

Shades of Green Part I

by Richard Evanoff

Most people think of the Green movement as a monoculture in which everyone more or less thinks the same. Actually there is as much intellectual diversity in the Green movement as there is biological diversity in an Amazonian rainforest. Well, almost. Here's a primer on some of the various shades of green:

Light green. "Light greens" are people who think that environmental problems can be solved by working within the framework of our existing social, economic, and political structures. Their approach is essentially "reformist" rather than "revolutionary," because they believe modern representative "democracies" and transnational corporations can be influenced to become more environmentally responsible. The light green strategy is to lobby for tougher environmental laws, to work within the court system to enforce existing laws, and to try to persuade corporations to adopt more environmentally friendly practices. Many NGOs and citizens groups (though certainly not all!) fit into the light green category. The interests of light greens tend to be fairly narrow and specialized. NGOs tend to focus on single issues such as wildlife preservation, toxic wastes, or nuclear energy. Local citizen groups tend to be exclusively concerned about problems that affect their immediate communities. Reforms are often piecemeal and lack an overall vision. There are signs, however, that NGOs are beginning to link up with each other in a more comprehensive movement, and that citizens groups are starting to move away from a NIMBY (Not In My Back-Yard) approach to a NIABY (Not In Anybody's Back-Yard) approach.

Deep green. The phrase "deep ecology" was first coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1972. Whereas shallow ecology advocates preserving nature because it is beneficial to humans (i.e., nature has "instrumental" value), deep ecology advocates preserving nature because it has its own right to exist (i.e., nature has "intrinsic" value). Deep ecologists suggest that we need to move from an "anthropocentric" to a "biocentric" worldview. An anthropocentric worldview sees humans as the most important organisms in the universe; since humans are "superior," they have a right to manage, control, and dominate nature. A biocentric worldview, on the other hand, sees humans as part of nature; since humans are at the same level as everything else they do not have the right to manage, control, or dominate nature. Deep ecology is grounded in two fundamen-

tal ethical principles: (1) self-realization — every life form has a right to achieve its own fullest potential; and (2) biocentric equality — every life form is of equal importance. There is no particular reason why we should value butterflies over spiders, for example, or pandas over snakes. The organization Earth First! (which believes the earth rather than humans should be put first) was deeply influenced by deep ecology. Earth First!'s essential praxis is direct action, rather than political reform. If the laws, the courts, and corporations fail to protect wilderness areas, it is necessary for concerned citizens to take matters into their own hands. Earth First'ers have spiked trees, decommissioned bulldozers, and directly confronted loggers in an effort to protect wilderness areas from violence by human hands.

Black green. Black is the traditional color of anarchism, and anarchism has enjoyed something of a revival in the past two or three decades. Green anarchism has little to do, however, with the violence, terrorism, and social disorder that people usually think of when they hear the word "anarchism." Anarchism is a political philosophy developed in the nineteenth century by Pierre Proudhon, Michael Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin which holds, quite simply, that it is possible for human beings to live together in this world in a cooperative and civilized way without the need for nation-states. Modern nation-states are inherently hierarchical and dominating, and their primary function is not necessarily to "serve the people," but to keep our present capitalistic system, which is equally hierarchical and dominating, in place. Murray Bookchin, a contemporary anarchist thinker who has been influential in elaborating the school of environmental philosophy known as "social ecology," sees the domination of humans over nature and the domination of humans over humans as two sides of the same coin. If we had an economic system that was organized on the basis of satisfying genuine human needs rather than on the basis of generating more corporate profits, there would be no hierarchical division between rich and poor or between humans and nature. To give a concrete example, Brazilian settlers would not be presently burning down the Amazon rainforest if they had not been thrown off their original farmlands by the lords of agribusiness. In the same way that capitalism eventually supplanted feudalism, social ecology envisions a future world in which coercive nation-states and global capitalism have been supplanted by municipal assemblies based on face-to-face democracy and an economic system that provides for local and public control over the means of production.

"**Earth green.**" I hesitate using the phrase "earth green" to represent ecofeminism because there are many subshades within ecofeminist thought and no consensus on what the nature of women is or what the position of women on nature should be. What

unites ecofeminists, however, is the observation that the domination of humans over nature is inextricably linked to the domination of men over women. Some ecofeminists, such as Susan Griffin, have suggested that women are more "in tune with nature" than men, and therefore that feminine values (which emphasize nurturing) should replace masculine values (which emphasize domination). Other ecofeminists, such as Sally Miller Gearhart go further by arguing that "matriarchal" societies in which women have power over men should replace our present "patriarchal" societies. Some of the most interesting work in ecofeminism has been done by social ecologists. Janet Biehl and L. Susan Brown, for example, have suggested that associating women with nature merely perpetuates ancient stereotypes. Moreover, matriarchal societies would be just as repressive as patriarchal societies. The answer therefore lies in eliminating *all* forms of hierarchy and domination — between rich and poor, male and female, humans and nature. □

Next issue: red greens, blue greens, dark greens, and green greens.



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