

An Abstract of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis of:

Terry Carl Dunfield

Accepted on June 4, 2006

A Constructive Postmodern Critique of Modern Development: Agrarian Reform  
in Latin America

This thesis critiques the Modern economic concept of progress contrasting it to the Constructive Postmodern concept of concrescence, which originated in Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy, and is suggested by Latin American agrarian land reform. It draws heavily on John Cobb Jr.'s ideas of constructive postmodern economics which derive from Whitehead's process philosophy. In order to strengthen the argument that a Constructive Postmodern view of progress and agrarian land reform is needed in Latin America, certain features of Dr. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen's Bioeconomics are also applied. Georgescu-Roegen argues that agrarian economies must not and cannot follow industrialized nations' Modernist paradigms for economic development. While practices based on the Modern Paradigm continually threaten the Constructive Postmodern model of progress and economic development, examples of successes of Constructive Postmodernism in Latin America exist, illustrating the alternative to Modernism.

The Constructive Postmodern alternative put forth in this thesis mirrors John B. Cobb Jr.'s petition for society to adopt a more sustainable, ethical, and spiritual path in developing what industrialized nations call the "undeveloped" countries. For developing countries to "develop," the deficiencies in the Modern sense and its practical failures must be acknowledged. Alternatively, when development follows a Constructive Postmodern path, success is more likely. The standard of progress under Constructive Postmodernism must be determined by peoples of their own countries and region, not imposed on them by those who hold economic power. In Constructive Postmodernism, greater attention is paid to the idea of a happier individual and an environmentally healthier world, giving this type of economy an additional measurement of success. Inhabitants of agrarian cultures are predisposed to Constructive Postmodern ways of thinking. Latin America is thus uniquely ready for a successful transformation to a Constructive Postmodern economy.