The left has always had a complicated attitude towards capitalism: in large part it has been against capitalists, but in favour of the capitalist system. Capitalism is all about the production of surplus. The left objects to the unfair monopolisation of this surplus by an undeserving minority. But it prizes a system which produces, over the long term, an ever-expanding growth in wealth – since this can be used to improve the wellbeing of society as a whole, the poor and needy most of all. Finally, in the distant vista of Marxist utopia all left-wingers share a vision – even if conceived now as an inspiring ideal rather than a historical inevitability – of a future state in which years of economic growth have eradicated poverty, and liberated everyone from the alienating compulsions of wage-slavery.

In Growth Fetish, Clive Hamilton, executive director of think-tank The Australia Institute, attacks the left for its ongoing accommodation with capitalism. The basis of his argument is two-fold: i) capitalism has already succeeded in “solving the economic problem” and (more or less) eradicating poverty; and, ii) despite this rise in prosperity, people are no happier than they were decades ago. Accordingly, “the people” no longer need or indeed want more economic growth.

Hamilton spins from this premise a negative and a positive argument. The negative argument is directed at the parties of the centre-left, chiefly in Australia, the United States, and Britain. This has it that the centre-left has declined in influence and popularity since the seventies, through failing to offer a persuasive alternative to neoliberalism: it has neither rejected the terms of neoliberalism nor, within these terms, convinced electorates it “could outperform ‘turbo-capitalism’ on its own territory.”

The positive argument of the book is that we live in the “age of abundance”; that capitalism has now succeeded in meeting all the demands which led to the founding of modern socialist movements in the nineteenth century. In other words (literally, since Hamilton does not express things in quite this way), we have already arrived in Marx’s utopia – we just need to realise it, then we can all withdraw from the rat race and start enjoying ourselves. Marx looked forward to a time in which he could “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I like, without ever becoming a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critic”. Hamilton looks around at the world he lives in today and sees young people who “often spend years moving in and out of the workforce while they pursue a range of other ‘projects’,” projects that “will provide discrete chapters and narrative
threads for their life biographies.” Or as he also puts it: “The superabundance of modern capitalism has liberated people from the need to cling to a career path.”

_Growth Fetish_ is obviously a populist book. Hamilton is clearly aiming to reach beyond the usual circles of politicos and intellectuals, to find the kind of mass readership Naomi Klein enjoyed with _No Logo_. (In common with that book, _Growth Fetish_ gives a wildly over-stated – deliberately flattering? – portrayal of the size and importance of a certain class of self-consciously young and hip anti-globalisers: its target audience.) This makes it difficult to judge the wider qualities of the author. On the strength of this book, however, Hamilton is no thinker; he is a publicist of ideas. There is nothing in itself wrong about this. The central idea in this book – that the capitalist system may have raised mass standards of living but that it continues to alienate us and erode social connections – deserves to be publicised. But it does mean that this book is undermined by serious inconsistencies and inadequacies.

Regarding Hamilton’s negative argument, the book does land some deserved blows on the Third Way – notably on its rather reductive attitude towards education, by which it views the expansion of higher education as a simple economic investment. In general, however, the book’s criticism of social democracy is less well-observed. Surely, for instance, one of the main reasons for the rightward trend in the eighties was the influence of the New Left and its lack of interest in the bread and butter issue of economic growth, combined with the recessions presided over by the Carter and Callaghan governments? Moreover, Hamilton is surely wrong in dismissing inequality as an ongoing problem against which the left should fight. As forcefully argued in _Why Inequality Matters_, the recent Catalyst pamphlet by Ben Jackson and Paul Segal, less egalitarian societies not only contain more absolute poverty but are more atomised and unhappy. Hamilton concurs; yet says the solution is not for the state to engage in redistribution, but rather for the individual to disengage from the rat race. The average man or woman still won’t have as much as the rich and powerful; but they will have stopped worrying about it.

As for Hamilton’s positive argument, this is fraught with a host of problems. Have we really reached the age of abundance? No matter what the standard of living and rate of employment, the dominant mood in Western societies today is surely that of economic insecurity. Hamilton reads the collapse of the “job for life” certainties of the recent past as a purely positive development: “While there appears to be no way back from having your ‘career destroyed’, rewriting your life narrative allows you to confront your failures, integrate them into the story, and move
on.” Writing like this he could easily pass for the kind of HR consultant who, brought in to give a positive spin to a programme of redundancies, almost seems to be doing the chosen workers a favour by giving them the sack. Hamilton’s arguments seem especially out of step with trends for pensions and medical provision.

There are three even more serious flaws in the book. First, Hamilton in no way engages with economic theory, and the question of what a general decline in economically productive work would do to the economy as a whole. Could this be managed so as to avoid a recession? If not, would there still be anything resembling an age of abundance to support people in their Hamiltonian lifestyles? Second, the book is entirely West-centric. Not only does it not offer any prescriptions for the developing world (are they to press ahead with ‘turbo-capitalism’ until they reach the levels of prosperity found in the West, circa 2004?), it in no way engages with the question of to what extent the West’s abundance depends on the developing world’s continuing exploitation. Third, and most crucially, it ignores the fundamental message of environmentalism: that our current lifestyles depend on an exploitation of resources which is unsustainable; that growth is therefore inescapably limited. This is the strongest card that anyone writing against our dominant obsession with growth could play. It is strange that Hamilton chooses not to.

But then, Hamilton’s age of abundance depends on the fruits of economic growth – in exactly the same way as Marx’s utopia depends on machines to reduce our compulsion to work to the minimum. And how are the fruits of economic growth sustained but by the consumption of natural resources? A serious reckoning with environmentalism might have led Hamilton to question the long term viability of his own post-growth society, in which we work less and less, but are still supported by the economy. If people are working less, then productivity – and the wider economy – could only be kept buoyant through greater automation; which is to say, through greater consumption of natural resources.

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Tourism today is addicted to growth,” Freya Higgins-Desbiolles, a senior researcher in tourism management at the University of South Australia, tells me. “They’ve got to kick the growth fetish.” Mount Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia © Ryan O’Niel.

Everyone has a part to play in turning the situation around, says Bret Love, co-founder of ecotourism website greenglobaltravel.com and Green Travel Media. Growth Fetish is that book. It is powerful and potentially transformative.” - Rev. Tim Costello. “This book reveals the undelivered reality of economic growth and the hollow mantras of the Third Way. Growth Fetish provides a much needed road map to a new politics in a post-growth world.” - Senator Natasha Stott Despoja. For decades our political leaders and opinion makers have touted higher incomes as the way to a better future. Economic growth means better lives for us all. Growth Fetish is a book about economics and politics by the Australian progressive political theorist Clive Hamilton. Published in 2003 it became a best-seller in Australia, an unusual feat for what is normally considered a dry subject.

Background. Clive Hamilton is the former Executive Director of The Australia Institute, an independent think-tank which has been cited as playing a significant role in debate over social and environmental policies. Hamilton resigned from the Australia Institute in 2007. Breast expansion is by far my preferred fetish, and I want to share it with my fellow perverts. I’ve tried to not include games -focused- on sissification/gender-changing/futa in the main list (which happens to be a fair bit of games), nor have I included games that left me too underwhelmed, or were graphically horrible. I may list them at the end. “Sheroni Girls” is a RPGM that has decent breast expansion it in, Main characters are an alien race that can go super saiyan of sorts and in the process get bigger and bustier Growth Fetish [Hamilton, Clive] on Amazon.com. *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Growth Fetish.Â Growth Fetish Paperback â€“ April 20, 2004. by. Clive Hamilton (Author).