

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of  
Central European University in part fulfilment of the  
Degree of Master of Science**

## **Conservatism and Ecology**

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**ABSTRACT OF THESIS** submitted by:

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It is a recurring question where environmentalism or ecology can be positioned on the stage of ideologies. Environmentalism for a long time seemed to have been attached to the political Left, whereas Conservatives are generally considered as lacking any serious commitment to the environment. However, as some previous authors argue there may be more shared grounds for traditional conservatism and greens than are usually acknowledged.

The overall aim of my research is to assess the potential for contemporary conservatism to engage meaningfully with ecologism. The first goal of my research is therefore to reveal the original affinities between green and conservative philosophies through a focused study of the most influential works of conservative intellectual history. By elucidating the main elements of the change that transformed the conservative worldview into the ideology of neoconservatism, I wish to reveal the underlying reasons for the change in conservatives' attitudes to humans' role in nature.

In the second part I explore two recent works which have the potential to bridge the gap between conservatism and ecologism, within the non-neoliberal strand. I will explore the possible grounds for conservative environmentalism by comparing and contrasting two recent works; one by the Hungarian philosopher András Lányi, *Roads to Ecophilosophy*, and another work by the conservative English philosopher, Roger Scruton, entitled *Green Philosophy*.

**Keywords:** ecology, conservatism, neoconservatism, Lányi, Scruton

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I dedicate this work to the memory of my father, Zoltán Ujj, the first ecologist I knew, and whose reassuring words as well as contestation I truly miss.

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*"May Freedom's oak forever live  
With stronger life from day to day;  
That man's the true Conservative,  
Who lops the moulder'd branch away."*

Tennyson

## 1. Introduction

Ecology and other traditional ideologies have interacted and mutually influenced each other since the notion of ecology was adopted from natural science into the social and human sciences. There is a recurring question where environmentalism or ecology can be positioned on the stage of ideologies, and if so, what would be an adequate typology for environmental thought in relation to existing political ideologies. In the post-war era, environmentalism for a long time seemed to have been attached to the political Left, whereas Conservatives are generally considered as lacking any serious commitment to environmental concerns. Left-leaning environmentalism has strengthened on three identifiable levels of politics: (i) party politics: in the programs and actions of Left-wing parties and governments (ii) environmental movements: since it is typically associated with the New Leftist movements and (iii) academic discourse because contemporary environmentalist authors usually operate on the intellectual territory of the Left.

On the other hand, some authors argue that there may be more shared grounds for traditional conservatism and greens than are usually acknowledged (Pilbeam 2003; Gray 1993, 1995; Durnil 1995); others go further and argue that the supposed hostility of environmentalism and conservatism is simply a "historical accident" (Bliese 1997) or that conservatism and ecology are in fact "natural bedfellows" (Scruton 2012). One may also argue that classical conservatism is generally modest about prescribing ready solutions to complex problems and therefore what seemed to be negligence is simply their general characteristic



attitude of moderation. Arguably, conservatives' concerns in general manifest in completely different ways and are less noticeable, less obvious.

The literature of environmentalism and ecology has developed significantly in the last decades. Although it has adopted many principles from the rich tradition of other ideologies, at the core of ecology remains the reconceptualization of the human-nature relationship, as well as the realization of the limits to current patterns of growth. The literature of ethics is truly abundant (see Elliot 1996) similarly to the literature of environmental and ecological philosophy (see Zimmerman 2005; Pojman 2001; Gottlieb 1997). Though environmentalists typically disavow traditional Left-Right labels (Pilbeam 2003), most of the writings would rather inspire liberal or socialist-leaning readers. . Although free-market conservatives and resource economists developed principles for market-based environmental protection, at times the seriousness of their commitment raised doubts, while in other cases their genuine understanding of the nature of the problems could be subject to questioning (Ridley 2010; Simon 1983).

Although the shared grounds of conservatives and greens were recognized, only very few authors ventured to elaborate their theory on conservative grounds (Gray 1993; Bliese 2002, 1996, 1997). Moreover, these attempts could barely become part of the canon of environmental theory or seriously influence the scientific debate. It is apparent that sophisticated, in-depth enquiries into political thought and philosophy that tackle the environmental problem in its entirety are seriously lacking in the conservative realm.

In the literature there is a shortage of worthwhile conservative theoretical works on the environment or ecology, albeit past conservative practices reveal that historically there have been good examples of conservative environmental protection. Environmental movements are usually associated with the environmentalism of the sixties and seventies taken up by New Left movements (Dillingham 2008; Callaghan 2000). However, a considerable number earlier

environmentalist associations appeared at the beginning of twentieth century in the USA, Britain and continental Europe (Scruton 2012). These associations had usually been apolitical and non-affiliated associations or clubs where members gathered for leisure and hiking. They endorsed ideals like freedom, self-responsibility, adventurousness, discovery, naturalness and fraternity and shared a passion for the discovery of nature. The Republican Party members greatly sympathised with the Conservationists in the US either from Congress or as conservationist club members (Drake 2010; Dunlap *et al.* 2001).

Perhaps the most striking piece of evidence that may make us reconsider the assumption of conservative anti-environmentalism is that until around the 1970's American conservatives had been outright defenders of nature, and embraced the aims of the conservation movement. Moreover, such major legislative landmarks as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) were all introduced during the Nixon administration. Conservative opposition to environmentalism started off mainly after the seventies and was exacerbated during the Reagan administration in the US. This negligence of environmental concerns or direct opposition to them has remained an important feature of Anglo-Saxon conservatism ever since.

These examples imply that there has been a significant change in the attitude of conservative theory to environmental problems which coincides with the Neoconservative shift in the intellectual history of conservatism. So far, there has been little discussion about the underlying reasons of this shift. The underlying theoretical reasons of this change need further enquiry to lay the ground for further investigation of the current relationship of conservatism and environment.

The overall aim of my research is to assess the potential for contemporary conservatism to engage meaningfully with ecologism. In the first part I disentangle the threads of contemporary

conservatism and argue that it is the non-neoliberal branches of conservatism have greater potential for serious engagement; in the second part I explore two recent works which have the potential to bridge the gap between conservatism and ecologism, within the non-neoliberal strand.

The first goal of my research (Aim 1) is therefore to reveal the original affinities between green and conservative philosophies through a focused study of the most influential works of conservative intellectual history. By elucidating the main elements of the change that transformed the conservative worldview into the ideology of neoconservatism, I wish to reveal the underlying reasons for the change in conservatives' attitudes to humans' role in nature.

This will reveal what is the potential for a credible conservative environmentalism in traditionalist conservatism and what are its limitations today when neoconservatism has become the prevailing stream of conservatism. The key idea that I will present in the first section is the change in the conservative understanding of the tradition-knowledge-ideology nexus through the relevant works of Oakeshott and Hayek and thus the transition from the traditionalist conservative attitude to a rationalist ideology. Understanding this transition is vital in order to understand the underlying reasons for current conservative hostility to ecological issues.

In the second part of the thesis, based on the outcome of the first part, I will explore through the works of two contemporary authors on what grounds ecology and conservatism can think and act in unison (Aim 2). I will do so through the comparative study of two recent works which attempt to reconsider the underlying philosophical causes of ecological problems. One is a book of ecological philosophy by the Hungarian philosopher András Lányi, entitled *Roads to ecophilosophy* (2010); the other is the most recent work by the renowned conservative British philosopher, Roger Scruton, entitled *Green Philosophy* (2012).

In the first section of the thesis, in the literature review I will examine the works of previous authors who aimed to shed light on or even elaborate the common grounds for conservatism and ecology. The following section will provide a brief outline of conservatism, with special regards to those elements that are relevant for the environment. It will then go on to discussing the philosophical background of the conservative transformation in the 1970's through the relevant works of Oakeshott and Hayek.

In the second major part of the thesis, I will explore the possible grounds for conservative environmentalism by comparing, contrasting as well as critically some major elements of the works of Scruton and Lányi. My focus will be particularly on these two works and I will attempt to highlight some important similarity and difference between the two works.

### 1.1. Definitions and scope

At the outset it is important to clarify certain notions that are recurrently used in this thesis. Conservatism, like most great worldviews, has no unitary meaning, and embraces a wide range of varieties. My concern will be mostly with the two major streams, traditionalist conservatives and the neoconservative devotees of the free-market. *Traditionalist conservatives* are typically concerned with the maintenance of social order, defend traditional institutions and hold the belief in moral absolutes. Although *free-market conservatives* also acknowledge the importance of traditions, they give priority to free-market mechanisms and individual economic liberty (Pilbeam 2003; Scruton 1980).

The term '*neoconservatism*' has twofold meaning: in the US neoconservatism has usually been associated with a certain strand of foreign policy, that focuses on the hegemonic role of the United States and contends that the military power of the United States should be employed around the world to promote American interests. It first became dominant in the 1970's and intensified after 2001; in the other meaning it is understood as the conservative branch of a new paradigm of economic policy that became remarkably influential in Anglo-

Saxon countries in the 1970-80's (the Reagan-Thatcher era) and which follows the principles of classical liberalism (thus, 'neoconservatism' stands in pair with 'neoliberalism') (Mándi 2012).

The *New Right* is used in several countries to describe renewed right-wing groups and policies. The Right Wing in the US refers to a political movement whose first wave appeared in the 1950's. The American New Right distanced itself from both moderate republicans and the so-called Old Right. It included such notable figures as Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. The consecutive waves focused on different issues depending on the political situations.

Out of the many classifications of green philosophies (shallow and deep, moderate and radical) for the purposes of this thesis the '*environmental*'-'*ecological*' differentiation is most indicative because it marks philosophical, ethical and attitudinal differences as well. The terms as I will deploy them indicate that while "*environmentalists argue for a managerial approach that seeks technical solutions to environmental problems without addressing underlying issues, ecologists adopt more radical stances, being willing to argue against present patterns of consumption and production and to recognize that the non-human world possesses intrinsic value.*" (Dobson 2000). '*Green*' is used as an umbrella term for different perspectives but it is also one that avoids specifying the 'depth' or 'shallowness' of the ideas it refers to in a certain context (Pilbeam 2003).

## 2. Literature review

Since New Right conservatives are generally reluctant to engage with greens about the seriousness and significance of environmental problems and have been the firmest opponents to environmentalism in the last decades, the prospects for finding common ground seem grim. The New-Right's hostile treatment of the environmental movement has various origins and even triggered counter actions from conservatives, such as the infamous Wise Use movement (Rowell 1996) or environmental scepticism (Lomborg 2001), although both backlashes were heavily criticized for false allegations and disguised, unscientific argumentations. Since conservatives generally dislike the activist kind of political behaviour, the campaigning attribute of environmental movements is generally contrary to the conservative mind-set (Ridley 1995). Because of their continuous cries of alarm about the coming ecological disaster or collapse, environmental groups are generally tagged 'scaremongers', 'doomsayers' or 'alarmists' (Carter 2007; Ridley 1995; Scruton 2012).

Environmentalists' proposals for solutions bring down their reputation among conservatives even more, because they generally propose stricter, more stringent regulations for businesses and critique the dominance of free-market logic. Even if environmental problems are accepted as real, the solutions proposed by greens are not apt to convince most conservatives. For this reason, for a long time it seemed obvious that the 'environment' should be positioned on the political Left, as a new impulse for its renewal but with roots deep in socialism and liberalism (Paehlke 1989). Paehlke, like many others, imagined environmentalism as the new, third-way of progressive politics. Environmentalism on this view has the ability to resurrect progressive politics after Rawls and is capable of replacing the self-interest model with a common-interest model. The ideology of environmentalism, it was hoped, would be the recognition of an enlightened self-interest that people more efficiently coordinate in order to achieve long-term future goals (Paehlke 1989). As a response to the widespread scepticism in

the Anglo-Saxon world and in order to overcome difficulties stemming from the lack of knowledge about environmental problems, Orr suggested that ecological literacy should be made a top priority to inform and educate people on what they “*need to know to live responsibly in a finite world*” (Orr 1992). The uneven distribution of knowledge in society about the state of ecology is a major problem for environmental circles. Because the possibilities for explaining and making citizens understood to the wide public are extremely narrow, many environmentalists took up an instructive and prescriptive language. This “unsolicited commanding” could be another element to the movement that irritated many conservatives.

In response to the heavy criticism of sceptics who did not offer meaningful solutions to the more and more apparent environmental problems, schools of environmental and resource economics undertook the elaboration of comprehensive environmental policies on the grounds of free market principles (Eckersley 2006). The basic idea of the resulting ‘free market environmentalism’ is that through the invisible forces of the free market, and some minor legal adjustments, (with an ideal market all) environmental problems can be solved by the creation of tradable property rights for both environmental “goods” (such as wildlife) and “bads” (such as pollution and waste) (see Anderson and Leal 1991; Bennett and Block 1991; Stroup 2003). Its proponents argue that “invisible” market allocation of resources is more efficient than ‘command and control’ type state environmentalism (Eckersley 2006). The starting point for the theory is that environmental problems are cases for the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ (Stroup 2008). Then, it continues with the assertion that governments often fail to manage the commons, because they don’t hold the kind of responsibility for environmental resources that private actors do. For this reason governments are unsuccessful in controlling pollution and to providing environmental public goods at reasonable cost whereas the private sector, because of its adaptability, is often more responsive to environmental demands. However, one major

defect of the assumptions is that the government-market, public-private dichotomy misses other forms of common-pool resources, such as community management as developed by Elinor Ostrom (Ostrom 1990).

The main point of criticisms from a green perspective is that the theory is an extension of a certain economic view or theory to other spheres that should not be subject to ownership and trade. According to Eckersley, for instance, economist devotees of the free-market environmentalism “suffer from a tunnel vision” in focusing so much on efficiency and neglecting to recognise that other goals (such as social equity or ecological sustainability) should be also addressed<sup>1</sup>. The economic performance principle cannot be realized in the environment where different things and problems are inextricably linked (Eckersley 2006).

At the other end of the conservative spectrum, classical conservatives also expressed criticism against environmentalists, although not so much from the economic viewpoint. In environmentalist aspirations for stricter state control and management, traditionalist conservatives saw socialism in disguise, and took loud, noisy and eager environmental campaigns as radicalism (Carter 2007). Nonetheless, there are various grounds, on the level of ethics, morality and general disposition, where conservatives and greens share their views (Pilbeam 2003; Bliese 1997; Scruton 1980; Gray 1995; Rossiter 1982).

As has been recognized by a number of authors (Pilbeam 2003; Bliese 1997; Scruton 1980; Gray 1995; Rossiter 1982) managed to establish extensive lists of the common traits of ecology and conservatism and they also drew attention to the possible conflicting views. Pilbeam (Pilbeam 2003) succinctly elaborated the web of potential agreements disparities.

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<sup>1</sup> Eckersley evokes and extends an analogy by Herman Daly to this kind of economic reductionism. *“If the economy were a boat then FME economists might be able to assist in finding the optimal seating allocation of passengers to ensure that the boat remains on an even keel. However, they would not be able to assist those who were poor to purchase seats; nor would they be able to provide seats to nonhuman species that have no commercial value. Finally, and this is the ultimate irony, they could do little to prevent the boat from sinking. The best they could do would be to ensure that the boat sank on an even keel.”*(Eckersley 2006)



Even within the realms of the common grounds, there are small but significant dissimilarities, in addition, there are a number of fundamental differences between ecology and traditional conservatism.

Before proceeding to the next topics, it is necessary to mention another stream of political thought, the Far-Right and Right-wing totalitarian regimes. Since the environment and the state of the ecological system is an issue that concerns everyone regardless of political affiliations, the far-right was no exception in embracing certain environmental claims. It is important to clarify that the fact that certain right-wing authoritarian groupings (such as the German Nazis as well as contemporary far-right parties) concerned themselves with environmental problems and wrapped environmental ideals into their own ideology should not be mixed with the intellectual history of deep ecology which cannot be linked in any way to totalitarianism. Anna Bramwell attempted to link fascism and ecologism by arguing that Nazi biologism and ecological views are interlinked. In Nazi Germany the Darwinian, biologist conception of people and society were reflected in the 'rootness' of Nazism, that is the attachment to land and space ('blood and soil') (Bramwell 1985). Although Nazis experimented in organic farming and alternative forms of energy (Carter 2007), the Nazi ideology of expansionism, imperialism, racial theory, massive industrialization, uniformity and strong authoritarianism stand in firm opposition to the accepting, tolerant ecology that praises diversity. Today, the topic re-emerges with new relevance as parties of the Radical Right in Europe have strengthened and at the same time are moving environmental themes on their political programs. Olsen in fact shows that radical environmentalism may emerge on the political far-Right as well although their environmental ideology stands on different grounds and though these grounds are based rather on the 'survivalist' tradition of environmentalism than on the philosophical offerings of ecology (Olsen 1999). In line with the Far-Right logic, principles are interpreted as absolute, unwavering values, such as the 'rootedness' of the

individual, an argument which serves to fortify the existing nationalistic and chauvinistic identity. "Pollution" in the far-right discourse signifies not only the disruption of the natural world, but is extended to the social world as well. Instead of cooperation, compromise and tolerance, for the Far-Right pollution means a call for total purification and serves only as the "environmental" justification for an anti-immigrant politics (Olsen 1999).

This comparison and the explanation of the common grounds is the topic of the following chapter.

From now on, the focus will solely be on traditional conservatism and its common grounds with green philosophy will be the topic of the following chapter. I will provide a brief account of the origins of conservative thought in order to show the original affinities between green and conservative philosophies. This will reveal what are the potentials for a credible conservative and where are the fundamental limitations today.

### 3. Conservatism

The literature of conservative thought is plentiful and diverse. Due to the very limited space and scope of the present thesis, I solely attempt to draw the main outlines of conservatism, with special regards to those that are relevant for the present discussion of the environment. Ideologies or worldviews are complex conceptual systems and therefore their description is always partial. There are also a lot of confusions because of the intricate links between the different concepts and ideas. Thus I will touch upon only the ideas that are relevant for the present thesis and mention some of the main, widespread confusions related to conservatism but will unavoidably leave many elements untouched.

Confusion is due especially to one maxim that conservative authors frequently espouse, which is that conservatism is not an ideology that could express itself in a coherent, all-encompassing manner, in universal formulae, rules or aims. It is an attitude, a belief, a stance that is conscious of the inconceivable complexity of human existence and the human world. It recognizes the cognitive barriers to thoroughly depicting the many-sided human values with “the abstract clarity of utopian theory” (Scruton 1980). These recognitions are decisive for all intellectual enterprises of conservative authors. It prevents them from outlining a comprehensive system of principles which would be abstract enough to lucidly describe politics and society and which would be susceptible to distilling doctrines into extensive plans and policy.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, in absence of a comprehensive ideology, a reactive, following attitude is most often attributed to conservatism. In response to the widespread reproaches to conservatism, such as passivity and a reactive attitude, Samuel P. Huntington in his journal article *Conservatism as an Ideology* (1957) provided a new scientific interpretation to these perceptions. This significant article of post-war Anglo-Saxon ‘New Conservatism’ elucidated

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<sup>2</sup> This is the element of conservatism that changed most strikingly with neoconservatism. Here, I simply wish to outline the basic tenets of classical/Burkean conservatism and will discuss this change later.

the role and position of conservatism in modern political thought. Instead of defining conservatism as an aristocratic theory or as an autonomous system of ideas, Huntington attributes a formal-situational role to conservatism, defined by and responsive to the actual political situation or era. Conservatism arises with particular force in historical situations in response to fundamental challenge to traditional, established institutions. Thus, with its lack of a transcendent ideal conservatism would be the opposite of radicalism *per se* and not that of any particular radical philosophy such as Marxism or Liberalism (Huntington 1957). This positional role of anti-radicalism was spelled out in the first proclamation of modern conservatism by Edmund Burke as well, who also laid down the fundamental substantial elements to the conservative creed that the following conservative thinkers subsequently espouse. The *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was a reaction to the Great French Revolution of 1789 and the consequent flavour of relentless pursuit of large-scale social transformation, propagated by the intellectual stance of that revolution. Since the birth of the book can be located in modernist times, there is a good reason to deem conservatism a distinctly modern viewpoint. Conservatism entered the lists with Burke's *Reflections* and the book has remained a fundamental work of reference for conservative thinkers ever since. The *Reflections* as an extensive critique of the Enlightenment view of man at the overture of the subversive French revolution recognizes the dangers of revolutionary thinking and defends the traditional order of society. In opposition to revolutions, where cherished values and social institutions are impaired, Burke argued that virtues and wisdom cannot flourish except but through and within the frames of customs and institutions. Thus conservatives feel great repulsion<sup>3</sup> against the revolutionary strains of liberals and socialists who continually agitate and seek political remedy for social ills in transformative change. For conservatives the state of a

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<sup>3</sup> It needs to be noted, that even the language of conservative authors fairly differs from how other modern ideologies express their doctrines. Instead of categorical statements, they prefer to use less explicit and direct expressions or senses.

society is the natural outcome of organic changes and slow historical evolution. Another consequence of revolutionary changes is that the legitimacy of established power is put in question and individual responsibility erodes. Individual freedom and responsibility can only manifest itself within the frames of settled, traditional institutions where the individual finds its place (Scruton 1991). Hence the conservative mindset detests politically-driven, power-oriented, revolutionary changes because they threaten the institutions that are the embodiment of the knowledge and wisdom of preceding generations.

Another consequence of revolutionary changes is that the legitimacy of established power is put in question and individual responsibility erodes. Individual freedom and responsibility can only manifest itself within the frames of settled, traditional institutions where the individual finds its place. Conservatism accentuates individual responsibility in contrast with collective or any form of indirect responsibility, because evil acts are perpetrated by individuals, not by any particular social institution; hence its distaste for large state bureaucracies or for any other form of technocratic, impersonal institutional arrangements. This is a view that conservatism shares with liberalism, and both hold a brief for the freedom of human beings against the oppressive and coercive forces of techno-bureaucracies (Scruton 1980). However, in the same vein Conservatism opposes rampant individualism and the program of equality. Not that conservatives deny a basic moral equality between human being; but instead of a programmatic equality enforced by a bundle of complex rules and safeguards, the conservative holds that every person is equal as a physical and spiritual entity, worth of reverence, hence deserving to be treated as an end in itself rather than a means (Scruton 1991). This moral equality entails certain secondary equalities, such as equality before the law, the right to justice, and political equality understood as universal suffrage. But conservatives do not wish to go beyond that and engage in a project of political levelling. Mindful of the “*infinite variety among men in talent, taste, appearance, intelligence and virtue, [the conservative] is candid enough to assert*

that....men are grossly unequal – and what is more, can never be made equal – in most qualities of mind, body and spirit” (Kirk 1953). In this manner, conservatives refuse the aspiration at the heart of all radicalisms, the perfecting of man coupled with a faith in the illimitable progress of society; that is *meliorism* (Kirk 1953).

Although generally conservatives put a lot of stress on affirming man’s wickedness and irrationality, they are not necessarily anthropologically pessimists. First, they persistently hold that “*The Nature of man is intricate*” (Burke 1987 [1790]) as Burke put it and that no scientific enquiry can ascertain the mystery of this complexity. Religion and spirituality is connected to this deeper stratum of the soul, which is impossible to be fully revealed (Rossiter 1982). Again, conservatives reproach both liberalism and socialism for their insensitivity to the ordinary person’s need for day-to-day harmony and familiarity. Man is a “*religious animal*” (Burke 1987 [1790]), religion is the foundation of civil society and an important form of wisdom and legitimacy. The other two main ideologies’ lack of responsiveness to the spirituality of everyday life stems from their commitment to an “abstract idea of emancipation” and a claim for an abstracted view of freedom (Scruton 1980). In the conservative view, individual freedom can only manifest itself; indeed, it only finds meaning within a settled social order, because freedom and obedience are the two sides of the same quality of interpersonal relations<sup>4</sup>. Authority is of high importance within conservative thought and its esteem of community over the individual is fundamentally different from the anti-authoritarian disposition of liberals. For conservatives attachment to authority is familiarity instead of alienation, protection rather than oppression. Its defence of authority stems not only from a fear of the subversive power of unbridled freedom but from its conception of human nature and human behaviour. In the liberal conception of autonomous individuals, the greatest political achievement is a freedom from coercion and constraint exercised by others. The conservative

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<sup>4</sup> I will return to this crucial point, the meaning of freedom and responsibility in the comparative analysis of Scruton and Lányi.

sees human personality as a social artefact; individuals are inseparable from the social context, their freedom and personality emerge already bound by duties to those with whom they share a history and a culture. Education in the family, the school or in the church is the vehicle for this socialization, where children are shaped into civilized, self-disciplined and – it is hoped – virtuous people. This education is not a mere intellectual training, it is an intricate but great mission where children are thought to “*think, survive, ply a trade, and enjoy leisure*” (Rossiter 1982). The conservative is realistic to accept the fact given by the nature of things that the individual is socialised within a social context he did not choose, but instead of deeming this social order coercive, the conservative cherishes the orderliness, security and continuity it provides. This continuity is ensured by education as well as by the perpetuation of property and of hereditary rights. All these occur in their most valuable form in inheritance within the basic unit of society, the family. The hereditary transmission of wealth and property secures the long-term maintenance of society. In society the hereditary principle is accompanied naturally by other advantages and benefits but some preference given by birth is unavoidable, and is considered “*neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic*” (Burke 1987 [1790]). Conservatives picture society as a living organism, hence the popularity of the tree as its metaphor. Society evolves organically as a tree, with its roots in the past. Exogenous, mechanical meddling deranges its functioning and distorts its natural growth.

Continuity in society is worthy of particular emphasis, since this element of Burkean conservative thought is often cited by environmentalists as well (Vincent 2012; Weiss 1990) . Burke accentuates that society is a contract, but more than that, a partnership, and not the kind of partnership of mere occasional interest that can be undertaken or dissolved arbitrarily, at will. “*It is a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership*

*not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.”* (Burke 1987 [1790]).

Besides many dissenting views on society and social arrangements, the essential disagreements between modern ideologies, between Conservatism and the Left, is rooted in their epistemological positions, i.e. how they frame the questions of knowledge. Almost all descriptions of conservatism cover their original scepticism of the capacities of the human mind and the critiques of their modernist understanding of knowledge. The above-mentioned rejection of large-scale social planning or social engineering stems essentially from conservative’s distrust of rationalism which neglects the limitations of the human mind and knowledge (Mándi 2012). Conservative anthropology sees human individuals as rational agents, nonetheless as much as it typifies them as rational creatures, it acknowledges that man is also driven by instincts and emotions. Consequently the conservative habits of “*prudence, prejudice, experience, and habit are better guides than reason, logic, abstractions, and metaphysics*”. For them, “[*t*]ruth exists not in universal propositions but in concrete experiences” (Huntington 1957).

In the following lines I am going to reflect on two essential spheres of modern conservatism that are at the same time cornerstones of the conservative creed and are also essential embodiments of conservative political epistemology, i.e. the ways of the construction of social knowledge. These two spheres are tradition and the economy. The discussion of epistemological views is requisite to understand the dispositions of classical, ‘Burkean’ conservatism, the neoconservative shift in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (the converging neoliberalism and neoconservatism) and most importantly, it will clarify why and where classical conservatism can contribute to environmental or ecological philosophy. Though government, law, property, justice, family, religion and culture are just as much crucial cornerstones of any



political philosophy as economy and social relations, the scope of the current thesis allows only a limited discussion of these broader aspects.

Through a focused study of the two works of the most influential authors of conservative intellectual history (Friedrich Hayek and Michael Oakeshott). By elucidating the main elements of the change that transformed the conservative worldview into the ideology of neoconservatism, I wish to reveal the underlying reasons for the change in conservatives' attitude to human's role in nature.

### 3.1. Tradition

Tradition lies at the heart of conservatism as an indispensable and inexhaustible source of knowledge and guidance. Scruton defines the term as *“all manner of custom, ceremony and participation in institutional life”* (Scruton 1980) which are enacted not unconsciously but for a certain reason, and this reason is to be found in the past, in history. Tradition is not merely the assurance of the sustained perpetuation of power or just *“the trapping of the exercise of power. Traditions arise and command respect wherever individuals seek to relate themselves to something transcendent.”* (Scruton 1980). The common knowledge of a community is preserved and summoned through traditions where continuity and the sense of belonging are sealed by common enactments of participation. The common consciousness is the underpinning of identity and the practicing of tradition is the affirmation of belonging.

Tradition is the cultural brace of institutions and communities. The less it is invented, the less its design or formation can be attached to a person, the more it is powerful. The most valuable traditions are those to which many contributors added their knowledge, building on previous achievements. Because traditions could not have been invented by a single person, but many members contributed to it and nonetheless they bear more or less the same meaning for everyone, it can be stated that tradition is *“not a custom, a ritual but a form of social knowledge”* (Scruton 1980). It cannot be captured by one person or a group of people or

comprehensively stored in books. It does not accumulate in the same manner as capital or as scientific knowledge does; it is tacit and dispersed (Scruton 1980).

When the idea of tradition is applied to politics, the existence of substantially different understandings of the making and the formation of politics is revealed. The agenda-driven liberal or the socialist conceptions of rational planning seem to stand in firm opposition to the tacit and mainly practical social knowledge of the conservative conception. Here, it becomes clear that there is a differentiation and what is more a tension between social knowledge and scientific knowledge. The roots of these epistemological differences were extensively discussed by Michael Oakeshott in *Rationalism in Politics* (1962). According to Oakeshott, human knowledge has two different components that exist in concert: one is technical knowledge or knowledge of technique that can be learned and remembered in the classical sense, which can be formulated into rules and comprehensively written down in books. Such is the practice of driving a car and most importantly, the technique of discovery in natural science. The other type of knowledge is practical knowledge which, on the contrary, exists only in use, cannot be formulated in rules but is vital for any concrete activity or the mastery of any skill. These two types of knowledge, “*distinguishable but inseparable*”(Oakeshott 1962a), co-exist in all human activity; only rationalism neglects, or disowns the use of what is called here practical knowledge. For instance, using Oakeshott’s example, cooking can be, to a certain extent, learned from a cookery book, but mastery of this skill cannot be confined to the use of the rules and thus can be only attained with the guidance of a master or teacher. The same is true of works of art, religion, politics and scientific enquiry, despite all efforts to oust it from these two latter fields.

Oakeshott traces back the appearance of the Rationalist intellectual strain to Cartesian philosophy in the seventeenth century (Oakeshott 1962a). At this turning of the state of knowledge of both the natural and the civilized world, Bacon and Descartes were the

dominating figures in the new project which aimed at creating a technique of inquiry, a sure plan that is the formulation of the scientific method. The mind needs to be purged for scientific enquiry, ripped from preconceptions and prejudices with knowledge and opinion strictly separated. The ultimate goal was to achieve certainty through the mechanical application of a universal set of rules, a technique which is indifferent to the subject-matter of the inquiry.

There is not a single sphere of life that could escape the influence of Rationalism, and politics is no exception either. Rationalism has invaded political thinking to such an extent that rational politics has become not only the mode but a “*stylistic criterion to all respectable politics*” (Oakeshott 1962a). This inundation of rationalism is detectable in political thought as well as in political practice where reverence for traditions has given way to ideologies. Ideological politics is the distillation of traditions into an agenda-driven creed and is guided by the tenets of a rationalist conception, the Ideology, such as Socialism. In Oakeshott’s view most salient works of political rationalism in the history of political thought have clearly been the works of Marx and Engels while other influential political philosophical works like Locke’s *Second Treatise of Civil Government* or Benthamite credos are also breeding grounds for ideology.

Rationalist politics is constructed from the partial knowledge of the complexity of political situations, of movements of a society and of interests. According to Oakeshott, the rules of the technique in politics have been so fortified that the dogma of the sovereignty of technique overrules all other sources of knowledge. Ideologies are necessarily reductions of the full knowledge that may be acquired because most of that knowledge is practical, is revealed in use, in the traditions of the political community. In a politics guided by traditions truth lies not in the abstract ideas of the rationalist creed but can be elicited through the practice of traditions and unraveled in conversations. This view may not answer the question of ‘*What is*

to be done?<sup>5</sup> and may not prescribe any actual formula or plan for action. However, this moderation does not amount to passivity, although the implications for political conduct are substantially different. In his essay *On Being Conservative*, Oakeshott insists that the term ‘conservatism’ is not an ideology or a creed, but a certain disposition - as summarized in the above section (Oakeshott 1962b).

### 3.2. Economy

Economic liberalism understood as the spontaneous order of the free market is a concept that is oft-associated with conservative thought and that creates many common stages of deliberation and action for liberals and conservatives. Although it is common to pair conservatism with the idea of the free market, it needs to be emphasized that conservatism accommodates a wide range of economic views, even theories that contradict the market theory. Free market liberalism is more widely endorsed among Anglo-Saxon conservatives than by conservatives of continental Europe, who are more reluctant to ‘buy in’, and who are more sceptical about the anticipated benefits. In general it can be stated that, unlike libertarians, conservatives traditionally place institutions above market mechanisms and discern the prominence of political order over economics (Scruton 1991). Resistance to economic levelling and a deep reverence for private property (especially property of land) is general across the whole spectrum of conservatism. These are the foundations of the economy that any radical is likely to attack or undermine (Kirk 1953).

Friedrich Hayek was clearly the most influential and most iconic figure of post-war liberal economic theory. Though Hayek published an essay under the title ‘*Why I Am Not a Conservative*’, and is generally labelled liberal for his economic theory, he brought new inspiration to conservatives by creating the antithesis to rationalist centralized economic planning. For this conjunction however, conservatives had to pay a price and relinquish part of

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<sup>5</sup> It is the title of a famous pamphlet by Lenin

the non-ideological attitude. In order to understand the connection of free market economy to conservatism and the tensions between the two, some of the underlying assumptions of free-marketism need to be elucidated.

The precursor to Friedrich Hayek and the Austrian School was obviously Adam Smith's theory of the free market theory. His work was grounded on two important intellectual progresses of the Enlightenment. From one side, the Enlightenment conception of human freedom: people, pursuing without restraint their own, rationally conceived self-interest, through the free exchange of goods, secure a beneficial result not only for themselves but unintentionally for the society. For this reason, individuals create the greatest social benefit on the long-run and thus effectuate the most efficient form of distribution within society. On the other hand, another breeding ground for Smith's theory was the natural philosophy of Newton, whose representation of the natural world was frequently cited by Smith and is largely reflected in his concept of the social world (Diemer and Guillemin 2012). Influenced by Newtonian discoveries, Adam Smith depicted a model of the society of individuals as a law-bound system of matter. The attractiveness of this theory, analogous to laws of physics and astronomy, stems from the presentation of a system where the various elements are strictly connected to each other through the eternal forces of nature. This analogy of invisible but inescapable forces proved to be stronger than any philosophical hypothesis (Hetherington 1983).

Smithian theory came into new prominence at the demise of totalitarian socialist economies (i.e. Communism as well as National Socialism) after the Second World War, when opposition to the most oppressive forms of techno-bureaucratic systems led to the revival and review of classical liberal economic theory. At the time when the ideal of human freedom was just about to be resuscitated in Europe (the end of World War II), Friedrich Hayek, passed judgement over socialism and elaborated the primary driving forces and laws of the functioning

of a free society (Hayek 1972 [1944]). According to Hayek, the spontaneous, self-organizing and self-generating order<sup>6</sup> grows as a result of economic exchange which is one form of peoples' engagement in social relations. These activities are guided by the practical and social knowledge of individuals that manifests itself only in conditions of free cooperation and association. This knowledge that sums up to a rational social functioning of society is nevertheless dispersed and tacit at the same time, and thus cannot be acquired by a single individual; moreover this rationality of social functioning applies not only to economic exchange but in other spheres where people need coordination in situations of diverging interests (Hayek 1993 [1982]). This paradigm of 'social epistemology' is a revision of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' theory that sees the price of a commodity as concentrated information of the various social behaviours connected to the exchange of that one commodity (Scruton 1991).

As mentioned above, the greatest novelty of Adam Smith's theory, as well as of his revision by Hayek in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, was the adoption of the results of the Newtonian scientific revolution. The application of the logic of natural sciences to social systems rips social theory from the normative stances thus providing an explanation for social functioning irrespective of the culturally defined normative substance. Hayek introduces his topic, the theory of spontaneous order, with the observation that this topic had been and still is a concern of biology and physics. But if the two approaches are contrasted, there is an element to the spontaneous *social* order that is dismissed by natural scientists as 'teleological shorthand': the conception of 'purpose' as the driving force behind the action of the individual elements of the social organism (Hayek 1993 [1982]). Smith's greatest innovation - the theory's extraordinary explanatory power - is at the same time the greatest flaw of the theory. This dilemma cannot be resolved by simply adding the awareness of purposive action of the elements. This

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<sup>6</sup> This distinction of grown, self-regulating order in contrast with the made, exogenous order was reflected in the Classical Greek words: *kosmos* and *taxis*.

awareness would be the acquired “*regularities of conduct conducive to the maintenance of the order*”. Instead ‘function’ as in natural science he attempts to overcome the problem by renaming it to ‘purpose’. The greatest criticism to be drawn against this explanation of invisible, quasi-physical forces of the economy is the subjection of human beings to these forces. It means that by the elimination of the barriers of free trade. Although subjection is not effectuated by exogenous forces of organizations, it nevertheless remains a subjection to invisible forces that are impossible to be influenced or to be diverted by the individuals or localities. Inasmuch as the market theory is capable of tracing certain patterns of social behaviour, it remains startlingly silent on the normative stances of the social system and economic behaviour.

As explained above, free market liberalism is not necessarily conjoint with modern conservatism, though it is conspicuously prevalent in current conservative thinking. Conservatives endorsing the idea of the free market economy should rather be seen as an antithesis to the radical faith in the wilful reconstruction of society upon some abstract design, in short, to social engineering. Thus, at the heart of their economic liberalism lies the defence of societies against the wanton social (re)designing and an often undue optimism in the ability of customs, traditions and morality to prevail over the conquering forces of the market. They are at least as strongly against bureaucrats as against “sophisters, calculators and economists” (Burke 1987 [1790]; Kirk 1953) and thus Hayek’s defence of political-economic freedom proved to be a useful argument against the overexpansion tendency of the state that infringes individual freedom and undermines personal responsibility.

The above-mentioned free-market environmentalists employ essentially the Hayekian epistemology (Anderson and Leal 1991), but thus they rip environmental assets from all of their non-economic values. What nature can offer humans cannot be understood simply through technical knowledge. As people acquire ‘practical knowledge’ about the environment, the

sentiments of commitment, attachment, reverence, responsibility, etc. developed and these (in addition to the recognition that human existence depends upon nature) prevent people from exploiting its assets and treating it solely as means for increasing wealth.

As repeated above, in the US, the American Republican Party has not always held an anti-environmentalist position and until around the 1970's it rather embraced the conservation movement. Moreover, the major legislative landmarks were all introduced during the Nixon administration. The following sub-chapter will shed light on the definitive ideological shift that resulted, among many others, in the redefinition of man's role in nature.

In the US, the American Republican Party has not always held an anti-environmentalist position; until around the 1970's American conservatives have been outright defenders of nature, and embraced the conservation movement. Moreover, such major legislative landmarks as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have all been introduced during the Nixon administration.

### 3.3. Neoconservatism

Conservatives usually acknowledge the tensions that lie between the domination of market mechanisms and the most cherished value of their beliefs: tradition. The reservation or opposition of traditionalist conservatives to the market logic is that the market forces infest other spheres of life and overrule other traditional arrangements (Scruton 1991) and push to the market non-economic spheres of life. Defenders of Hayek argue that Hayek does not invent or prescribe but only discovers (!) that market mechanisms are mobilised by the dispersed, practical, tacit knowledge in society, and traditional institutions, traditions and the market are embodiments of their evolution (Mándi 2012).<sup>7</sup> Thus, for Hayek and for most

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<sup>7</sup> In this paragraph I greatly rely on the excellent thread of thought in *Ideology and Tradition* by Tibor Mándi (2012), a study on the neoconservative shift.



contemporary conservatives the market is one manifestation of tradition, it is consubstantial with tradition, comparable to the Anglo-Saxon common law that has evolved through centuries (Mándi 2012). As I noted above, the strengthening of new market liberalism from the 1970's was largely fuelled by a widespread reaction to the socialist-type, strongly interventionist economic policy that had been dominant even in the non-communist world in the post-war era. It was recognized however that the enemy of the spontaneous order of the market is not the state per se, but the constructivist ambitions of engineering-minded rationalism. This repulsion against the overriding and threatening forces of the strong state led Hayek and his followers to move further in taking action against them (Mándi 2012). Though Hayek sympathises with certain traditional conservative values, in his essay *Why I am not a Conservative?* (1960) he distances himself from it, arguing that because of the rather passive temperament *by its very nature it cannot offer an alternative to the direction in which we are moving. It may succeed by its resistance to current tendencies in slowing down undesirable developments, but, since it does not indicate another direction, it cannot prevent their continuance. It has, for this reason, invariably been the fate of conservatism to be dragged along a path not of its own choosing. The tug of war between conservatives and progressives can only affect the speed, not the direction, of contemporary developments.*" (Hayek 1960). Thus, in order to confront "constructivist rationalism", he created the "ideology of freedom" as he elaborated it in the *Road to Serfdom* (1972 [1944]) and which become tremendously popular in both the US and the UK. It has gained popularity in political life because he argued against the expansion of the centralised economic planning that infringes human freedom (Mándi 2012) and hampers individual, community and business aspirations.

The discrepancy stems from the fact that while Hayek rejected "constructivist rationalism", he gave way to the rationalism of ideology. Oakeshott rightly describes how Hayek's aspiration for the creation of an ideology was the manifestation of political Rationalism:

*“Rationalism has ceased to be merely one style in politics and has become the stylistic criterion of all respectable politics. [...] This is, perhaps, the main significance of Hayek’s Road to Serfdom – not the cogency of his doctrine but the fact that it is a doctrine. A plan to resist all planning may be better than its opposite, but it belongs to the same style of politics. And only in a society already deeply infected with Rationalism will the conversion of the traditional resources of resistance to the tyranny of Rationalism into a self-conscious ideology be considered a strengthening of those resources.” (Oakeshott 1962a)*

His impatience and his ambition to change the course of things led Hayek to disrespecting slow, incremental and organic changes and blinded his view on the fact that besides spontaneous “invisible” mechanisms, the institutions that create the frames of such a self-regulating order are man-made and those who establish the rules and laws of such an order also need, apart from technical knowledge, a good deal of practical knowledge as well. And this practical knowledge cannot be acquired only through experience, through personal connection and affiliation to the place and the people who are affected by the decisions. Otherwise, even those minimum, guiding regulations that create the frames of the spontaneous order become erroneous because they are insensitive for local needs and specificities.

#### 4. Ecology and Conservatism

At the other end of the conservative spectrum, classical conservatives also expressed criticism against environmentalists, although not so much from the economic viewpoint. In environmentalist aspirations for stricter state control and management, traditionalist conservatives saw socialism in disguise, and took loud, noisy and eager environmental campaigns as radicalism (Carter 2007). Nonetheless, there are various grounds, on the level of ethics, morality and general disposition, where conservatives and greens share their views (Pilbeam 2003; Bliese 1997; Scruton 1980; Gray 1995; Rossiter 1982).

Both conservatives and greens are suspicious of the Enlightenment view of man, of the faith in the eternal progress of humanity (Scruton 1980; Porritt 1984; Kirk 1953). They both recognize in the rationalism of science and technology a danger for the human and the natural world (Porritt 1984). Industrialization comes with alienation (Scruton 1980) because the direct connections with objects and personal connections between human agents are interrupted by machinery. Moreover, the management of the risks posed by technological development requires control, regulations, standards and codes of conduct which are mostly determined by techno-bureaucratic systems and therefore, with the expansion of control, human freedom dramatically decreases. Porritt (1984) warns that as much as socialism is a goal-driven ‘super-ideology’ of industrialism so is capitalism. Greens should be critical of all kinds of massive industrialization agendas. The fundamental principle of both types of economic system is the economic performance principle which is incompatible with the functioning of natural ecosystems.

Concluding from the common etymological origins of ‘conservation’ and ‘conservative’ to their common desire to conserve would be ‘limp’ statement (Scruton 1980), because conservatives’ goal is not the conservation of something specific. Conservatives, similarly to greens, are disposed to conserve or preserve valuable natural or cultural heritage, thus find long-term solutions, however conservatives do not wish to arrest change altogether, but seek

solutions that respect the boundaries (O’Sullivan 1976). Unlike radicals, they look for the balanced “golden mean” and slow, incremental transition. For greens it is the balance of the whole ecosystem that is the goal and since humanity has drifted so far from a balanced nature, greens take a more radical precautionary stance. While risk-taking *per se* is not considered hazardous from a conservative point of view, greens have established an elaborate system of principles of risk aversion (Bliese 1997). A high level of precaution may be justified by various ecological causes, but from the conservative viewpoint, it is vital to take into account other spheres of life, such as economic exchange and the behaviour of businesses. Thus, instead of radical precaution and drowning innovation, Scruton (1980) argues that the husbanding of different kinds of capital (economic, social, environmental, etc.) may serve better in long run. Besides the idea of horizontal cooperation of the different spheres (spatial continuity), society is imagined in both creeds as a temporal collaboration between the subsequent generations. To strengthen the moral aspect of their argumentation, greens often appeal to the “rights of future generations” which is a shared concern with conservatives, although the latter stress the significance of our respect for the past, the ancestors. The continuity is expressed in Burke’s words as ‘*a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born*’ (Burke 1987 [1790]). Two hundred years later a political descendant of Burke rephrased it in the following manner : “*no generation has a freehold on this Earth. All we have is a life tenancy – with a full repairing lease*” (Thatcher 1990)<sup>8</sup>. It echoes the other related idea of ‘stewardship’ that has its origins in the Bible. All these conceptions emphasise the temporariness of our existence and warn that we have inherited the land from our ancestors and will pass it on to our descendants; therefore

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<sup>8</sup> Thatcher’s attitude to the environment is contradictory issue that I do not wish to elaborate on here. It suffices to say that besides her belief in the free-market, she acknowledged the threat of climate change and other environmental problems. At the end of her term she eased the way for certain environmental initiatives (such as the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)) though the environment was clearly not at the forefront of her politics.

we have a prime responsibility to be good tenants of it. Besides nice ideals, these thoughts should lead us to another realization fundamental for both creeds, that individuals are embedded into the society or community they were born in. Burkean conservatism as well as ecologism reject liberal individualism and rather emphasize the role of social context in shaping personality and in transmitting knowledge.

Last but not least, conservatives as well as greens admire natural and man-made beauty (i.e. cultural heritage), and are concerned with the conservation of natural landscapes. Their nostalgic visions for the lost Romantic wilderness are expressions of their affection for beauty and transcendental values (Scruton 1980, 2012).

#### **4.1. Further clarifications through examples of political practice**

Finally, though this thesis is mainly concerned with intellectual conservatism, due to the intimate nature of connections between intellectual conservatism and practice a few examples from practice may be helpful to stress that a green conservatism is possible and may be a reality and what is described in this thesis is not merely an abstract construction of ideas but it has connections to political practice as well.

As noted in the introduction, there is a general view that conservatives are generally seen as less concerned for the environment. Even though this may be true in the US, there are a number of arguments that there is a strong variance between citizens of different countries in their values attached to the environment and environmental political activities.

Empiric analyses show, physical circumstances in a country strongly influence conservatives' support of environmental protection in particular countries. Conservatives are least likely to support the environment in capitalist, highly developed countries, characterized by good environmental conditions and are more committed to environmental protection if they reside in former communist countries of low overall development status and poor environmental conditions (Nawrotzki 2012). In Central-Eastern Europe environmentalism has

emerged in the 1980's as a response to the environmental destruction caused by the wastefulness and mismanagement of resources in the socialist economic system. On the other hand, in countries without a socialist past, largely due to the history of environmental groups, environment-related values are often interpreted as another form of leftist values (rejection of discrimination against vulnerable groups, environmental justice) that are in opposition with conservative ideology that favours the industrial capitalist social order and resists changes that might impair the profit margin and economic growth (McCright and Dunlap 2010). The disparity between inherent values of conservatism and actual preferences may also be due to the activities of pre-dominantly Leftist environmentalist groups.

The environmental movement altogether is usually associated with the environmentalism of the sixties and seventies taken up by New Left movements, however there had emerged early environmentalist movements in the late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century in the USA, Britain and continental Europe (Scruton 2012). These early movements came to being as reactions to the Industrial Revolution and their ideals were deeply rooted in the intellectual thought of the era and were highly inspired by the Enlightenment cult of beauty and Romantic literature (Scruton 2012). Such groups were for instance the German *Wandervogel* youth movement or the Sierra Club which endorsed ideals like freedom, self-responsibility, adventurousness, discovery, naturalness and fraternity. These pre-1945 groups had substantially different goals than the movements from the sixties and onwards. These had usually been not-politically-driven and non-affiliated associations or clubs where members gathered for leisure and a passion for discovery of nature. The Republican Party members greatly sympathised with the Conservationists in the US either from Congress or as conservationist club members (Drake 2010; Dunlap *et al.* 2001).

In contrast with these non-political leisure associations, the New Leftist environmental movements set a strong anti-capitalist tone that spurred a strong counter response from the

conservative parties (McCright and Dunlap 2010). Thus, for many conservatives environmentalism is only another variant to socialism that promotes strong state intervention, large bureaucracy and the wrecking of business opportunities (Gray 1993; Pilbeam 2003). This opposition was exacerbated during the Reagan administration whose aim was to considerably cut off state expenditures and regulation that impede business interests; including reducing the state's role as an environmental management state (Drake 2010). The capitalistic expansionary imperative that is based on the ever greater exploitation of natural resources is clearly hostile to any environmentally based restriction. Another point of opposition lies in the nationalistic focus of U.S. conservative ideology, which is largely incompatible with the commitment to an environmentalist global perspective and the support of international regulatory bodies (Pilbeam 2003).

## 5. Oikophilia and responsibility

### 5.1. Introduction

As I highlighted above, there are a number of potential common bases for classical conservative thinking and ecology: their scepticism towards the claim of science and the idea of progress, strong attachments to non-material values, a concern for absent generations, the community as the basis of social life, and so on. However, by accepting the slight change in the conservative understanding of tradition that led to its embrace of the ideology of freedom, conservatism's non-activist, non-revolutionary attitude was abandoned for the rationally established/constructed spontaneous order, and for a vigorous ideology that is fit for the intensified and media-driven political battles of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Whether neoconservatism should be interpreted as the direct continuation of classical conservatism or just a politically successful ramification of a rich and diverse political family that contains a large variety of branches remains an unsettled question. In practical politics neoconservatism, which has already proven its incapacity to accommodate the meekness of ecological ethics and morality, has become so dominant that it might even be doubted whether a classical, may we call it Burkean-Oakeshottian conservatism (that may be hospitable to the environment) is viable in today's politics.

Through the works of the two authors, András Lányi and Roger Scruton, however, I will attempt to demonstrate that for all the difficulties of such a return, persuasive arguments can be drawn from the two books for environmental conservatism. What is more, their arguments may be enlightening for anyone (even non-conservatives) who is concerned with ecology and the state of our civilization. This latter aspect is crucial for any enquiry into ecology. There is a widespread belief among environmental theorists (Dobson 2000), that the ecological problem is at the end a political, an ethical, a cultural problem and that the destruction of the natural environment is a proof that something is fundamentally wrong with how we think about



human existence. The question of whether our ethical views are anthropocentric or not is just the starting point of debate about the ecological crisis that often results in fundamental questions about politics, the condition of culture, hence about civilization.

First, I would like to contrast Lányi's and Scruton's perception on the environmental problem. While conservatives are generally rather skeptical about the severity and the scientific backing of environmental problems, greens all have a rather somber view on the state of the ecosystem and tend to believe scientific results.

Then, I will compare their conceptions of the 'local' and community. I will start with their critique of, large bureaucratic systems and continue with their epistemological stances

Finally, I will contrast how they argumentations regarding the fundamental value of both conservatism and ecology, i.e. responsibility and will elucidate how they conceptualize this term.

The peculiarity of the two works is that the authors started out their philosophical careers with very different interests: as a leading figure in the emerging environmental movement in Hungary, Lányi's primary concern has always been the protection of local environments (natural or man-made), and he only gradually became attentive to the systemic problems (in science, politics and economy) which make the ecological system frightfully vulnerable. Scruton on the other hand has been an outspoken conservative since the dawn of his career, starting out with philosophical enquires on aesthetics, politics, architecture and music and later, with his extensive works on the intellectual history of conservatism and on conservative thought, he became a renowned figure of contemporary conservatism. In the end, through their works, Lányi ended up approaching to conservatism, while Scruton ended up articulating genuine environmental concerns. Besides these two works by Lányi and Scruton central to this thesis, I will evoke one more work by Lányi, his most recent journal article that appeared in the Hungarian Review of Political Science, entitled *Ecology, as a Political Philosophy* (2012).

This article is a direct continuation of his book where he establishes a new typology for political ideologies, and reasons that ecology has emerged to be a consistent, coherent ideology that can be positioned as the fourth element in the matrix of worldviews besides liberalism, conservatism and socialism. He finds that in a matrix defined by two axes: (1) weak or strong government and (2) individual – community relation, ecology shares with conservatism a strong communitarian disposition, unlike the Left (liberalism and socialism) that is where the individual's relation to community is less articulated. Therefore, although Lányi is not a typical conservative, but rather an ecologist, his works demonstrate that a serious examination of the philosophical background reveals that in many aspects the conservative and ecological worldviews intertwine. For this reason, some of the philosophical underpinnings of the two creeds need to be discussed to reveal that what was presumed by Pilbeam, Bliese and the other authors are not just seeming likenesses but well-founded linkages.

## 5.2. Alarmism or ecocide?

The extensive works of Scruton and Lányi chiefly operate in political philosophy, ethics and epistemology and draw on many of the human aspects of the environment. András Lányi's<sup>9</sup> work, the *Roads to Ecophilosophy* (Lányi 2010) is a collection of his philosophical writings from the past fifteen years. It builds upon a wide range of works from the area of philosophy and social science, accepting the scientific results on environmental degradation and climate change as given. On the other hand, Scruton's *Green Philosophy* drew from books on various different areas, such as economics, political science, psychology, and natural science. He spared no effort to investigate the verifications and the credibility of certain scientific results, especially the ones related to climate change.

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<sup>9</sup> Since András Lányi's works are not available yet in English, only in Hungarian, I may be slightly more diffuse with describing his work and thoughts.

As noted in the introduction, the authors started off their careers with very different backgrounds and aspirations, and the different experiences are clearly reflected in the set-up of the works and in their perception of the environmental problem overall. For an activist-philosopher like Lányi from a socialist rather than post-socialist country, environmental destruction, massive wasteful industrialization, and threats of chemical pollution from intensive low-quality agriculture were added to the daily realities of horrible living environments and ravaged civic culture. But these problems are not specific to Hungary; they occurred in many parts in the world. The grimmest experience for any environmentalist is the extreme narrowness of the opportunities for influencing and participating in decision-making; and this was even more so in socialist countries where techno-bureaucratic leadership obviated any counter-move or compromise by deeming political issues problems of technicalities. For him, as a debutant activist in the final years of socialism the initial questions were whether the gap between social sciences and natural sciences could be bridged and on what grounds social science or philosophy or civil society could have a say in issues that were then considered technical or management problems - sufficient grounds at the time to exclude the public from the public policy process. Even though in Eastern Europe environmental records improved considerably after democratization and the establishing of market capitalism, the chances for meaningful political participation remained slim and society was left powerless against the abrupt invasion of market mechanisms. Lányi's scope of questions expanded through the years to questions of political philosophy, ethics and further on to epistemological and ontological questions (Lányi 2010:7-11). Thus, his essays collected in *Roads to Ecophilosophy* were stages of an endeavour in the discovery of the meaning, the substance of 'ecology'. The book however follows a reverse order and starts with anthropology, a concept of the human-specific interpretation of the environment and continues with the exploration of some important connections in ecophilosophy and intellectual history; in the second chapter he goes on step by step discussing moral philosophy, a revision of the anthropocentrism of ethics, then to political

philosophy. The book finishes with further reflections in the realm of political theory and cultural history examining the relation of the social subsystems such as science, politics, education, and mass media to ecology. The final question raised in the final essays is why such tools of social self-correction fail to serve us to prevent a catastrophe (an “ecocide”<sup>10</sup>) that is unprecedented in history but the hazards of which we are well aware of. His overall view of the state of affairs remains sombre as not only ecology is in peril but. With the striking disappearance of cultural diversity, and because the possibilities for meaningful political participation or alternative lifestyles to the consumerist-productionist norm have narrowed radically, he considers that the whole civilization is in decline. This sombreness is not exceptional at all among greens, but rather regular.

This “gloomy” picture of the current ecological problems that Lányi upholds throughout his work is the kind of attitude that Scruton opposes right from the first paragraphs (Scruton 2012, 1–4). He accepts environmental problems as being a shared concern but rebukes environmentalists for their alarmism that frightens the average person and creates an atmosphere of life-threatening danger and panic. For this reason, Scruton argues, for many it is more comforting to believe the skeptics whose reassuring words offer hope. The anxiety fuelled by environmentalists’ constant scaremongering is a breeding-ground for radicalism, a justification for radical solutions, and is useful in his view only for triggering top-down control.

Scruton devotes a considerable portion (chapter 2) of the book to arguing that the scientific results that are supposed to support the alarmism are not always fully reliable, and that there are serious doubts about the required neutrality of the scientists. Scruton discusses at length that the vast global schemes (such as the Kyoto protocol) that are offered as solutions are founded upon a scientific method of assessment of data that is questionable and that results may have been influenced for political reasons (Scruton 2012, 38–71). At the end,

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<sup>10</sup> “Ecocide” an ecology-specific formulation of ‘genocide’

he does not deny climate change, but wants to remain cautious about the implications. Conservatives have a general scepticism towards the developments of science and technology, but more importantly, scientific results are not indicative for them of what people should do. For conservatives, scientific results may be accepted as an acquired knowledge but this does not necessarily translate into action. Thus, conservatives are doubly sceptical: they are more disposed to questioning the reliability of science and second, for them, scientific results are not indicative of what should be done.

### 5.3. Bureaucracy versus Locality

According to Scruton, this uncritical belief in science is the reason that environmental NGOs and pressure groups lobby so often for the implementation of vast schemes and large-scale plans, preferably international ones (Scruton 2012, 18–37) In Scruton's view they are in the wrong for two reasons: one is a common argument of conservatives, that bureaucrats are unaccountable, that large-scale plans in their hands are usually ineffective or inefficient, and bureaucratic solutions are usually coupled with even more stringent regulations. He implies that those who have a disposition towards realizing vast projects often do so regardless of what aim is to be achieved. Because of this sort of megalomaniac disposition, some of those (Scruton does not specify although he supposedly refers to politicians) who promise to implement vast schemes for environmental protection, may at the same time promise vast, environmentally damaging developments and policies, such as new large transport infrastructure or new subsidies for high-emission industries (Scruton 2012, 1–4, 90–103)

Instead of large-scale solutions, both authors make a case for the strengthening of the locality, the local perspective in politics. Their observations about current unaccountable centralised systems and their reasoning for the vindication of subsidiarity are complementary. This is one of the most important shared grounds for ecology and conservatism and thus it is worth further elaboration. As described in the previous paragraph, there are a number of

counter-arguments against centralized action, such as the unaccountability of bureaucrats (which rises as the decisions are transferred to higher levels<sup>11</sup>), inefficiency and ineffectiveness. There is also a problem of democratic participation, since those affected by the decisions are left out from the decision-making process and from implementation as well which is especially problematic in the case of decisions that affect either positively<sup>12</sup> or negatively the local environment. In case of high-level decisions addressing local communities, local people have to bear changes with all their implications in their lives which they had no say in.

Therefore, as Scruton emphasizes many times, instead of agenda-driven movements, environmental problems should be addressed by local clubs and associations, where the members are connected by friendship and neighbourliness. The problem with organizations of goal-directed membership is that the purpose cannot be easily subjected to critical examination (Scruton 2012, 88–90). Internal defects and contradictions must, for the sake of interest, be passed over. and those who critique their goals or values are regarded as ‘enemies’ (or ‘enemies of the cause’). Thus even those goal-directed organizations that aim at solving ‘common’ or ‘shared’ environmental problems generate enmity and conflicts.

Local communities by themselves will act if needed for protecting or improving their local environment because the average person’s understanding and sense of danger is shaped by local needs and much less by the mass of information he is bombarded with from outside (Scruton 2012, 10). People generally have a sense of locality and as they are socialized in a certain environment, they develop a local identity and a commitment to the place where they live. This commitment is what leads most people to take action for their habitat.

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<sup>11</sup> It means that international and global decision-making and bureaucracy are generally even more difficult to be held accountable than national or regional.

<sup>12</sup> In NGOs this is problem is usually formulated as ‘lack of ownership’, when local people are uninterested in the projects that are normally targeted at improving their living conditions. Organizations try to address it by involving the local communities in the decision-making and implementation of the projects.

This thought also refers back to the above description on epistemology. What Oakeshott described as practical knowledge is the kind of knowledge that cannot be learned from books, only through experiences, through personal interactions. It may be complemented with the sort of technical knowledge that is passed on as information or data, but this socialization process is what develops the sense of responsibility in the individual that will motivate them to act for their community. Scruton's and Lányi's argumentation imply that this kind of adaptation or action is more efficient and more effective because this practical knowledge helps to develop solutions that are sensitive to the local needs

The most obvious reason for using general agendas and plans for solving environmental problems would be that many such problems do not appear strictly on the defined territory of a village or town but they affect many localities or may be trans-boundary problems. These large scale problems are everyone's so they need to be managed on behalf of everyone (Scruton 2012, 128–129), and in most cases for environmentalists this means managed by the state. The conservative and environmentalist critique of the argument that environmental problems should be managed by the state are intertwined (Lányi 2012, 114; Scruton 2012, 88–91, 130–131). First of all, bureaucrats can seldom be held accountable. Impersonal institutions bear legal liability but in institutions moral responsibility diminishes (we cannot ask *what is responsible?* only *who is responsible?*). Second, with state management, problems are “confiscated” by the state, citizens are left out of the decision-making process and the sense of ownership is lost (Scruton 2012, 2–37). Third, universal solutions are insensible to local specificities (to qualitative differences that cannot be subject to rationalist calculation). Then, bureaucratic management disaggregates the risks and problems and provides technical solutions (technological solutions or regulatory ones) to problems through the assessment of what can or cannot be changed in addition to calculations of the possibility of adverse and beneficial effects. (As Scruton mentions and as Lányi elaborately describes, impersonal techno-

bureaucratic systems are not specific to the state, big transnational companies or the media also slip quite often from our control.) Finally, the “confiscation” of problems has crucial consequences for citizens and communities. As these systems take the burden of decisions they deprive the ordinary citizens of meaningful participation in public affairs. As the state takes responsibility in more and more areas of life, individuals are left with less opportunity and less responsibility in both private and public life.

Scruton rebukes environmentalists for their support for technical solutions, just as Lányi defines ecological politics in response to the oppressive forces of impersonal organizations. This helps us in revealing the real difference between environmentalists who (as defined above) usually “*argue for a managerial approach that seeks technical solutions to environmental problems without addressing underlying issues*” (Pilbeam 2003, 491), while ecologists aspire to develop philosophical foundations for their arguments, which tackle social functioning such as the present system of ever increasing consumption and production, the intrinsic value of nature as well as interpersonal relations.

Lányi’s ecological political philosophy is based essentially on reclaiming participation in politics and, even more importantly, an insistence that public affairs and the definition of common/ public/social goals should be left open for political discussion. For him, a genuine political solution is the settlement of conflicts through discussion and compromise between the parties and the only way to decide on the essence of right and wrong. Ecology, as Lányi puts it “*Ecological politics is not environmental protection; it is the lore of coexistence.*” (Lányi 2012, 14).

The logic of localization is at the heart of both ecological politics and conservative politics and it stems from realization of the importance of practical knowledge. Only about that whose place we know, can we make *right*<sup>13</sup> decisions. As Lányi argues, the prospects for the

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<sup>13</sup> I will return to the criterion of right as Lányi defines it later.



protection of the ‘rich diversity’ in nature as well as in culture remain bleak as long as decisions affecting local people are taken by global networks (financial or bureaucratic) and uncontrollable bodies who are far from their reach (Lányi 2012: 114).

Localization of decisions, the restitution of the human scale of affairs is a precondition for ecological politics. He refers to Hans Jonas (...) when he says that our responsibility for future generations makes our moral duty the averting of the environmental catastrophe and this moral obligation can only be met through the political process. This is the reason why he calls ecological politics the politics of responsibility. He finds our current institutions inadequate for fulfilling this role since these institutions were designed to serve other purposes. Their different logic cannot be changed at the voluntary will of ecology. This is the justification for the need to develop the philosophical grounding of ecology and ecological politics which he considers to be the politics of responsibility and meekness (Lányi 2012: 114). This opposition to current institutions and the radical claims of change is in strike opposition with the conservative tenets but is not atypical to ecology. Environmentalism emerged in response to the pressing problems of our time, i.e. the significant loss and degradation of rich natural areas. Ecology is a direct continuation of environmentalism that evolved from environmentalism but whose scope is much broader and it stands on firmer philosophical grounds as well. It is in a way a comprehensive critique of modernity.

#### **5.4. Responsibility and Oikophilia**

This thesis greatly builds upon the discussion of rationalism, and the two types of knowledge as developed by Michael Oakeshott. The discussion of practical knowledge that was made central to both conservatism and ecology was defined briefly and it was discussed mainly in relation to politics and social interactions. Other elements to knowledge, such as commitment and identity were also evoked previously but the motivations behind them were left untouched. However, any discussion of communitarian, small-scale, personal social

arrangements needs to elucidate the motivating forces that keep the individuals together and that create the firm grounds for cooperation.

At the centre of both authors' conception of interpersonal relations stands the sense of responsibility as the most determining connection between two people. Whereas in the case of conservatism the emphasis is put on the agent in whom responsibility is developed for the other, ecology emphasizes the link itself, the communicative connection between the subjects.

The question is what the source of this responsibility for others is. Lányi and Scruton agree that the reductionist anthropology of self-interested atomised individuals does not provide any meaningful explanation about the motivation of individuals for non-economic actions. Altruism may answer a small portion of motivation, but still does not provide us with any moral guidance on why people should cooperate outside the economic sphere. As Scruton puts it "*moral reasoning is not economic reasoning...There are certain things on which we put a price and things on which we don't put a price.*" (Scruton 2012, 201) People, communities, law and justice are clearly outside of the realm of tradable goods. The reductionism refers to that the human motives are reduced to sheer preferences and desires, but morality, the expression of judgements is defied (Scruton 2012, 201).

A look at Kantian philosophy cannot be avoided in any discussion of morality, and so do Lányi and Scruton, who are led to elaborate their views on moral philosophy *via* an interpretation of Kant. Interestingly, as I will attempt to demonstrate, Kantian ethics as well as its critique may lead to the same conclusion on the whole.

One of the greatest achievement of Kantian philosophy is the systematic distinction of moral judgement and empirical desire (Kant 2008; Scruton 2012, 201–204). The moral agent is a being who is at the same time free and obedient to reason, and possesses a transcendental and an empirical aspect as well. Kantian morality is founded upon the *categorical imperative*, an imperative of reason, which tells us to act in accordance with the maxim that it should work as a principle of universal law. Determined by universal rationality one cannot will anything

other than what anyone else would will in a similar situation. Reason alone motivates us to avoid immoral behaviour, such as lying or stealing.

Scruton points out, that despite of the controversies related to Kant's metaphysics, the cognition of the empirical aspect to the moral agent helps us realize that people are not driven by sheer self-interest but also by their conception of their place in the world and by a habit of evaluation that situates them as objects of judgement among others, who can be praised and blamed (Scruton 2012, 202–203). It is not because people are utilitarian calculating machines that we can apply to the common good. People are governed by a sense of responsibility. Scruton follows with Stephen Darwall's reasoning that Kantian ethic of moral reason must be founded on the 'second-person standpoint', because reasons for action are 'agent-relative' reasons and not the "impersonal evaluations that appeal to utilitarians nor the abstract and universal principles of the Kantian pursuits" (Scruton 2012, 203–204; Darwall 1996). Because we regard ourselves as accountable to other, the force for action derives as 'You address Me and I address You' (Scruton 2012, 204). "The interpersonal nature of moral reasoning underlies both the motivating force and the rational justification of the Kantian moral law." (Scruton 2012, 204)

Scruton partly reviews the Kantian view of ethical view constituted by the 'abstract right' of universal principles and rather creates synthesis of the abstract right and of the concrete, historically rooted obligations (Scruton 2012, 208). While nevertheless he establishes the idea of responsibility on Kantian moral philosophy, Lányi establishes his conception of responsibility on the critique of Kant. In a pursuit for an ethics that could replace the current anthropocentric ethics, one that takes into account not just humans universally but non-human beings<sup>14</sup> as well, Lányi gets at questioning that the ethics of modern European individualism (that he argues has been surpassed by deep ecology or eco-philosophy) is really

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<sup>14</sup> In David Abram's that endows "a more-than-human world" with intrinsic value (Abram 1997)

“anthropocentric”. In the Kantian philosophy the focus of criticism is the autonomy of moral choice. Because *“in the definition of the possible goals of good will [Kant] has to exclude all kinds of specific goals and affections which constitute the identity of the Self. By their nature, they cannot be generalized. Consequently, in the absence of these determinants... Kant’s moral legislator is led only by abstract rationality, an impersonal fulfillment of duties, which aims at the Other only as an occasional representation of the general idea of humanity”* (Lányi 2010, 73). Lányi sees the flaw of Kantian philosophy in the concept of autonomy, and in the fact that moral position of the co-subject, of the other moral agent, is defined with the intermediating concept of humanity. In response, Lányi redefines autonomy via the theory of living systems as developed by ecology (here, it is as biology). *“...organisms are capable of autonomous sustenance (of maintaining and renewing their patterns) just because they are not independent of their environment. Instead, they are in active interaction with it, and in the course of this interplay they modify their inner state in response to the environmental challenges. For Kant, this would qualify as a heteronomous behaviour...autonomy is not independence, but a type of mutual interdependence, which may or may not be attained within social interaction, and which is not possible – let alone theoretically – outside it.”*(Lányi 2010, 73). The ethics of modern European philosophy was anthropocentric and despite of the various attempts, could not be meaningfully applied on the non-human world. Instead of focusing on the agent and establishing a theory based on the different characteristics of the Self or the biological organism(s), Lányi establishes his theory on interaction - of the mutually interdependent, constantly communicating agents. Following the philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas (1967), Lányi argues that it is not understanding on the first place that humans need from others, *“but help and devotion, as understanding each other cannot be the outcome of our dialogue, if it was not present among the preconditions of it as my preliminary engagement to the truth of my partner* (Lányi 2010, 78). It is not primarily the discussion that exercises the compelling force on me, but that the Other addresses me and expects response,

convinced that his/her concerns are mine, too (Levinas 1967). Humans are reliant on the help of the others, mutually dependent and this is the hard necessity of the relation. But exactly because of this when the Other addresses me I can choose either to deny or meet the requests and this my freedom. *“I am who is addressed, who responds. I am the respons-able one.”* (Lányi 2010, 78).

The most important difference between the two ways to responsibility is that the moral motive towards non-human beings directly ensues from Lányi’s interpretation of responsibility while the Kantian responsibility is an extension of the person-to-person sympathy to other beings. Responsibility is tightly linked to senses because responsibility is not the consequence of speculation but the fact of direct experience.

At the focus of environmental ethics we find one of the most unsettling ethical challenge of today, the rights of for future generations or with other words, the responsibility for future generations. So far, two paths have been offered for the ethical dilemma of taking future people into account in our moral considerations. The successor of Kantian moral law, Hans Jonas, developed the future-directed moral commandments for the present age that are supposed to replace the Kantian maxims of present humanity. The other way follows Rawlsian contractarian theory of justice. The principle of ‘just savings’ prescribes to leave at least the equivalent of what is received. Scruton’s concern is that none of them, not even the complex normativity of the ‘environmental justice’ debates can create incentive for future-oriented responsibility (Scruton 2012, 207). Thus, instead of abstract theories, following his reasoning about the concrete historically-rooted obligations, Scruton seeks the motives for protecting future people in the most basic attachments to our ancestors, children, family and locality.

This direct experience with family members, our own surroundings, the people, nature and the built environment are comprehended in the disposition that Scruton names *Oikophilia*; it is the love for the home, the commitment to the locality, a sense of identity of the individual. What Scruton describes under this term is however, barely new. It comprises the various

elements of conservative philosophy that have already been accounted: starting with the respect for absent, especially preceding generations, cultural embeddedness, and the local arrangements, the “little platoons” (Burke) of society: such as trusts, associations, clubs and the market. Oikophilia<sup>15</sup> involves many dispositions that serve the sustenance of the ‘oikos’ such as piety, ecological and social balance, distaste for dehumanizing technology, and another crucial identity for conservatives: the sense of nationhood.

### 5.5. Further remarks

We have seen that there are many natural dispositions that are shared by both ecology and conservatism and that the hostility to environmentalism is rooted in the changes conservatism itself went through, rather than being conservatism’s natural opposition to it. Yet, despite of the many affinities between the two creeds, environmentalism remains to be seen by a significant number of conservatives as ‘socialism in disguise’. Because of the radical stance of environmentalism, the agenda-driven campaigning, and so on, greens cannot hope any sympathy for their movement from conservatives (Scruton 2012). What is more, radicalism, to a certain extent has been perpetuated from environmentalism to ecology as we have seen in Lányi’s strong opposition to current institutions. The radicalism of greens stems from their radically different perception of ecological problem and of the scale of the ecological destruction. Minor changes in environmental policy or adjustments achieved by a more moderate attitude could hardly satisfy environmentalists, because the loss in nature has been so severe in their view, and the direction of social changes is so unsettling for them, that ecologism cannot take but a radical position.

This is one of the most fundamental difference between the two creeds. For this reason, both environmentalist groups and ecologists formulate certain desired paths for a substantial

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<sup>15</sup> *oikos*: Greek word, means house or household. From oikos comes the English prefix eco – for ecology and economics

change and that change is no less than “*the fundamental transformation of our acquisitive and instrumental relationship with nature*” (Pilbeam 2003)

On the other hand, anti-environmentalists reason that data from the last decades on economic performance prove the drastic increase in wealth and standard of living (due at least partly to the expansion of the free market). Thus, environmentalists who argue for stricter business regulations create barriers to the benefits of the free market as well (Neal and Davies 1998; Simon 1983). Considering the last development of the last decades, Simon concludes, human beings create more than destroy and from this perspective, thus population growth and the creation of wealth is rather a triumph than a problem (Simon 1983). The argumentation goes even further with pointing out the benefits of economic and technological development to under-developed countries (O’Hear 1997). O’Hear attacks not only the sentimentality of environmentalists as they bemoan the loss of certain modes of life in return for unprecedented development, but he also criticises the conception of greens of an ever-balanced, harmonious nature. He argues that the extinction of certain species and fluctuations in climatic conditions are also vital to the functioning of nature (O’Hear 1997).

Similarly, conservatives’ belief in the free market does not seem to fade in spite of the many controversies of market solutions especially in relation to the environment. However, it needs to be noted that conservatives in general are very divided upon this tenet. As I showed above, traditionalist conservatives are more cautious about market solutions and realize its many drawbacks on society. Free-market environmentalism has been discussed in length in the literature review, only one more comment needs to be made here. As Pilbeam points out proponents of free-market environmentalism fail to recognize “*the extent to which the contemporary resonance of green ideas is bound up with a more general antagonism towards the tenets of Enlightenment humanism*” (Pilbeam 2003). Consequently, because of their failure to link the environmental problem with the paradigm of the technological and scientific

development progress, their answer to environmental problems is ever too often a scientific or technological solution (Thatcher 1990; Pilbeam 2003)

The limitations to free-market conservatism and green doctrines are quite significant and easy to trace. Nevertheless there are also a number of barriers to husbanding classical conservatism and green thoughts. First of all, there is a small but important difference to the transgenerational outlook of the two creeds. Dobson argues that conservatives are more interested in cherishing the past (and thus often accused of sentimental nostalgia), whereas greens prefer to turn to the future (Dobson 2000). In spite of the fact that conservatives are also concerned for the conservation of natural sites, Dobson reminds, conservatism remains essentially anthropocentric and the natural landscape is considered as part of the cultural landscape rather than as something with an intrinsic value (Dobson 2000) This assertion is not wholly justified. Scruton does mention the intrinsic value to nature and he also states that conservatism sees Nature as something essentially ‘good’ (Scruton 2012).

With an in-depth enquiry into three areas of András Lányi’s and Roger Scruton’ work, I wanted to demonstrate that the assertions about the affinities between conservatism and ecology that were suggested by several authors, are philosophically grounded and can be confirmed. I also wanted to show where there are important dissimilarities in these areas as well as explore their origins.

To sum up, ecology and conservatism were found to have a diverging perception of the ecological problem that is rooted in conservatism’s scepticism toward scientific results. Their scepticism was exacerbated by distaste for the intense campaigning activities of environmentalist groups. Conservatives dislike the agenda-driven/goal-directed nature of environmentalism and are especially annoyed by environmentalist’s claim for wider and stricter regulations because that results in the further expansion of bureaucracy. It was found, ecology and conservatism share their criticism of techno-bureaucratic systems. This finding reflects the division between environmentalism and ecology in respect of their scope of issues. While



environmentalists seek primarily managerial solutions, ecological political philosophy is focused at reclaiming participation in politics and, insists that public affairs and the definition of common goal should be left open to public discussion. The refusal of wide bureaucratic control is rooted in the epistemological understanding of the conservative and ecological creeds and both of them see local communities as the essential political realm for individuals. Again, the radicalism of ecology is revealed, as ecologists seek to change social institutions through political means. Finally, responsibility was found as the central moral value in both creeds, although because of their differing accounts of Kant's moral philosophy, responsibility is conceptualized slightly differently; nonetheless, responsibility remains central to both creeds.

## 6. Conclusion

Ecology, as worldview or philosophical stance evolved from environmentalism in the last decades and its evolution has been supported by a wide range of enquiries in philosophy, ethics, politics, natural science and other disciplines. Ecology started to secede from environmentalism driven by the recognition that environmental problems are bound up with more general systemic problems. Environmentalism and ecology co-exist in the political realm, though the influence of the latter is significantly less. Environmentalism has for a long time been attached to the political Left and conservatives were generally considered as lacking any lacking serious commitment to environmental concerns. A few authors in the past have pointed out the potential shared grounds for traditional conservatism and green philosophy, but in the conservative realm philosophical works that take the ecological problem into account were lacking. In the same vein, the underlying reasons of a definitive turn in the intellectual history of conservatism and its implications to the conservative attitude toward the environment have not been unfolded.

It was found that there are a number of common grounds for contemporary conservatism and ecology, with the reservation that only the non-liberal branches, mainly traditional conservatism can accommodate environmental aspects into their creed. The acceptance of certain limits to human aspirations, the scepticism towards the rationalism of the claims of science, a distaste for the modernist agenda of progress and rationalist social engineering, communitarian arrangements in society, the concern for absent generation (past and future), a view to the transcendental values were found the most important links between them.

Through an enquiry into the part of conservative intellectual history that could shed light on the definitive turn in conservative thought, the philosophy of Hayek and Oakeshott, showed that the gist of the emergence of Neoconservatism was the creation of the doctrine of the spontaneous order of economy, a rationalist “*plan to resist all planning*”. By accepting the doctrine of the free market economy, from a stance, an attitude Conservatism transformed into

an ideology. From an environmental point of view this meant, that the sustenance of the ‘healthy functioning’ of the free market became the main objective of neoliberal and neoconservative politics. Although free market environmentalists have attempted to create incentive for the protection of natural assets via free market mechanisms, the fact that the economic performance principle cannot and should not be applied on the environment was overlooked.

Subsequently, the exploration of the philosophical grounding of the two recent works by András Lányi and Roger Scruton confirmed the affinities between conservatism and ecology which had been suggested by previous authors. I also showed that there are nevertheless important dissimilarities in those areas.

The reserved and sceptical attitude towards environmental problems can hardly ever change within the conservative realm. For ecology the starting point for action is at least the acknowledgement of ecological problems, whereas conservatives are generally sceptical about the scientific results. Ecology and conservatism equally criticize the techno-bureaucratic systems because bureaucrats are most difficult to be held accountable. These specialised systems in their functioning must disaggregate the risks, thus complex problems can seldom be resolved in an effective and efficient manner. What is more, they appropriate the common problems and thus local communities are deprived from the possibility of finding common solutions to the problems. Central to this criticism is that common problems should be solved at lowest possible level, where there is sufficient knowledge about the circumstances. In case of complex environmental problems, knowledge of the ‘place’ is crucial for right decisions.

Lányi’s political philosophy has showed that the radicalism of ecology is still an important element to it.

Finally, responsibility was traced as the central moral value of both creeds. Responsibility is the characteristic of interpersonal relations, between interdependent and constantly communicating

agents (Lányi) or between the autonomous moral agents. Responsibility is when the ‘I’ addresses the ‘Thou’. *I am who is addressed, who responds. I am the respons-able one.*

These findings enhance our understanding of the potential for contemporary conservatism to engage meaningfully with ecologism. The current findings add substantially to our understanding of the ecology-conservatism interaction and provide a new understanding of the underlying reasons of the hostilities between the two creeds. The present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests that while traditional conservatism has good potential to affiliate with ecologism, it is very likely that the relationship of green philosophies with neoconservatism will remain antagonistic.

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