

What are the limits to reform environmentalism? Rearticulating ecological modernisation towards ecologism

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Pessimistic accounts of ecological modernisation (EM) see its primary purpose as the reproduction of capitalist social relations. The world that ecological modernisation appears intent upon is one of dangerous climate change, 4°C or more warming and the continued expansion of market-based exploitative relations¹. More worryingly, EM indicates that future ecological politics directed at the productive core are likely to be co-opted and assimilated into the system. Does this mean, however, that Greens should adopt an anti-EM strategy, seeing it – as much as capitalism itself – as the enemy? Does EM’s co-optation of Green signifiers cement a somewhat ‘greened’ but still growth- and consumption-based capitalism as unassailable, sounding the death knell for *real* Greens? Or is the relation between EM and ecologism more complex? In short, how should Greens approach EM?

Several environmental political thinkers have argued for a complementary relationship between institutionalised environmentalism and radical Green politics. While recognising the former’s limits, Andrew Dobson claims that no antagonism, only a productive tension, exists between radical political ecology and reformism². Similarly, Douglas Torgerson³ views environmental institutionalisation as an achievement to be credited to the radical Green movement through its role in staking out the borders of the ‘green public sphere’. And John Barry invites Greens to engage positively in debates around ecological modernisation for strategic purposes, albeit while remaining conscious of its technocratic and reformist ‘business as usual’ approach⁴. Specifically, Barry invites radical Greens to jettison their limits to growth and no-growth outlooks and engage positively with ecological modernisation in the hope of shifting its emphasis on economic growth to economic security, redistribution and well-being. To constitute a strategic program for political ecology, however, Barry’s proposal requires additional elements. It needs to address how we get from national environment to global ecology, from consumer to Green citizen, and from industrialism to precautionary development. Further, Barry, Dobson and Torgerson all share with Mol and Spaargaren a faith in an ‘incremental radicalism’, rejecting materialist conceptions of capitalist production’s immutable core. They also downplay the legitimacy dividend that meagre but visible reforms deliver. Yet, however pessimistic current assessments are of EM, their

¹ J. B Foster, B. Clark, and R. York, “The Midas Effect: a Critique of Climate Change Economics,” *Development and Change* 40, no. 6 (2009): 1087–1088.

² Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 200–2.

³ “The Uncertain Quest for Sustainability: Public Discourse and the Politics of Environmentalism,” in *Greening Environmental Policy: The Politics of a Sustainable Future*, ed. Frank Fischer and Michael Black, 1st ed (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 16–17.

⁴ John Barry, “Towards a Model of Green Political Economy: From Ecological Modernisation to Ecological Security,” in *Global Ecological Politics*, ed. Liam Leonard (Emerald Group Publishing, 2010), 109–128.

position cannot simply be discarded. If there is a way in which EM might – eventually – be articulated towards genuine ecologism, it needs to be taken seriously. To that end, this paper attempts to elaborate Barry's strategic proposal as far as possible into genuine political ecology. Aided by Laclau and Mouffe's approach to hegemonic struggle⁵, it draws up a discursive-strategic roadmap of the key rearticulations necessary to challenge the ideology of growth, industrialism, consumerism and nationalism from within capitalism. Testing this program allows us to locate the main points of friction between radical and institutionalised environmentalism, and provides a clearer picture of how deep reformism may run.

The paper begins by outlining the discursive-ideological problematic EM presents to Greens. The three major Green responses, the *co-optive*, *complementary*, and *rearticulatory*, are then discussed. The rearticulatory position (chiefly espoused by Barry) is dealt with in detail. Christoff's weak/strong EM schema is applied to highlight several lacunae in Barry's argument, leaving us with four binary oppositions (and one master-binary) holding the 'greened' capitalism of EM in place. I translate Barry's strategic proposal – avoiding an anti-growth position while working to subvert growth – into Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, which offers a robust theoretical underpinning for the application of such a 'subversive rearticulation' strategy against EM in general. I select the Chinese market reforms of the Deng Era as a historical example of subversive rearticulation, which allow the details of subversive rearticulation to be fleshed out and visualised more concretely. The remainder of the paper constructs a feasible subversive rearticulation strategy for the four governing binaries and master-binary of EM. The central contribution of the paper is the proposed 'rearticulatory arcs', chains of signifiers that appear not to directly challenge the governing binaries – thus guarding against immediate marginalisation – all the while subverting the binaries themselves. It appears possible that ecologism can indeed make an entrance 'through the back door' of EM, via such a strategy.

How should Greens approach EM? Three positions

From a Laclauian discourse theory perspective, ecological modernisation is the articulation of the 'green' signifier to that of modernity – itself already a signifier of the sedimented capitalist ideological discourse. The formal difference between ecologism and EM is clear enough: in ecologism, Green becomes the nodal point, or master-signifier, while in EM capitalism remains the centre. Stavrakakis (reading Eckersley and Dobson through a Laclauian discourse approach) argues that the difference between ecologism and 'other discursive forms that include Green dimensions will be the location of the "Green" component. That is, whether it constitutes a nodal point or a single moment in the periphery of the articulatory chain'⁶. The very term ecological modernisation suggests as much: 'ecological' is the predicate attached to the subject 'modernisation' – ie it remains a green (*capitalist*) *modernisation* rather than a (capitalist) modern *Greening*.

It is this difference in location of the 'green' component that solely concerns us here; how Greens understand this difference will determine how they conceive of the political struggle against EM. This

⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Verso Books, 1985); Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Ernesto Laclau, *The Making of Political Identities* (Verso Books, 1994); Ernesto Laclau, "The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no. 3 (1996): 201–220, doi:10.1080/13569319608420738; Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996); Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

⁶ Yannis Stavrakakis, "Green Ideology: A Discursive Reading," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 2, no. 3 (1997): 262, doi:10.1080/13569319708420763.

is not to downplay the magnitude of the challenge. Genuine Green politics represents an ideological challenge to the direction of capitalist society, not merely a call for the smoothing over of its roughest edges. Ecopolitics is faced with a struggle between political ecology (for which ecology is a master-signifier gaining its meaning partially through its Other – dirty, destructive industry) and ecological modernisation (for which ‘green’ is merely one moment of a consumer-capitalist system)⁷. Yet this struggle does not take place on some discursive field akin to a Cartesian plane. As with any ‘positive’ identity, Green identity is constituted through its own limits, and these limits are social antagonisms. Can we comprehend Green politics *without* reference to the capitalist modernity that it opposes? Not according to Dobson⁸, Beck⁹, and Hajer¹⁰. As Laclau puts it, ‘because antagonisms constitute the limits of objectivity, they also have a decisive role in shaping the latter’¹¹. Thus, nor can industrial capitalism be comprehended without regard for its exteriority – an exteriority that is always being refreshed and renewed. Of course, this implies that the two identities themselves are continually under construction – not by each other, because as *antagonistic* discourses they are separated by an unsymbolisable void¹², but by those internal political projects that rely upon certain representations of the Other. Greens are only too aware of how ecologism’s advance is constantly hindered by its ‘natural’ suitability as an Other upon whose menace can be consecrated the goodness and naturalness of the dominant social order.

If working with EM means working *with* dominant ideology and trying to change it from within, Green political strategy needs to be focused on defusing the Otherness of the Green identity, without – in the longer term – resiling from its core ideological contents. What this implies is that rather than promoting ecologism *against* dominant ideological discourse, Greens must constructively work on the terrain of capitalist ideology, *while refashioning that very terrain*, subverting established binaries that have so effectively restricted Green discourse to the margins. The promise of this *subversive rearticulation* is that despite the stumbling block of co-optation, Greens can, through a carefully devised strategy, rearticulate EM away from its consumer-capitalist foundation towards genuine ecologism. Before we begin to demonstrate what such a rearticulatory strategy would look like, let us place it in the context of the three major Green positions regarding EM: co-optive, complementary, and rearticulatory.

1. Co-optive

EM can be seen to obstruct ecologism in that it saps the social and political momentum from the Green movement – *co-opting* its language (‘green’, ‘ecological’, ‘sustainable’) and imagery and making technical improvements without challenging the structural causes of ecological destruction. A hegemonic bloc of material and political interests seek to reclaim climate change for existing institutions

⁷ As Mouffe explains, hegemonic struggle, which ensues when discourses have different designs for a signifier, is in fact the normal labour of politics: ‘Ideological struggle in fact consists of a process of disarticulation-rearticulation of given ideological elements in a struggle between two hegemonic principles to appropriate these elements; it does not consist of the confrontation of two already elaborated, closed worldviews. Ideological ensembles existing at a given moment are, therefore, the result of the relations of forces between the rival hegemonic principles and they undergo a perpetual process of transformation’ Chantal Mouffe, ‘Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci,’ in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1979), 192–94..

⁸ *Green Political Thought*, 189–90.

⁹ *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, 1st ed. (Sage Publications Ltd, 1992), 40.

¹⁰ ‘Ecological Modernisation as Cultural Politics,’ in *Risk, Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology*, ed. S. Lash, B. Szerszynski, and B. Wynne (Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), 260.

¹¹ Ernesto Laclau, ‘Foreword,’ in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, ed. David J. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), xi.

¹² To paraphrase Lacan, ‘there is no Green-Modern relation’.

– incorporating it into their logics and vocabularies – so as to defuse its critical potential¹³. Eco-socialists and eco-anarchists are most likely to take such a view of EM. It echoes Frankfurt School pessimism about capitalism as a self-regulating totality whose only transformations occur through the operation of the system’s own internal logic, thus ensuring the continual expansion of this logic into further and further reaches of the social and ecological world¹⁴. As Hajer puts it (in what he calls the ‘technocratic project’ interpretation), EM is ‘much more the repressive answer to radical environmental discourse than its product’¹⁵. This strongly sceptical interpretation of EM detects ‘ideological’ operations quelling critique, because not only the natural sciences but the social sciences have been directed to preconceived policy goals as opposed to the analysis of the ‘immanent forces that keep the juggernaut running towards the apocalypse, so that it might be possible to steer it, or preferably to stop and dismantle it’¹⁶.

By articulating ‘green’ to the capitalist master-signifier; EM has succeeded in constructing an equivalence between the Green signifier and capitalism’s established moments of liberalism, consumerism, industrialism, nationalism, economism and growth. This has transformed the Green signifier into a vessel for the *metaphorical surplus* of capitalism¹⁷. By bringing Green signifiers into its orbit as carriers of the capitalist (ideological) metaphorical surplus, EM deepens this surplus and further enshrines the anti-ecological moments. EM is then seen to simply lock in a ‘greened’ version of business as usual, in which the proper interpretation of EM is as an attempt to manage the ‘irresolvable problems of ecological, social and normative unsustainability’, and thus ‘sustain the unsustainable’¹⁸. For these reasons, from the *co-optive* perspective Greens should consider EM an enemy.

2. Complementary

In the *complementary* position, the discursive space in which Green political thought is situated does not suffer from the radical exclusion identified by the *co-optive* theorists. The most prominent proponent of the *complementary* model is Andrew Dobson, whose assessment is that a sort of dialectic operates between ecologism and environmentalism through ecologism’s constitution of a ‘green public sphere’¹⁹; in fact, the institutionalisation and cultural suffusion of *environmentalism* is an achievement to be credited to *ecologism*. Nevertheless, environmentalism will not be enough. The complementary model sees environmentalism as a transitional strategy towards ecologism.

Torgerson²⁰ makes a similar case, though this time in relation to sustainable development discourse. The ideology of industrial and administrative progress – ideological in the sense that it is a discourse of closure admitting of no antagonistic discourses – had survived, in the century of world wars and the

¹³ Ben Glasson, “Gentrifying Climate Change: Ecological Modernisation and the Cultural Politics of Definition,” *M/C Journal* 15, no. 3 (March 5, 2012), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjjournal/article/view/501>.

¹⁴ I. Blühdorn, “Sustaining the Unsustainable: Symbolic Politics and the Politics of Simulation,” *Environmental Politics* 16, no. 2 (2007): 251–275; J.B. Foster, *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999); James O’Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998); A. Salleh, “Climate Strategy: Making the Choice Between Ecological Modernisation or Living Well,” *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, The no. 66 (2010): 118; R. York, E. A. Rosa, and T. Dietz, “Footprints on the Earth: The Environmental Consequences of Modernity,” *American Sociological Review* (2003): 279–300.

¹⁵ Hajer, “Ecological Modernisation as Cultural Politics,” 254.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 87.

¹⁸ Blühdorn, “Sustaining the Unsustainable.”

¹⁹ Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 200–202.

²⁰ “The Uncertain Quest for Sustainability: Public Discourse and the Politics of Environmentalism.”

Great Depression, through technological development alone. But the limits discourses of the 1970s constituted an attack on the last remaining vestige of progress. The so-called sustainable development ‘settlement’ between ecology and economy is not a renewal of progress in enlightened ecological stripes, but is precisely *about the reality of limits*. Thus, despite becoming institutionalised in the form of environmental managerialism, sustainable development bears the thumbprint of – and owes its very existence to – radical environmental critique. As he puts it:

The industrialist faith in progress offered a mode of closure to the world of public discourse: a form of ‘uncertainty absorption’ (March and Simon, 1958, pp. 164-5) which inhibited the serious consideration of alternatives to the conventional path of development. *By advancing a discourse of sustainability, environmentalism now provokes uncertainties with implications for the very shape of public life.* Although the dominant accent of the discourse on sustainability appears to fit comfortably with a technical administrative focus, with a cautiously incremental approach and with the steady advance of industrialization, *this discourse of sustainability also has the potential to disrupt the prevailing contours of public discourse. Central to the concern with sustainability, after all, there remain doubts about the very possibility of maintaining the conventional path of progress.*²¹

Far from foreclosing the possibility of institutional and democratic reform, Torgerson sees sustainable development as part of an ‘incremental radicalism’²² stimulating new forms of public participation in the previously apolitical techno-economic sphere. When social movements and administrative and industrialist institutions are exposed to each other, ‘the contention between incremental and radical approaches may be expected to have results that no single party could predict or control’²³. This last phrase is important because it echoes a very brief remark Torgerson makes earlier, subtly accusing radical ecogism of sharing industrialism’s teleological certainty, as in the original limits discourse which relied upon debunked computer forecasting. ‘Incremental radicalism’, on the other hand, ‘continues to accept the responsibility of critical judgement but – acknowledging the uncertainty of the quest for sustainability – gives up the presumptuous notion of somehow comprehensively controlling the future.’²⁴

In this dialogical interpretation, there is no reason to suspect that capitalist reproduction is assured through inoculation against radical critique. Together with post-Marxists who problematize the notion of social totality, the *complementary* model places its faith in the productive tension between different environmental discourses, so long as debate continues to flourish. It echoes Boggs’s suggestion that counterhegemonic success will involve a gradual shift toward a new political culture based on egalitarian, participatory principles, rather than a dramatic rupture. ‘Radical change in the West is most likely to occur through a dialectical interweaving of state and civil society instead of the “triumph” of one over the other’²⁵.

3. Rearticulatory

The *rearticulatory* model retains the Green insistence on the structural economic character of ecological destruction. While it shares something of the Frankfurt School pessimism regarding social

²¹ Ibid., 16. (Emphasis added).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 17.

²⁴ Ibid., 16.

²⁵ Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power: Emerging Forms of Radicalism in the West* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 243.

reproduction, this pessimism cannot be absolute because there is no social *totality* developing according to its own inner logic. It follows that, notwithstanding the immense co-optive abilities of capitalism – which Green strategy must be cognisant of – there is no *essential* limit to how far reform may run. The rearticulatory model has faith that EM can represent a first step in a long-term transition to ecologism. This transition can be attained through an astute – even shrewd – rearticulation of the terms that constitute ecopolitical debate. For Green political strategy, much turns on the prospect of this rearticulatory model. After outlining and analysing its specific claims, this section explores the rearticulatory moves needed to subvert EM for ecologism. It asks, is it really possible to simultaneously see EM as the co-opter of ecologism and nevertheless (temporarily) endorse it while working to undermine it? Can the *co-opted* co-opt the *co-opter*?

John Barry is the leading Green proponent of the *rearticulatory* model, which can be said to repudiate the ‘utopian’ Green position that ‘the only way to deal with ecological catastrophe’ is a ‘complete transformation of modern society and economy’²⁶. Against this ‘broadly radical Marxist/socialist or anarchist analysis’, Barry accepts the need to engage positively in debates around the now-dominant discourse of EM from a strategic and normative point of view, while remaining conscious of its downsides, particularly its ‘technocratic, supply-side and reformist “business as usual” approach’²⁷. Barry presents two justifications for his belief that ‘there are strategic advantages in seeking to build upon and radicalise ecological modernisation’. The first builds on Dryzek and colleagues’ conclusion that, to be accepted, Green aims must attach themselves to one of the state’s core imperatives: accumulation and legitimacy. In this context, Barry contends that EM ‘allows (some) green objectives to be integrated/translated into a policy language and framework which complements and does not undermine the state’s core growth imperative’²⁸. The second justification is that EM is a useful beginning because it evades the anti-growth or limits to growth legacy that has, in Barry’s opinion, held back radical ecologism and Green political economy. Embracing the benefits of ‘technological innovation, the role of regulation driving innovation and efficiency, the promise that the transition to a more sustainable economy and society does not necessarily mean completely abandoning current lifestyles and aspirations’ – a strategic advantage for democratic adoption of Green goals²⁹.

Barry proposes that ‘ecological modernisation can be framed within an overarching policy approach to sustainable development³⁰ aimed at producing “economic security” and “well-being” rather than orthodox “economic growth”’³¹. To oppose growth is far less strategically productive than to accept EM, for now, while working to shift the discourse away from economic growth to *economic security*. The route to this rearticulation of economy from growth to security takes place through the realisation that well-being, democracy, social and political stability, and even individual freedom have much stronger links with economic security than with economic growth, at least after a certain point that most

²⁶ Barry, “Towards a Model of Green Political Economy: From Ecological Modernisation to Ecological Security,” 110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 125–26.

³⁰ Sustainable development, for Barry, is the general category of which EM is the particular instantiation within Great Britain and some other European states. It has been variously watered down from the original, which he insists carried ‘explicit political bargains about limits and global justice built in, even in its relatively conservative versions’ *Ibid.*, 115.. At present, EM in the United Kingdom emphasises technological fixes, competitiveness, eco-efficiency, innovation, and productivity. Any tension between sustainable development and economic growth, industrial production and global capitalism is excluded from government rhetoric *Ibid.*, 113.

³¹ Barry, “Towards a Model of Green Political Economy: From Ecological Modernisation to Ecological Security,” 117.

advanced industrial nations are at or have passed³². It is not the difference between scarcity and affluence – ie the traditional growth versus limits to growth models – that matters, but economic security, which is dependent on economic redistribution³³. A universal, basic income is one such policy, which Greens have long advocated.

Barry envisages a wider redefinition of the terms of ecopolitical debate. As he puts it:

a shift away from ‘economic growth’ and orthodox understandings of ‘prosperity’ should be taken as an opportunity by green theory to *redefine basic political and economic concepts*. It asks us to consider the possibility that human freedom and a well-organised and well-governed polity does not depend, in any fundamental sense, on increasing levels of material affluence. Indeed, there may be a trade-off between democracy and orthodox economic growth and related government policy heavily or exclusively focused on improving material well-being.

34

Economic security and well-being are tightly linked for Barry, and should be at the centre of our efforts to work ‘through’ EM, offering a ‘more attractive and compelling’ way to overcome growth than the ‘(still prevalent) negative and often disempowering discourse of “limits to growth”’³⁵.

Disarticulating ‘green’ from capitalism

Translating Barry’s strategic program for the transition from EM to ecologism, we can identify two major rearticulatory moves. First, retaining the primacy of economy, but replacing the emphasis on economic growth with an emphasis on economic security and well-being. Second, integrating ecological objectives with social objectives, with a ‘social bottom line’. Below I analyse these and assess their prospects.

Barry sees the disarticulation of EM from economic growth and re-articulation to an ‘overarching policy approach to sustainable development’ aimed at economic security and well-being. It is to the latter also that Greens should articulate their version of economy, which for now remains wedded to a ‘limits to growth’ or a ‘no-growth’ outlook. Thus by positively engaging with EM, Greens may be able to steer the ecopolitical conversation away from the false binary of *growth/anti-growth* towards economic security and well-being. Thus, the way to oppose the current model of growth is not to oppose it directly, but indirectly: by shifting the major articulation of economy, growth, to security. This allows Greens to be pro-economy yet in a way that disarticulates growth and rearticulates it to quality of life and well-being. In other words, we subvert growth by being *pro-economy* while working on changing the *meaning* of the economy. We would take the discourse onto the territory of economic security through elaborating the signifiers of quality of life, well-being, democracy, freedom and political stability – all of which then refer back to economic security.

EM has articulated Green ideas to the capitalist master-signifier, appropriating the Green signifier into a vessel for the metaphorical surplus of (capitalist) modernity, and reinforcing the dispersal of its own (anti-ecological) moments. The test of Barry’s proposal in particular and the rearticulatory model in general will be whether or not it can disarticulate Green elements away from capitalist signifiers and

³² Ibid., 122–23.

³³ Ibid., 124–25.

³⁴ Ibid., 122.

³⁵ Ibid., 111–12.

renew their Green ideological authority. But what constitutes the ‘ideologisation’ of a signifier? In the *Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology*, Laclau states that in the shift from a technical measure to ideological change it is necessary that ‘a particular content shows itself as more than itself.’³⁶ He cites the example of a developing nation implementing a policy of nationalisation of basic industries. This measure would remain a technical economic device unless it incarnates something ‘more and different from itself’: for instance, the emancipation from foreign powers, or social justice for the excluded peoples within the nation. Ideology is as close as we come to closure. Discursive closure is impossible, and the position adopted by the profane element as it steps into its ideological role is always a means of dissimulating the impossible closure. This position is one which promises the absent fullness – the closure and transparency – of the discourse community. In our case, the de-technicalisation of Green and the recharging of its ideological potential implies propagating the metaphorical surplus of ecologism through the alignment of ‘green’ with a range of signifiers – egalitarianism, decentralisation, social justice, peace and non-violence, participatory democracy, and so on.

This move effectively constructs a new frontier around the Green signifier such that it may stand on its own ideological feet, so to speak. And in fact this is precisely what Barry has argued – the crucial need to articulate ecological demands with social demands. Particularly, ‘social and global justice, egalitarianism, democratic regulation of the market and the conceptual (and policy) expansion of the “economy” to include social, informal and non-cash economic activity and a progressive role for the state (especially at the local / municipal level)³⁷.

One of the reasons for focusing on the ‘social bottom line’ is to suggest that the distinctiveness and critical relevance of a distinctly ‘green’ (as opposed to ‘environmental’ or ‘ecological’) political economy will increasingly depend on developing a political agenda around these non-environmental/resource policy areas as states, businesses and other political parties converge around the ecological modernisation agenda of reconciling the environmental and economic bottom lines. It is in developing a radical political agenda around the social bottom line (without of course losing sight of the environmental and economic dimensions) that green political economy needs to focus.

38

In general terms, the essence of Barry’s proposal is to eschew a strategy of resistance towards capitalism (which EM has made ‘green’ a moment of) and adopt a reformist strategy. Barry wants to re-articulate economy with security and well-being, disarticulating it from economic growth. At the same time, he wants to align ‘Green’ with social goals such as social justice and egalitarianism. Contrast this with the radical Green rejection of any articulation of ecology with capitalism. Barry hopes to strategically work from the incorporated ‘green’ moment of capitalist discourse to firstly, rearticulate capitalism from economic growth to economic security, and secondly, articulate this moment with social demands of redistribution, egalitarianism and democratic control of the market. Progressively, then, Barry’s strategy would construct a chain of equivalence between: Green demands; demands for economic security; demands for social justice – in such a chain all terms would resonate as metaphors for all of the others, with ‘Green’ standing as the privileged element, the master-signifier representing the field as a

³⁶ Laclau, “The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology,” 206.

³⁷ Barry, “Towards a Model of Green Political Economy: From Ecological Modernisation to Ecological Security,” 111.

³⁸ Ibid.

whole. This discursive formation will be complete when the relation between the terms shifts from a metaphorical relation to a metonymical relation.

Further rearticulatory moves

This is all very well as a strategic subversion of the (inevitably costly) battle on the turf of growth/limits to growth, and it may well be plausible. Yet beyond social justice and economic security, the path from EM to ecologism contains further points of severe tension. First, Barry's proposition is incomplete for our purposes because it remains wedded to the carving up of the planetary ecosystem along nation-state political lines. His Green republicanism is ambiguous about issues of scale. Second, Barry retains a one-sided faith in techno-scientifically driven development. The powerful post-war association of science with instrumentalism must be challenged without completely undermining scientific accounts of ecological deterioration. The articulation between technology and progress needs to be wound back – without this it is very difficult to articulate a precautionary-principle view of the social place of technological development. Third, Barry's proposal seems reluctant to directly challenge the notion of the individual as *homo economicus* or as rational manager of natural resources, replacing them with new conceptions of Green subjectivity.

While there are any number of combinations of rearticulatory moves that may transform EM into ecologism, any rearticulatory program must find a way to combat the governing binaries that have traditionally thwarted Green discursive struggle. The four that I have derived including growth/no-growth are based on the frontiers most manifest in US, UK and Australian climate discourse:

- Economic growth vs no-growth
- Nation-state vs planet
- Industrialism vs precautionary development
- Consumer vs Green citizen

The most influential discussion of the EM problematic is Christoff's 'weak'/'strong' schematisation (1996). Significant differences will be discussed a little later, but for now it is fair to say that the manner Christoff schematises *strong* EM is generally not inconsistent with how I have 'cut the cake' of ecologism.

*Types of Ecological Modernisation*³⁹

Weak EM	Strong EM
Economistic	Ecological

³⁹ Note that these pairs are not all 'mutually exclusive' binaries, for Christoff. He suggests that 'technological change, economic instruments or instrumental reason' are not to be abandoned 'in favour of institutional and systemic change or communicative rationality'. Technocratic or neo-corporatist approaches *are* in a mutually exclusive binary with deliberative and open systems. Yet on the whole it is not that the oppositions should be inverted, but that the weak-EM terms need to be 'subsumed into and guided by the normative dimensions of strong EM' "Ecological Modernisation, Ecological Modernities," *Environmental Politics* 5, no. 3 (1996): 491.. So it is clear that even to move from weak to strong EM requires the shift from a state-based technocentric and economistic perspective to an international, deliberative institutional perspective.

	National	International
	Technological (narrow)	Institutional/systemic (broad)
	Instrumental	Communicative
Technocratic/neo-corporatist/closed		Deliberative democratic/open
Unitary (hegemonic)		Diversifying

40

While Christoff’s emphasis is on how to strengthen and radicalise EM, my aim is how we might move from EM to ecologism. We both agree that the nation-state paradigm must be transcended, though Christoff’s *international* frame remains state-centric when ecologism is more consistent with a *planetary* frame. A *global* frame would be an improvement, but even this is not enough to distinguish between global society and the global biosphere, which necessarily includes society as biospheric actors. A properly ecological conception of the Earth may better adhere to the signifiers ‘planet’ and ‘planetary’. Excluding for the moment Christoff’s first binary – economistic/ecological – and his last binary – unitary (hegemonic) / diversifying – the remaining oppositions he mentions are broadly consistent with my ‘industrialism/precautionary development’ and ‘consumer/citizen’. Juxtaposing these elements or oppositions, we can see their affinity:

Weak EM	Strong EM		EM	Ecologism
Technological (narrow)	Institutional/systemic (broad)	↔	Industrialism	Precautionary development
Instrumental	Communicative			
Technocratic/neo-corporatist/closed	Deliberative democratic/open	↔	Consumer	Green citizen
Unitary (hegemonic)	Diversifying			

I argue for an enhanced citizenship tied to a discourse of precautionary development, whereas Christoff contends that strong EM overhauls institutions and systems guided by communicative action in open, deliberative fora. Christoff’s categories of ‘communicative’ and ‘deliberative democratic/open’ significantly overlap. Yet ‘precautionary development’ assumes a deliberative space in which a revitalised citizenry – rather than a technocracy – can debate the relative merits of particular developmental decisions. In some ways, Christoff’s category of ‘institutional/systemic (broad)’ is implied in my proposed reararticulation of EM to ecologism, given the broad changes necessitated by that transition.

Unitary (hegemonic) / Diversifying?

There are two major differences between Christoff’s and my approach. The first reflects the differing conception of the destination: ecologism or strong EM. Christoff’s strong EM remains supply-side in that nowhere does it imply the curtailing of consumption. Moreover, it does not directly address

⁴⁰ Ibid., 490.

economic growth or redistribution – the difference between ‘economistic’ and ‘ecological’ (his first binary) does not preclude continued economic growth and wealth concentration. In these aspects it remains firmly within ‘classic’ ecological modernisation theory built around the assumption that supply-side refinements can disembed economy from ecology. This, problematically, places little in the way of the extension of the social inequities and systemic crises of capitalism. And in this respect the contrast with ecologism – which determinately isolates distributive justice and non-materialistic well-being as key elements of its ideological core – is clear. And it is here that we rub up against the second distinction between ecologism and EM of *any* variety. Ecologism is a distinct political ideology, whereas (strong) EM’s professed ‘openness’ is what has enabled it to (at least appear to) bridge neoliberal economics and scientific ecology, to ‘transcend’ ideologies. The irony of course is that not only does EM contain a disavowed ideological core, but that its openness invites the same problems as the openness of liberal thought – i.e. it too easily dovetails with the openness (that is, ‘neutrality’) of atomisation, globalisation, marketization (forces whose imperial ‘universalism’ reveals the true meaning of ‘openness’).

Economistic/ecological, or capitalist/Green?

As Dobson puts it, Green politics ‘seeks explicitly to decentre the human being, to question mechanistic science and its technological consequences, to refuse to believe that the world was made for human beings’⁴¹, an essentially promethean view. This suggests that above and beyond the elements surveyed, Greens take issue with something more, something *cosmological*, that goes to the core of human-nature relations. Is this the *structuring lack* that holds the respective ideological fields of ecologism and capitalism together? We can delineate the elements of the capitalist cosmology: It is constituted by science (we are separate from nature and can know it objectively), reinforced by industrialism (we can control nature and direct it to our ends; we are superior) and commodity fetishisation (consumption), ideologised by humanism and the Judeo-Christian mythos, teleologised by (capitalist) ‘modernity’. But taken together do these elements not suggest some unspoken core, some structuring lack that the capitalist master-signifier stands in for? Ultimately, it is this unspoken core that must be overturned and replaced by a new core of human *embeddedness* in nature. Yet this cosmological *embeddedness* is not exhausted by the signifiers of the Green discourse – just as cosmological ‘Prometheanism’ is not exhausted by the signifiers of the Modern discourse. It is the regularity of dispersal of the ideological elements, and the crucial role of the master-signifier in maintaining this regularity that enables the circulation of the metaphorical surplus of all elements into and through the discursive field *qua* field. It is this that allows the ideology to show *what is in it more than itself*, the *objet a* of Lacanian discourse. It is this ‘beyond’ that allows a discourse to furnish objects with value. Whereas economism ascribes value to material throughput, ecologism assigns value (which essentially means recognising, making intelligible) to all living things, whether ‘productive’ or not. Thus we can see that Christoff’s ‘economistic/ecological’ binary is not one binary among others, but stands above them; it is equivalent to the wholesale discursive-ideological shift between EM and ecologism. ‘The economy’, a codeword for ‘capitalism’ or ‘market’, is not an object per se but the condition of the intelligibility of all objects. It is the master-signifier that holds in place the capitalist discourse and the metaphorical surplus or ‘beyond’ that naturalises its significations and makes others appear irrational – or occludes them altogether.

⁴¹ Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 7.

How do we ultimately change this core? Do we have to take it head on? No. Remember that a dialectic exists between the master-signifier or structuring principle and the terms that surround it. In practice this means that one can promulgate the master-signifier as master-signifier, or one can propagate the discursive moments which depend upon that master-signifier, and then create the master-signifier in that method. The idea is that this master-signifier shift that can obtain *retroactively* when a critical mass of other elements have substantively been detached from the capitalist discourse and *articulated together* in a chain of equivalence. The master-signifier simply acts as a pole of condensation for the metaphorical surplus of all the individual moments, then retroactively becomes the name of the emerging field as such.

Indeed, it is this retroactive constitution of the Green master-signifier that justifies the strategic decision to (initially) work with EM (rather than oppose it), as well as the rearticulatory strategy in general. As we will see in the next section, rearticulatory strategy demands scrupulously avoiding waging this battle directly. Thus while we can say that Barry's program does not go far enough in relation to the three 'missing elements', the strategy is only really going to be complete once a 'critical mass' of articulations enables the retroactive constitution of the Green master-signifier. As we already saw in relation to growth/no-growth, the binaries that lock out Green ideology (nation-state vs planet; industrialism vs precautionary development; consumer vs Green citizen) may be able to be subverted rather than confronted, provided the appropriate *rearticulatory tactics* (tactics Barry already devised in relation to growth). If they are effective enough, these *tactical rearticulations* can together comprise the broader *rearticulatory strategy* aimed at the capitalist master-signifier and capitalist ideology itself.

Subversive rearticulatory strategy

Barry's belief that 'EM allows (some) green objectives to be integrated/translated into a policy language and framework which complements and does not undermine the state's core growth imperative' is not particularly inspiring because, as he admits, consumption and growth go more or less unquestioned⁴². Yet the great promise of a rearticulatory strategy is that it may be able to subvert seemingly entrenched binary oppositions by deliberately *not* addressing them head-on, but by forging a series of articulations that describe an *arc* first away from the binary and then, cumulatively, change course such that we arrive at the prohibited term without having to 'cross the bar' of the binary directly. Subversive rearticulation is not, in a sense, new to ecological politics. It is arguably already present in the naming of ecological modernisation. 'Modernisation' here comes to subvert the binary that had structured existing environmental debates – between (negative, limits-based) environmentalism and (material) 'development'. It is clear that the very conditions of existence of EM as discourse are the subverting of this binary. As Dobson but particularly Torgerson suggests, the disputed meaning of ecology in the discourse of ecological modernisation (and sustainability in sustainable development) indicates that we are not dealing with a closed discursive field, much less one closed around consumer-capitalist EM.

Let us make the principle of subversive rearticulation quite clear by explaining its operation through a historical example. This will be followed by a discussion of proposed rearticulatory 'arcs'. Before we do, though, we should assuage any suspicions that the focus on discursive rearticulation is premised upon an idealist view of the social. Because the (materialist) theoretical basis of the post-Marxism

⁴² Barry, "Towards a Model of Green Political Economy: From Ecological Modernisation to Ecological Security," 125.

espoused by Laclau and Mouffe (and others) is so often misinterpreted – not only by their critics – it is worth citing in some detail where they stand in relation to Marxian materialism. In the context of a discussion of the genealogy of their discourse theory, they contend that:

the practice of articulation, as fixation/dislocation of a system of differences, cannot consist of purely linguistic phenomena; but must instead pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured. The recognition of this complexity, and of its discursive character, began to beat an obscure path in the terrain of Marxist theorisation. Its characteristic form was the progressive affirmation, from Gramsci to Althusser, of the material character of *ideologies*, inasmuch as these are not simple systems of ideas but are embodied in institutions, rituals and so forth. What did, however, become an obstacle for the full theoretical unfolding of this intuition was that, in all cases, it was referred to the field of *ideologies*; that is, to formations whose identity was thought under the concept of ‘superstructure’. It was an a priori unity vis-à-vis the dispersion of its materiality, so that it required an appeal either to the unifying role of a class (Gramsci), or to the functional requirements of the logic of reproduction (Althusser). But once this essentialist assumption is abandoned, the category of articulation acquires a different theoretical status: articulation is now a discursive practice which does not have a plane of constitution prior to, or outside, the dispersion of the articulated elements.⁴³

Disarticulation and rearticulation as discursive or ideological struggle is *not* concerned with the transformations and recombinations of conceptual matrices – as a postmodern culturalist perspective may be. Ideas and signifiers do not participate in discursive-historical struggle; as Marx notes, they have little or no independent historical power in themselves⁴⁴. Rather, what it is what these ideas and signifiers enable social actors to legitimately *do* that makes them so central to history. Rearticulatory discursive strategy aims to build the legitimacy of certain notions and decisions, and undermine the legitimacy of other notions and decisions.

Subversive rearticulation: The Chinese market reform example

Articulatory structures are the contours of the field of discursive struggle – of debate, deliberation, argument, consent. To illustrate how a binary can be subverted by rearticulation, let us examine the example of the astonishing political-ideological rearticulation in which capitalism was resuscitated from a position of radical exclusion, and effectively brought into the centre of Chinese ‘Communist’ discourse, without amounting to a challenge to ‘Communism’.

Up until about 1920, a variety of flavours of socialist thought circulated in Chinese society, such as anarchist-socialism. From the 1920s to the 1970s socialism was almost exclusively identified with the CCP. Maoist ideology enshrined a firm link between the Party, communism, and socialism – and a virulent opposition to capitalism. Yet Deng’s faction was able to persuade the Party, and gain popular support, for free-market capitalist measures. Today Deng’s term, ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’, stands for a form of capitalism that is useful to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The Communist regime became the creator and protector of Chinese capitalism, such that today the enemy of the Chinese state is in fact socialism, not capitalism, because socialism has been freed from its association with official political despotism⁴⁵.

⁴³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 109.

⁴⁴ *The German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 69–70.

⁴⁵ Maurice J. Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: an Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994* / Maurice Meisner., 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), xii.

So, how was such an ideological about-face achieved all the while retaining the official label of ‘Communism’? Deng Xiaoping rose to power in 1978 championing ‘socialist democracy’, promising to revitalise the socialist goals of the Communist Revolution and to democratise the People’s Republic⁴⁶. Under Deng, China enacted an elaborate and comprehensive new economic policy, embracing markets and opening itself to world trade. The transformation in ideology, ideas, policy, law, institutions, knowledge and experience took great faith and courage – it required a clear view of the reality – ‘that the maintenance of the status quo in centrally planned China in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution meant continued backwardness, vulnerability and eventually instability in a rapidly developing East Asia and changing world’⁴⁷. In a tour of southern China, seen as an attempt to stoke the fires of economic reform, Deng argued that the criteria for judging reforms should transcend capitalism and socialism. And Jiang Zemin claimed in 1992 that ‘it is baseless and incorrect for some people to argue that a larger role for the market would mean going capitalist’⁴⁸. From a discourse perspective it was ‘modernisation’ that enabled the Party to subvert the governing ideological binary and embrace capitalism. In the Mao era, Zhou Enlai had already been championing the modernisation of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and defence⁴⁹. ‘Modernisation’ itself was grounded by the emergence of the discourse proclaiming that the real enemy was not capitalism but ‘feudalism’. ‘Modernisation’ bears no allegiance to either communism or capitalism, being espoused by both – and does not provide a direct challenge to CCP ideology. At the same time, however, ‘modernisation’ can be articulated to decidedly non-Communist concepts – and from there it is not far to capitalism itself.

In Deng’s terms, this was ‘fording the river by feeling the stones at each step’ (attrib.) – i.e. there was no ideological basis for market reforms and international integration. It was made possible by Deng’s control of the CCP and the People’s Liberation Army, but also others’ confidence that he stood firmly for continued Party political dominance and ‘commitment to some *undefined minimum core* of socialist principles and objectives’⁵⁰. It is this ‘minimum core’, the surplus of the master-signifier that remains, even when detached from its constitutive elements, that enables ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ to circumvent its own governing binary – to disarticulate ‘Communism’ from anti-capitalism, to subvert the capitalism-communism binary altogether. Importantly, this is not a dialectical transcendence of the binary in the form of ‘modernisation’, because it is too one-sided – the little that remains of socialism is not substantive. Nor is it a deconstruction of the binary, because it ceases at the point of reversal – a reversal that still goes under the name of the dominant term.

To construct the diagonal we initially need a ‘pivot term’ to shift the discourse away from the field dominated by the communism/capitalism binary. If the pivot term favours one or the other pole of the binary, the binary logic is invoked and the diagonal collapses. The pivot term should initially appear neutral – as did the term at the centre of the Deng Era discursive strategy, ‘modernisation’. The original binary remains (in fact both are variously ‘alive’ and flickering), yet once the diagonal achieves dominance in a given discursive scene the binary becomes subordinate, a re-routing occurs.

⁴⁶ Ibid., ix.

⁴⁷ Ross Garnaut, “Twenty Years of Economic Reform and Structural Change in the Chinese Economy,” in *China: Twenty Years of Economic Reform*, ed. Ross Garnaut and Ligang Song (Asia Pacific Press, National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University, 1999), 5.

⁴⁸ Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 7.

⁴⁹ Garnaut, “Twenty Years of Economic Reform and Structural Change in the Chinese Economy,” 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4, emphasis added.

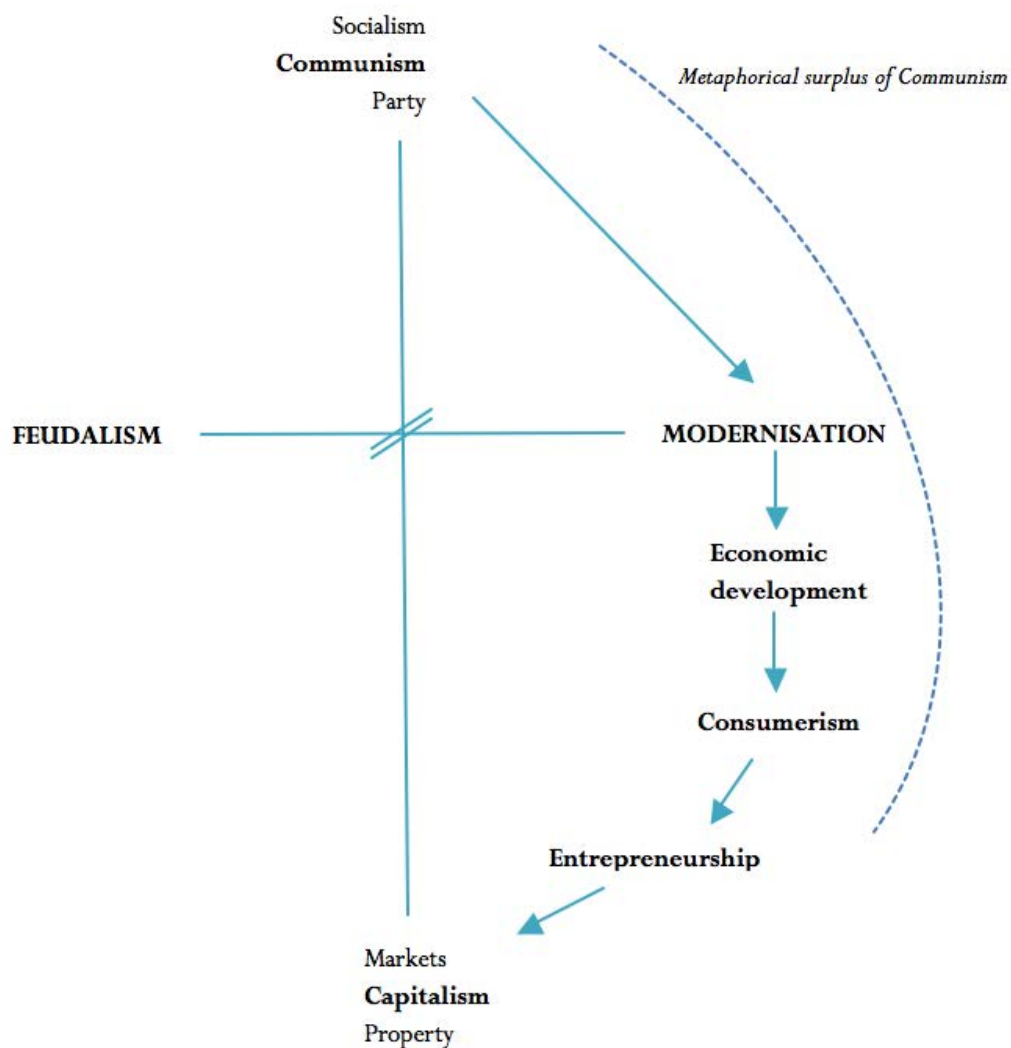
Communism begins to achieve its identity not from opposition to capitalism, but in opposition to non-modernisation (which found its synonym in ‘feudalism’, in the Deng discourse).

It is via this discursive diagonal that we are able to begin to subvert the original binary. Communism and modernisation become united in a chain of equivalence, just as do capitalism and ‘feudalism’. Modernisation then takes on some of the metaphorical surplus of communist discourse. Now, because modernisation is related metonymically to economic development, economic development can exist within the chain of equivalence that bears the metaphorical surplus of communism. And if economic development can, then via the same route (along the same chain of equivalence) we can have free markets – or consumerism or entrepreneurship. As far as we extend the chain of equivalence we broaden the metaphorical surplus of communism, so a modernisation involving free markets and open trade relations is not really capitalist at all. In this way we have been able to arrive at capitalism without attempting to directly overturn the communism/capitalism binary. The important point is that we still have, the ‘undefined minimum core of socialist principles and objectives’⁵¹, in effect the empty signifier of communism that now serves little other function than suturing Chinese ideological discourse⁵².

Subversive rearticulation is a kind of *categorical circuit-switching*. The Maoist discourse is structured around a communism/capitalism opposition, a structural (binary) proscription against capitalism. For anything strongly articulated to capitalism (such as free markets) to appear on the communist side of binary requires reversing the communism/capitalism opposition. It is impossible to reverse the binary directly – but it is possible to construct a chain of articulations that can diagonally traverse this opposition. The third term, ‘modernisation’ first subverts the binary, and then reverses it. Through this term, we can actually get to a capitalism (which was formerly the ‘enemy of the state’) without directly negating the socialism that remains affirmed at the heart of Chinese state ideology.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² What happens to communism in this sequence? Once previously capitalist terms are populated by communism, doesn’t it imply that communism is ‘deconstructed’? No, we do not have to go that far. Communism is merely revealed as being split against itself. Capitalism is revealed to in fact *be* communism, that which we formerly thought it owed its identity to *in opposition*. The One and the Other are not divided by an easily identifiable barrier any longer – they never were, but it takes such a sequence as this, to reveal the splitness and the contradiction at the heart of ideology in *every case*. Thus, the One is not ‘communism’, but this is not to say that it is ‘capitalism’, either; the One was always split against itself.



From EM to ecologism via ‘well-being’: Rearticulatory arcs

Our endeavour is to pursue just such a subversive rearticulatory strategy for each of the binaries that support the EM/ecologism master-binary: growth/no-growth; industrialism/precautionary development; nation-state/planet; consumerism/anti-consumerism. Each discursive front requires its own specific tactics, its own pivot term, diagonal and rearticulatory arc. To clarify, the *pivot term* is the first term that subverts the binary-structured field. It initiates a *diagonal*, which if augmented carefully may ‘loop’ around in an arc, arriving at the subordinate term without have directly crossed the bar governing the binary. Taken together, these articulations comprise a *rearticulatory arc*. The master-signifier will follow its own rearticulatory arc, helping to ensure the coherency of the overall discursive-ideological trajectory.

Clearly, EM is not a neutral term between capitalism and ecologism – its balance of articulations lay heavily on the capitalist side. Capitalism-EM-Ecologism does not constitute a satisfactory rearticulatory arc because the binary between (capitalist) EM and ecologism remains. It itself must be subverted. But what pivot term will serve this purpose? The master-signifier itself cannot be imposed but emerges from the field itself as the term that stands in for the systematicity of the discourse itself (and thereby partially empties itself of its own particular content). After pursuing rearticulatory arcs for the four

binaries, the term that emerged as the most likely to serve this role, in the intervening stage between EM and ecologism, was ‘well-being’.

Well-being appears a very apt contender for this role. Not only does Barry link it to economic security in his proposal, it is a guiding impulse in Tim Jackson’s work⁵³, and it links together the very similar Green notions of the ‘Good Life’⁵⁴ and of ‘Living Well’⁵⁵. It is the ‘picture of the Good Life that the political ideology of ecologism paints for us’ that marks ecologism off from other political ideologies as well as from ‘light-green environmentalism’, for Dobson⁵⁶.

While most post-industrial futures revolve around high-growth, high-technology, expanding services, greater leisure, and satisfaction conceived in material terms, ecologism’s post-industrial society questions growth and technology, and suggests that the Good Life will involve more work and fewer material objects.

57

‘Living Well’, or ‘*buen vivir*’, is a notion introduced at the People’s Climate Summit in Bolivia in 2010. It marks out ‘a rhetorical contrast between high energy polluting economies of the industrial ‘North’ and low carbon eco- sufficient provisioning models in the global “South”’⁵⁸. Salleh appears to endorse its prospects as a pivot term, subverting the ‘politico-economic divide between Left and Right’ for an ‘ecological divide’ of which the defining dimension is ‘acceptance or rejection of ecological modernisation’⁵⁹. Indeed, ‘Living Well’ has some existing basis in (Australian) Green discourse. ‘Organisations such as Rising Tide, Socialist Alliance, and Friends of the Earth, combine sustainability with global justice, and acknowledge the rationality of Living Well’⁶⁰. From a strategic point of view, this suggests the practical relevance of Living Well as a signifier central to Green political strategy.

The broad outline of the rearticulatory arc, then, involves four stages:

Capitalist modernity

Ecological modernisation

Well-being

Ecologism

These terms stand as the master-signifiers of each stage, enabling us to transition between capitalist modernity, through ecological modernisation, to ecologism – without ever having sought to directly resist either capitalist modernity or ecological modernisation.

The same form is exhibited by each of the four rearticulatory arcs. For instance:

⁵³ “Where Is the ‘Wellbeing Dividend’? Nature, Structure and Consumption Inequalities,” *Local Environment* 13, no. 8 (2008): 703–723; *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet* (Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁴ Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 201.

⁵⁵ Salleh, “Climate Strategy.”

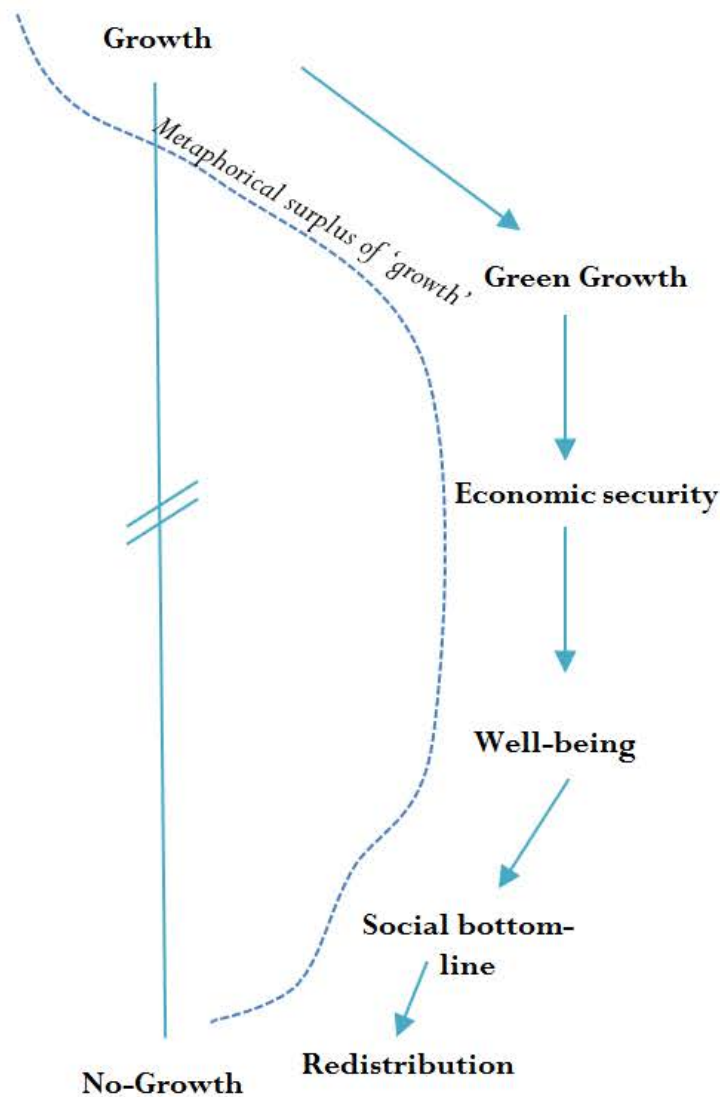
⁵⁶ *Green Political Thought*, 77.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁸ Salleh, “Climate Strategy,” 118.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*



Thus the overall strategy can be visualised as four such arcs operating in parallel, with the master-arc at the ‘centre’ of this arrangement. It is these four supporting binaries and their reararticulatory arcs that we now explore in some detail.

From growth/no-growth to economic security

The minimal contribution of EM to the discourse around economic growth is to articulate ‘green’ to ‘growth’. As the Stern Report put it, ‘we can be “green” and grow. Indeed, if we are not “green”, we will eventually undermine growth, however measured’⁶¹. But this is the result of bringing ‘green’ into the capitalist discourse as one element among others, and clearly subordinate to ‘growth’. If Greens are to succeed in undermining growth’s hegemony, they, as we know, will not do it by being seen to be anti-growth. How then are they to do it?

Barry has already proposed the first step with his suggestion that we should shift the debate from one between economic growth and no-growth to economic security. Economic security is agnostic between growth and no-growth, and it plays into the state imperative of security – this ensures it will

⁶¹ Nicholas Stern et al., *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, vol. 30 (London: HM Treasury, 2006), iv.

be admitted to the debate. Yet the real value of the ‘economic security’ signifier is as a pivot term that can begin to diagonally subvert the growth/no-growth binary. Economic security can itself be articulated to egalitarianism, distributive justice, and specific measures such as a guaranteed minimum income. Greens should never allow themselves to be overtly anti-growth, but if they elaborate the discourse of economic security and well-being, constructing articulations with redistribution and so on, the logical implication will be that growth undermines economic security. The field has been rearticulated such economic security, distributive justice, and well-being line up on one side, while growth finds itself isolated in opposition to this newly forming chain of equivalence. Growth has been able to be displaced from its dominant position precisely by avoiding confronting it directly.

From industrialism to precautionary development

As Dobson points out in relation to both socialism and capitalism, ‘... it is undoubtedly a central feature of ecologism that it identifies the ‘super-ideology’ of industrialism as the thesis to be undermined’⁶². Whether the construction of an ‘ecotourism’ resort in Brazil, the launch of a hi-technology consumer gadget in the US, or the opening of a new copper mine in Mongolia, in public and official discourses the ideological master-signifier of industrialism casts upon virtually all technological development a virtuous, teleological brilliance. In this inscription, the constitutive outside of industrialism (mercenary, rapacious) sutures industrial development to benevolent progress, expelling the undesirable side of its character. As a result, ecological despoliation is rendered somewhat illegible, existing only as the disavowed underside of industrialism.

Industrialism is built out of three major components: science, technology, administration, and it profits from their respective fantasmatic components. The fantasy of scientific ideology accords a metaphysical status to the scientific mastery of mechanical nature (cf.⁶³). In turn, technology and technologisation are sanctioned as science’s *raison d’être*. It is as if by unlocking the secrets of nature, humankind has been bestowed the sacred right to adapt nature to its own needs. Within EM at least, this process is framed by governmental oversight, the state holding the tiller and maintaining ‘monological administrative’ order⁶⁴ while technoscientific development pulls the oars. The fantasmatic structure of industrialism, then, is four-fold:

Industry – benevolent – commercial exploitation of science and technology

Technology – benevolent, virtuous – application of science

Science – benevolent, virtuous – unlocking the secrets of nature

Administration – neutral – maintaining order and purpose

In ecological modernisation we see a rearticulation of the industrialist master-signifier, a shift from unfettered industrialism to the ‘green’ industrialism of clean energy, recycling, and pollution-prevention pays. This ‘green industrialism’, as one element of the system of ecological modernisation, is already a first step in a rearticulatory arc away from industrialism *qua* industrialism. Effectively, what it has done is articulate a ‘green’ signifier to the discourse of industrialism.

⁶² Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 22.

⁶³ Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18ff.

⁶⁴ Douglas Torgerson, *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 1999), 20.

Ecological modernisation, by ‘greening’ industrial development reconstituted the discursive field from one structured around industrialism itself (with its sanctioning of the unmitigated progress inherent in techno-scientific development) to one structured around a ‘green industrialism’ and ‘green technocentrism’. Industrialism remains at the centre of this field, but now it is tinged with green. The governing binary is now between a ‘green’ techno-scientific industrialism and its Other, a backwardness that cannot even count ecological virtue on its side; progress is now inscribed as industrial *and* ecological.

Industry – benevolent – commercial exploitation of science and technology

Technology – benevolent, virtuous – application of science

Science – benevolent, virtuous – unlocking the secrets of nature

Administration – neutral – maintaining order and purpose

Green – ecologically sound

Our challenge is to invert the relation such that Green is the master-signifier, defusing the ideological contents of industrialism such that science, technology and industry (or development) become moments of the Green master-signifier. Again, we should avoid a direct confrontation lest we tempt the charge of Ludditism, and find ourselves snared within industrialist discourse itself. Instead, subversive rearticulation offers the prospect of overcoming industrialism through a rearticulatory arc that circumvents the binary altogether.

A possible starting point is to construct a diagonal between industrialism to democracy. Democracy is, after all, a term that bears no allegiance to either industrialism or its other. ‘Democratic development’ introduces a new, powerful argument into the debate around development, and suggests, indeed implies, that technology is not an unadulterated good. We might also articulate a ‘social progress’. Again, ‘social’ is not a term that belongs to either element of the opposition. The kinds of discursive moves that ‘social progress’ opens up is to use its other – ‘anti-social progress’, or in the case of ‘democratic development’, ‘anti-democratic development’ – to critique particular technological or industrial developments (and problematize industrialism in general).

Both of these terms, democratic development and social progress, could be bolstered by the introduction into Green discourse of a concept of ‘vulnerability’, which itself destabilises the sedimented humanistic notions of autonomy and transcendence⁶⁵. Vulnerability is a key component of precautionary development, and the already-established precautionary-principle discourse can articulate to ‘social progress’ and ‘democratic development’ to subvert industrialism – while avoiding being radicalised as anti-development.

From nation-state to planet

‘Ecologism makes the earth as physical object the very foundation-stone of its intellectual edifice’, writes Dobson⁶⁶, and ‘rests a large part of its case on the belief that environmental degradation has taken on a global dimension’⁶⁷. This is in stark contrast to all other modern political ideologies, in which the Earth has remained invisible ‘either due to its very ubiquity or because these ideologies’

⁶⁵ See John Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability: Human Flourishing in a Climate-Changed, Carbon Constrained World* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2012), 74–76.

⁶⁶ *Green Political Thought*, 12.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

schema for description and prescription have kept it hidden'⁶⁸. Ecologism calls for the institution of a social space coterminous with the globe, the Earth, the planet, yet in capitalist modernity it is the nation-state which has the dominant claim on social and geographical collective identification. Due to their power to construct imagined communities and to interpellate subjects, terms such as 'America', 'Britain', 'the national interest', 'the economy' and our 'society' (which ultimately reference the nation) still exert enormous power in environmental discourse. In many enunciative scenes, these signifiers possess the power of master-signifiers, structuring in advance the kinds of statements that are considered in order, and weighting national concerns above international and global. Even EM discourse proceeds from the capitalist notion of national interest – concern merely shifts to 'the environment' (which comes pre-signed as the national environment). So naturalised is the nation as social space, imagined community, that in political matters at least, rationality seems to have its very foundations in the nation rather than in transcendent principles. To speak from outside of the nationalist frame is to appear eerily at odds with reality, such is the power of the nationalist master-signifier. The Green challenge is to dilute the influence of nationalistic terms. It is only when 'Earth' and 'planet' possess equal discursive power that ecopolitical discourse can free itself from nationalist myopia. Yet we know that the Green position faces resistance whenever it attempts to argue from a planetary perspective. Opposing the nationalist frame directly is counterproductive to the Green political strategy, but can we subvert the national/global binary? What pivot term might allow us to construct a diagonal articulation that will eventually circumvent the binary altogether?

One possibility that has proven itself to be workable at present is to subvert the nationalist space through an emphasis on local ecology. The protection of threatened local beaches, rivers, wetlands and forests, has the power to construct communities. All-too often, these communities are usurped by nationalist signifiers; the nation-state 'naturalises' itself by inscribing itself upon – and appropriating the affective investment in – local socio-ecological communities. It is not possible, nor even desirable, to expect the planet alone to engender Green communities. It is feasible, however, that the construction of a unique kind of *subjective federalism* or *glocalism* based around the two levels of planet and of local (social-ecological) community. Such a double-level identification that is behind the already powerful mantra 'think global, act local'. Our hope is that it may undercut the nationalist stranglehold and offer a new array of signifiers favouring Green ecopolitics.

Glocalism may displace the nation-state as chief articulator of the local, ensuring local ecopolitics is conducted under the sign of the planet. The NIMBYism that can characterise local ecopolitics may be dissipated if the local is read through a global master-signifier. Green glocalism, however, should not try to subsume the local under the global, detaching them from their unique modes of embeddness in their human/human and human/non-human networks. Both are necessary, and they are not necessarily commensurable. As Ingold argues, we are irrevocably split geographically⁶⁹. While the social-ecological space of planet will for most people remain a highly abstract concern – what Ingold in another place refers to as 'globe'⁷⁰ – the local social-ecological space of community is a space in which immersed individuals trace out entangled pathways. The latter has the quality of a sphere, as opposed to a globe.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁹ *Lines: A Brief History* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2007).

⁷⁰ "Globes and Spheres: The Topology of Environmentalism," in *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*, ed. K. Milton (London: Routledge, 1993), 31–42.

Modernity has ‘transformed our understanding of place: once a knot tied from multiple and interlaced strands of growth and movement, it now figures as a node in a static network of connectors’⁷¹. The built environment may conform to this model, yet people still thread their own ways through the environment, tracing paths as they go’. We simultaneously live *in* our worlds (or spheres) and *on* the planet (or globe). Green discourse should reflect this in a glocalism that emphasises the local aspect of global issues (which is already occurring in relation to climate change impacts, for instance), drawing connections while not totalising one level upon the other. It is imperative to avoid the direct national-global confrontation that always disadvantages Green politics, and allow the global to enter through the back door, as it were, without trying to force globalism on those already attached to national identities.

Reinforcing rearticulations – building the metaphorical surplus

Individually, for the discursive fronts that we have dealt with so far – growth/no-growth, industrialism/precautionary development, and nation/planet – we have proposed rearticulatory arcs that allow us to circumvent the bar separating the two terms whiling avoiding a direct challenge to the unmarked term’s dominance. The kernel of this move is the metaphorical surplus that links the pivot term with the marked term by their mutual opposition to the unmarked term.

As intended at the outset, the four (or five, including the master-signifiers) rearticulatory fronts will each pass through four stages: Capitalist modernity, ecological modernisation, well-being and ecologism. The relative fixity of each stage is a function of the ability of each element to represent all the other elements – to bear the metaphorical surplus of the system itself and enable systematicity to emerge between the elements. This knitting together process is itself not systematic, but depends upon the elaboration of multiple articulatory chains between the elements themselves. Such connections are already being established across the fronts we have canvassed so far. Let us look at two. First: an emerging affinity between economic security discourse and planetary discourse. Second: the affinity between the pivot term of the nation/planet rearticulatory arc (local community) and the pivot term of the industrialist/precautionary development arc (social development).

Economic security and the nation-state

Economic security discourse broadens economic discussion from the confines of the nation’s borders, and by doing so helps to transcend that political form as the dominant construction of social space. Economic-growth discourse, by its very definition, is embedded in the social space of the nation-state. The focus on GDP growth and on the nation reinforce – and naturalise – one another. Yet as we work to rearticulate from nation to planet, our efforts are indirectly assisted by the shift from growth discourse to economic-security discourse. Economic-security discourse lends itself to an international and even global view of the economy, as the sources of insecurity are increasingly to be found beyond the borders of the national economy: capital flight, volatile commodity prices, currency instability and so on. On the one hand the globalisation of neoliberal trade and financial regimes heightens the insecurity deriving from these factors. On the other, this insecurity has been present for at least three decades. In that time, this insecurity (job losses, industry offshoring, interest-rate unpredictability, stockmarket exposure, welfare state rollback) has been portrayed in economic-growth discourse as a necessary byproduct of the transition to a ‘globally competitive, open economy’, with its implicit promise of prosperity for all at some future point. Of course, the symptom of the official repression of

⁷¹ Ingold, *Lines*, 75.

the economic insecurity of (neoliberal) globalisation is the channelling (or in psychoanalytic terms, displacement) of economic insecurity into cultural (ethnic, racial, national) insecurity, as manifest in the emergence of right-wing racist, anti-immigrant politics (One Nation in Australia, Front Nationale in France, the British National Party, the Tea Party in the US), and their more centrist beneficiaries. Economic security discourse promises to subvert this official (hegemonic) /symptomatic (displaced) couplet in order to scrutinise the actual sources of economic insecurity. These sources transcend the borders of the nation-state – and thus economic security discourse proves productive in helping us subvert the hegemony of nationalist identifications and rearticulatory effort from nation-state to planet – at least in its early stages of rearticulating to region and then to globe.

Local communities and social development

Again, here, we see the synergistic effects of pursuing several rearticulatory arcs at once. To the extent that we establish local and global social (-ecological) *community* – rather than nation-state imagined community – as terms of the discourse, these communities articulate to the pivot term ‘social progress’ (and ‘anti-social progress’), furthering our efforts to subvert the industrialist master-signifier. In the interplay between the ‘social’ of ‘social progress’ and the construction of the local community, initiating a metaphorical surplus linking the terms – which is precisely how we begin to institute a new social (-ecological) master-signifier to displace both industrialism and nationalism.

From consumerism to Green citizenship

While the ‘aspirational’ politics espoused by all mainstream parties extols ever-increasing production and consumption, Green politics calls for reductions in overall demand⁷². Yet it is easy for Greens to underestimate the depth of the problem represented by consumerism, because as an ideology it now has the predominant claim over individuals’ identities⁷³. Consumerism, the hegemony of the consumer subject – a subject interpellated as someone for whom commodities offer the promise of the good life – enshrines the market at the very centre of the social.

If the market is the institutional infrastructure of consumerism, its hold is sustained by four fantasmatic components. First, commodity fetishism, which erases the trace of the labourer’s hands from the product. Second, advertising and marketing, which construct the ‘castle of romantic dreams’⁷⁴ that channels human desire – whether this is a desire for amusement, physical pleasure, or social esteem – to marketable commodities. It is the dream of the new acquisition – and of consumption as a general orientation to the world – that provides the fantasmatic glue that binds individual subjects to the market as consumers. Third, the fantasy of ‘consumer democracy’ in which the sovereign consumer exercises his or her ‘franchise’ within the marketplace⁷⁵. As Schwarzkopf puts it, the idea of consumer sovereignty realises the Enlightenment aspirations of individual liberty and increasing living standards for all⁷⁶. But in this respect, it ‘provides a clandestine spring of political-theological legitimacy that renders global consumer capitalism unassailable in its status, despite the hardship it causes for millions

⁷² Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, 13.

⁷³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (McGraw-Hill International, 2004), 23–24.

⁷⁴ Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, 3rd ed (United Kingdom: Alcuin Academics, 2005), 227.

⁷⁵ P. Miller and N. Rose, “Mobilizing the Consumer: Assembling the Subject of Consumption,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 14, no. 1 (1997): 1–36.

⁷⁶ S. Schwarzkopf, “The Political Theology of Consumer Sovereignty: Towards an Ontology of Consumer Society,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 3 (May 2011): 110, doi:10.1177/0263276410396912.

of people’⁷⁷. And fourth, the cornucopian fantasy that all demands, no matter how extravagant, will be met. The market mediates between the commodity and its constituent parts (organic matter, inorganic matter, human labour), but is then fetishized as the (cornucopian) source itself, effacing the finitude of the ecosphere.

Thus the ideological structure of consumerism can be analysed as such:

Consumerism

Commodity fetishism – the ready-made commodity (detached from its social origins)

Marketised desire – marketers attach the *objet a* to commodities

Consumer democracy – consumer preferences are sovereign and not to be infringed upon

Cornucopianism – any demands or desires will always be provided for

At best, ecological modernisation, ‘green capitalism’ and ‘green growth’ discourses address consumerism only so far as to articulate a ‘green consumerism’. But, does green consumerism merely legitimise the consumption of ever-greater quantities of commodities, or may it be turned against consumerism itself? Green consumerism is Janus-faced. On the one hand it, of course, celebrates consumption, now cleansed of its ecological stigma. Green products generally earn the right to the ‘green’ label on the basis of being *greener* than their dirtier competitors, rather than by being genuinely sustainable. On the other hand, green consumerism raises the alarm about the ecological peril of a consumerist society – it introduces to mainstream discourse the notions of anti-green products and anti-green consumption. You might say, as Torgerson does of sustainable development in general, that green consumerism is precisely about the reality of limits. It ‘provokes uncertainties with implications for the very shape of public life’, and ‘has the potential to disrupt the prevailing contours of public discourse’⁷⁸. Both interpretations are valid and co-existent. The political question is about how to develop a rearticulatory arce that will subversively shift the balance towards the latter interpretation, to eventually turn green consumerism against consumerism itself.

It is crucial that Greens are not seen as puritanical (or totalitarian). With consumption a private act, a moral right, and the path to happiness and to self-creation⁷⁹, the anti-consumption argument is lost before it is begun. Arguing for reduced consumption is no better, as it is likely to be interpreted as anti-consumption. Yet the Green position is in fact one of high desire, not restraint. The challenge is to rechannel desire away from the marketplace. Barry’s call for a ‘politics of sustainable desire’ recognises that desire and its fulfilment ‘are fundamentally political and ethical and their regulation is a legitimate political objective’⁸⁰. The Lacanian insight, ‘Man’s desire is the desire of the Other’⁸¹, means, in part, that ‘the object of man’s desire... is essentially an object desired by someone else’ (Lacan, cited in⁸²). The rearticulatory strategy is to work with consumption, to begin by *espousing green consumerism*. If Greens are accused of being complicit in ‘greenwash’, this is a cost that should be borne

⁷⁷ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁸ “The Uncertain Quest for Sustainability: Public Discourse and the Politics of Environmentalism,” 16.

⁷⁹ You may even fashion yourself as radically anti-capitalist by purchasing the proper signifiers of rebellion.

⁸⁰ Girard, cited in Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability*, 208.

⁸¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 235.

⁸² Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 38–39.

in the short term – in the longer term green consumerism can initiate a rearticulatory arc away from consumerism itself – if we can ultimately guide the arc towards anti-consumerism. As this arc moves closer to anti-consumerism, it should begin to destabilise consumerism's four fantasmatic pillars. The question is: Where do Greens try to take the arc after green consumerism? What terms come next?

One natural expansion of the articulatory chain is from green consumerism to ethical consumerism, a well-established discourse. Fair trade, food miles, the organic and slow-food movements open up hitherto-closed (and interlocked) fields of discourse. They broaden the terms of debate to trade injustices, over-transportation, industrial agriculture, and the stripping from food practices of their community-building potential. They appeal to the broader notion of ecological metabolism. While it may be a band-aid solution initially, at the very least ethical consumer discourse can focus on the social reality behind production. At best it may puncture the façade of the fetishised commodity. Ethical consumerism dovetails neatly with the progressive master-signifier rearticulation from EM to 'well-being'. Barry goes so far as to link economic security with well-being, but he does not explicitly propose well-being as resistance to consumerism. Well-being does not oppose consumerism, but it can easily be articulated with terms that are non-consumerist, for example: health (which can then be linked to environmental health), relationships, community, sufficiency⁸³ – terms that at the very least trouble the dual fantasies of the sovereign consumer and of the fetishised commodity.

There *are* flourishing communities both inside and outside of major cities which have turned away from consumerism to seek fulfilment in other spheres: family and other personal relationships, community, civic involvement, arts and crafts, permaculture, gardening, sports and games, hiking, spirituality, the pleasures of intellectual activity. Economistic value regimes depreciate these (largely) extra-market activities; and desire is channeled to commodities with price tags. Yet celebrating such activities is not a *direct* assault on consumerism – indeed many of them are already favoured by other ideologies. To espouse family and community, notwithstanding their association with conservatism, is not the worst tactic Greens could pursue. Sport, despite its complicity in nationalism and commercialism, is largely conducted at the community level. The championing of such activities could well function as a circuit-breaker, rearticulating ecologism from its marginal position and towards a more mainstream, acceptable position.

That these activities require social (community) co-ordination remains problematic – it is this capacity that is increasingly threatened by capitalist work regimes. Yet in the UK, Australia and the US, around one quarter of people have already reported downshifting or simplifying – voluntarily reducing their consumption and working hours⁸⁴. It is by building and propagating a discourse of well-being, quality of life, and happiness – linked to such terms as family, community, sport – that Greens may begin to disarticulate desire from the marketplace. Once individuals do downshift and/or become more involved in community activities, they adopt new subject positions. Becoming more heavily invested to the identities bestowed by these activities than that of the individual in the marketplace saps libidinal

⁸³ 'Sufficiency in material consumption to enable the maximisation of quality of life' Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability*, 172. We harness sufficiency to economic security *Ibid.*, 176..

⁸⁴ Clive Hamilton and Elizabeth Mail, "Downshifting in Australia: A Sea-change in the Pursuit of Happiness. Discussion Paper No. 50" (The Australia Institute, 2003).

energy from their attachments to consumer subjectivities. They are likely to adopt a more reflexive, even cynical, attitude towards the marketing machine.

Nevertheless, of the reararticulations that we have suggested are necessary before we can place our faith in ecological modernisation as a transition stage, reararticulating away from consumerism appears the most difficult. We can have some hope that this reararticulation may be carried along by the tide that swells as the other reararticulations proceed; as the metaphorical surplus congeals, it begins to reconceptualise the relation of humanity to nature. The Green master-signifier itself, as planet or Earth, is also offered as an object of identification for the Green subject. This process cannot be separated from its obverse – that of the *Green-ing* citizen itself being a fecund progenitor of the Green master-signifier. We can but hope that each progresses enough to enact a self-reinforcing articulation between subject and Green. Let us turn now to explaining the process of the master-signifier reararticulation.

From capitalism to ecologism

We have sketched out four reararticulatory pathways which, as indicated at the outset, are intended to subvert the binary logic governing ecopolitical discourse at the crucial sites of economic growth, nationalism, industrialism and consumerism. The aim has been to avoid running into the usual argumentative obstacles that arise when these binary structures are enforced by hegemonic capitalist discourse. A strategic reararticulation rather than a confrontation involves a ‘pivot term’ and subsequently linked terms (rather than a direct confrontation) and subtly reorients the debate away from the governing binary, subverting it, rather than inverting it. The re-articulatory arcs set out so far include:

Capitalist modernity	EM	Well-being	Green (ecologism)
Growth	Green growth	Economic security; redistribution; equality; fairness	No-growth
Industrialism	Green industrialism	Social progress; democratic development	Precautionary development
Consumer	Green consumer	Ethical consumer; community member	Green citizen
Nation	National environment	Local (social/ecological) community	Planet

From EM to ecologism: rearticulating the master-signifier

Of course, the premise of this strategy is that we are able to subvert the governing binaries of an ideology while not (directly) opposing them, by exploiting the metaphorical surplus of the dominant term's negation.

Equipped with this metaphorical surplus a relatively innocuous shift – from, for example, economic growth to economic security – can describe an arc negating economic growth without invoking no-growth or limits-to-growth discourse. How is this possible? 'Economic security' is linked to 'no-growth' by their common difference from 'economic growth'. This simple difference is haunted by the metaphorical surplus of no-growth – 'economic security' thus partially signifies 'no-growth'. The continued circulation of the metaphorical surplus of no-growth is the means by which we can construct a rearticulatory arc from growth to no-growth (through economic security, redistribution and equality) without ever negating growth itself.

This metaphorical surplus is internal to the binaries that we are attempting to subvert. Another metaphorical surplus circulates externally, linking each rearticulatory arc. The privileged vehicle of this surplus is the master-signifier active at each stage of the arcs: capitalist modernity, EM, well-being, ecologism. It works to construct unity across each stage of the arcs. The trajectory of this surplus is from economic growth, industrialism, consumerism and nationalism (as ideological field); to no-growth, precautionary development, ecological subjectivity and planetary consciousness (as ideological field); via the intervening fields under the banners of 'ecological modernisation' and 'well-being'. The 'essence' of each of these ideological fields is a logic, or a principle of reading – effectively a grammar of signification – that determines what is to be visible and intelligible. If their progression is co-ordinated such that they remain relatively stable fields, the four rearticulatory arcs are the sub-components of the 'radical incremental' transition from an economistic logic to an ecological logic.

Conclusion

Prompted by Barry and by Dobson, this paper has tested the idea of a strategic Green embrace of ecological modernisation. Rather than seeing EM's appropriation of Green discourse and political ideology into minor technical measures for the purposes of social reproduction as a dead-end, we have tested a disarticulation-rearticulation approach that pragmatically works with present discourse conditions. It proposed the idea of a subversive rearticulation of four key capitalist binary terms, which, if conducted in a unified manner, would eventually overturn the economistic logic that most centrally obstructs the advancement of Green political discourse.

To be suspicious of the co-optive logic of EM while simultaneously extending it a strategic embrace appears contradictory. Yet there is no contradiction in observing a state of ideological hegemony and attempting to change that hegemonic formation from within. It is their respective positions with regard to the existence of a social totality that develops according to an internal (economic) logic that distinguishes (some forms of) classical Marxism from the 'post-Marxism' of Laclau and Mouffe. If such a totality does not exist, it points to the potential existence of the 'pivot terms' that strategic rearticulation strategy relies upon – i.e. terms that exist within the 'field of discourse' but are not presently under the yoke of dominant ideological binaries. Greens may exploit certain vulnerable pivot terms – their work is in first, identifying them according to the conditions outlined above, and

elaborating the discourses that will eventually lead these terms back to the marginalised, Green, side of the dominant binaries.

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