ of virtue that performative politics takes as its rationale and subject-matter:

the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is (Macintyre, 1982: 219).

Adapting this slightly we can claim the following. The individual who experiences a high degree of welfare is he/she who has the time, the resources and the social capital to debate, with others, both the subjective and objective meanings of welfare, and a high welfare society is that which recognises the non-instrumental value of, and so facilitates, such debate (Fitzpatrick, 2002).

The ecosocial welfare model therefore stretches along a line of reflexivity between each form of politics. At one extreme lies the nitty-gritty of income maintenance, health care, shelter, etc.; at the other lies an equation of welfare with ‘the good’; and in between lies the radical reformism that constructs the walls of civility that actually shape and enable the public sphere. Ecosocial welfare incorporates, but is not reducible to, social policies and systems of state welfare; at the same time, the concept of ecosocial welfare suggests that questions of the good must be attached to ecological issues and themes, as a batch of moral philosophers have begun to do. Living the good life, a life of welfare, increasingly refers to the establishment of relations of nondomination and creative harmonisation between human and nonhuman nature.

This is what makes post-structuralism potentially valuable. If the governance of disciplinary norms is a permanent feature of our lives, if state and non-state agencies reach into the capillaries of the social body, and vice versa, then ethical discourse must aim not at the elimination of governance but at the greening of governance. Relations of normal deviation and abnormal deviation may be susceptible to collective tectonic shifts away from our existing productivist imperatives towards environmental ones. As such, the ‘abnormals’ would not be those who fail, or sometimes jump, outside the race to earn/consume/earn/consume, but those who live and work unquestioningly without reference to performative debate and ecological critique. Unlike Wissenburg, then, for whom preferences and norms are given, a discursive Green democracy requires the association of autonomy with its natural pre-conditions.
The second aspect of discursive reflexivity can be dealt with more briefly as it is being covered extensively in the literature on reflexive modernisation and risk society. This debate proposes that the consequential ghosts of the first phase of modernity return to haunt the second phase of modernity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1994). The scientific techno-rationalism of the industrial era, based upon the hierarchical production of goods by social experts and their consumption by the mass of non-experts, is replaced by a post-industrial risk society where the generalised experience of hazards and ‘bads’ makes each person into both an expert and a neophyte in the ways of the world. Most obviously, the attempt to externalise, master and dominate nature has led to a feedback mechanism of ecological damage and catastrophe where nature shows us that we are not so clever after all (Beck, 1995). This means that the traditional goal of progress (the elimination of bads at source) has to be replaced by a strategy of risk management, of living with ambiguity, uncertainty and the permanence of ever-accelerating change. In a risk society, the centres of power and responsibility have vanished, leaving citizens who are more highly empowered than ever in a world that resists control with greater ease than ever before.

This means that policy-making can no longer take place behind closed doors but must be conducted in the open. And unlike the social reforms of the modernistic welfare state, where those who designed policies and institutions were often not those who would have to experience them, a greater dialogue must be established between specialists and non-specialists, with the realisation that the latter are no less experts than the former in that they possess knowledge and experience with is different rather than inferior. At local, regional, national and international levels, then, there must be formal and transparent systems of reciprocal interaction between specialists and lay opinion, systems that are nevertheless receptive to the informal protests of oppositional movements that will always confront the comfortable certainties of both sides. Such proposals are already on the agenda to some extent. For instance, the agents of globalisation such as the World Bank and World Trade Organisation are, in the wake of widely publicised protests in ‘global cities’ around the world, more open to discursive contestation than ever before; similarly, the politics of food production has become open to the public gaze due to various health scares and the failed attempt of corporations and governments to hide developments in genetic modification.

Economic democracy

The literature concerning ecological democracy has made few connections with that concerning economic democracy (cf. Gorz, 1989). This is partly the fault of Green theorists, many of whom often seem split between an ownership-as-usual approach to ecological reform and an anarchistic approach that bypasses the issue of property rights altogether. Many socialists, too, have ignored Green concerns. For instance, the revival of interest in market socialism in the 1980s and 1990s said very little about sustainability issues.

Interesting connections are there to be made, however. At a simple level it can be claimed that socialism needs ecologism if it is not to repeat the error of trying to beat capitalism on its own terms, i.e. in terms of growth, efficiency and productivity. Instead, socialism requires new organising principles that propose qualitatively different goals and values, and Green economics offers an obvious resource in this respect. Conversely, ecologism requires socialism if its promises of mutuality and discursive democracy are not to founder in an economic system distinguished by imbalances of economic power. As Ofke (1996) suggests, welfare state expansion stalled because its emphasis upon altruism and collectivism collided with an economic system based upon gain and self-interest – with proposals to nurture socialised forms (as opposed to statist forms) of property coming too late in the day, e.g. the Swedish Meitner plan – and there is little reason to imagine that Green reforms would be any different. Nevertheless, if the socialised ownership and control of natural and social resources is to be placed on the political agenda then social policies may have crucial role to play for two reasons.

John Roemer (1994) has spent several years elaborating the outlines of a market socialist economy. This economy would contain two types of money: commodity money for the purchase of consumables and share money (coupons) that are issued by the state treasury. Coupons could not be sold themselves but they could be used to purchase shares in public firms, shares that generated a ‘social dividend’ or stream of cash during an individual’s adult life. Roemer is therefore proposing a socialisation of a large part of the economy that manifests itself as a dividend for each individual (the value of which will vary): a market socialism that utilises forms of both individual and collective ownership. This idea suggests two points. First, perhaps two types of coupon can be envisaged: social coupons that can be used to purchase shares in firms and natural coupons that can be used to purchase shares in land. But whereas the value of the social dividend is straightfor-
wardly proportionate to the productivity of the object of investment (the firm), some way would have to be found of making the value of the 'natural dividend' proportionate to the sustainability of the invested land. For instance, it is often alleged that a sustainable economy would lead to improvements in health due to reductions in stress, depression and pollutants; if so, then the value of the natural dividend could be related to such monetary savings via Green indicators such as the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare. Secondly, Roemer's social dividend can be thought of as a more elaborate version of the Basic Income proposal discussed in Chapter 8. The implication is that appropriate reforms of the income maintenance system might present us with an embryonic version of the social and natural dividends proposed here and so a potential platform from social security to social ownership and control.

The second relevant policy area concerns pensions policy. Even putting ecosocial issues aside there is a compelling need to democratize the occupational and private systems that characterize a growing element of the world economy (Fitzpatrick, 2001a). As people are called upon to provide for their own futures away from social insurance provision, so contributors should be able to own and control those systems in conjunction with professional fund and portfolio managers. At present, such pensions are 'passive', with limited amounts of information available as to their scope and financial 'location'; more 'active' systems must therefore be legislated for, with members having the kind of collective and democratic powers regarding investment decisions that has hitherto been denied. Governments have been reluctant to follow this train of thought as such democratization potentially represents a form of economic socialization. With members in control, investment decisions would either be based upon a deeper ethical dimension than at present or non-ethical decisions would be more accountable to public opinion than they currently seem to be by occurring in the democratic light of day. (The closest that UK politicians have come to contemplating radical reform is with reference to the Singapore Central Provident Fund: a potential advance on today's non-state schemes but one that treats members largely as consumers and as units of national economic management.) It would then be relatively easy for governments to reward, e.g. through tax breaks, ethical decisions that embody the principle of sustainability. Regulating the market in this way could produce a virtuous circle of incentives and returns, an ecological non-zero-sum game compatible with today's political economy but one that potentially points beyond the limitations of market capitalism: a transformative stance that defines the rationale of ecosocial welfare.

Obviously, this only scratches the surface of an interesting, important but immensely complex idea. Indeed, devising proposals for a Green economic democracy would probably be a full-time job for a research institute. Even so, ecosocial welfare must make reference to these kinds of ideas if it is to offer anything more that a revamped social democratic welfare state.

Conclusion

Can ecosocial welfare resolve the two contradictions of the welfare state? No, it cannot. Its attraction is that it plants one foot, but only one, in the realities of the limited present, but this also means that the first contradiction, between social legitimation and economic accumulation, and the second, between growth-driven distributive justice and natural preconditions, can be healed but probably not cured. Because it is concerned with the practical and the do-able, ecosocial welfare does not make any of the grand, world historical claims that have previously been proposed by radicals as means of resolving the inherent contradictions of capitalism. However, ecosocial welfare's other foot stretches away from the unimaginable present into an agathotopian future where legitimation, accumulation, justice, growth and sustainability begin to converge. The theory of ecosocial welfare is both a thought-experiment and a potential site of ideological mobilization that is designed to test the waters of political imagination within the borders of social policy. Disagree with the details, by all means, but for what reasons can you tell me that the experiment is not worth performing?