

Green Rising: An Alternative Future

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ABSTRACT

Special Track 1: Future of Human Social Systems: What Might the Evolution of Complex, Adaptive, and Evolvable Systems Tell Us About Where We Are Going?

My book *Green Rising: An Alternative Future* deals with the theme of this track.

Where we are going is not a mystery. There are numerous discussion of where we are going, beginning with *Limits to Growth*. Darwin was the one who described the process of evolution as “selection,” or decision making. The fundamental characteristic of complex, adaptive, and evolvable systems is that they make decisions. *Green Rising* looks at the question from the point of view of decision making. The book considers “How do these decisions to destroy the environment get made?” And it looks at that from the view of a holarchy with decisions at each level: corporate, political, philosophical and cultural.

Decisions are historical. Our culture has chosen a direction. In order for us to make a decision to change that direction we have to have alternatives. The book sets forth possible alternatives to our current system.

These are summarized in the book's last appendix: The Green Manifesto. The rest of this abstract is a summary of the Manifesto which is a summary of the book which is available as a free download at the website, www.berserkrpress.com.

The world system is currently in danger from the growth of human beings and their economy. We must move from a growth economy to a sustainable economy. This requires change at the various levels of the holarchy. The capitalist system of compound interest creates a constant economic demand for growth. Controlling growth requires controlling capitalism. The capitalist corporation is a corrupt system that focuses the corporation on maximizing shareholder value, capitalist growth. This system of incorporation must be replaced by a system that equalizes stakeholder value. The free market is a system for distributing production based on wealth. It is based on inequality and increases inequality. The combination of the capitalist corporation with its drive for efficiency and the free market with its growing inequality creates a constant unemployment and poverty that generates a general popular demand for more jobs and thus economic growth and an exponentially growing consumption. The free market system must be replaced by a guaranteed liveable income and the egalitarian provision of essential social services like education and health care. Our political parties with their neoliberal ideologies define the goal of the economy as increasing levels of consumption. Instead of looking at our society as a collection of individuals each trying to maximize consumption, we need to look at our society as an organic whole seeking the health of the ten basic biological functions of a society. In order for us to make the shift from looking at society as a mechanism to looking at society as a biological system, we have to make a cultural change from a philosophy of materialism to a philosophy of holism. A cultural change requires a change in our universities, our spiritual institutions, and our media.

The Green Manifesto

1. Disrupting the Environment

When we look at the environmental problems we now face, it is clear that our major environmental problem is growth: growth of population, and growth of industrial capital. In 1950 world population was 2.5 billion. In 2020 it is now 7.7 billion. We are too big. We take up too much space. We are crowding out other species.

We consume too much. In 1961 the World GDP was \$11.8 trillion and by 2017 it was \$80.3 trillion. We produce too much pollution, and we are working industriously to produce even more. The amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide has been steadily increasing from a 1960 level of 316 ppm to the 2013 level of over 400 ppm. We are disrupting ecological balances. Global warming resulting in climate change represents just one very dramatic consequence of our industrial growth.

At every election politicians promise us that they will grow the economy and increase our level of consumption. There are real alternatives to the current system, but we need to change the system.

2. The Capitalist System

The capitalist system is a system for steadily increasing the inequality of income. People, who have more money than they know what to do with, lend it to people who have a use for it. Then they collect compound interest. The basic principle is that an increasing percentage of the national income should be given to the rich because they are rich.

Compound interest is a system of exponential growth, and all systems of exponential growth are unstable. The system will reach its natural limits and crash. It is a boom and bust system.

After the Great Depression governments learned how to manage capitalism by taxing wealth, forgiving debt, and controlling interest rates. They created a steady growth in consumption. Our environmental problems continue to get worse.

3. Corporate Capitalism

The Capitalist corporation is defined as owned by the stockholders. The employees are serfs of the corporations which are bought and sold on the stock market. As a result the capitalist corporation has one concern: profit. The interests of the other stakeholders: employees, creditors, suppliers, the local community and the environment can all be sacrificed for the sake of higher profits for the stockholders. As long as our economy is dominated by stockholder companies we will continue to destroy our environment.

Corporations can also make a profit by increasing efficiency, in other words, producing more products with fewer workers. The result is a steadily increasing unemployment. This unemployment then leads to demands by the workers for more growth to provide more jobs. Politicians feel compelled to grow the economy.

It is possible for us to change our laws of incorporation and to transform the capitalist corporation by removing corporations from the market, and replacing corporate serfdoms with corporations driven by social mission and measuring their results for all the stakeholders and not just the shareholders.

4. The Free Market System

The Free Market is a system for distributing social production according to wealth. In a free market the person with the most money has the most power. In a free market the rich live in mansions and the poor are homeless. Similarly in a free market the rich feast and the poor starve. It creates free market genocides like the Irish famine, and the 5% drop in the Russian population with

the economic “reforms” of Boris Yeltsin.

As capitalism increases the inequality of income by redistributing wealth to the richest, the free market increases the inequality of distribution by excluding the poorest from the market. It creates massive inequality and insecurity. The poor and the unemployed demand jobs and economic growth. Unless we provide every citizen with a guaranteed adequate income, and an egalitarian provision of basic social services like education and health care, the drive for growth will continue to destroy the environment.

5. The Politics of Growth

Our political parties believe that the purpose of government is maximizing consumption and that capitalism and the free market are the best ways to do that. They are dedicated to neoliberal ideologies of recreating nineteenth century inequality and predator capitalism by the worship of the market mechanism. They will continue to destroy the environment unless we look at the economy in a different way.

6. The Economy:

Our materialistic worldview looks at the purpose of an economy as consumption, and a better economy is achieved by higher levels of consumption. As long as our economy is focused on maximizing consumption by growing the GDP then the economy will consume our environment. We need to look at the economy in an organic way. The purpose of an economy is to fulfill human needs for food, housing, and clothing. At the moment we have an economy with homelessness and hunger. It is a failed economy. We need to measure our economy by its ability to meet these human needs, and not by our GDP. We need to focus our economic measurements on health, not wealth.

7. The Politics of a Steady State

Instead of looking at our society as a collection of individuals each trying to maximize consumption, we need to look at our society as an organic whole seeking health.

Health can be understood as the effective functioning of the different parts of the society. The anthropologist Edward T. Hall identified ten basic biological functions of a society: communication, organization, economy, reproduction, space, time, play, learning, defense (health), and technology.

The United Nations has been working on developing ways of looking at social health. We can see that some of Hall's functions form part of their approach. For example the Millennium Development Goals:

Social Organization: MDG 3. Promote gender equality and empower women. MDG 8. A global partnership for development.

Economy: MDG 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Reproduction: MDG 4. Reduce child mortality. MDG 5. Improve maternal health.

Education: MDG 2. Achieve universal primary education.

Health care: MDG 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Technology: MDG 7. Ensure environmental sustainability.

The United Nations has even attempted to get a measurement of social health with the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index. The IHDI measures the health of basic social functions:

Social organization is measured by inequality

the Economy is measured by per capita GDP

Education is measured by years of schooling

the health of the members is measured by life expectancy

which could also be considered a measure of personal safety.

8. Worldview: From Materialism to Holism

In order for us to make the shift from looking at society as a mechanism to looking at society as a biological system, we have to make a change in the way we look at reality.

Materialism teaches that only matter and energy are objectively real. Therefore things like ideas, conversations, values, and decisions can all be reduced to deterministic mechanisms or random chance. Thus objective reality is seen as just a machine, and living things are just more complicated machines.

Therefore because we think, and feel and make decisions we do not feel part of objective reality. We think we are observing the environment as outside observers.

Because in materialism only matter and energy are real, there is no society, and no responsibility for the environment. There are only individuals and each individual seeks their own interest. In materialistic individualism the only valid morality is the end justifies the means.

Since, in materialism, the environment is only a machine we can replace the environment with our own better machines. We can build space ship earth, and replace the sky with steel plates. And if we destroy the environment on earth we can get in our space ship and go to another planet.

The alternative to materialism is holism. Holism recognizes the reality of ideas, decisions and communication as well as matter and energy. Matter and energy are the media of information and communication, while information and communication control matter and energy. In holism control systems are information systems and they are run by ideas. Thus society, and the ecosystem, and Gaia are control systems that operate by information and communication in order to maintain core values.

Just as the family is a biological whole of which we are a part, so society and the ecosystem are wholes of which we are a part. The individual finds meaning in relationship. If you ask someone who they are they will tell you about their relationships.

Holism means seeing the world as a web of life where we belong. A holistic worldview allows us to see our society as a biological ecosystem of which we are a part. We are not simply isolated individuals; we are members of a larger reality; and we have responsibilities beyond our individual interests. To use our social position for our own enrichment while destroying the environment is corruption. We are responsible for the health of our ecosystem.

9. The University

The university controls the ideas that control our society. It is the bastion of materialism: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. As long as our universities enforce a philosophy of materialism, and an ethic of individualism, selfishness, and greed we will continue to destroy the environment.

We need a science and an educational system that is holistic and that stresses our participation in and our responsibility for society, nature and creation. Fortunately holism is finding more advocates. DNA research is basically holistic because it affirms that DNA is an acid, a molecule with energy, but it is also a medium for coded genetic information that controls the development of the organism. The Gaia Hypothesis presents the planetary ecosystem as a whole cybernetic system. Darwinian evolution of survival of the fittest is being complemented by symbiotic theories of evolution that stress the role of cooperative relationships in creating evolutionary change.

10. Our Spiritual Communities

Spirituality is holistic. It means seeing ourselves as part of a larger reality. Our religious organizations need to break free of their worship of materialism, their individualistic spirituality,

and their functional atheism. We need an holistic spirituality that recognizes the fundamental unity and interdependence of all life.

The shift of a worldview from materialism to holism entails a shift in political values from wealth to health, a shift in economic values from GDP growth to subsistence, a shift in corporate purpose from profit to social mission, and a shift in individual values from selfishness, and greed to love and respect.