INTRODUCTION

Man’s conquest of nature, if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men. There is nothing but can be any simple increase of power on man’s side. Each power won by man is a power over man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows in the triumphal car.

(C.S. Lewis)1

It is fair to say that, on the whole, conservative thought has been hostile to environmental concerns over the past decade or so in Britain, Europe, and the United States. Especially in America, environmental concerns have been represented as anti-capitalist propaganda under another flag. In most Western countries, conservatives have accused environmentalists of misuse of science, of propagating an apocalyptic mentality, and of being enemies of the central institutions of modern civil society. Nor are these accusations always wide of the mark. Indeed, in considerable measure they show conservatives endorsing the self-image of the Greens as inheritors of the radical protest movements of earlier times, and as making common cause with contemporary radical movements, such as feminism and anti-colonialism. In other words, both the Greens themselves and their conservative critics have been happy to share the assumption that socialism and environmental concern go together.

The aim of this present argument is to contest that consensus. Far from having a natural home on the Left, concern for the integrity of the common environment, human as well as ecological, is most in harmony with the outlook of traditional conservatism of the British and European varieties. Many of the central conceptions of traditional conservatism have a natural conformance with Green concerns: the Burkean idea of the social contract, not as an agreement among anonymous, ephemeral individuals, but as a compact between the generations of the living, the dead and those yet unborn; Tory scepticism about progress, and awareness of its ironies and illusions; conservative resistance to untried novelty and large-scale social experiments; and, perhaps most especially, the traditional conservative tenet that individual flourishing can occur only in the context of forms of common life.

All of these and other conservative ideas have clear affinities with Green thought, when it is not merely another scourge of the inherited institutions of civil society. The inherent tendency of Green thought is thus not radical but the opposite: it is conservative. At the same time, the absorption of Green concerns into conservative thinking will necessitate some radical changes within conservative philosophy and policy; particularly within those strands of conservative thought that have, during the past decade or so, come to be animated by neo-liberal doctrines whose origins are, in fact, not conservative at all, but rather in the classical liberal rationalist and libertarian ideologies which were spawned in the wake of the Enlightenment.

In one of its thrusts, the argument advanced here is a further critique, building on earlier criticisms I have developed elsewhere,2 of the neo-liberal doctrines of the New Right, within the particular context of environmental policy. This New Right ideology is, in effect, the most recent eruption of secular liberal utopianism, a species of rationalism in politics3 which affirms that the dilemmas of political life can be resolved, once and for all, by the application of a system of first principles for the regulation of governmental activity. This rationalist dogma is here rejected, as novel problems arise for government from people’s unanticipated interactions with the natural environment. But the conception of human nature, and of human well-being, that underlies this species of liberal rationalism is also rejected. On the view developed here, though human beings need a sphere of independent action, and so of liberty, if they are to flourish, their deepest need is a home, a network of common practices and inherited traditions that confers on them the blessing of a settled identity. Indeed, without the undergirding support of a framework of common culture, the freedom of the individual so cherished by liberalism is of little value, and will not long survive. Human beings are above all fragile creatures, for whom the meaning of life is a local matter that is easily dissipated: their freedom is worthwhile and meaningful to them only against a background of common cultural forms. Such forms cannot be created anew for each generation. We are not like the butterfly, whose generations are unknown to each other; we are a familiar and historical species, for whom the past must have authority (that of memory) if we are to have identity, and whose lives are in part self-created narratives, woven from the received text of the common life. Where change is incessant or pluralism too insistent, where the links between the generations are broken or the shared remnant of the common culture is in tatters, human beings will not flourish. They will wither, or else fall into anomic violence. In so far as neo-liberalism has been an ideology of radical change, whose debts are to liberal individualism rather than to traditional conservatism, it has tended to reinforce the disintegrative processes of modernist societies. This chapter may be understood as an attempt to restore a balance within conservative philosophy which has in recent years shown signs of being lost.

It is also an attempt to correct some of the radical excesses of Green theory. On the whole, Green theory is inspired by an anti-capitalist mentality that neglects the environmental benefits of market institutions and suppresses the ecological costs of central planning. In the real world, environmental degradation has been at its most catastrophic where, as under the institutions of the former Soviet system,
planners are unconstrained in their activities by clearly defined property rights or by the scarcities embodied in a properly functioning price mechanism. (The situation appears to be little different, or worse, in the People's Republic of China.) For reasons that are perfectly general, and which will be explored in greater detail later in the argument, environmental despoilation on a vast scale is an inexorable result of industrial development in the absence of the core institutions of a market economy, private property and the price mechanism. This is a vital truth as yet little understood by Green theorists, even though it is all too plain in the post-communist countries.

Green theorists also harbour an animus, very often, to the distinctive technological and social forms of modern life, which is quixotic and counter-productive. It is eminently sensible for Green theorists to seek for forms of technology and of productive association which are less environmentally invasive, and so more sustainable over the long term, than many of those which characterise the highly industrialised societies of our age; but it is absurd to suppose that we can return to the technologies or the productive associations of pre-industrial societies, and it is unreasonable to stigmatise some of the least invasive modern technologies, such as nuclear power, as especially environmentally hazardous. It is reasonable to be concerned about the growth of vast mega-cities, such as Shanghai and Mexico City, in which vast aggregations of human beings are concentrated, without the amenities or the public spaces that distinguished the historic European cities. This is not a reason for hostility to cities—one of humankind’s most civilised institutional inventions—or for rural nostalgia, but rather a ground for a project of restoration of the city in something akin to its classical historic forms. There is much that is amiss in modernity, and much to reject in modernism; but we can hope only to temper the modern age and its ills, not to abolish them, as some of the Green theorists suppose.

As against the neo-liberal strand within recent conservatism, on the other hand, my argument is that market institutions, although they are indispensably necessary, are insufficient as guarantors of the integrity of the environment, human as well as natural. They must be supplemented by governmental activity when, as with the restoration or preservation of the historic European city, private investment cannot by itself sustain the public environment of the common life. The environmental case against doctrinal neo-liberalism is yet stronger than this. The unfettered workings of market institutions may damage the natural and human environments, even if it is true (as I argue later) that in most cases they act to protect them. Though there is in many Western countries a good case for freer selective immigration, a policy of laissez-faire in immigration, by undoing settled communities, mixing inassimilable cultures and thereby triggering dormant racisms, would serve only to undermine the political stability on which successful market institutions depend for their existence; yet such a policy continues to be advocated by fundamentalist liberals who cannot, or will not, perceive that labour is a factor of production which is categorically distinct from others, inasmuch as it is wholly constituted by human beings, whose relations with each other are not at all like those of different sorts of assets in a global portfolio. Equally, despite the economic rationality of global free trade, the real evils of trade war, and the fact that multilateral free trade pacts remain often beneficial, global free trade as envisaged, say, in recent GATT discussions, can often have disastrous effects on local and regional communities, pushing out entire ways of life while supplying no sustainable alternatives. Mechanical application of the simplistic panaceas of neo-liberalism spells ruin for communities in many parts of the world and, parenthetically, it is a recipe for disaster throughout the post-communist world.

Neo-liberal ideas have been attractive to conservatives in many Western countries, and in parts of the post-communist world, partly in virtue of the real excesses of twentieth century statism, to which they provide a healthy corrective. They are nevertheless a distraction from the central concerns of traditional conservatism, and they inhibit conservatives in addressing the problems that arise for them in an age in which economic growth on conventional lines has begun to come up against genuine environmental constraints. Conservative policy in the post-war world has been governed by the strategy of securing legitimacy for market institutions by so aligning the electoral and the economic cycles as to yield uninterrupted economic growth. This is a strategy which, in neglecting the deeper sources of allegiance, is risky when the economy turns sour. It offers nothing in an age—not so far off, and perhaps imminent in some Western countries—when economic growth on the old model is not sustainable, and has in any case come to a shuddering halt.

The prospect of open-ended growth in the quantity of goods, services and people is in any case hardly a conservative vision. Though the eradication of involuntary poverty remains a noble cause, the project of promoting maximal economic growth is, perhaps, the most vulgar ideal ever put before suffering humankind. The myth of open-ended progress is not an ennobling myth, and it should form no part of conservative philosophy. The task of conservative policy is not to spread the malady of infinite aspiration, to which our species is in any case all too prone, but to keep in good repair those institutions and practices whereby human beings come to be reconciled with their circumstances, and so can live and die in dignified and meaningful fashion, despite the imperfections of their condition. Chief among all of the objects of conservative policy, for this reason, is the replenishment of the common life; the shared environment in which, as members of communities and practitioners of a common culture, people can find enjoyment and consolation.

As against the values and policies of neo-liberalism, which tend to deplete further and even to destroy the resources of this common life, a Green conservatism animated by the concerns of traditional Toryism would seek, wherever this is feasible, to repair and renew the common life. It would acknowledge the vital role of the core institutions of civil society, private property and contractual liberty under the rule of law, in any civilised modern state, and, more particularly, in any polity which seeks to protect the common environment, human and natural. It would recognise that unlimited government has been the greatest destroyer of the common environment in our age, and would accordingly support measures for the limitation of government, often by the devolution or hiving-off of its activities. It would affirm that governmental monopoly, or near-monopoly, in a variety of vital
are nevertheless hesitant to resist, since it is associated with the prestige of science as the animating force of modernity. This scientific world-view must be brought into question among conservatives, as it has already been among Greens, and it is part of the agenda of Green conservatism that it be so questioned. Green conservatism will, first and last, repudiate the hubristic rationalist ideology that suffuses neo-liberal thought and policy, which has captured and subjugated recent conservatism, but which is merely the most recent ex crescence of modernist humanism— a creed that both genuine conservatives and Greens have every reason to reject.

**THEORY**

**Ecological functions of market institutions**

the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another; and another... But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit— in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in the commons brings ruin to all.

(Garret Hardin)

The central ecological function of market institutions is in the avoidance of the tragedy of the commons. This occurs when, in the absence of private or several property rights in a valuable natural resource, separate economic actors—individuals, families, corporations or even sovereign states— are constrained to deplete the resource by over-use, given their realisation that, if they do not do so, others will. Tragedies of the commons occur because, in the absence of the institutions of private property, no one has an incentive to adopt a long-term view of the utilisation of resources. Tragedies of the commons also have features akin to those of Prisoner's Dilemmas, in that each has an overriding incentive to do what is not in his or her own interest— in this case, to run down the resource to extinction. Examples of such tragedies are manifold in environmental literature, unfortunately, but two may suffice to illuminate the central point about them. If a forest, say, belongs to no one, then no one will have an interest in planting the next generation of trees, or, for that matter, in developing logging techniques that leave saplings standing. Since no one stands to benefit from such foresight, no one will exercise it. Hence the reckless deforestation, for agricultural and other purposes, including timber harvesting, that has occurred in parts of Latin America and South-East Asia. Or consider natural resources in fish. In so far as shoals of fish are in the commons— unowned assets in a state of nature— they will be harvested to extinction, since the only operative incentives on fisherfolk will be to catch the fish and reap a fast profit on them, before their competitors do. True, where fisherfolk live in isolated communities without competitors for their resources,
they may develop traditions which limit the overexploitation of fish; but these will always go by the board when competitive fishing communities, or enterprises, come on to the scene. The moral of this example is a perfectly general one. Competition for natural resources, living or otherwise, in the absence of private property rights in them, spells inexorable ruin for such resources. The commons will always be doomed, and its resources fated to disappear, when there is a diversity of competing demands upon them. The lesson — rightly drawn by free market economists — is that the extension of private property institutions to cover resources, such as shoals of fish, hitherto in the commons, is a potent corrective to the over-exploitation of the natural environment.

Market institutions have another crucial ecological virtue: that of reflecting through the price mechanism shifting patterns of resource-scarcity. In the broadest terms, market pricing overcomes, at least partially, the otherwise insuperable epistemic dilemma facing all economic agents: that of utilising information which is dispersed throughout society and which, in virtue of its often fleeting and circumstantial nature, and the fact that it is sometimes embodied in dispositions whose content is not fully articulable, cannot be collected or gathered together by any planning agency. By allowing this, often tacit and embodied, knowledge to be expressed in price information available to all, market institutions mitigate the ignorance in which we must all act in our capacity as economic agents. They in this way allow for a measure of rationality in the allocation of resources, and of efficiency in their uses, that is unavoidably denied to central planners and their agents. The point may be put differently. Critics of central planning often focus on the perverse incentives that socialist institutions create for planners, bureaucrats, managers and workers. They point to the political factors that skew the allocation of capital into unproductive enterprises, the reinforcement of risk-aversion (and consequent low levels of technological innovation) that planning institutions yield via their inability to attach costs to unexploited opportunities, the disastrous state of labour morale in the absence of rewards for real productivity, and so on. All of these observations are pertinent, but they miss the mark in failing to note that resource-allocation would be immensely wasteful and chaotic under socialist institutions even if they did not have this perverse impact on incentives, simply in virtue of the fact that planners, managers and workers would still lack the information regarding resource-scarcity that only market pricing can make available to them. Even perfect servants of the plan could not help but generate economic chaos. In so doing, they would also, no less inexorably, produce environmental catastrophe.

Socialist planning and environmental destruction: the case of the USSR

The Soviet record after over seventy years of central planning is instructive for anyone who supposes that socialist institutions have any advantage over market institutions in ecological terms. Let us consider a few figures. According to Andrei Yablokov, the Russian government’s adviser on the environment, life expectancy in Russia has, because of pollution, declined from 70.4 years in 1964 to 69.3 in 1990. In some especially badly polluted cities, it has fallen to 44 years. Yablokov asserts that about 20% of the population of the former Soviet Union lives in ecological disaster areas, while 30–40% live in areas of ‘ecological stress’. An official report in 1988 admitted that in 103 industrial cities, with a total population of about 40 million, air pollution levels are more than 10 times the official limit; in 16 cities they are 50 times the limit. The mortality rate of native peoples in the former Soviet Union is even lower than that of the average citizen. According to Stefan Hedlund, the death rate among these peoples is two to three times higher than among Russians, and one group of native people – the Evenks – have a life expectancy of only 32 years. The human cost of environmental degradation in the former Soviet Union cannot be measured by such figures: it is incalculable. It is one of the blackest ironies of our age that, until very recently, the anti-capitalist mentality of Western Greens induced them to look to socialist institutions as solutions for the incomparably less serious environmental depredations of the Western European nations.

The destruction of nature in the former Soviet Union has consequences that go far beyond the régime that brought it to pass. It will affect the whole world for centuries to come. The dangers of the Soviet nuclear industry, though enormous, are perhaps only the best known of the threats that the Soviet ecological catastrophe pose for the environmental integrity of large parts of the planet.

Radioactive lakes, created over the years by waste from the Soviet nuclear weapons programme, are at risk from earth tremors which may send the polluted waters into the Caspian sea ... and cause an environmental disaster comparable to, or even greater than, the Chernobyl accident.... Lakes around the Urals city of Chelyabinsk, the centre of the Soviet nuclear industry, are oozing with plutonium.

Built by slave labour immediately after the Second World War, Chelyabinsk — the name of the city as well as the province in which the long-secret nuclear complex, officially called Mayak, is sited — has been the scene of three nuclear disasters, each comparable with, or worse than, the Chernobyl meltdown of April 1986. Further, the first of these nuclear disasters was not, like Chernobyl, an accident, but instead a result of conscious, deliberate policy: ‘From 1940, when the Mayak complex produced its first nuclear weapon, to 1956, Mayak officials poured nuclear waste directly into the nearby Techa River.’ The effect of ‘the unrestrained nature of Soviet “economic development”’ has been that ‘Both morbidity and mortality rates (in Chelyabinsk) rocketed during the Eighties. Growth in diseases of the blood circulation system ... grew some 31% during the last decade, while bronchial asthma increased by 43%, congenital anomalies by 23% and gastro-intestinal tract illness by 35%.’ These were figures acknowledged even in an official report commissioned by Gorbachev. It is clear that it is not alarmist to describe the Chernobyl incident as one of a number that have occurred in the Soviet Union; and one of a much larger number that are still likely to occur. The situation in China is still largely unknown, but is very likely to be comparable or, if ominous...
reports from Tibet (where part of the Chinese nuclear arsenal is sited and tested) are all well-founded, even worse.16

The nuclear hazards of Soviet institutions are the most dramatic, but not necessarily the most serious, evidences of what has recently been termed 'ecocide in the USSR'.17 'Normal' policies of economic development may yet take a greater toll on the global environment. As Hedlund has observed,

In Soviet Central Asia, irrigation and overfertilisation to support a senseless cotton monoculture has led to the virtual disappearance of the Aral Sea, once the world's fourth largest inland water... Desertification is comparable to the Sahel, and health indicators compare to those of Bangladesh... Giant herds of sheep, grazing in numbers 20 times greater than the land can sustain, have caused a disaster in the Kalmuck region between Stavropol... and the Caspian... the result has been the creation of a sand desert... This desert is spreading by 10% annually and is forecast to reach the southern Ukraine within five years... Europe is threatened both by its first sand desert and by massive waves of ecological refugees.18

The inheritance of Soviet institutions is environmental destruction on an almost apocalyptic scale. And the environmental destruction has not ceased with the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to a recent report by the Lithuanian Department of the Environment, fifty years of Soviet military occupation have incurred environmental degradation that will cost at least 150 billion dollars to repair; indeed, Soviet troops are continuing to degrade the environment (by, for example, dumping benzene into water near the Soviet airfield in central Lithuania at levels ten times those judged safe for human consumption).19 The collapse of the Soviet state has revealed an environmental wasteland, which the remnants of the Soviet system are further despoiling.

The causes of this catastrophe are not to be found in the wickedness of Soviet bureaucrats, in the backwardness of Soviet peoples, or in errors in the implementation of economic planning, but in the nature of the system itself. Soviet institutions explain the Soviet ecological apocalypse, because they contained no mechanisms for accountability of the planners or their servants, no institutions for the transmission of negative popular feedback on the adverse effects and hazards of the plans, and for that matter no provision for monitoring those adverse effects. The fundamental explanation for the Soviet destruction of the environment, however, is that it occurred in a Hobbesian state of nature - a lawless condition without property rights in which human life was (and indeed is) indeed 'nasty, brutish and short'. Apart from the complete absence of institutions of democratic accountability, the lack of a law of property meant (and means) that no one can in general know, even with the best will, who might have responsibility for which aspect of the environment; and, of course, every incentive of the system tends to suppress such knowledge, even where it exists.

The lesson of the Soviet example is the same as that of the broader theory of the role of market institutions in protecting the environment. The destruction of the environment proceeds most swiftly, and often most irreversibly, in a state of nature lacking in law and property rights. The institutions of a civil society, it which these lacks are remedied and a market economy built up, though long derided by Western Greens, are a vitally important necessary condition not only of human well-being but also of the conservation of the natural environment. This is a truth well understood by the Green movements of the post-communist world, but yet to be absorbed (or accepted) by Western Greens, with a few noteworthy exceptions.

Ecological limitations of market institutions

The ecological case for market institutions is undoubtedly a very strong one. If private property provides incentives for conservation of scarce resources, the price mechanism supplies a measure of the relative scarcity of different resources. Further, the price mechanism will encourage the search for alternative resources when existing resources of a certain sort grow too expensive, just as it will spur technological innovation in respect of the extraction and use of known resources. In these ways, market institutions embody the least irrational of available mechanisms for the allocation of resources, and, by comparison with socialist planning institutions, they are highly environmentally friendly.

Market institutions have, nevertheless, very serious ecological limitations. As they are described and defended by their most ideological advocates, market institutions are a sort of perpetual motion machine, an engine of unlimited growth which only the ill-conceived interventions of government.stalls. This conception is defective for several reasons. There are, in the first place, forms of environmental market failure that it fails to capture. Consider the phenomenon of global warming. (From the point of view of my argument here, it does not matter whether this phenomenon exists, whether the evidence shows it to be a real danger, or whether there is no conclusive evidence in support of such propositions. It could be merely a hypothetical danger and still do the work I want it to do in my argument.) Global warming reveals the limits of market institutions, from an environmental perspective, in that it is a threshold phenomenon, coming about via billions of separate acts, each of which individually is innocuous or even imperceptible. Market pricing of each of these acts will not prevent the totality of them generating the phenomenon. In this, and in similar cases of a pure public bad, only prohibitive governmental intervention can prevent or alleviate the problem. The class of environmental market failures may be a larger one than the example of global warming suggests, if (as is surely plausible) there are areas where the extension of property rights is inviable or merely too costly to be reasonably envisaged. This may be true of endangered species that are migratory over vast distances and across several legal jurisdictions: only an intergovernmentally agreed and enforced ban, or a quota system similarly set up, can protect them from extinction. In other words, even where a pure public bad is not at issue, the public good of protection of endangered species will be underprovided whenever market institutions cannot sensibly be extended to create property rights in the species i
question, and where market institutions are not supplemented by governmental institutions and policies.

It will often not be enough to supplement market institutions for the sake of environmental protection. Their workings will have to be constrained. Global markets, left to themselves, will often decimate local trades and modes of production and will destroy the ways of life that they support. (Conventional programmes of ‘aid’ to ‘developing countries’ often have the same effect.) Global markets in food, along with dumping from developed countries with artificial and unnecessary agricultural surpluses, have destroyed agrarian ways of life in many poor countries, promoting migration into unsustainably gigantist cities, with all of their familiar costs and hazards. Ending economic aid that is self-defeating or counter-productive, and curtailing agricultural protectionism in the developed countries, as advocated by free-marketeers, is not an adequate response to the dilemma of protecting otherwise sustainable agrarian communities in poor countries, even if such measures are part of the solution. Such countries may need protection (in the form of tariffs and subsidies) for their peasant farmers – whatever GATT, the IMF, or the World Bank may dictate. In this, and other contexts, market institutions must be restricted in their workings, and not merely supplemented.

We find another limitation of market institutions in their insensitivity to inherently public goods. These are goods which do not necessarily satisfy the technical requirements of an economic public good, such as indivisibility and non-excludability, but which are ingredients in a worthwhile form of common life. Consider public parks in the context of a modern city – an example to which I shall return towards the end of this chapter, when I consider the implications for conservatives of a Green agenda for urban policy. There are, of course, no insuperable technical obstacles to turning urban parks into private consumption goods. Fences can be set up, electronic ID cards printed for subscribing members, private security patrols hired, litter collected by profit-making agencies, and so on. Public parks are not, in the conventional economic sense, public goods. However, they are inherently public goods in the sense that I intend, inasmuch as public parks that are safe, well-tended, pleasing to the senses and easily accessible to urban dwellers are elements in the common form of life of the historic European city. The point is generalisable. Public spaces for recreation and for lingering, whether streets, squares or parks, are necessary ingredients in the common life of cities, as conceived in the European tradition, and elsewhere. Where such public places atrophy or disappear, become too dangerous or too unsightly to be occupied, and so vanish into a state of nature, the common life of the city has been compromised or lost. This is a nemesis, long reached in many American urban settlements and not far off in some British and European cities, which market institutions can do little to prevent. It is only one example, though perhaps a peculiarly compelling one, of the indifference of market institutions to inherently public goods.

If their workings are not to compromise the integrity of the environment, human as well as natural, market institutions must be both supplemented and constrained. They need such constraint and supplementation, in any case, if they and their various environmental benefits are to survive. Market institutions, except in their most rudimentary forms, are not natural phenomena, the spontaneous results of human action, but artefacts of law and creatures of government. They are as frail and as vulnerable to the onslaughts of war, revolution and dictatorship as any other civilised institution. This is an especially important point, in so far as market institutions may throw up problems which they cannot themselves solve, and which sometimes threaten their very stability. We do not need to look far for examples of this hazard. Left to themselves, no doubt, market institutions would throw up a cornucopia of narcotic designer drugs, even larger than that which has grown up underground and beyond the reach of law; in this, and in other areas of policy, a strategy of legal prohibition, though not without its own costs, has in many countries (though not, apparently, in the United States) contained the problem within a manageable compass. Again, unhampered market institutions may generate forms of entertainment, such as violent or horrific video films, whose general availability is manifestly harmful to the common life. Here, as elsewhere, market institutions must be curbed, or at least restrained in their workings, if a civilised and peaceful form of common life is to be preserved and transmitted across the generations.

On a larger scale, if market institutions generate demands which they cannot themselves satisfy, they will be swept away by revolution or popular dictatorship – as may happen in countries, such as some in Latin America, where the spread of market-generated prosperity has not been accompanied by a demographic transition and where overpopulation has survived. Free-marketeers who repose their faith in market institutions forget that they are artefacts of human actions which market action can undo. In this they forget a crucial Hobbesian truth: that the integrity of market institutions, and ultimately their very survival, depend on the efficiency of coercive authority, in the absence of which market institutions collapse or else suffer capture by exploitative predators. Market institutions depend, in other words, on a Hobbesian peace for their very existence. The office of government, in this connection, is the superintendence of market institutions, with the aim of ensuring that their workings are not self-defeating or such as to endanger themselves. This is a rudimentary tenet of conservative philosophy of which many contemporary conservatives, whose vision has been occluded by the empty vistas of neo-liberal dogma, appear ignorant.

Ecological theory and conservative philosophy

change is a threat to identity, and every change is an emblem of extinction. But a man’s identity (or that of a community) is nothing more than an unbroken rehearsal of contingencies, each at the mercy of circumstances and each significant in proportion to its familiarity. It is not a fortress into which we may retire, and the only means we have of defending it (that is, ourselves) against the hostile forces of change is in the open field of experience; by throwing our weight upon the foot which for the time being is more firmly placed, by cleaving to whatever familiarities are not immediately threatened and thus assimilating what is new without becoming unrecognizable to ourselves. The Masai, when
they were moved from their old country to the present Masai reserve in Kenya, took with them the names of their hills and plains and rivers and gave them to the hills and plains and rivers of the new country. And it is by some such subterfuge of conservatism that every man or people compelled to suffer a notable change avoids the shame of extinction.

(Michael Oakeshott)21

One of my central theses is that Green thought and conservative philosophy converge at several crucial points, the very points at which they most diverge from fundamentalist liberalism. There are at least three deep affinities between Green thought and conservative philosophy that are important to my argument. There is first the fact that both conservatism and Green theory see the life of humans in a multi-generational perspective that distinguishes them from liberalism and socialism alike. Liberal individualism, with its disabling fiction of society as a contract among strangers, is a one-generational philosophy, which has forgotten, or never known, the truth invoked by David Hume against Thomas Hobbes: that, in our species, wherein sexual and parental love are intertwined, the generations overlap, so that we are au fond social and historical creatures, whose identities are always in part constituted by memories (such as those which are deposited in the languages that we speak) which cross the generations.22 The forms of common life in which we find our identities are the environments in which we live and have our being: they are our human ecology.23 Again, contrary to the antinomian impulse that animates Marxian and other socialist liberationist movements, the traditions that we inherit from our forebears are not fetters on our identities, shackles which repress our self-expression, but the necessary conditions of having selves to express. We may sometimes legitimately seek to amend our historical inheritance, when it no longer meets human needs, but never to emancipate ourselves from it: that project, the project of making the world over anew, is the gnostic delusion that beset Paine, Robespierre and Lenin. For conservative philosophy, therefore, as for ecological theory, the life of our species is never to be understood from the standpoint of a single generation of its members; each generation is what it is in virtue of its inheritance from earlier generations and what it contributes to its successors. In so far as one-generation philosophies prosper, the links between the past and the future are weakened, the natural and human patrimony is squandered, and the present is laid waste. The modernist idea that each of us is here only once, so we had better make the most of it, is a popular embodiment of the one-generational world-view, which finds expression in much liberal and socialist thought.

A second, connected idea, shared by conservative philosophy and Green theory, is the primacy of the common life. Both conservative and Green thinkers repudiate the shibboleth of liberal individualism, the sovereign subject, the autonomous agent whose choices are the origin of all that has value. They reject this conception, to begin with, because it is a fiction. Human individuals are not natural data, such as pebbles or apples, but are artefacts of social life, cultural and historical achievements: they are, in short, exfoliations of the common life itself.24 Without common forms of life, there are no individuals: to think otherwise is to be misled by the vulgarised Kantian idea of the person which, shorn of the metaphysics that is its matrix in Kant and that gives it all the (slight) meaning it has, dominates recent liberal thought.25 But liberal individualism also embodies a mistaken conception of the human good. For conservatives, as for Green thinkers, it is clear that choice-making has in itself little or no value: what has value are the choices that are made, and the options that are available – in short, what is chosen, provided it is good. As I have already argued elsewhere,26 individual well-being presupposes an array of choice-worthy options which can only be supplied by worthwhile forms of common life. It is from the options provided by such forms of life that choices, however autonomous, derive all of their value. The ultimate locus of value in the human world is not, therefore, in individual choices but in forms of life. This should lead us to qualify, even to abandon, the ideal of the autonomous chooser (which I have myself elsewhere endorsed)27 in favour of the recognition that the good life for human beings – as for many kinds of animal species – necessarily presupposes embeddedness in communities. It is an implication of this point that Green theorists who extend to other animal species the legalist categories of individual rights are moving in precisely the wrong direction: what is required is the recognition that, among human beings, it is not individual rights but forms of life that need most protection, if only because it is upon them that individual well-being ultimately depends.

A third idea shared by conservative and Green thinkers is the danger of novelty; in particular, the sorts of innovation that go with large-scale social (and technological) experimentation. It is not that conservatives (or sensible Green thinkers) seek to arrest change; that would be to confuse stability, which is achieved through changes that are responsive to the cycle of life and to the shifting environment, with fixity. It is rather that both Greens and conservatives consider risk-aversion the path of prudence when new technologies, or new social practices, have consequences that are large and unpredictable, and, most especially, when they are unquantifiable but potentially catastrophic risks associated with innovation. It is an irony that conservatives, whose official philosophy emphasizes reliance on the tried and tested, should often embrace technological innovation, as if it were a good in itself. To be sure, there is little likelihood that the flood of technological innovation can in our time be stemmed; but that is no reason to welcome it or to refrain from curbing it, where this is feasible and there are clear dangers attached to it. It is at least questionable, for example, whether experimental advances in genetic engineering will on balance add to the sum of human well-being; whether their prohibition in any one country, or group of countries, can successfully halt their development, however, is another matter. It is more than questionable whether current high-tech policies in farming are defensible from a conservative perspective that is prudently risk-averse, since current farming technology, like other branches of industrial food technology, encompasses a myriad of interventions in natural processes, each of which has consequences that are unknown and whose effects, when taken together, are incalculable and unknowable.

A sound conservative maxim in all areas of policy, but especially of policy having large environmental implications, is that we should be very cautious of
innovations, technological or otherwise, that have serious downside risks -- even if the evidence suggestive of these risks is inconclusive, if the risks are small, or if their magnitudes cannot be known. A tiny chance of catastrophe may be a risk that can prudently be assumed, if all that is at stake is a human life or a few human lives. It is hard to see how any genuinely conservative philosophy can warrant risk-taking of this sort when the catastrophe that is being hazardous is environmental and millennial in its consequences. This is a truth which is acknowledged -- and acknowledged as an element in a sane conservatism -- by at least some Green thinkers.38

The conservative and Green aversion to risky change does not, of course, entail any policy of immobilism. It may indeed entail radical alternatives in current policy, if such policy encompasses substantial and unwarranted risks. Such alternatives will not, however, be animated by any conception of open-ended progress. It is a cardinal element in my argument for the consilience of conservative philosophy with Green thought that both reject the modernist myth of progress, and for very similar reasons. It is rejected by Green thought because it incorporates the idea of infinite growth -- an idea alien to every tenet of ecology.39 The characteristic that best distinguishes flourishing ecosystems is never growth, but rather stability (a conservative virtue in its own right). This is a truth which is acknowledged in the discipline of ecology in all of its varieties, but which is expressed most beautifully in James Lovelock's idea of Gaia:40 the idea of life on the Earth as constituting a single organism, one which regulates the species and environments of which life on Earth is composed so as to maintain its stability as a whole. This is an idea, resisted by scientific fundamentalists on the ground that it restores teleology to nature, which should commend itself both to Green thinkers who seek to escape from anthropocentric conceptions of the place of the human species in the biosphere, and to conservatives who have not lost the sense of nature (preserved in the Judaic-Christian tradition) as an order or cosmos. Both Green and conservative thinkers should welcome the idea of Gaia, not least as a counterweight to the dominant humanist heresies of modernism. Modernist political faiths which advocate the unlimited growth of population, production and knowledge -- political religions such as Marxism and liberalism -- are effectively in rebellion against every truth we have established about order in the natural world. Only a sort of secular, humanistic fideism -- not any rational assessment of the human lot -- could support the otherwise groundless conviction that our species is exempt from the natural constraints that govern every other species of which we have knowledge. The idea of progress is rightly anathema to the most reflective Green thinkers, one of whom has stigmatised it as expressive of 'the anti-way', the way downwards, to entropic disorder and final extinction.31

Conservatives have, or should have, their own good reasons for rejecting the idea of progress. Several come at once to mind. The idea of progress is particularly pernicious when it acts to suppress awareness of mystery and tragedy in human life. The broken lives of those who have been ruined by injustice or by sheer misfortune are not mended by the fact -- if it were a fact -- that future generations will live ever less under these evils. Meliorism, as embodied in the idea of progress, corrupts our perception of human life, in which the fate of each individual is -- for him or her -- an ultimate fact, which no improvement in the life of the species can alter or redeem. Again, the idea of progress presupposes a measure of improvement in human affairs which, except in limiting cases, we lack.32 This is not to deny that we can meaningfully judge there to have been improvements in specific spheres of human life: no one who has read Thomas de Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium-eater can doubt that anaesthetic dentistry has made a not inconceivable contribution to human well-being. But improvements in one sphere are accompanied by new evils in others: who is bold enough to affirm that the technological advances of modern medicine have, on balance, promoted human well-being? The facts of iatrogenic illness, of meaningless longevity and of the medicalisation of the human environment, well documented by Illich,33 are telling evidences to the contrary. The deeper truth, however, is that, when assessing goods and evils across very different spheres of human life, we are trying to weigh incomensurables -- longevity against the absence of pain, security against adventure, and so on. Although there are generically human evils -- of torture, of constant danger of violent death, of human lives cut off in their prime -- which are obstacles to any sort of human flourishing, even these universal evils cannot be weighed in the scales against each other. Like the goods of a flourishing human life, they are incomensurables. The conception of human history as a project of universal improvement, in so far as it is at all meaningful, is questionable, given that the eradication of one evil typically spawns others, and many goods are dependent for their existence on evils. At root, however, the idea of history as progressive amelioration is not so much debatable as incoherent; as Herder perceived when, acknowledging the incomensurability of the goods that are distinctive of different forms of cultural life, he rejected even the qualified meliorism of the Kantian philosophy of history.34

If the idea of history as the progress of the species is without meaning, it cannot afford a meaning to human life. And here we have the root of the conservative objection to the notion of progress: that it serves as a surrogate for spiritual meaning for those whose lives would otherwise be manifestly devoid of sense. The idea of progress is detrimental to the life of the spirit, because it encourages us to view our lives, not under the aspect of eternity, but as moments in a universal process of betterment. We do not, therefore, accept our lives for what they are, but instead consider them always for what they might someday become. In this way the idea of progress reinforces the restless discontents that is one of the diseases of modernity, a disease symptomatically expressed in Hayek's nihilistic and characteristically candid statement that 'Progress is movement for movement's sake'.35 No view of human life could be further from either Green thought or genuine conservative philosophy.

The modern conceptions of progress is only one symptom of the hubris of humanism that is the real religion of our age. As against that debased faith, both conservative and Green thought have as their ideal peace and stability. They seek a form of society that is sufficiently at ease with itself that its legitimacy does not depend on the illusory promise of unending growth. Neither Greens nor conserva-
tives, if they are wise, are in any doubt as to the magnitude of the obstacles in the way of such a society. There can be no doubt that the project of a social order that does not rest on the prospect of indefinite future betterment creates problems for policy that have as yet been barely addressed by conventional thought, including the mainstream of conservative philosophy. Securing the legitimacy of political and economic institutions in a stationary-state society, which is without open-ended growth in population or production, is a hard and central problem for policy, which ought to concern Green thinkers as deeply as it should conservatives.

POLICY

The stationary state

It is perhaps only in transmissible arts that human progress can be maintained or recognised. But in developing themselves and developing human nature these arts shift their ground; and in proportion as the ground is shifted, and human nature itself is transformed, the criterion of progress ceases to be moral to become only physical, a question of increased complexity or bulk or power. We all feel at this time the moral ambiguity of mechanical progress. It seems to multiply opportunity, but it destroys the possibility of simple, rural or independent life. It lavishes information, but it abolishes mastery except in trivial or mechanical efficiency. We learn many languages, but degrade our own. Our philosophy is highly critical and thinks itself enlightened, but it is a Babel of mutually unintelligible artificial tongues.

(George Santayana)

If the project of unbounded progress is to be rejected as a sensible social and political ideal, both in virtue of the ecological limits that it will soon meet and because of its spiritual emptiness, is there an alternative conception of the good society to which conservatives and Greens can alike repair? One may be found, I submit, in J.S. Mill, in his conception of a stationary-state economy, which he describes canonically as follows:

in contemplating any progressive movement, not in its nature unlimited, the mind is not satisfied with merely tracing the laws of its movement; it cannot but ask the further question, to what goal?...

It must always have been seen, more or less distinctly, by political economists, that the increase in wealth is not boundless: that at the end of what they term the progressive state lies the stationary state, that all progress in wealth is but a postponement of this, and that each step in advance is an approach to it ... if we have not reached it long ago, it is because the goal itself lies before us [as a result of technical progress].

I cannot ... regard the stationary state of capital and wealth with the unaffected aversion so generally manifested towards it by political economists of the old school. I am inclined to believe that it would be, on the whole, a very considerable improvement on our present condition. I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other’s heels which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress. The northern and middle states of America are a specimen of this stage of civilization in very favourable circumstances; and all that these advantages seem to have yet done for them (notwithstanding some incipient signs of a better tendency) is that the life of the whole of one sex is devoted to dollar-hunting, and of the other to breeding dollar-hunters....

Those who do not accept the present very early stage of human improvement as its ultimate type may be excused for being comparatively indifferent to the kind of economical progress which excites the congratulations of ordinary politicians; the mere increase of production and accumulation.... I know not why it should be a matter of congratulation that persons who are already richer than anyone needs to be, should have doubled their means of consuming things which give little or no pleasure except as representative of wealth.... It is only in the backward countries of the world that increased production is still an important object: in those most advanced, what is economically needed is a better distribution, of which one indispensable means is a stricter restraint on population.

There is room in the world, no doubt, and even in old countries, for a great increase in population, supposing the arts of life to go on improving, and capital to increase. But even if innocuous, I confess I see very little reason for desiring it. The density of population necessary to enable mankind to obtain, in the greatest degree, the advantages both of cooperation and of social intercourse, has, in all the most populous countries, been attained. A population may be too crowded, though all be amply supplied with food and raiment. It is not good for a man to be kept perforce at all times in the presence of his species.... Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture plowed up, all quadrupeds, or birds which are not domesticated for man’s use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture. If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extinguish from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not a happier or a better population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living and much more likelihood of its being improved, when minds cease to be engrossed by the art
The single greatest threat to global ecological stability other than large-scale nuclear war comes from human population growth. According to United Nations estimates, there are around 5.5 billion people in the world today. Within thirty years, this number will have increased to 8.5 billion, and by the middle of the next century it will—barring demographic collapses of one sort or another—have topped 10 billion. These latter extrapolative figures take account of the demographic transition: the point in economic and social development at which families (in many, but not by any means all, poorer countries) begin to shrink in size. Even given that the rate of increase of world population fell from 2.04 per cent per annum in 1970 to around 1.8 per cent at present, it is worth noting that an annual growth rate of the latter figure will double the number of parents every 39 years. Nor does the story end there. Even given the very large and doubtful supposition that a demographic transition occurs everywhere and at a similar rate, the world's total population will swell for a long time. The age-structure alone of many populations, such as that of Bangladesh, in which perhaps a majority are under fifteen, guarantees this further increase. The prospect is of a doubling of the world's human population in under sixty years. Is there anyone who can reasonably suppose that the world's ecological balance can cope with this unprecedented demographic growth? Or that it will occur unattended by vast economic and political (and military) convulsions?

It may be salutary to review briefly the principal reasons why population pressures are likely, unless sensible policies are adopted, to render the coming century one of wars and migrations even greater and yet more terrible than those of the twentieth century. To begin with, the growth of populations is very uneven as between different countries, and different parts of the world. In the former Soviet Union, for example, the population of Russians is in steep decline, whereas the Muslim population is, in general, increasing rapidly. The huge differences in size of different populations further increase the absolute magnitudes resulting from these different rates of growth. The population of mainland China, perhaps around twelve hundred million at present, is roughly ten times that of neighbouring Japan, whose population is static or declining. The population of Indonesia is such (well over a hundred million) that it would find no difficulty in fielding a land army larger than the entire population of New Zealand. Such examples could easily be multiplied. It requires a faith in the resilience of human institutions that borders on the absurd to imagine that discrepancies of these magnitudes will not occasion migrations and wars of the classical Malthusian varieties.

Nor is the celebrated demographic transition occurring evenly in all parts of the world. The theory itself, though it has a measure of leverage on historical and contemporary evidence, is a piece of economic imperialism. Like other applications of the model of *homo economicus*, it neglects the crucial variable of culture. The theory tells us that families will shrink in size when parents, themselves growing richer and so able to provide for their old age, or sheltered from destitution by welfare programmes, cease to regard their children as investment goods and come to view them as consumer goods. Family size will then fall. This desiccated model leaves out the influence on fertility of very diverse moral and religious
population is itself an encroachment on individual liberty, as more and more of our activities are constrained by the density of human settlements. The sudden and dramatic increase in human numbers has been identified by at least one twentieth-century conservative thinker as but an aspect of the ascendency of man over humanity which is the chief threat to individuality in our age. It is scarcely a conservative point of view to value the quantity of human beings in the world over the quality of their lives; to prefer a crowded world choked with noise and filth to a world of space and amenity that is peopled on a smaller scale; or to deny the human need for solitude and wilderness. All of these conservative considerations mandate a policy for population when, as now in most parts of the world, medical progress has removed natural constraints on overpopulation. The forms of population policy will naturally vary from time to time and place to place; and, for conservatives, it is important that they should conform, so far as they can be done feasibly, with local customs and beliefs. There will nevertheless be occasions when unless local beliefs and values - about the sanctity of human life, say, or the evil of contraception - are radically reformed, the deeper conservative values of the stability and integrity of the common environment will be compromised, perhaps irreversibly. This is only one example of a truth to which my argument will recur that, in our age of cataclysmic change, conservative values can sometimes be renewed only by radical revisions in current thought and practice.

**Economic development**

Man's continuous tapping of natural resources is not an activity that makes our history. On the contrary, it is the most important long-run element of mankind's fate. It is because of the irreversibility of the entropic degradation of matter energy - that, for instance, the peoples from the Asian steppes, whose economy was based on sheep-raising, began their Great Migration over the entire European continent at the beginning of the first millennium. The same element - the pressure on natural resources - had, no doubt, a role in other migration including that from Europe to the New World... Nothing could be further from the truth than the notion that the economic process is an isolated, circular affair - as Marxist and standard analysis represent it. The economic process is solidly anchored to a material base which is subject to definite constraints. It is because of these constraints that the economic process has a unidirectional irreversible evolution.

(Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen)

The economic activities of modern man are interfering ever more dramatically with the most fundamental Gaian cycles - water, carbon, sulphur, phosphorus - thus disrupting the critical order of the biosphere and reducing its capacity to support life. This is unfortunately inevitable if economic development remains modern man's overriding goal. For it is a one-way process, in which it...
Biosphere is systematically transformed into the technosphere and technospheric waste—a process that cannot continue indefinitely.

(Edward Goldsmith)\textsuperscript{44}

The ideal of a stationary-state society implies stable levels of human population throughout the world; in most parts of the world, stability at levels lower than at present. In some Western countries, the ageing of current populations may support more liberal selective immigration policies; but the population of the world as a whole, and of most of the countries in it, is by any sensible standard far too high. Alleviation of the human lot lies not in a further growth in human numbers, but in stability at much reduced levels. To this end, attitudes and policies in regard to fertility and immigration will need to alter radically. If they do not, human numbers will be curtailed by other, more traditionally Malthusian means.

It is no less important to stress that economic development cannot proceed much longer on the traditional lines of indefinitely expanding output. Such policies carry with them an indefinite expansion of the toxic side-effects of hyper-industrialisation, in pollution, ozone depletion, the disappearance of wilderness, and so on. Certainly, the proposition that the ‘developing’ world can ever hope to have the levels of production of the most industrialised nations is thoroughly absurd—but only slightly more so than the idea that the so-called First World can expect to return to the trajectory of uninterrupted economic growth that it enjoyed in the sixties and eighties. Both propositions underestimate the fragility of the world’s ecological balance, and the impact on its stability of ever higher levels of industrial activity. Most absurd of all is the notion that a population around twice that of the world at present could ever expect to generate the industrial production that the world’s richest nations presently exhibit.

The industrialisation of the world on the model of its richest nations is a dystopian fantasy. It probably exaggerates even the capacity of the First World to renew itself on the conventional path of economic growth. The past few years have seen the abortion of the Reaganite and Thatcherite ‘dashes for growth’, and the stubborn resistance of the world’s most advanced economies to a resumption of expansion in the old lines. In the United States, the artificial lowering of short-term interest rates to levels unknown for nearly thirty years, and probably in real terms negative, has so far failed to rekindle economic activity. In Europe and Japan, neither monetarist nor Keynesian strategies of the old sort appear efficacious in restarting the engine of growth, and asset values are in ominous decline. The prospect for the First World—fraught with terrible implications for the rest of the world—may be a Great Depression, akin to that of the 1930s (or worse) in that it is accompanied by trade wars, financial meltdowns and geopolitical convulsions. This is not a prospect to be welcomed by any sensible conservative or Green, or by any sane observer; but it is one that should at least pose a question mark over the feasibility, if not the desirability, of a resumption of economic growth along the lines—almost certainly unrepeable—of the 1960s and 1980s.

Even if the real prospect for the First World is one of continued stagnation rather than of catastrophic depression, it bodes ill for the future of the transitional post-communist countries. It is in any case highly contestable whether—as the conventional wisdom would have us believe—that future lies in a replication of the central institutions of Western democratic capitalism. As I have argued in detail elsewhere,\textsuperscript{45} such a transplantation of Western institutions to the post-communist countries is, in general, neither desirable nor possible. Except in a few areas, where development can piggy-back on the innovations of the military—industrial complex, it is fantastic to suppose that the future for Russia, say—whose environment is already virtually ruined by Faustian projects of industrialisation—lies in further industrial growth: it is much more likely to be in the renewal of agriculture, if that can still be achieved. In any case, except perhaps in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, in Hungary, in Slovenia, in Estonia and possibly Lithuania, and in the Silesian parts of Poland, where Germany, Austria and Finland have historic interests and the capacity for investment, there is likely to be insufficient Western inputs of capital to finance the reconstruction of the post-communist economies on any Western model. Most of the post-communist peoples will therefore be compelled, by force of sheer economic stringency, to consider other paths to development.

The model of First World affluence and industrial productivity is, perhaps, especially pernicious in its applications to the world’s poorest countries, in most of which it will be forever unattainable. It may well be feasible, at least for a while, for small countries, such as Taiwan and Singapore, to follow in the tracks of Japan and to catch up with, and overtake in affluence and productivity, formerly First World countries, such as New Zealand; it is very doubtful whether a country of the size, geography, resources and population of mainland China can do likewise. (It is worth recalling that average levels of wages in mainland China are perhaps about a hundredth of those in Japan.) In this connection, whatever the other aspects of the present Chinese government, one cannot withhold admiration from their recent policies which initiated economic reform first in agriculture, where it reaped the boon of a surviving peasant tradition that the Bolsheviks, and Stalinist collectivisation, destroyed in Russia. In countries such as China, the renewal of agriculture, along with population control and the search for light, intermediate technologies having the least destructive impact on the natural environment, should be corner-stones of policy, rather than the futile project of emulating Western industrial societies which are already in evident decline, and which may be headed for a fall.

Policies of emulation of First World economic development are pernicious, also, because of their adverse effects on local ways of life. In some instances, at least, there are ways of life that have long achieved an ecological balance with their environmental niche, in which poverty is unknown or even unthought-of, and in which all the evidences of human flourishing are present. Modernisation of a culture such as that of Ladakh, say, has thus far been an almost unmitigated disaster,\textsuperscript{46} encompassing the ruination of ancient traditions that had served the Ladakhis well for many centuries. This is not to say that modernisation can realistically be halted, since the introduction of Western medical technologies, with their explosive consequences for population growth, is already probably irre-
An agenda for Green conservatism

Two caveats are in order before we explore the implications of a convergence Green and conservative perspectives at a national level in Britain. It is far from clear that the nation-state is the appropriate unit for environmental policy, since so many policy issues transcend it, while others are most manageable at regional and lo-cal levels. Nor is it at all self-evident that the nation-state is an institution that acco

We and associates at the Centre for Cross-Border Environmental Policy, the British Institute of Human Rights and the Centre for Social and Economic Rights have argued that the nation-state as the unit of analysis is an obstacle to the green agenda, and that the transnational level of analysis is necessary. This is not to say that the nation-state is irrelevant, but that the era of nationalism is over.

The national perspective: an agenda for Green conservatism in Britain

Two caveats are in order before we explore the implications of a convergence Green and conservative perspectives at a national level in Britain. It is far from clear that the nation-state is the appropriate unit for environmental policy, since so many policy issues transcend it, while others are most manageable at regional and local levels. Nor is it at all self-evident that the nation-state is an institution that accords with either with Green or with Green values (in so far as they are ultimate distinguishable). The nation-state is a very recent institution, a construction of nineteenth-century classical liberal political elites, who were animated by an attitude of nature and a commitment to indefinite economic growth. These last are hardly Green values. It is not clear that there is anything deep in ethic conservative or Green thought that commits them to the sanctity of the nation-state as we know it at present.

The nation-state is also, in some important respects, an inappropriate vehi-

cle for environmental concern. Many environmental problems are global; their effects spill across territorial jurisdictions. This is true not only of phenomena such as ozone depletion and global warming but also of acid rain pollution, and many other injurious impacts on the natural environment. There is also a difficulty for Green theorists, which few, if any of them, have as yet confronted: the difficulty created by the ecological terrorism and environmental destruction that is won; by bandit states. Here is meant not only deliberate acts of ecological vandalism - the sort that were committed in Kuwait by the present ruler of Iraq, which increasingly likely in the future, but also the phenomenon of environmental hoards, having global or regional spillover effects, which are wreaked by lawless states. The former Soviet Union and present mainland China probably fall into this latter category. These phenomena lead by a clear train of reasoning to another of vast hazards to the natural and human environments, which is typi-

cally neglected or very inadequately treated in Green thought: the hazards generated the ever more rapid development, proliferation and deployment of military technologies of mass destruction. This is an issue to which I will return at the end of this chapter. Here I wish only to note that the proliferation of such technologies - not halted, or even significantly retarded, by unilateral acts of national renunci-
tion; and it is of very little profit to anyone to have installed exhaust controls cars, or to have curtailed the peaceful development of nuclear energy, if we thereafter subject to the lethality of biological, chemical, conventional and nuclear weapons technologies. The proliferation of such technologies throughout an

versible. In the case of Ladakh, as of that of analogous Bhutan (where the situation is complicated by ethnic strife between Nepali immigrants and native Bhutanese which threatens to resemble the conflicts that have decimated Sri Lanka), the precipitate introduction of Western medicine alone spells ruin for the people and their culture, unless countervailing modernising measures - such as the introduction of birth control - are also soon adopted. Even assuming that the demographic crises of countries such as these can somehow be averted, they face the daunting task of negotiating a highly selective assimilation of Western technologies at a time when all of the international organisations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations, favour development on the First World model. If there are any safe bets in this field, one may be found in the prediction that such policies, which aim for unsustainable economic development at the cost of the irreversible destruction of traditional cultures, will in fact all end in tragedy. This is a wager that the post-colonial history of Africa, no less than the history of Western cultural imperialism that preceded it there, already amply supports. The result of such policies in Africa has so far been only the deracination of local peoples from their traditional tribal cultures and their impoverishment by a global market that drives out their local products. It is hard to see by what rationale this scenario should be replicated in other parts of the world.

Western models of economic development for poor countries should be objectionable both to conservatives and to Green thinkers. Where Western development has taken root, as in Japan, it has been able to do so precisely because (and so far as) indigenous traditions have not been displaced: a fact which should reinforce the conservative precept that development policy should always conform with local traditions, and never amount to an attempt at a wholesale transplantation of an alien culture. For Greens, the very notion of universalising Western affluence should be suspect, given its costs to the natural environment, and its unsustainability over the long term. Even conservatives who judge the imperatives of economic growth in an industrial society to be irresistible need not sanctify the fiction that such growth has furthered the cause of human happiness. Is any conservative ready to affirm that the city-dweller complete with ghetto-blaster is happier than the destitute Eskimo (prior to the fatal contact with Western culture), or the pious and cheerful Tibetan? Human experience suggests otherwise. We are led to the absurd view of economic growth as an inherently desirable phenomenon, partly by the fetish of calculability that has overtaken the social studies, and partly because we have few decent measures for the costs of economic growth. This will prove a dangerous folly for policy-makers to persist in.

Western advice that poor countries abandon the First World model of development is often, and not always without reason, viewed as hypocritical. It is not unreasonably asked: what alterations are the First World peoples (so called) willing to make in their form of life for the sake of the integrity of the environment? If modernisation on a First World model is to be resisted, how are the First World countries to reform themselves? More to my present purpose, how are conservatives to respond to the challenge posed by the fact that Western affluence cannot be made universal or enduring? What, in particular, are the implications for policy
increasingly anarchic world that contains a growing number of terrorist states casts a lengthening shadow over the future of our species, and over all of the others that it presently dominates, which should inform all serious projects of environmental conservation. In this area, above all, as in many others, unilateral action by nation-states is bound to be typically ineffectual: what is needed is effective concerted action by national governments.

The contemporary nation-state has been, and continues to be, an agency of centralisation; as such, it is an institution that should be endorsed by conservatives and Greens only with considerable reserve and suspicion. Much environmental destruction has occurred because national governments have acted with indifference or ignorance upon local ecologies, natural and human. Again, there are many activities of existing nation-states that need not, and often should not, be performed by national governments, and that sometimes can be done most effectively without any action by government beyond the provision of a legal framework for private initiative. One of the most radical suggestions of neo-liberal thought has been that even the monopoly on the supply of moneys by national governments may be unnecessary and indeed undesirable from the standpoint of price stability. This is a thought that should be congenial to Greens, since it opens up the possibility of local communities having their own local money, issued by local banks that are independent of central governments. Again, much welfare policy has been filtered through national government, when it is often best made and implemented at lower levels, closer to local communities, and often by intermediary and voluntary institutions. Though (as I shall argue) the contemporary nation-state is now the only political institution to retain legitimacy and, for that reason, cannot responsibly be dismantled, there can be no doubt that its responsibilities are currently massively over-extended.

In general, policies toward local environmental issues are best made at local level, if only because, in the human world, all policies turn on the stability and viability of local communities. Here a further caveat needs issuing. Returning environmental initiative to regions and localities need not, and typically (at least in Britain) should not, mean a multiplication of tiers of local and regional government. In Britain, local government has often been in the forefront of environmental vandalism – wrecking working-class communities by hubristic projects of urban renewal, demolishing serviceable buildings and despoiling countryside. What is needed is rather the strengthening of local and regional non-governmental institutions, the enabling of local communities – a task that may often require the intervention of national government to break the power of local bureaucracies and entrenched interests.

We see here a paradox from which neither conservative nor Green thought can escape: whereas there is nothing sacred in the nation-state that we are bound to revere, still less (after the fashion of modernist humanism) to worship, it remains none the less the only effective agency of environmental action. It acts by making and policing intergovernmental agreements and by conferring Hobbesian protection on local communities and regional ecologies that would otherwise be victims of predation by criminal states. And it uses its coercive powers to curb forces, such as uncontrolled migration, and to limit organisations, such as the transnational corporation, which might otherwise endanger local communities and environments. (I do not mean here to stigmatise the transnational corporations, which can sometimes take a larger view than national governments; merely to affirm that the activities of transnational corporations need to be subject to a monitoring that only national governments often can supply.) The nation-state can discharge this task, not only in virtue of its coercive powers, but because of that upon which they rest, namely, the fact that nation-states are in our time the only political institutions that retain authority in a world that has otherwise lost it. It is a lesson which wise conservative philosophy has to teach Green theory that only by working with and in institutions, such as the nation-state, which possess authority and legitimacy, can environmental problems be stably resolved.

The political economy of the stationary state: the limits of market capitalism

There is nothing in front but a flat wilderness of standardisation either by Bolshevism or Big Business. But it is strange that some of us should have seen sanity, if only in a vision, while the rest go forward chained eternally to enslavement without liberty and progress without hope.

(G.K. Chesterton)

The capitalist state is unstable, and indeed more properly a transitory phase lying between two permanent and stable states of society.

(Hilaire Belloc)

One of the central facts of our time is the historical vindication of market institutions. Central planning has not achieved economic security at the price of individual liberty; it has assured general poverty and sustained tyranny. By the conventional standard of its contribution to economic growth, central planning has been a comprehensive failure except in the strategic–military sector. As we have already seen, the inability of central planning institutions to deliver prosperity has not prevented them from devastating the environment. On the contrary, central planning has accomplished a near-ecocide in the former Soviet Union without even a temporary compensating growth in prosperity, and with most of its gigantic industrial projects being ventures in absurdist pyramid-building which lack the aesthetic appeal and spiritual significance of their Egyptian prototypes.

The historical vindication of market institutions has been, popularly and wrongly, perceived as expressive of the triumph of Western capitalism. It is true enough that such absurd variants on a 'third way' as market socialism are utopian (or dystopian) fantasies; but this is not to say that Western capitalism has triumphed, that it will or should be adopted throughout the post-communist world, that it is a single set of institutions without distinctive varieties, or even that some of its varieties – those found in the Anglo-American world, especially – may not now be in steep decline. The simple fact is that market institutions come in an immense diversity of forms, of which Western capitalism is only one and is not necessarily the most stable.
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From a standpoint that is acceptable to authentic conservatives and Greens alike, Western capitalism, at least as it is found in a country such as Britain, has two large and connected disadvantages, which disable it in ecological terms. The first is that Western capitalism — like socialist central planning but unlike medieval feudalism, say — is predicated upon indefinite economic growth. For Western capitalism, the stationary state represents the nemesis of secular stagnation, dreaded by mainstream economists from Ricardo to Hansen: any faltering in growth, any disruption of rising living standards is perceived — as indeed it is correct so to do — as a defect in the prevailing economic system. For Green theorists, accordingly, Western capitalism is predicated upon an ecological impossibility, and it is for that reason doomed to instability and ephemerality. The second disadvantage flows from the first. This is that the political legitimacy of Western capitalist market institutions depends upon incessant economic growth; it is endangered whenever growth falters. This is a feature of Western institutions that should be profoundly distasteful to all true conservatives, for whom the legitimacy of institutions, and the authority of government, has (or should have) ethical and spiritual foundations, whereby they can weather even protracted periods of economic hardship. The dependency of Western capitalism on uninterrupted economic growth for its political legitimacy has allowed it to evade addressing its chief defects, which account for its systemic tendency to instability: the insecurity that it generates for ordinary people by its prodigious technological virtuosity and inherently innovative character; and the maldistribution of capital whereby this insecurity is compounded. There are, indeed, varieties of market institutions in which this endemic insecurity is addressed, such as that of Japan, in which at least a substantial proportion of the working population enjoys lifetime job security in a company. (It is the stability which such practices confer on Japanese market institutions that addresses one reason among many others why Japan is very wise to resist emulating Western, and especially Anglo-American, models for business enterprise, which bear all the marks of bankruptcy.) In most capitalist countries, however, the insecurities of the economic system are at best mitigated by a range of welfare institutions, which foster a culture of dependency and do nothing to spread the advantages and responsibilities of ownership.

Such welfare institutions, when they are not confined to their proper function of assisting those incapable of productive employment to lead lives that are nevertheless dignified, abound with moral hazards and self-defeating effects. It is, in fact, hard (but essential) to envisage reforms of our inherited capitalist institutions which would obviate the necessity for a welfare state that has, on the whole, done little to emancipate its supposed beneficiaries from poverty and dependency, but has instead institutionalised these conditions. I have suggested elsewhere reforms of current welfare institutions and policies which might go some distance towards achieving their original intent and rendering less significant their counterproductive side-effects. Here I want to argue that only a radical extension of the benefits of ownership will sufficiently mitigate market-generated insecurity for market institutions on a roughly capitalist model to be stable in the context of a stationary-state economy. In Britain, policies for the dispersion of wealth have been destructively perverse in the extreme. On inheritance, they have encouraged not wider ownership, but the transfer of wealth to the state. In tax policy absurd fetish of home-ownership has been subsidised, while savings, dividends and capital gains have been subject to double taxation. Schemes for wider dispersion of wealth have taken the form of encouraging investment in highly volatile equities arising from privatisations. The combination of progressive income taxation with virulent inflation has rendered the accumulation of capital from earnings impossible for virtually everyone. The result has been the Servile described by Bellocc, which is little different from the new servitude (one without the redeeming features of its medieval predecessor) diagnosed by Hayek.

Tax and welfare policies must urgently be reformed, so as to promote re-skiing and to enhance the opportunities for the private accumulation of capital — its necessary condition of the Green virtue of social stability and the conserving values of harmony and independence. In addition, consideration should be given to a negative capital tax, whereby every citizen would receive at maturity a patrimony of capital that would confer on him or her the possibility of independ and of self-provision against most forms of market-generated insecurity. In Britain, such a patrimony could be denominated in government bonds, perhaps index-linked against inflation and tax-exempt, which were redeemable on stated terms purposes of investment, saving, provision for retirement, and so on. The aim should be to guarantee a minimum of capital as a patrimony for each and all. (To be specific: such a scheme could not guarantee that the patrimony would not be waste malinvested, and so it could not obviate the need for all welfare institutions we are dealing with, as always, with exercises in imperfection, not utopia.)

A distributivist measure in no way mandates egalitarian levelling (since it could easily be financed from proportional income taxation) and it needs for its justification none of the dubious notions of social justice rightly criticised by neo-liberal In truth, it probably embodies one of the few viable means of reducing the system instabilities of market capitalism while substantially dismantling the elephantine apparatus of the welfare state. It is vastly preferable to hare-brained neo-liberal schemes for a negative income tax, which I have criticised elsewhere. As might conceivably engender that fund of legitimacy that would enable institutions to renew themselves stably across the generations in a stationary-economy, in which only individual effort or the lottery of the market, but no engine of forced economic growth, can alter individual positions in society.

New institutions and policies of other sorts will doubtless be necessary if institutions are to adapt themselves to the constraints of a stationary-state economy. Daly has suggested, as an alternative to pollution taxes which attempt to correct the externalities of industrial production, depletion quotas on natural resources, which would be set by government but would be auctioned off as marketable assets commends this radical policy proposal on the grounds that it does not expop lands and capital, but does further restrict their use at an across-the-board level provides the necessary macroeconomic control with the minimum sacrifice of microeconomic freedom. It minimises centralised, quantitative planning and minimises reliance on decentralised, market decision-making. Similar prop
have been made for the control of population.\textsuperscript{50} It does not matter, for the purposes of my argument, whether these proposals are acceptable as appropriate responses to current environmental concerns. They have the merits (not always possessed by policies advocated by Greens) of seeking to turn to advantage the workings of market institutions, rather than to repress them; and in that respect, they accord maximal feasible respect to individual liberty. They accept that the task of Green policy is that of reforming civil society and its market institutions, not abolishing them. In this such policy proposals are exemplary. Even if the proposed measures were to prove defective, they will be less delusive than attempts to kick-start economic growth on the old models; and they will have some prospect of generating the legitimacy for market institutions that they have in recent times borrowed spuriously from an unsustainable expansion in material living standards.

**ISSUES ON THE NATIONAL POLICY AGENDA**

It is no part of the object of this chapter to address every issue in national political debate in Britain in order to identify a convergence of conservative and Green perspectives on it. Instead I shall, from the shifting and inevitably indeterminate subject-matter of public discourse in Britain, address six broad policy areas—energy and agriculture, urban and transport policy, and health and education—to see how a Green conservative agenda might be applied. In every case, we will find a substantial convergence of perspectives, along with significant revisions in both standard conservative and conventional Green thinking.

**Energy and agriculture**

The natural energy of the Universe, the power that lights the stars in the sky, is nuclear. Chemical energy, wind and water wheels: such sources of energy are, from the viewpoint of a manager of the Universe, almost as rare as a coal-burning star. If this is so, and if God’s universe is nuclear-powered, why then are so many of us prepared to march in protest against its use to provide us with electricity?

The very concept of pollution is anthropocentric and it may even be irrelevant in the Gaian context.

(James Lovelock)\textsuperscript{61}

A feature of Green thought has been its opposition to novel technologies for the production of energy, most particularly, its opposition to nuclear power. At first glance this may appear to be one of the many points of convergence between Green thought and conservative philosophy which it is the purpose of this chapter to exhibit. After all, conservative philosophy insists that it is collectively imprudent to incur even tiny risks, if they are risks of catastrophe and are avoidable; and we have had more than one instance thus far (as the opponents of nuclear power never cease to remind us) of serious accidents in nuclear power plants. Are not the Greens therefore in conformity with conservative philosophy in opposing nuclear power, in virtue of its novelty and its potentially vast hazards to the environment?

Almost all of the commonly accepted arguments against nuclear power are substantially spurious; elements of a pseudo-Green conventional wisdom, part Luddite, which is suspicious of new technologies, however benign they may be, and attached to old technology, no matter how demonstrably environmentally pernicious. It is true, of course, that there are in the world unsafe (because now obsolete) nuclear power stations, especially in the post-Soviet world, and, very probably, in China: the risk of further Chernobyls amounts, for that reason, to a likelihood. These dangers are good arguments against unsafe reactors, and therefore for the closure of such reactors; they are not arguments against nuclear power. The fact is that, by comparison with older energy-producing technologies, nuclear power is environmentally benign, and not especially hazardous. As Lovelock has observed:

It is true that calculations have been made of the cancer deaths across Europe that might come from Chernobyl, but if we were consistent, we might wonder also about the cancer deaths from breathing the smoke fogs of London coal and look on a piece of coal with the same fear now reserved for uranium. How different is the fear of death from nuclear accidents from the commonplace and boring death toll of the roads, of cigarette smoking, or of mining—which taken together are equivalent to thousands of Chernobyls a day?\textsuperscript{62}

The public perception of nuclear power as peculiarly risky is an illusion, partly created by the failure to compare its hazards with those forms of power with which we are familiar. (Compare the frequency and devastating impact on the natural environment of oil spills—of which only the worst are reported—with the publicity given to nuclear accidents; or the havoc wrought on nature by the antediluvian, pre-nuclear industrial technologies of the former Soviet bloc—virtually screened out from Western perceptions—with the global publicity accorded to the Chernobyl meltdown.) Indeed, if time travel were possible, a visitor from an earlier period of industrial society—say, the nineteenth century in Britain—would most likely be astonished by the cleanliness and integrity of our environment, which early industrialism ravaged. There is a lesson here for Green thought, which is that, whereas the reckless adoption of novel technologies without due consideration of their consequences is imprudence or folly, new technologies are not always malificent. Sometimes, as is arguably the case with nuclear power, they are a major improvement on the cumbrous, costly and ecologically invasive technologies of the past (such as coal-mining). In any event, nuclear power is with us; it behooves us to make the best of it. As Lovelock has put it:

If we cannot disavow nuclear power, I hope that it stays as it is. The power sources are vast and slow to build, and the low cost of the power itself is offset by the size of the capital investment required... I have never regarded nuclear radiation or nuclear power as anything other than a normal and inevitable part of the environment.\textsuperscript{63}
This is not an argument for the indiscriminate adoption of nuclear power, or for everything that has been done by the nuclear industry or said on its behalf. It is, rather, an argument for a rational energy policy, formulated at national level, in which nuclear power, along with other forms of energy-production, would have an important role. That there is need for a national energy policy is questioned, I take it, only by free-market doctrinaires, whose positions are grounded in a metaphysical faith in market institutions rather than empirical reasonings about their operations and limitations. As in a good many other respects, we can take a cue here from Japan, which responded to the oil-shock of the seventies by a host of governmentally sponsored energy-saving initiatives, including further development of its nuclear power programme. We will also be sensible if we treat the progressive curtailment of the role of the private passenger car as being, among other things, an element in a reasonable national energy policy.

After the size of the world’s human population, the greatest threat to the integrity of our common environment is to be found not in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, but most probably in current farming practices. Once again, the Green conventional wisdom, with its nostalgia for a lost rural arcadia and its contempt for the contrivances of city living, neglects or misperceives the real threats to our common life, and that of the planet. The impact on global ecological stability of even the world’s most bloated cities is a trifle by comparison with that of the agricultural technologies that have been adapted to feed a swollen human population. As Lovelock again puts it:

we are moving towards eight billion people with more than ten billion sheep and cattle, and six billion poultry. We use much of the productive soil to grow a very limited range of crop plants, and process far too much of this food inefficiently through cattle. Moreover, our capacity to modify the environment is greatly increased by the use of fertilizers, ecoidal chemicals, and earth-moving and tree-cutting machinery.... Bad farming is probably the greatest threat to Gaia’s health.64

Or, as Edward Goldsmith has observed:

The rapid degradation of the world’s remaining agricultural lands is invariably attributed by governments and international agencies to traditional agricultural techniques. Thus US Aid attributes the rapid deterioration of ‘the soil resource base’ in arid lands to mismanagement, based on the use of ‘traditional technology and agricultural practices’—though these technologies have been used sustainably for thousands of years.... Malnutrition and farming are also attributed to archaic agricultural practices, and, in particular, to low inputs of fertilizer. A report based on a 20-year study jointly undertaken by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and other organisations insists that the amount of food produced in the world is a direct function of fertilizer use, without mentioning the diminishing returns on excessive applications of fertilizer experienced whenever farmers have adopted modern agricultural methods.65

What does this mean for farming policy in a country such as Britain? Writing over twenty years ago, Robert Waller observed that

The whole framework of prices, grants, subsidies and incentives within which he [the farmer] will be working will... favor intensification. It developed basically within the 1947 Agricultural Act. This well-intentioned Act was designed to shield the farmer against the forces of the free market by fixing prices and subsidies that would assure him a reasonable livelihood. In practice it has had the opposite effect.66

Commenting on the ecological effects of intensive farming practices, Waller notes that:

Each one of the different technologies used to increase intensification is subject to a fundamental law of diminishing returns. Slowly the countless disadvantages resulting from each new input of machinery, fertilizer, pesticides, etc., will begin to outweigh their initial advantages. This process must render each further increment of growth achieved by these means progressively less profitable, until such time as negative returns set in.67

Intensive farming practices of this sort have been further reinforced by the provisions of the European Community’s Common Agricultural Policy, which subsidises overproduction. The question arises as to what policy framework for agriculture in Britain can be commended on grounds common to both Green and conservative perspectives, and by what standards current practices are to be assessed.

It is plain that the iniquitous Common Agricultural Policy must be phased out. At the same time, it is no less evident that subjecting farming, in Britain or in similar countries, to the exigencies of global markets is a recipe for environmental short-termism. (It is possible that the market reform of agriculture in New Zealand constitutes an exception to this generalisation; but I cannot pursue the point here.) Wherever there remain small and medium sized farms which are embedded in local communities to whose viability they make a decisive contribution, they deserve support and shelter from the global market if they cannot otherwise survive. The policy of subsidising highly intensive, ‘efficient’ farming is precisely the opposite of that which is appropriate, when less ‘efficient’ farms, which have perhaps renewed themselves over several generations in contexts of markets that were not globalised, are at risk. The general function of tariffs and subsidies in relation to agriculture should be to act as an incentive to move away from high-intensive ‘efficiency’, rather than the contrary. (Agricultural subsidies may have, also, a strategic military justification, as in the Swiss and Japanese examples. This provides a further reason against the adoption of unrestrained free markets in farming.) In Britain, it is at least arguable that current CAP subsidies should be redirected to the support of organic farming methods which have a low impact on the soil and its related ecosystems, including a less intensive and more humane regime of life for breeding and caring for farm animals. It is not only arguable but also manifestly sensible, from any point of view which can be shared by genuine
conservatives and Greens, that the destruction of small farms in the present economic depression should be arrested by reforms of current subsidy arrangements which take proper account both of the impact of farming practices on the natural environment and of the contribution of farming to the maintenance of rural community life.

It is no part of my brief here to try to specify the details of a sensible policy for agriculture in Britain. The goal of the argument is the simpler one of urging the repudiation of any agricultural policy which applies to farming norms of industrial productivity that neglect the non-renewability of many of the natural resources that enter into farming, which promote the further industrialisation of farming, and which do not recognise the contribution that farming makes to the renewal of rural communities as one of its larger social benefits. It is this general framework of thought that must be applied to the details of policy as they pertain to the different varieties of farming which currently exist in Britain.

Urban and transport policy

A village or small town must ... be arranged so as to confer on it a feeling of wholeness and oneness. In south-west France, the two neighbouring towns of Marmande and Villeneuve-sur-Lot are said to exert very different influences on their inhabitants. The former is stretched out along a main road, the latter, an ancient bastille, is built round a central square. Of the two, it is the latter which is known for its spirited community.

Cities ... should also be designed on similar principles if they are to satisfy social needs. The central square is a very important feature, offering a place where the citizens can gather to run their affairs. The Greeks could not conceive a city without its agora. Significantly, in the industrial cities of the West, as economic concerns take over from social ones, it is the shopping precinct with its multi-storied car park that is the focal point.

(Edward Goldsmith)68

The typical American male devotes more than 1,600 hours to his car. He spends four of his sixteen waking hours on the road or gathering his resources for it. And this figure does not take into account the time consumed by other activities dictated by transport: time spent in hospitals, traffic courts and garages. The model American puts in 1,600 hours to get 7,500 miles: less than five miles per hour. In countries deprived of a transportation industry, people manage to do the same, walking wherever they want to go, and they allocate only three to eight per cent of their society's time budget to traffic instead of 29 per cent. What distinguishes the traffic in rich countries from the traffic in poor countries is not more mileage per hour of life-time for the majority, but more hours of compulsory consumption of high doses of energy, packaged and unequally distributed by the transportation industry.

(Ivan Illich)69

One feature of the Green conservative agenda that is central to my case has been

intimated already, at several stages of the argument: namely, the rejection of a Green nostalgic hostility to the city, and of the corresponding arcadian conception of country life. To be sure, our discussion of agricultural policy has stressed the vital need to preserve rural communities, and to resist their destruction by crass development programmes and by the unfettered global market; and it will not be suggested that the good life can only be lived in cities. Green nostalgia for a lost (and, no doubt, substantially delusive) rural idyll is dangerous, nevertheless, in that it tends to obscure the real threats that now exist to one of humankind's most civilised institutional inventions, the city. It is the overdevelopment of the city, its deformation as a megalopolis, and its increasing insensitivity to the needs of those who labour and dwell in it that should be at the heart of an agenda of policy which is held in common by Greens and conservatives alike. In truth, the death of the city - an accomplished fact in parts of the United States - should be seen as a disaster in human ecology. The real and present danger is that it is occurring, in many modern countries, slowly and all but imperceptibly, but with ultimate effects on human social order which are all too visible in the limiting case of Detroit.

Urban policy and transport policy are, of course, closely interlinked - so closely that it may be worth looking at some of the absurdities of current transport policies (and the lack of them) before proceeding, with London as our exemplar, to try to say something on the larger issues of urban conservation and reconstruction. Since transport policy is a large and complex subject, my aim here, as elsewhere in this chapter, is not to prescribe in detail; such a task would be not only beyond my competence but also profitless, given the very different policy dilemmas in different countries, and even within Britain. Instead, my aim is to sketch a rough outline of thought for policy which is animated by values of conservation and concern for the common life. The inevitable point of departure for critical reflection in the arena of transport policy, in Britain and in many Western countries, is its fatal domination by the private motor car and its requirements. The private motor car will always have a place in transport, and the argument I shall develop against it does not aim to eliminate that role; instead, my goal is to question the dominant place of the car in modern transport, and to do so by showing that its dominance is prejudicial to the common environment.

It may be worth glancing at a few global facts about cars and their effect on the environment before we look at their national and local impact. In under forty years (1950-88) the number of cars on the road across the world has multiplied by nearly ten times, from 53 million to 500 million. Cars account for about one half of all air pollution, with three hundred pounds of 'greenhouse gas', carbon dioxide, being eventually released into the atmosphere for every fifteen gallons filled up. Worldwide, car accidents kill around a quarter of a million people, and seriously injure three million. The number of passenger cars rose by five times between the fifties and the late eighties. In Britain, each mile of a British motorway demands 25 acres of land, and each year up to 4,000 acres of rural land are paved over to be used as roads. Further, cars are extremely inefficient as a mode of transportation, both in terms of the number of people they carry, and because cars efficiently convert only 2-3 per cent of the potential energy in the oil refined for their use. The case against
the private passenger car as a mode of transportation, stated solely in terms of its effects on the physical environment, is overwhelming.

It is not the physical costs of over-reliance on the car but its impact on the life of urban (and other) communities that I want to focus on here. The impact of the car on cities is to destroy them as human settlements in which generations of people live and work together. It is well to recall that cities have not, traditionally, been concrete wastelands to which people repair only to work, and then flee; they have not been segregated by occupation or age, or carved up into residential and business areas; and they have, in consequence, been communities, not traffic intersections for transients whose lives are elsewhere and which at night have the funereal character of a deserted stage-set. Yet, at any rate in Britain today, this is what cities are fast becoming. As has recently been observed, ‘London is becoming more mono-functional, increasingly divided into ghettos of poverty and affluence disrupted by traffic noise and pollution.’ And the reason for this degeneration is, in substantial part, to be found in the tyranny of the car: ‘Leaving aside the costs of lost productivity caused by congestion, and the toll of deaths, injury and ill health, road traffic does more than anything else to undermine city neighbourhoods. Streets meant for shopping and meeting, green areas designed as places of recreation and relaxation become, respectively, trunk roads and roundabouts.’ The restoration of cities as public places for the enaction of the common life demands, first and foremost, policies for the drastic curtailment within cities of the motor car; a policy objective that is in any case justified by the deleterious effect on the health of city dwellers of car-related pollution.

No doubt an extension of market institutions into traffic control will be helpful to this end. Road-pricing, which has been technically feasible for some time but remains politically disfavoured, is a good example of the imaginative use in urban contexts of the price mechanism in the service of environmental concerns. It is hard to see how market solutions, by themselves, can be of much further use. An increase in petrol taxation might be defensible, though it is a blunt instrument of policy. Emission taxes on larger, less efficient cars are more worthy of serious consideration. Most importantly, however, is the recognition by policy-makers that only a massive expansion of public transport in Britain will diminish the role of the private car, with all of its environmental costs. One feature of such an expansion would undoubtedly be the enhancement of facilities for walkers and cyclists: in Britain, 37 per cent of passenger journeys and 32 per cent of travel time occur via walking or cycling, but these basic freedoms of mobility are very poorly planned for. The expansion of bus, railway and (in London and similar cities) underground services is a vital part of a policy aiming to curb the appetite (and the need) for the private car. Here we need to note that public transport may be privately owned and operated, and may (as with the growth of jitney services since coach deregulation in Britain) benefit from measures of economic liberalisation. In transport, as elsewhere, there may well be a case for public funding of privately operated services, and so for privatisation, where this does not create a private monopoly but rather promotes market competition. What cannot be shirked is the necessity in many areas of transport policy – rural buses being an obvious example – of governmental subsidy for environmental purposes. (In this connection, current proposals for privatisation of British Rail are, at best, an exercise in irrelevance.) In transport as in urban policy, few things are more pernicious than the market model of private persons making their several decisions. Such a model is bound to result in running down of infrastructure – except for elements of it which benefit powerful interest groups, such as the motor industry – and the further erosion of communities and of cities as human settlements that contain communities.

The renewal and development of infrastructure in cities, at least in those but not on the classic European model, requires decision-making by strategic plan authorities of a sort that can only be unthinkable to doctrinaire advocates of laissez-faire. This is not to say that intervention in the life of cities by government has always been, or is ever likely to be, invariably beneficial: in Britain it involved the destruction of working-class communities by municipal housing programs and in the United States the further marginalisation of black communities by renewal policies. The risks of further policy mistakes of this sort are unavoidable but against these we must set the certainty that uncontrolled private development will evacuate cities of their common life, and produce a common environment that is anomic, chaotic and aesthetically repellent. Both conservatives and greens acknowledge that only strategic planning authorities, of the sorts that are active in all of the other major European cities, can preserve British cities as places of aesthetic integrity and human amenity, as human settlements in which the individual public goods of common life are protected.

Concern for the aesthetic integrity of cities confers on planning authorities another important responsibility: that of preserving the city as a place of plebeian buildings, in harmonious styles, and of composing a beautiful landscape living-place. In part, the task of such authorities will reasonably be conserva and restrictive, that of denying planning permission to developments which would disrupt local architectural styles or would diminish the city as a setting for common life. An excellent example is that of the municipal authorities in Salzburg, who granted permission for a McDonald’s outlet in that city only on condition that its architecture conform to the traditional style of the city. Such authorities will reasonably concern themselves with restoration: with removing the uninteresting ruins of architectural modernism and replacing them with buildings which worth living in and looking at. That this is not a utopian vision is shown by real examples that we have in such European cities as Siena and Barcelo Throughout much of Europe, but as yet very intermittently in Britain, old planning institutions remain weak, cities have been renewed and conserved imaginatively and resourcefully. Planning will be rejected by laissez faire dogmatists, who cannot grasp that the city is a form of life for itself, and an individualist conceptions of strangers; but the conservative pedigree of planning policies for cities is impeccable, reaching back in Europe for centuries.

Such policies are radical in effect, but conservative in inspiration. Limiting the private passenger car – which one American conservative has called ‘the neoliberal Jacobin’ – is a potent corrective against the further weakening of the tie street and local communities. Restoring cities as public places which are safe
insulates them from political influence. The resultant situation can hardly be worse than that which preceded it, and may well in some respects be significantly better.

Voucher schemes do not in any case go to the root of the problems of modern schooling in a country such as Britain, which arise from the transformation of education into an arm of industry, and from the institutional monopoly which schools themselves have over learning. Schooling as we know it in Britain today is not much more than a century old. Literacy and numeracy were spreading quickly and widely among ordinary people in the nineteenth century well before compulsory schooling was instituted, and the contribution of schools to their further promotion—like that of medical care to the prevention of disease—is easily exaggerated. The decline that has occurred in educational standards in Britain since the 1960s, say, has further limited the role of schools in transmitting essential skills and values. It has done so, pretty well across the board of the different varieties of schools, with some private schools doing less well than some state schools when measured by traditional standards. Doubtless the reckless experimentation with teaching methods and curricula in the state schools in the sixties, the headlong rush into comprehensivisation and the near-abolition of selective state schools during that period, all contributed to the erosion of educational standards. It is noteworthy, however, that it is the adoption of progressive methods of teaching which seems the decisive variable here, and that this was spread across both state and private schools. Privatisation of itself would accordingly be no remedy for this decline, which has deeper institutional and cultural roots. From this point of view, neo-liberal voucher schemes are merely an irrelevance.

The chief defect of voucher schemes, from the standpoint of a conservative (or a Green) who is concerned with the renewal of community, is that they fail to address the institutional monopoly of learning by schools. Such a monopoly was tolerable, when teaching in schools was governed by a tacit curriculum of inherited skills, values and cultural understandings that expressed the traditions of local communities; it becomes insupportable when schools are estranged from the communities that they are supposed to serve, and reproduce themselves (rather than their communities) in alienated unemployables. Though Britain contains many good schools, in the maintained as well as in the private sector, in which something akin to a traditional education is still offered, it is increasingly plain that schools as institutions have, on the whole, become insensitive to the skills and traditions that they exist to transmit, and often indifferent to the communities that they serve. Voucher schemes have the merit of extending to the poor a range of choice which is currently enjoyed by the affluent, and of ending the inequity whereby families of modest means, who nevertheless scrape up the means to finance private education for their children, end up paying twice. It is unclear that voucher schemes, as currently advocated by neo-liberals, would do much, if anything, to remedy the failings that belong generically to the majority of contemporary schools, state-supported and private.

One solution to this dilemma may be in a system of educational credits for all, which is not tied to attendance at schools but instead to measured achievement in literacy and numeracy, the two most basic skills which present schooling inculcates.
least successfully. The basic content of such a scheme has been set out by Illich, programmatically:

Right now educational credit good at any skill center could be provided in limited amounts for people of all ages, and not just to the poor. I envisage such credit in the form of an educational passport or an ‘edu-credit card’ provided to each citizen at birth. In order to favour the poor, who would probably not use their yearly grants early in life, a provision could be made that interest accrue to later users of cumulated ‘entitlements’. Such credits would permit most people to acquire the skills most in demand, at their convenience, better, faster, cheaper and with fewer undesirable side effects than in school.78

There is little doubt that enabling pupils, or their families, to choose among a range of venues and methods of learning, which were not restricted to the institution of the school, would result in a blossoming in many fields of teaching of traditional teaching methods. As Illich notes:

The strongly motivated student who is faced with the task of acquiring a new and complex skill may benefit greatly from the discipline now associated with the old-fashioned schoolmaster who taught reading, Hebrew, catechism or multiplication by rote. School has now made this kind of drill teaching rare and disreputable, yet there are many skills which a motivated student with normal aptitudes can master in a matter of a few months if taught in the traditional way. This is true of codes as of their encipherment; of second and third languages as of reading and writing; and equally of special languages such as algebra, computer programming, chemical analysis, or of manual skills like typing, watchmaking, plumbing, wiring, TV repair; or, for that matter, dancing, drawing and diving.... At present schools pre-empt most educational funds. Drill instruction which costs less than comparable schooling is now a privilege of those rich enough to bypass the schools, and those whom either the army or big business sends through in-service training.79

The central idea of such a proposal is akin to that of the voucher, in that it confers purchasing power on individuals for the acquisition (in a context of market competition for their provision) of a specified range of services; but it differs radically from the voucher scheme, as it figures in recent neo-liberal policy proposals, in not requiring that the services be provided in a specific institutional setting (the school) and therefore in not presupposing attendance in schools. In this way it goes much further than any neo-liberal measure could: it not only severs public financing of a good from its market provision but also severs its provision from the narrow context of any specific institution – in this case, the declining institution of the school. It thereby cuts a Gordian knot in neo-liberal policy: that surrounding compulsory schooling and the definition of schools themselves. In this proposal, education credit could be used in any institutional context (including that of schools) which could show a record of achievement in transmitting specific skills. The obligation on families would not be to assure school attendance by their children, but to enable them (with the use of the educational credits) to acquire specified basic skills. These latter could be subject to assessment by state examinations (as proposed over a century ago by J.S. Mill) and the institutions, or ‘centres’, which taught them would also be subject to governmental accreditation based on objective performance criteria for the transmission of the skills; both these would be legitimate uses of governmental activity. (Of course, the obligation of families in bringing up their children to specified levels of literacy and numeracy would need to be qualified with respect to disability and retardation; but this I think, a matter of detail in the overall proposal, which does not affect its main thrust.) At the same time, the compulsory element in schooling would have been removed, and the privileging of schools with governmental finance (an objectifiable feature of all current voucher schemes) would have been ended: school would have been disestablished. One predictable result of exposing schools in this way to competition by non-school institutions would be a drastic and rapid improvement in the quality of schooling itself.

The educational credit proposal, like the voucher schemes it is designed to supplant, need not come in only one form; it could have many variations and be introduced in a series of incremental steps. For the vast majority where income is adequate, it could take the form of a tax credit for each child, to be spent on any accredited school, state or private, and at any accredited, non-school ‘centre’. For those whose incomes are too low for tax credits to be feasible, educational credit card (akin to the voucher) would be needed, usable on the school terms as tax credits. Providing that a poverty trap was not thereby created there is no reason why, in the interests of opening up opportunities for the worst, such a credit card for learning purposes need not be worth significantly more than the tax credits of more affluent families. Equally, as Illich indicates, there is reason why such a learning credit card should be restricted to children: it could and should, be available as a means of re-skilling (or for the first time) those who discover, later in life, that schools have failed them, or whose existing skills have been rendered obsolete by economic or social change. In this proposal learning is conceived as a life-long engagement whose limits are not those of institution of the school, but only of the lives of learners. The basic skills specified for children would, by necessity, be different from (and far more uniform than those needed by most people later in life, and monitoring and accreditation procedures would differ accordingly. The device of an educational credit would link learning at all levels, nevertheless, while freeing it from the disabling confines of an institution from which traditional understandings of learning and teaching have often vanished.

From a conservative perspective, a radical proposal on the lines sketched the advantage of promising to revivify traditions of learning in all of their variants. From a Green perspective that is shared by conservatives, it should be welcome as rendering more permeable the barriers between learning and working, between work and leisure, that disfigure modern societies. The prospect opened up such a proposal is that of learning occurring in the context of a common life where harbours flourishing schools, but in which the school is no longer a hermeneutic institution, whose funding and legal status separate it from the vernacular trans
the worst drug-testing bureaucracy in the world, and leaving nearly forty million of its citizens without medical coverage of any systematic sort. The American system of medical care performs extremely poorly by comparison with the systems of countries such as Britain and Greece which, unlike the USA, spend only a fraction of their GDP on medical care. In fact, the British National Health Service performs remarkably well, both in terms of cost-containment and in terms of its adequacy as perceived by its users in many areas of care. Indeed, current reform measures, aiming at the creation within the NHS of markets through the transformation of hospitals into independent trusts, may well prove costly remedies for tolerable ills in the old system, which a genuine conservative policy should probably have left alone. (This is not to say that current reform measures can or should be reversed; any future administration has no option but to try to make them work.) Certainly, no policy for the National Health Service could be worse conceived than one of privatisation or marketisation on the American model, given its record.

Reform of the National Health Service in Britain, like reform of other systems of health care in other countries, begins by accepting a few truisms which are denied by many in the current Pelagian climate of opinion but which are central to both conservative and Green outlooks on human life. There must first be acceptance of the limits of medical care. We are all going to die, and it cannot be the proper office of medical care to thwart the course of nature; rather, to assist and smooth its way. Many, if not most, episodic ailments are self-limiting: either the healing resources of the body cope with them or else death supervenes. Medical care can help in moments of crisis and can assist in adapting to chronic illness; it cannot wipe out sickness or conjure away our mortality. When it attempts to do so, iatrogenic illness becomes a worse affliction than those that befall us in the natural course of things. Much modern medicine is pathological in its denial of death and reflects the broader culture of which it is a part in refusing to recognise that we may thrive in dying, even as our souls may perish in senseless longevity. Virtually all of modern medical care resists this implication, but it is an inexorable result of existing medical technology, which can keep us ‘alive’ almost indefinitely, that death must henceforth be for us – except in the context of catastrophic accident – a chosen option, if we are to be spared the death-in-life that follows from many forms of illness, disability and senility. This is a crucial point to which I shall return.

Medicine can do little about the frailties of our condition, and nothing about our mortality; these remain subject to fortune and genetic fate. It must be accepted, also, that medical care has contributed comparatively little to the improvement of health that has undoubtedly occurred in recent times. This, as Illich and others have amply shown, arises far more from improvements in sanitation and other aspects of the environment, in diet and in lifestyle, than from any sort of medical intervention. The task of medicine, which is understood in Britain by wise general practitioners, is often, if not typically, to help patients to cope with ailments which arise from their lives as a whole and which medical intervention cannot hope to cure. For the most part, our ailments arise from the way in which we live (or the genes that we have acquired in the genetic lottery); we cannot hope for a medical
cure for them, we can hope only, at best, for their alleviation. This is a truth which is obscured by popular discourse of "the war against cancer"—as if death were an enemy that could be vanquished rather than, at last, a friend to be welcomed—and which is denied in macabre high-tech medicine involving organ transplantation. The major phases in the human life-cycle are not necessarily occasions for medical intervention. For millennia, people have been born, have suffered pain and illness, and have died, without these occurrences being understood as treatable disorders. There remain many who wish their children to be born at home, their illnesses and old age to be lived through at home, and who want to die at home. The medicalisation of human life, which has occurred in all modern societies, increasingly denies us these options. As Illich has put it, describing one end of the spectrum of this medicalisation of the human life-cycle: "Only the very rich and the very independent can choose to avoid that medicalisation of the end to which the poor must submit and which becomes increasingly dense and universal as the society they live in becomes richer." The question remains, what is to be done to reverse this trend to ever greater medicalisation of human life? And how might such an objective be achieved, while preserving (or extending) access to basic, decent medical care, where this is a manifest human need? Illich has stated, in the most general terms, what needs to be done:

In several nations, the public is now ready for a review of its health-care system. Although there is a serious danger that the forthcoming debate will reinforce the present frustrating medicalisation of life, the debate could still become fruitful if attention were focused on medical nemesis, if the recovery of personal responsibility for health care were made the central issue, and if limitations on professional monopolies were made the major goal of legislation.

Let us see how this programmatic statement might be applied in the context of a country such as Britain.

It must be acknowledged, first of all, that many medical procedures, which are currently restricted to members of the medical profession, can be performed safely and intelligently by trained laypeople. The tendency to further professionalisation of medical care must be resisted and reversed. Professional monopolies curbed or broken, and competency in a variety of medical tasks allowed to para-medical personnel. Even the licensure of physicians itself—the corner-stone of the privilege of the medical guild in the United States, but important in Britain also—must come under critical questioning, as should the ever-increasing designation of medicines as prescription-only medications. It would, of course, be absurd to propose, in the fashion of radical libertarian critics of contemporary institutions such as Szasz, that all legal limitations on medical practice and on pharmaceutical freedom be abolished forthwith; that is a measure that no conservative or Green thinker could sensibly support. There is nevertheless every reason for professional monopolies to be curtailed and pharmaceutical freedoms enhanced, in order to achieve the recovery of personal responsibility for health and the reversal of the dehumanising medicalisation of life. The contemporary world contains a variety of regimes for the medical profession: pharmaceutical freedom is significantly greater in Continental Europe and in Latin America than in English-speaking countries (of which the United States is, by far, the most restrictive); the freedoms and competences of nurses, midwives, pharmacists, opticians and others in the medical profession vary widely across jurisdictions; and different countries are at different stages as to the road to the medicalisation of life that the omnipotent authority of the medical guild carries with it. There is no reason why a policy of restoring personal responsibility for health should not borrow eclectically from these differing regimens for the medical profession, with a view to relaxing and, perhaps, eventual curtailing the professional monopoly of doctors.

In this connection, the recovery of personal responsibility for health would be assisted by reforms in the funding of health services. In Britain, where the National Health Service will remain the cornerstone of health care, there is a good case for a hypothecated health tax, with an exit option for those who prefer private arrangements solely. Such an exit option should be framed to permit those who exercise it to use the resources released not only on conventional medical care but also on alternative therapies which are, at present, rarely available with the NHS. Two further fundamental points must here be recognised: first, the relative performance and the epistemological credentials of conventional medicine, compared with many alternative therapies, are far less impressive than mainstream opinion allows; second, the choice among therapies, conventional or alternative, should so far as is practicable be that of the patient him/herself. An enabling condition of such freedom among therapeutic regimes, however, is a revision of the neo-liberal health voucher, analogous to that proposed earlier for the educative voucher, such that it covers alternative traditions of medicine and not only that conventional, scientific Western medicine. To be sure, there will always be shifting borderline between what is counted as medical care and what is regarded as a genuine alternative tradition of medical theory and practice. In part, this arises from our irreducible ignorance—observed by much mainstream medical authori—of what is best for our health. As Illich observes,

Nobody knows how much medical care will be worth to him in terms of money and pain. In addition, nobody knows if the most advantageous form of health care is obtained from medical producers, from a travel agent, or by renouncing work on the night shift. The family that forges a car to move to a Manhattan apartment can foresee how the substitution of fuel for gas will affect the available time; but the person who, upon the diagnosis of cancer, chooses operation over a binge in the Bahamas does not know what effect his choice will have on his remaining time of grace. The economics of health is a curious discipline, somewhat reminiscent of the theology of indulgences that flourished before Luther. You can count what the friars collect, you can look at the temple they build, you can take part in the liturgies they indulge in, but you can only guess what the traffic in remission from purgatory does to the soul after deat. Models developed to account for the willingness of taxpayers to foot rising medical bills constitute similar scholastic guesswork about the new world spanning church of medicine.
legal availability of euthanasia, physician-assisted where necessary, as provided for in a version of the Living Will mandating termination of life under specified conditions, can end the absurdity and moral horror in which we currently warehouse for survival those who would, often enough, vastly prefer to exercise the ultimate form of exit option. Where natural death is an unenvisioned blessing which is denied to virtually all of us, resistance to the death-by-choice of voluntary euthanasia is not wisdom, conservative or otherwise, but rather a fetishisation of physical survival, which is condemned by all of the world’s religions and offensive to human dignity. If patients are not in this most crucial of all decisions empowered as agents, then we transfer authority from responsible persons to the servants of medical institutions, themselves increasingly conceived as industries for the maintenance of human machines. We are then not far from the transforming of the patient into an object, and of medicine itself from a humane profession into a branch of biological engineering, whose ultimate output is soulless survival.

Reform of contemporary medical institutions and practice – in Britain, and in similar countries – cannot avoid taking the road of deprofessionalisation, of curbing and limiting professional monopoly over health care. An extended health voucher or health credit scheme of the sort proposed, though not without its difficulties, could assist in promoting this objective in the context of legal reforms to break down professional monopoly. No doubt there will always be a place for governmental involvement in health care, even in countries where health care is entirely privately provided, if only to guarantee that children’s health be protected and public health safeguarded. In respect of adults, however, considerations of personal responsibility for health, and of our ignorance as to what is best for our health (shared by the medical profession in many cases), argue for the greatest feasible individual freedom. The extended health voucher, as discussed so far, together with provision for the ultimate exit option of euthanasia (in many circumstances, though not all, itself merely a refusal of further treatment) would go a very considerable distance toward this goal. A health credit which was usable in a diversity of medical traditions would meet Paul Feyerabend’s desideratum that ‘health and sickness are to be determined by the traditions to which the healthy or sick person belongs and within this tradition again by the particular ideal of life a person has formed for himself’. Of course, there will always be a question, which can never be decided a priori, as to what is to count as a bona fide tradition of medical treatment and what as a medical service. It may be, for this reason, that individual freedom can only be safeguarded (the interests of children and the problems of public health aside) if the extended health credit, which is advanced here as part of an exit option from the National Health Service in Britain but which is applicable in other, similar countries, be returnable entirely to the individual as free purchasing power. This appears to be the logic of returning health care to personal responsibility.

It is not my argument that deprofessionalisation and the enhancement of personal freedom in medical care be applied solely in the context of an exit option from the NHS. On the contrary, the aim – as with an educational credit for non-school institutions, one of whose aims is the revitalisation of schooling – is to
encourage these developments within the NHS also. This reflects my belief that, though a hypothecated health tax with an exit option that is in the end redeemable as free purchasing power is defensible on grounds of personal freedom, the crucial considerations in the reform of health care are not whether its funding or organisation is public or private, but instead the degree of professional monopoly within it. The diversity of medical traditions available to the patient, and his or her opportunities for controlling the care offered to him or her. These are the decisive considerations that should govern health care reform in countries such as Britain, not narrow concerns about funding. The mix of funding and organisational arrangements for health care will, inevitably and desirably, vary considerably from country to country, and from time to time. Even in the case of Britain, there is no a priori way of determining the institutional mix that will be most appropriate for medical care in the future, except to say that the NHS will remain the point of departure for sensible reform, even if (as proposed here) there be instituted an exit option from it. No doubt the best institutional framework for health care in Britain is one that allows for the maximum of diversity in a setting that allows for, and has incentives for, further unplanned developments; but there is a variety of forms that this institutional framework might take, and I have not tried to settle here the issues between them. It is no part of the argument here to try to solve which of these arrangements is to be adopted, since none will be universally desirable and the relevant reasonings are always circumstantial, not applications of first principles. The general thesis remains: that conservative values of respect for individuals and for the communities in which they live their lives mandate a reform of health care which is aimed at limiting professional monopoly within it and promoting the recovery of personal responsibility for health. This — together with the recognition that frailty and mortality are parts of our condition, not treatable disorders in it — should be a framework of thought that is eminently acceptable to Greens.

CONCLUSION

The project of science, as I understand it, is to solve the mystery, to wake us from our dream, to destroy the myth; and were this project fully achieved, not only should we find ourselves awake in a profound darkness, but a dreadful insomnia would settle upon mankind, not less intolerable for being only a nightmare.

(Michael Oakeshott)87

We know now that a completely planned heaven is either impossible or unbearable. We know that it is not true that design can come only out of planning. Out of luxuriant waste, unmoved by selection, come designs more beautiful and in greater variety than man could plan.

(Garrett Hardin)88

My argument has been that there are many natural affinities between conservative philosophy and Green thought, from which both may profit. Conservatives must learn from Green thought that the promise of open-ended global growth, held out by today’s neo-liberal descendants of Herbert Spencer, is delusive; instead they must turn their attention to the sources of legitimacy by which social institutions could be sustained in a stationary-state economy. In repudiating the fashionable heresies of neo-liberalism, conservatives are merely returning to an older and sounder Tory tradition, which perceived the illusoriness of the sovereign, autonomous chooser of liberal theory, and so insisted on the primacy of the common life. The importance of Green thought for conservatives today is that it recalls them to their historic task of giving shelter to communities and reproducing them across the generations — in a context of finite resources which dictates stability, not growth, as the pre-eminent conservative value.

An encounter between conservative and Green thought compels important revisions in some standard conservative positions. It is unreasonable for conservatives to disregard the dangers inherent in the present growth of human population, and perverse for them to resist measures for its control. Conservatives must learn to be open to radical criticism of current institutions of market capitalism and of the health and education professions, in so far as they are predicated on spurious promises of indefinite growth or open-ended progress, and so depart both from Green thought and from genuine conservative philosophy. Conservatives need to explore, with Greens and others, as yet unthought-of dilemmas of life in societies which are no longer buoyed up by the prospect of incessant economic growth or by modernist pseudo-religions of endless world-improvement.

On the other hand, Greens need from conservatives a vital tincture of realism without which their thought, and so their policy proposals, become merely utopian. It is supremely pointless for Greens to insist that the alternatives before our species are only a total transformation of our condition or oblivion. If that is so, we may confidently predict oblivion as our fate. In this, we would only be applying an aspect of the Gaia hypothesis, well stated by Lovelock:

Gaia, as I see her, is no doting mother, tolerant of misdemeanours, nor is she some fragile and delicate damsel in danger from brutal mankind. She is stern and tough, always keeping the world warm and comfortable for those who obey the rules, but ruthless in her destruction of those who transgress. Her unconscious goal is a planet fit for life. If humans stand in the way of this, we shall be eliminated with as little pity as would be shown by the micro-brain of an intercontinental ballistic missile in full flight to its target.89

The prospect of a Gaian decimation of the world’s human population has indeed been welcomed by the most radical supporters of the wild-politik, such as John Aspinall:

Some of us are now drawn to believe that a demo-catastrophe will be an eco-bonanza. In other words, a population readjustment on a planetary scale from 4,000 million to something in the nature of 200 million would be the only possible solution for the survival of our species and of the eco-system or systems that nurtured us.
The next great death might last a millennium, but during it, and indeed before it, who knows how many genera of plant and bird and beast would be swept away?... What will be left? What will survive the holocaust? The surviving world must be a diminished world; at its worst, a world in apocalyptic, irreversible decline; at its best, one savagely mutilated, even dismembered.

Only Panglossians – Marxist, neo-liberal, humanist or Pelagian – will gainsay Aspinal’s apocalyptic vision. If there is any consolation, it comes from the Gaian hypothesis itself, which suggests that a reduction in biodiversity might be the route to stability for the remaining life-forms on earth.

Lest these prospects seem overly apocalyptic, it is well to remind ourselves of one of the facts of our age that is rarely addressed by Greens, save in a spirit of pacific wish fulfillment: that is, the apparently inexorable proliferation of ever cheaper technologies of mass destruction. It is worth recalling that the international order in which, for the while, we live, is a Hobbesian state of nature, anarchy containing well over a hundred sovereign states. Of these states, many are desperately unstable, riven by internal ethnic and other conflicts; some, like Bangladesh or Indonesia, confront insuperable Malthusian problems; others, such as some African, Middle Eastern and Balkan states, are ruled by criminals and fanatics. To all of these states there is an uncontrollable leakage of weaponry of spiralling lethality – a leakage that has been massively increased in speed, magnitude and danger by the collapse of order in the former Soviet Union. It beggars belief to suppose that these weapons will not be used in the coming decades, with incalculable cost to human and other life. In former Yugoslavia, ethnic war of the sort that is likely to dominate the coming century has already ruined a fragile and precious part of the human environment, the city of Dubrovnik, and is degrading much of what is left of the natural environment. It is difficult not to foresee military convulsions, far vaster in scale than those in former Yugoslavia and using far more destructive technologies, wreaking irreparable harm on the environment in the years to come. If, for our species, the coming century looks like being one of wars, massacres and forced migrations, of which the holocausts of our own century are but precursors, for the other species with which we share a common environment the prospect looks hardly less bleak.

Such sobering prospects – whose realism will be doubted only by fundamentalist believers in progress – should occasion in both conservative and Green thinkers a mood of almost desperate humility. There will be no conversion to an ecological world-view that will deliver us from ourselves: we must make what little we can of the human animal as we find it. This means recognizing that local environmental improvement can always be swept away by bandit states, by ecological terrorism or by Malthusian invasion: it is always precarious and ever endangered. In turn, for Greens, this should compel a revision of attitude to some recent technologies, including (hardest of all for Greens who see themselves as inheritors of earlier protest movements) the technologies involved in space-based defence systems. Fallible as the latter are, they are probably the best defence that we have in an intractable anarchic world against environmental catastrophes produced by weaponry of mass destruction. (Given the speed with which nuclear weapons systems can be reassembled, proposals for multilateral nuclear disarmament, like most arms control proposals, are of little avail. This is true even supposing – what is plainly false – that inspection and enforcement are always feasible. Such measures may have limited uses in specific contexts, as perhaps currently in negotiating between Russia and the Western allies; they do not solve problems of proliferation or obviate the need for space-based defence systems.)

Green resistance to serious thought about the possibilities of such systems is only the clearest symptom of their refusal to contemplate the strategic-military dimensions of environmental conservation in our time. It is also an exemplar of the uncritically and unselectively hostile attitude of many Greens to new technologies with which, like them or not, we are saddled, and which we cannot hope to disinvest.

In part, such technologies as are involved in space-based defence systems are, like many others, prophylactic devices against other technologies which are otherwise uncontrollable. The task of using technology to tame itself is one that fate forces upon us. In this, as in so much else, Greens should heed the wise words of Lovelock, when he tells us that ‘there can be no voluntary resignation from technology. We are so inextricably part of the technosphere that giving it up as unrealistic as jumping off a ship in mid-Atlantic to swim the rest of the journey in glorious independence.’

Equally, Green hostility to the urban-industrial environment that modern humans have contrived for themselves misidentifies the real threats to their natural environment, which come from proliferating technologies of mass destruction, from farming, and, above all, from the growing deadweight of human numbers. As Lovelock has concluded: ‘It seems therefore that the principal dangers to our planet arising from man’s activities may not be the special and singular evils of his urbanized industrial existence.’

There can be no turning back from our current mode of life in cities, with its complex technologies; only a radical reform of them, with ecological stability as its aim. Protecting the environment from further human depredations will demand better technologies; it cannot be achieved by the Quixotic posture of trying to remove technology or abandon industrialism. Any people who attempted such a renunciation would soon be destroyed or conquered by others who had retained modern technology in its most invasive and destructive forms. This is a predicament that no ecological conversion can escape.

Green thought can learn from conservative philosophy the basic lesson of not looking after ultimate outcomes but, instead, of improvising humbly in order to avoid catastrophe and to stave off calamity. Green theory is an invaluable corrective of the Whiggish, anthropocentric, technological optimism by which all the modernist political religions are animated and which has, in the form of neo-liberalism, even infected most of what passes today as conservatism. From conservative philosophy, Greens must learn that the institutions of civic society are hard-won achievements, not to be casually thrown away for the sake of any
ecological utopia. With all of their limitations and the needs that I have identified, which mandate their supplementation and restriction, the institutions of civil society – including market institutions, suitably amended – are the only set of institutions whereby any civilization can in our age renew itself. The alternative to civil society – to an order of private property and contractual liberty, defined (and constrained) by a rule of a law that demarcates the spheres, and sets the boundaries, of autonomous social institutions – is only barbarism, in which both the human and the natural environments are laid waste. Our century is littered with the debris of political variations on Pascal’s wager, in which people have gambled that the familiar conveniences of civil society can be transcended, and supplanted, by another order, whose outlines they could as yet only dimly perceive. All such wagers have proved to be bad bets. Greens would be more consistent, and more prudent, if they regarded the institutions of civil society, including the market economy, as elements in a social ecology or spontaneous order,59 akin to those found in the ecologies of natural environments, which human reason can barely understand, let alone redesign. This is not to say that human environments – such as cities, or markets, for that matter – are invariably self-regulating, or that their workings cannot sometimes be improved upon by judicious intervention; but rather that intervention should typically take the form of alterations in the framework within which spontaneous activity occurs and which defines and limits property rights and contractual liberties, taxes and subsidies, and so on. In society, as in nature, we depend always on an order that we did not invent, and cannot re-create; our task can only be to remove the obstacles that we have ourselves put in the way of its natural healing, and, where this is not enough, to provide prophylaxis against hazards generated by our own virtuosity.

This may appear too humble a task for those who dream of ecological utopias, or who remain epigones of unlimited progress. In fact, the task of negotiating sensibly the transition to a stable social order is crucial. For latter-day Pelagians, it involves shedding the protective illusion of infinite improvement; for Greens, it means resisting the allure of arcadianism and utopianism. It is far from obvious that either the intelligence or the will exists among us in sufficient measure to make such a transition feasible. Behind the meliorist superstitions of the modern political religions and the Pelagianism that has conquered all of the traditional faiths, at least in the West, lies nihilism which, in becoming for the first time a mass philosophy, has also evoked its dialectical negation, fundamentalism, in many parts of the world. Further, contemporary science has itself assumed a fundamentalist form which – in the works of Monod and Dawkins, for example – propagates a species of nihilism about nature and humanity’s place in it. It is this species of scientism, in which fundamentalism and nihilism are conjoined, which allies itself with a sentimental humanism to give us the distinctive modernist world-view. Lovelock has justly characterised this view of things, and its narrow limitations, when he observes: ‘Our humanist concerns about the poor of the inner cities or the Third World, and our near-obscene obsession with death, suffering, and pain as if these were evils in themselves – these thoughts divert the mind from our gross and excessive domination of the natural world.’59 Certainly, riding
72 This is a point acknowledged by Barry, op. cit., p. 79.
74 Raz, op. cit., chs 7, 8. It may be worth noting that the welfare state could be given a derivation in contractarian terms. For an example of this, see Christopher Morris, ‘A Hobbesian Welfare State’?, Dialogue 27 (1988), pp. 652-73.
75 See Raz, op. cit., pp. 235-44.
76 See Chapter 1 of the present volume, pp. 28-9.
78 Raz, op. cit., p. 242.
79 See Chapter 1 of the present volume.
82 Raz, op. cit., chs 14, 15.
84 On this, see Chapter 1 of the present volume, p. 42-3.
85 The term ‘wanton’ originates with H. G. Frankfurt and is explained in my Mill on Liberty: A Defence, op. cit., p. 75.
86 On this, see Chapter 2 of the present volume. See also, David Willott’s excellent Happy Families: four points to a Conservative family policy, Policy Study 120, London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1991.
87 Raz, op. cit., p. 309.
88 See Hayek’s Monetary Nationalism and International Stability, London: Longman, Green, 1937. I have earlier argued for Hayekian currency competition on the ground that money may in the conditions of the contemporary British economy be unmeasurable: see Chapter 1 of the present volume. I have since been persuaded by the arguments of Tim Congdon that this Hayekian objection to monetarist policy may be unfounded. On this see T. Congdon, Monetarism Lost: and Why It Must Be Regained, London: Centre for Policy Studies, May 1989.
90 Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 160.
91 Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 168.
92 Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 17.
93 The spirit of the German Social Market Economy School has been well captured by E. Y. Neaman, who observes:

It was hardly a coincidence that behind Ludwig Erhard’s concept of a Sozialmarktwirtschaft (social market economy) lay the conservative cultural criticism of capitalism of Erhard’s mentor, the philosopher Alfred Müller-Armack. In an influential book of the era, Diagnosis of Our Times (1949), Müller-Armack pleaded for a synthesis of two opposing forces: the ruthlessness of the market and the Christian concept of brotherly love. Müller-Armack’s stress on the social side of the market equation typifies the general ambiguity of the German liberals in the post-war period. The founders of the social market economy, known as the ‘Ordo’ group, after the economic journal of that name, were sceptical of unhindered market capitalism. Thinkers like Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow advocated a social market as a collective healing process, by which social harmony should be instituted and traditional institutions, such as the sanctity of the family and Christian morality, preserved. Even the so-called Fribourg Group, economists who were more pragmatic and politically minded, saw the social market as a kind of objective mechanism which would regulate the collective in the most efficacious manner. They were not opposed to government intervention as long as its aim was to make competition even more effective. Thus, for example, government subsidies for the poor to pay rent were seen as enforcing the social market, but rent control was not.

The ‘social state’ (Sozialstaat), the same appellation used by Gottfried Feder was built on four fundamental pillars after 1945: (1) old-age pensions; (2) health and accident insurance; (3) employment-creation and unemployment insurance; and (4) family support... In contrast to the past, the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of 1949, which is the closest the Federal Republic has to a constitution, made the state responsible for protecting its citizens from social insecurity (E. A. Neaman, ‘German Collectivism and the Welfare State’, Critical Review 4(4), Fall 1999, pp. 607-8).

The crucial point is that the social market economy model conferred on citizens an entitlement to protection from insecurity.


4 AN AGENDA FOR GREEN CONSERVATISM

2 See Chapters 2 and 3 of the present volume.
3 The expression, ‘rationalism in politics’, is, of course, Michael Oakeshott’s.
5 This is acknowledged in Hardin’s book, Nature and Man’s Fate, New York: Mentor Books, 1959, ch. 11.
7 The best version of this argument for market institutions is to be found in Michael Polanyi, The Logic of Liberty, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, ch. 8.
8 Yablokov’s estimates were reported in the London Independent of 24 January 1992.
10 Ibid.
11 Stefan Hedlund is an Associate Professor of Soviet and East European Studies at Uppsala, Sweden, who presented a paper on Soviet environmental degradation to the Washington-based National Security Information Center in June 1991.
12 Independent, 24 January 1992. The Independent on Sunday of 15 December 1991 contains a much more detailed account by Mark Hertsgaard of the secret ‘Mayak’ nuclear complex at Chelyabinsk; it mentions the cover-up by both Soviet and Western authorities of the nuclear disaster at the Mayak waste dump in 1957, during which around twenty million curies of radioactivity – four times the amount released at Hiroshima – were released into the local environment.
13 See Hertsgaard’s report, ibid., for details.
14 Hertsgaard, ibid.
15 Hertsgaard, ibid.
22 There are some penetrating observations of the consequences of this point for moral and political thought in Stuart Hampshire, Inocence and Experience, London: Penguin, 1989.
23 That human individuals are tokens of which forms of life are the types is argued in the last chapter of my book, Post-Liberalism: Studies in Political Thought, London: Routledge, 1993.
24 See my Post-Liberalism, ibid.
25 I have criticised the use of the Kantian conception of the person in recent Anglo-American political philosophy in my ‘Against the New Liberalism’, Times Literary Supplement, 3 July 1992.
26 See Chapter 3 of the present volume.
27 Ibid.
32 I have been concerned with the idea of progress, in the context of incommensurabilities among human goods and evils, in Chapter 20 of my Post-Liberalism, op. cit.
34 I have discussed Herder’s rejection of the melioristic interpretation of human history in my Post-Liberalism, op. cit., especially in chs 6, 20.
38 Lovelock, op. cit., p. 178.
39 Hardin, Nature and Man’s Fate, op. cit., pp. 289–90.
40 On this possibility, see Lovelock, op. cit., p. 178ff.
44 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 300.
46 For an excellent account of the introduction of poverty into Ladakh via development programmes which were animated by conceptions of modernisation, see Helena Norberg-Hodge, Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh, London: Rider, 1991.
47 This is a point well discussed by E.J. Mishan in his Costs of Economic Growth, London: Pelican, 1967.
49 G.K. Chesterton. The citation appears in Herman E. Daly, op. cit., p. 148. No source is given, but I believe that it comes from Chesterton’s book, The Outline of Sanity, London: Methuen, 1926.
51 The reference is to Feissbach’s study. See note 17, above.
52 I have argued, in Chapter 3 of this volume, that market socialism, as a ‘third way’ between capitalist and socialist institutions, is systemically unstable.
53 See Chapters 1, 3 of the present volume.
54 I have discussed reform of inheritance taxation in Chapter 1 of the present volume.
56 I believe that the idea of a negative capital tax was advanced by A.B. Atkinson but I have been unable to trace the source.
57 I have argued, in Chapter 3 of the present volume, that the current apparatus of the welfare state could in most countries be substantially dismantled, while the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable were satisfied better than at present.
58 See Chapters 1, 3 of the present volume.
59 Daly, op. cit., pp. 160–63.
61 Lovelock, op. cit., pp. 171, 110.
62 Lovelock, ibid., p. 173.
63 Lovelock, ibid., p. 174.
64 Lovelock, ibid., p. 178.
65 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 373.
67 Walker, ibid., p. 135.
68 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 291.
70 I owe these figures to Wolfgang Zuckerman’s The End of the Road, London: Lutterworth Press, 1991.
Index

abilities, natural 87
Accessions Tax 39, 40
agriculture policy 156–8
aid, economic 134
Alchian, A. 75
alienation 95
allowances, tax 41
altruism 79
Argentina 13
Aristotle 107
arts 42–3, 112–13
Aspinall, John 173–4
Austria 112, 122
Austrian School 68–9, 77, viii
autonomy 66–7, 78–9, 81; conditions for 81–2, 110–11; and government 3; as need 84, 100, 102; and property 14, 37, 74–5; and rights 82

Bagehot, Walter 21
Baker, Kenneth 2
banking 19, 22; central xii, 114; free 21, 23, 24
Barry, Norman 100
Bello, Hilaire 151, 153
Bentham, Jeremy 4
Berlin, Isaiah xiii, 34, 61, 77
Beveridge, W. H., 1st Baron 32
Bhutan 148
Bracewell-Milnes, Barry 41
Brennan, Geoffrey 20
Bretton Woods agreement 17
Brimehow, Peter 22–3
Brittan, Samuel 16, 22, 42–3, 112
Buchanan, James 4, 11, 19–20, 37, 42–3, 71–2, 99, 120
budget 11
building societies 19, 22
Burke, Edmund 7, 10, 47, 64, 124
Bush, George 9
‘calculation argument’ 68–9
Canada 9
capital: market socialism 44, 93–4; negative capital tax 153
capitalism: and growth 151–2; and market socialism 96, 97; transposition to post-communist countries 98–9
cars 158, 159–60
censorship 53
centralisation of government 2, 150
charities, and welfare provision 104
Charron, Pierre 64
Chelyabinsk 131
Chesterton, G. K. 151
Chicago School viii
child benefit 61
children 113 see also education: family
China, People's Republic of 126, 131–2, 143, 147
doctrine, freedom of 60, 100, 137
Churchill, Winston 47
cities 62, 111, 126, 134; policy 158–62
civil service 2

civil society 136–7; and government 1, 12–13, 45; liberal 55–9; and the market 51
coercion, freedom from 77–8
communism xii, 98–9, 147; health care 166; incentives 68, 74; and market socialism 44, 98; planning failure 52, 67–8, 72–4; positional goods 79–80; poverty 74, 76
community care 60–1, 106, 109
competition, currency 23–4
Congdon, Tim 19, 20
conservatism 46–50; and functions of