

MURRAY BOOKCHIN



READER



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE  
‘ANARCHIVE’

**“Anarchy is Order!”**

*‘I must Create a System or be enslav’d by  
another Man’s.  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create’  
(William Blake)*

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a ‘new’ kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as ‘Anarchy is order’, ‘Property is theft’,...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The ‘anarchive’ or ‘anarchist archive’ Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the ‘**principles, propositions and discussions**’ of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don’t belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the ‘new

anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**'Anarchy Is Order' does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchiv offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*'demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down  
here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and  
wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will- 'o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance'.  
(L-P. Boon)*

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us.  
Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be send  
to

[A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be)

A complete list and updates are available on this  
address, new texts are always

WELCOME!!

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<a href="#"><u>Bookchins biography .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
<b>bookchin on History, Civilization, and Progress: ....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Outline for a Criticism of Modern Relativism .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Murray Bookchin .....	15
I. ....	15
II .....	25
III.....	38
<b>Anarchism: Past and Present.....</b>	<b>47</b>
Murray Bookchin .....	47
I. ....	48
II. ....	52
III.....	56
IV. ....	58
V.....	63
FOOTNOTES .....	64
<b>To Remember Spain .....</b>	<b>66</b>
Murray Bookchin .....	66
Preface.....	67
An Overview of the Spanish Libertarian Movement .....	69
<b>Notes .....</b>	<b>107</b>
After Fifty Years: .....	111
Notes .....	142
<b>Criticisms:.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Ecological movement: .....</b>	<b>146</b>

Deep Ecology, anarcho-syndicalism and the future of anarchist thought .....	146
Murray Bookchin.....	146
Comments on the International Social Ecology Network Gathering and the "Deep Social Ecology" of John Clark.....	164
Murray Bookchin.....	164
<b>postmodernism:</b> .....	225
ANARCHY AND ORGANIZATION .....	225
A Letter To The Left.....	225
Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism:.....	231
An Unbridgeable Chasm.....	231
Murray Bookchin.....	231
<b>syndicalism:</b> .....	310
The Ghost of Anarcho-Syndicalism .....	310
Murray Bookchin.....	310
<b>peace movement:</b> .....	351
From Spectacle to Empowerment:.....	351
Grass Roots Democracy and the Peace Process .	351
Murray Bookchin.....	351
<b>Answers to critics:</b> .....	355
Community Control or Statist Politics:.....	356
A Reply to David Lewis .....	356
Murray Bookchin.....	356
A Meditation on Anarchist Ethics .....	379
Murray Bookchin.....	379
Whither Anarchism?.....	408
A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics .....	408
Murray Bookchin.....	408
<b>Propositions</b> .....	543

RADICALIZING DEMOCRACY .....	544
Murray Bookchin .....	544
MUNICIPALIZATION .....	579
Community Ownership of the Economy1 .....	579
Murray Bookchin .....	579
The Meaning of Confederatism .....	591
Murray Bookchin .....	591
Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview .....	611
Murray Bookchin .....	611
What Is Social Ecology? .....	630
Murray Bookchin .....	630
What is Communalism? .....	661
The Democratic Dimension of Anarchism .....	661
Murray Bookchin .....	661
Libertarian Municipalism: The New Municipal Agenda .....	685
Murray Bookchin .....	685
<b>Murray Bookchin Bibliography .....</b>	<b>726</b>

## **MURRAY BOOKCHIN BIOGRAPHY**

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ON BEHALF OF MURRAY BOOKCHIN BY JANET BIEHL.

Murray Bookchin was born in New York City on January 14, 1921, to immigrant parents who had been active in the Russian revolutionary movement of tsarist times. Very early in the 1930s he entered the Communist youth movement but by the late 1930s had become disillusioned with its authoritarian character. Deeply involved in organizing activities around the Spanish Civil War (he was too young to participate directly, although two of his older friends died on the Madrid front), he remained with the Communists until the Stalin-Hitler pact of September 1939, when he was expelled for "Trotskyist-anarchist deviations." As a foundryman in New Jersey for four years, he entered the workers' movement and became active in union organizing in northern New Jersey (a heavily industrialized area at that time) in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). He became sympathetic to and active with the American Trotskyists while Trotsky was still alive, but after several years was disappointed by their traditional Bolshevik authoritarianism, especially after Trotsky's death.

After returning from service in the U.S. Army during the 1940s, he was an autoworker and became deeply involved in the United Auto Workers (UAW), a highly libertarian union before Walter Reuther came to power in it. After participating in the great General Motors strike of 1948, he began to question all his traditional conceptions about the "hegemonic" or "vanguard" role of the industrial working class, writing extensively on this subject in later years. In time, he became a libertarian



socialist and worked closely with German exiles in New York who were dissident Marxists and who moved increasingly toward a libertarian perspective (International Kommunisten Deutschlands). Many of his articles in the early 1950s were published in DINGE DER ZEIT as well as its English-language sister publication, CONTEMPORARY ISSUES, under his pen names of M. S. Shiloh, Lewis Herber, Robert Keller, and Harry Ludd. His earliest book, which was based on a very large article "The Problem of Chemicals in Food" (CONTEMPORARY ISSUES, 1952), was published in Germany in collaboration with Gotz Ohly (Herber and Ohly, LEBENS-GEFÄHRLICHE LEBENSMITTEL [Krailling bei München: Hanns Georg Müller Verlag, 1955]). He pioneered writing on ecological issues in the United States and West Germany, and according to reports from German friends, his writings contributed to reforms in German food and drug legislation.

In the 1960s he was deeply involved in countercultural and New Left movements almost from their inception, and he pioneered the ideas of social ecology in the United States. His first American book, OUR SYNTHETIC ENVIRONMENT (pseud. Lewis Herber) was published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1962, preceding Rachel Carson's SILENT SPRING by nearly half a year. It received warm reviews from such outstanding members of the scientific community as René Dubos and William Vogt. He then wrote CRISIS IN OUR CITIES (Prentice Hall, 1965). The collection titled POST-SCARCITY ANARCHISM (Ramparts Books, 1971; Black Rose Books, 1977) comprised such pioneering essays as "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" (1964) and "Towards a Liberatory Technology" (1965), both of which advanced the radical significance of the ecology

issue and of alternative technologies for progressive movements of all kinds. At least 100,000 copies of "Listen, Marxist!" (1969), his critique of traditional Marxism, circulated in the United States and Great Britain, profoundly influencing the American New Left at the end of the 1960s.

In the late 1960s, Bookchin taught at the Alternative University in New York, one of the largest "free universities" in the United States, then at City University of New York in Staten Island. In 1974, he co-founded and directed the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainfield, Vermont, which went on to acquire an international reputation for its advanced courses in ecophilosophy, social theory, and alternative technologies that reflect his ideas. In 1974, he also began teaching at Ramapo College of New Jersey, becoming full professor of social theory entering and retiring in 1983 in an emeritus status.

His subsequent works--THE LIMITS OF THE CITY (Harper and Row, 1974), THE SPANISH ANARCHISTS (Harper & Row, 1977), and TOWARD AN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY (Black Rose Books, 1981)--were very well received and stand as preludes to THE ECOLOGY OF FREEDOM (Cheshire Books, 1982; republished by Black Rose Books, 1991). This major work received considerable acclaim in major reviews not only in THE VILLAGE VOICE (one of New York's largest newsweeklies) but also in such scholarly journals as AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST. His articles have appeared in many periodicals since the 1950s, such as WIN, LIBERATION, RAMPARTS, CO-EVOLUTION QUARTERLY, RAIN, TELOS, NEW POLITICS, OUR

GENERATION, and ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, among others. His book THE RISE OF URBANIZATION AND THE DECLINE OF CITIZENSHIP (Sierra Club Books, 1986; republished in Canada as URBANIZATION WITHOUT CITIES [Black Rose Books, 1992]) is a historical exploration of civic self-management and confederalism. His most recent books are REMAKING SOCIETY (Black Rose Books, 1989) and THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY (Black Rose Books, 1990, revised 1994).

Now in his early seventies, Bookchin lives in semi-retirement in Burlington, Vermont. For reasons of health his activities are increasingly restricted, but he still gives two core courses at the Institute for Social Ecology each summer, where he has the status of director emeritus, and he occasionally gives lectures in North America and Europe. He is on the editorial advisory boards of ANARCHIST STUDIES and SOCIETY AND NATURE. With his companion, Janet Biehl, and others, he has published thirty issues of the theoretical newsletter GREEN PERSPECTIVES, to date. At the present time--1994--he is working on a historical and social account of dialectical nature philosophy, THE POLITICS OF COSMOLOGY (to be published by Guilford in 1998), and the second volume of a two-volume history of popular revolutionary movements, THE THIRD REVOLUTION. (Volume 1 will appear in 1996 from Cassell in London). His new book REENCHANTING HUMANITY has just been published (London: Cassell, 1996).

Bookchin developed from a traditional Marxist in the 1930s to a left-libertarian in the anarchic tradition of Peter Kropotkin. As a recent history of anarchist thought

(Peter Marshall, DEMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE [London: HarperCollins, 1992]) has emphasized, his major contribution to the anarchist tradition has been to integrate traditional decentralist, nonhierarchical, and populist traditions with ecology, from a left-libertarian philosophical and ethical standpoint. These views, which were largely original in the 1950s and early 1960s, have since entered into the general consciousness of our time, owing to the writings of Fritz Schumacher and many ecofeminists. The radicalism of his approach lies in his exploration of the historical emergence of our notion of dominating nature primarily from the domination of human by human, particularly in gerontocracies, patriarchies, and other oppressive strata. His writings seek to penetrate beyond class and exploitative relationships to hierarchical and dominating ones that have their roots in the distant past.

Underpinning many of his ideas is a reworking of dialectical thinking, one that brings ecological thinking to the service of Hegel's dialectical system of logic, in order to "naturalize" the dialectical tradition. His "dialectical naturalism" contrasts with Hegel's dialectical idealism and Marxian dialectical materialism, particularly the physicalist approach developed by Friedrich Engels in ostensible agreement with Marx. His concept of dialectical naturalism is elucidated in considerable detail in his book THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY.

From the late 1970s onward, he has been an important stimulus in the developing Green movements throughout the world, and he has written many works dealing with the nature and future of Green politics. One of his most important demands in recent decades has been for a

"new politics," or what he calls libertarian municipalism, a politics based upon the recovery of direct-democratic popular assemblies on municipal, neighborhood, and town levels. To avoid the danger of civic parochialism, he has advanced a civic confederalism, by which a decentralized society confederates in opposition to the centralized nation-state. He has also advanced the demand for a municipalized economy, in opposition to the present corporate capitalist system of ownership and management, to the nationalized economy promulgated by Marxian socialists, and to the workers' ownership and self-management of industry advocated by syndicalists. These ideas have been widely discussed in Green movements in North America and Europe.

Murray Bookchin's life and work span two historic eras: the era of traditional proletarian socialism and anarchism, with its working-class insurrections and struggles against classical fascism, and the postwar era of growing corporate capitalism, environmental decay, statist politics, and the technocratic mentality. He has tried to congeal these sweeping changes in society and consciousness into a coherent outlook that goes forward from a lived past into a liberated future.

## **BOOKCHIN ON HISTORY**

# **HISTORY, CIVILIZATION, AND PROGRESS:**

## **OUTLINE FOR A CRITICISM OF MODERN RELATIVISM**

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

**February 15, 1994**

This manuscript has been provided to [Anarchy Archives](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archivehome.html) ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/archivehome.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archivehome.html)) by the author.

### **I.**

Rarely have the concepts that literally define the best of Western culture--its notions of a meaningful History, a universal Civilization, and the possibility of Progress--been called so radically into question as they are today. In recent decades, both in the United States and abroad, the academy and a subculture of self-styled postmodernist intellectuals have nourished an entirely new ensemble of cultural conventions that stem from a corrosive social, political, and moral relativism. This ensemble encompasses a crude nominalism, pluralism, and skepticism, an extreme subjectivism, and even outright nihilism and antihumanism in various combinations and permutations, sometimes of a thoroughly misanthropic nature. This relativistic ensemble is pitted against coherent thought as such and against the

"principle of hope" (to use Ernst Bloch's expression) that marked radical theory of the recent past. Such notions percolate from so-called radical academics into the general public, where they take the form of personalism, amoralism, and "neoprimitivism."

Too often in this prevailing "paradigm," as it is often called, eclecticism replaces the search for historical meaning; a self-indulgent despair replaces hope; dystopia replaces the promise of a rational society; and in the more sophisticated forms of this ensemble a vaguely defined "intersubjectivity"--or in its cruder forms, a primitivistic mythopoesis--replaces all forms of reason, particularly dialectical reason. In fact, the very concept of reason itself has been challenged by a willful antirationalism. By stripping the great traditions of Western thought of their contours, nuances, and gradations, these relativistic "post-historicists," "postmodernists," and (to coin a new word) "post-humanists" of our day are, at best, condemning contemporary thought to a dark pessimism or, at worst, subverting it of all its meaning.

So grossly have the current critics of History, Civilization, and Progress, with their proclivities for fragmentation and reductionism, subverted the coherence of these basic Western concepts that they will literally have to be defined again if they are to be made intelligible to present and future generations. Even more disturbingly, such critics have all but abandoned attempts to define the very concepts they excoriate. What, after all, is History? Its relativistic critics tend to dissolve the concept into eclectically assembled "histories" made up of a multiplicity of disjointed episodes--or even worse, into myths that belong to "different" gender, ethnic, and national groups and that they consider to be ideologically equatable. Its nominalistic



critics see the past largely as a series of "accidents," while its subjectivistic critics overemphasize ideas in determining historical realities, consisting of "imaginaries" that are essentially discontinuous from one another. And what, after all, is Civilization? "Neoprimitivists" and other cultural reductionists have so blackened the word that its rational components are now in need of a scrupulous sorting out from the irrationalities of the past and present. And what, finally, is Progress? Relativists have rejected its aspirations to freedom in all its complexity, in favor of a fashionable assertion of "autonomy," often reducible to personal proclivities. Meanwhile, antihumanists have divested the very concept of Progress of all relevance and meaning in the farrago of human self-denigration that marks the moods of the present time.

A skepticism that denies any meaning, rationality, coherence, and continuity in History, that corrodes the very existence of premises, let alone the necessity of exploring them, renders discourse itself virtually impossible. Indeed, premises as such have become so suspect that the new relativists regard any attempts to establish them as evidence of a cultural pathology, much as Freudian analysts might view a patient's resistance to treatment as symptomatic of a psychological pathology. Such a psychologization of discussion closes off all further dispute. No longer are serious challenges taken on their own terms and given a serious response; rather, they are dismissed as symptoms of a personal and social malaise.

So far have these tendencies been permitted to proceed that one cannot now mount a critique of incoherence, for example, without exposing oneself to the charge of having a "predisposition" to "coherence"--or a "Eurocentric" bias. A defense of clarity, equally

unacceptable, invites the accusation of reinforcing the "tyranny of reason," while an attempt to uphold the validity of reason is dismissed as an "oppressive" presupposition of reason's existence. The very attempt at definition is rejected as intellectually "coercive." Rational discussion is impugned as a repression of nonliterate forms of "expression" such as rituals, howling, and dancing, or on an ostensibly philosophical scale, of intuitions, presciences, psychological motivations, of "positional" insights that are dependent on one's gender or ethnicity, or of revelations of one kind or another that often feed into outright mysticism.

This constellation of relativistic views, which range from the crude to the intellectually exotic, cannot be criticized rationally because they deny the validity of rationally independent conceptual formulations as such, presumably "constricted" by the claims of reason. For the new relativists, "freedom" ends where claims to rationality begin--in marked contrast to the ancient Athenians, for whom violence begins where rational discussion ends. Pluralism, the decentering of meanings, the denial of foundations, and the hypostasization of the idiosyncratic, of the ethically and socially contingent, and of the psychological--all seem like part of the massive cultural decay that corresponds to the objective decay of our era. In American universities today relativists in all their mutations too often retreat into the leprous "limit experiences" of a Foucault; into a view of History as fragmentary "collective representations" (Durkheim), "culture-patterns" (Benedict), or "imaginaries" (Castoriadis); or into the nihilistic asociality of postmodernism.

When today's relativists do offer definitions of the concepts they oppose, they typically overstate and exaggerate them. They decry the pursuit of foundations--an endeavor that

they have characteristically turned into an "ism," "foundationalism"--as "totalistic," without any regard for the patent need for basic principles. That foundations exist that are confined to areas of reality where their existence is valid and knowable seems to elude these antifoundationalists, for whom foundations must either encompass the entire cosmos or else not exist at all. Reality would indeed be a mystery if a few principles or foundations could encompass all that exists, indeed, all its innovations unfolding from the subatomic realm to inorganic matter, from the simplest to the most complex life-forms, and ultimately to the realm of astrophysics.

Some historical relativists overemphasize the subjective in history at the expense of the material. Subjective factors certainly do affect obviously objective developments. In the Hellenistic Age, for example, Heron reputedly designed steam engines, yet so far as we know they were never used to replace human labor, as they were two thousand years later. Subjective historians, to be sure, would emphasize the subjective factors in this fact. But what interaction between ideological and material factors explains why one society--capitalism--used the steam engine on a vast scale for the manufacture of commodities, while another--Hellenistic society--used it merely to open temple doors for the purposes of mass mystification? Overly subjectivistic historians would do well to explore not only how different traditions and sensibilities yielded these disparate uses of machines but what material as well as broadly social factors either fostered or produced them.[1]

Other historical relativists are nominalistic, overemphasizing the idiosyncratic in History, often begging basic questions that it is necessary to explore. A small people in ancient Judea, we may be told, formulated a

localized, ethnically based body of monotheistic beliefs that at a chronologically later point became the basis of the Judeo-Christian world religion. Are these two events unrelated? Was their conjunction a mere accident? To conceive this vast development in a nominalistic way, without probing into why the Roman emperors adopted the Judeo-Christian synthesis--in an empire composed of very different cultures and languages that was direly in need of ideological unity to prevent its complete collapse--is to produce confusion rather than clarity.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of relativism is its moral arbitrariness. The moral relativism of the trite maxim "What's good for me is good for me, and what's good for you is good for you," hardly requires elucidation.[2] In this apparently most formless of times, relativism has left us with a solipsistic morality and in certain subcultures a politics literally premised on chaos. The turn of many anarchists these days toward a highly personalistic, presumably "autonomous" subculture at the expense of serious, indeed, responsible social commitment and action reflects, in my view, a tragic abdication of a serious engagement in the political and revolutionary spheres. This is no idle problem today, when increasing numbers of people with no knowledge of History take capitalism to be a natural, eternal social system. A politics rooted in purely relativistic preferences, in assertions of personal "autonomy" that stem largely from an individual's "desire," can yield a crude and self-serving opportunism, of a type whose prevalence today explains many social ills. Capitalism itself, in fact, fashioned its primary ideology on an equation of freedom with the personal autonomy of the individual, which Anatole France once impishly described as the "freedom" of everyone to sleep at night under the same bridge over the Seine. Individuality is inseparable

from community, and autonomy is hardly meaningful unless it is embedded in a cooperative community.[3] Compared with humanity's potentialities for freedom, a relativistic and personalistic "autonomy" is little more than psychotherapy writ large and expanded into a social theory.

Far too many of the relativistic critics of History, Civilization, and Progress seem less like serious social theorists than like frightened former radical ideologues who have not fully come to terms with the failures of the Left and of "existing socialism" in recent years. The incoherence that is celebrated in present-day theory is due in no small part to the one-sided and exaggerated reaction of French academic "leftists" to the May-June events of 1968, to the behavior of the French Communist Party, and in even greater part to the various mutations of Holy Mother Russia from Czarism through Stalinism to Yeltsinism. Too often, this disenchantment provides an escape route for erstwhile "revolutionaries" to ensconce themselves in the academy, or embrace social democracy, or simply turn to a vacuous nihilism that hardly constitutes a threat to the existing society. From relativism, they have constructed a skeptical barrier between themselves and the rest of society. Yet this barrier is as intellectually fragile as the one-sided absolutism that the Old Left tried to derive from Hegel, Marx, and Lenin. But fairness requires me to emphasize that contrary to the conventional wisdom about the Left today,

there has never been any "existing socialism," the erstwhile claims of Eastern European leaders to have achieved it notwithstanding. Nor was Hegel a mere teleologist; nor Marx a mere "productivist"; nor Lenin the ideological "father" of the ruthless opportunist and counterrevolutionary, Stalin.[4] In reaction to the nightmare

of the "Soviet" system, today's relativists have not only overreacted to and exaggerated the shortcomings of Hegel, Marx, and Lenin; they have concocted an ideological prophylaxis to protect themselves from the still-unexorcised demons of a tragically failed past instead of formulating a credible philosophy that can address the problems that now confront us at all levels of society and thought.

Current expositions of oxymoronic "market socialisms" and "minimal statisms" by "neo-" and "post-Marxists" suggest where political relativism and assertions of "autonomy" can lead us.[5] Indeed, it is quite fair to ask whether today's fashionable political relativism itself would provide us with more than a paper-thin obstacle to totalitarianism. The dismissal of attempts to derive continuity in History, coherence in Civilization, and meaning in Progress as evidence of a "totalizing" or "totalitarian" mentality in pursuit of all-encompassing foundations directly or indirectly imbricates reason, particularly that of the Enlightenment era, with totalitarianism, and even significantly trivializes the harsh reality and pedigree of totalitarianism itself. In fact, the actions of the worst totalitarians of our era, Stalin and Hitler, were guided less by the objectively grounded principles or "foundational" ideas they so cynically voiced in public than by a kind of relativistic or situational ethics. For Stalin, who was no more a "socialist" or "communist" than he was an "anarchist" or "liberal," theory was merely an ideological fig leaf for the concentration of power. To overlook Stalin's sheer opportunism is myopic at best and cynical at worst. Under his regime, only a hopelessly dogmatic "Communist" who had managed to negotiate and survive Stalin's various changes in the "party line" could have taken Stalin seriously as a "Marxist-Leninist." Hitler, in turn, exhibited amazing flexibility in bypassing ideology for strictly pragmatic ends.

In his first months in power, he decimated all the "true believers" of National Socialism among his storm troopers at the behest of the Prussian officer caste, which feared and detested the Nazi rabble.

In the absence of an objective grounding--notably, the very real human potentialities that have been formed by the natural, social, moral, and intellectual development of our species--notions like freedom, creativity, and rationality are reduced to "intersubjective" relations, underpinned by personal and individualistic preferences (nothing more!) that are "resolved" by another kind of tyranny--notably, the tyranny of consensus. Lacking foundations of any kind, lacking any real form and solidity, notions of "intersubjectivity" can be frighteningly homogenizing because of their seemingly "democratic" logic of consensuality--a logic that precludes the dissensus and ideological dissonance so necessary for stimulating innovation. In the consensual "ideal speech situation" that Jürgen Habermas deployed to befog the socialist vision of the 1970s, this "intersubjectivity," a transcendental "Subject" or "Ego" like a mutated Rousseauian "General Will," replaces the rich elaboration of reason. Today this subjectivism or "intersubjectivity"--be it in the form of Habermas's neo-Kantianism or Baudrillard's egoism--lends itself to a notion of "social theory" as a matter of personal taste. Mere constructions of "socially conditioned" human minds, free-floating in a sea of relativism and ahistoricism, reject a potential objective ground for freedom in the interests of avoiding "totalitarian Totalities" and the "tyranny" of an "Absolute." Indeed, reason itself is essentially reduced to "intersubjectivity." Juxtaposed with literary celebrations of the "subjective reason" of personalism, and its American sequelae of mysticism, individual redemption, and conformity, and its post-1968

French sequelae of postmodernist, psychoanalytic, relativist, and neo-Situationist vagaries, Marx's commitment to thorough thinking would be attractive.

Ideas that are objectively grounded, unlike those that are relativistically asserted, can provide us with a definable body of principles with which we can seriously grapple. The foundational coherence and in the best of cases the rationality of objectively grounded views at least make them explicit and tangible and free them from the vagaries of the labyrinthine personalism so very much in vogue today. Unlike a foundationless subjectivism that is often reducible, under the rubric of "autonomy," to personal preferences, objective foundations are at least subject to challenges in a free society. Far from precluding rational critique, they invite it. Far from taking refuge in an unchallengeable nominalist elusiveness, they open themselves to the test of coherence. Paul Feyerabend's corrosive (in my view, cynical) relativism to the contrary notwithstanding, the natural sciences in the past three centuries have been among the most emancipatory human endeavors in the history of ideas--partly because of their pursuit of unifying or foundational explanations of reality.[6] In the end, what should always be of concern to us is the content of objective principles, be they in science, social theory, or ethics, not a flippant condemnation of their claims to coherence and objectivity per se.

Indeed, despite claims to the contrary, relativism has its own hidden "foundations" and metaphysics. As such, because its premises are masked, it may well produce an ideological tyranny far more paralyzing than the "totalitarianism" that it imputes to objectivism and an expressly reasoned "foundationalism." Insofar as our concerns should center on the bases of freedom and the



nature of reason, modern relativism has "decentered" these crucial issues into wispy expressions of personal faith in an atmosphere of general skepticism. We may choose to applaud the relativist who upholds his or her strictly personal faith by reiterating Luther's defiant words at Worms, *Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders* ("Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise"). But to speak frankly, unless we also hear a rational argument to validate that stand, one based on more than a subjective inclination, who gives a damn about this resolve?

## II

Which raises again the problem of what History, Civilization, and Progress actually are.

History, I wish to contend, is the rational content and continuity of events (with due regard for qualitative "leaps") that are grounded in humanity's potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation, in the self-formative development of increasingly libertarian forms of consociation. It is the rational "infrastructure," so to speak, that coheres human actions and institutions over the past and the present in the direction of an emancipatory society and emancipated individual. That is to say, History is precisely what is rational in human development. It is what is rational, moreover, in the dialectical sense of the implicit that unfolds, expands, and begins in varying degrees through increasing differentiation to actualize humanity's very real potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation.[7]

It will immediately be objected that irrational events, unrelated to this actualization, explode upon us at all times

and in all eras and cultures. But insofar as they defy rational interpretation, they remain precisely events, not History, however consequential their effects may be on the course of other events. Their impact may be very powerful, to be sure, but they are not dialectically rooted in humanity's potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation.[8] They can be assembled into Chronicles, the stuff out of which a Froissart constructed his largely anecdotal "histories," but not History in the sense I am describing. Events may even "overtake History," so to speak, and ultimately submerge it in the irrational and the evil. But without an increasingly self-reflexive History, which present-day relativism threatens to extinguish, we would not even know that it had happened.

If we deny that humanity has these potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation--conceived as one ensemble--then along with many self-styled "socialists" and even former anarchists like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, we may well conclude that "capitalism has won," as one disillusioned friend put it; that "history" has reached its terminus in "bourgeois democracy" (however tentative this "terminus" may actually be); and that rather than attempt to enlarge the realm of the rational and the free, we would do best to ensconce ourselves in the lap of capitalism and make it as comfortable a resting place as possible for ourselves.

As a mere adaptation to what exists, to the "what-is," such behavior is merely animalistic. Sociobiologists may even regard it as genetically unavoidable, but my critics need not be sociobiologists to observe that the historical record exhibits a great deal of adaptation and worse--of irrationality and violence, of pleasure in the destruction of oneself and others--and finally to question my assertion that

History is the unfolding of human potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation. Indeed, humans have engaged in destruction and luxuriated in real and imaginary cruelties toward one another that have produce hells on earth. They have created the monstrosities of Hitler's death camps and Stalin's gulags, not to speak of the mountains of skulls that Mongol and Tartar invaders of Eurasia left behind in distant centuries. But this record hardly supplants a dialectic of unfolding and maturing of potentialities in social development, nor is the capacity of humans to inflict cruelties on each other equivalent to their potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation.

Here, human capacities and human potentialities must be distinguished from each other. The human capacity for inflicting injury belongs to the realm of natural history, to what humans share with animals in the biological world or "first nature." First nature is the domain of survival, of core feelings of pain and fear, and in that sense our behavior remains animalistic, which is by no means altered with the emergence of social or "second nature." Unknowing animals merely try to survive and adapt to one degree or another to the world in which they exist. By contrast, humans are animals of a very special kind; they are knowing animals, they have the intelligence to calculate and to devise, even in the service of needs that they share with nonhuman life-forms. Human reason and knowledge have commonly served aims of self-preservation and self-maximization by the use of a formal logic of expediency, a logic that rulers have deployed for social control and the manipulation of society. These methods have their roots in the animal realm of simple "means-ends" choices to survive.

But humans also have the capacity to deliberately inflict pain and fear, to use their reason for perverse passions, in order to coerce others or merely for cruelty for its own sake. Only knowing animals, ironically animals capable of intelligent innovation, with the *Schadenfreude* to enjoy vicariously the torment of others, can inflict fear and pain in a coldly calculated or even passionate manner. The Foucauldian hypostasization of the body as the "terrain" of sado-masochistic pleasure can be easily elaborated into a metaphysical justification of violence, depending, to be sure, on what "pleases" a particular perpetrating ego.[9] In this sense, human beings are too intelligent not to live in a rational society, not to live within institutions formed by reason and ethics, institutions that restrict their capacity for irrationality and violence.[10] Insofar as they do not, they remain dangerously wayward and unformed creatures with enormous powers of destruction as well as creation.

Humanity may have a "potentiality for evil," as one colleague has argued. But that over the course of social development people have exhibited an explosive capacity to perpetrate the most appallingly evil acts does not mean that human potentiality is constituted to produce evil and a nihilistic destructiveness. The capacity of certain Germans to establish an Auschwitz, indeed the means and the goal to exterminate a whole people in a terrifyingly industrial manner, was inherent neither in Germany's development nor in the development of industrial rationalization as such. However anti-Semitic many Germans were over the previous two centuries, Eastern Europeans were equally or even more so, while ironically, industrial development in Western Europe may have done more to achieve Jewish juridical emancipation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than all the Christian pieties that marked the preindustrial life during the Middle Ages. Indeed, evil may

have a "logic"--that is to say, it may be explained. But most general accounts explain the evolution of evil in terms of adventitious evil acts and events, if this can be regarded as explanation at all. Hitler's takeover of Germany, made possible more by economic and political dislocations than by the racial views he espoused, was precisely a terrible event that cannot be explained in terms of any human potentiality for evil. The horror of Auschwitz lies almost as much in its inexplicability, in its appallingly extraordinary character, as in the monstrosities that the Nazis generally inflicted on European Jews. It is in this sense that Auschwitz remains hauntingly inhuman and that it has tragically produced an abiding mistrust by many people of Civilization and Progress.

When explanations of evil are not merely narrations of events, they explain evil in terms of instrumental or conventional logic. The knowing animal, the human being, who is viciously harmful, does not use the developmental reason of dialectic, the reason of ethical reflection; nor a coherent, reflective reason, grounded in a knowledge of History and Civilization; nor even the knowing of an ambiguous, arbitrary, self-generated "imaginary," or a morality of personal taste and pleasure. Rather, the knowing animal uses instrumental calculation to serve evil ends, including the infliction of pain.

The very existence of irrationalism and evil in many social phenomena today compels us to uphold a clear standard of the "rational" and the "good" by which to judge the one against the other. A purely personalistic, relativistic, or functional approach will hardly do for establishing ethical standards--as many critiques of subjectivism and subjective reason have shown. The personal tastes from which subjectivism and relativism derive their ethical standards

are as transient and fleeting as moods. Nor will a nominalistic approach suffice: To reduce History to an incomprehensible assortment of patterns or to inexplicable products of the imagination is to deny social development all internal ethical coherence.[11] Indeed, an unsorted, ungraded, unmediated approach reduces our understanding of History to a crude eclecticism rather than an insightful coherence, to an overemphasis on differentiae (so easy to do, these mindless days!) and the idiosyncratic rather than the meaningful and the universal, more often attracting the commonsensical individual to the psychoanalytic couch than helping him or her reconstitute a left libertarian social movement.

If our views of social development are to be structured around the differences that distinguish one culture or period from another, we will ignore underlying tendencies that, with extraordinary universality, have greatly expanded the material and cultural conditions for freedom on various levels of individual and social self-understanding. By grossly emphasizing disjunctions, social isolates, unique configurations, and chance events, we will reduce shared, clearly common social developments to an archipelago of cultures, each essentially unrelated to those that preceded and followed it. Yet many historical forces have emerged, declined, and then emerged again, despite the formidable obstacles that often seemed to stand in their way. One does not have to explain "everything" in "foundational" terms to recognize the existence of abiding problems such as scarcity, exploitation, class rule, domination, and hierarchy that have agonized oppressed peoples for thousands of years.[12] If critics were correct in dubbing dialectics a mystery for claiming to encompass all phenomena by a few cosmic formulas, then they would be obliged to regard human social development as a mystery if they claimed that

it lacks any continuity and unity--that is, the bases for a philosophy of History. Without a notion of continuity in History, how could we explain the extraordinary efflorescence of culture and technique that *Homo sapiens sapiens* produced during the Magdalenian period, some twenty or thirty thousand years ago? How could we explain the clearly unrelated evolution of complex agricultural systems in at least three separate parts of the world--the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Mesoamerica--that apparently had no contact with one another and that were based on the cultivation of very different grains, notably wheat, rice, and maize? How could we explain the great gathering of social forces in which, after ten thousand years of arising, stagnating, and disappearing, cities finally gained control over the agrarian world that had impeded their development, yielding the "urban revolution," as V. Gordon Childe called it, in different zones of the world that could have had no contact with one another?

Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia, most clearly, could not have had any contact with each other since Paleolithic times, yet their agriculture, towns and cities, literacy, and mathematics developed in ways that are remarkably similar. Initially Paleolithic foragers, both produced highly urbanized cultures based on grain cultivation, glyphs, accurate calendrics, and very elaborate pottery, to cite only the most striking parallels. Even the wheel was known to Mesamericans, although they do not seem to have used it, probably for want of appropriate draft animals, as well as the zero, despite the absence of any communication with Eurasian societies. It requires an astonishing disregard for the unity of Civilization on the part of historical relativists to emphasize often minor differences, such as clothing, some daily customs, and myths, at the expense of a remarkable unity of consciousness and social development

that the two cultures exhibited on two separate continents after many millennia of total isolation from each other.

The unity of social evolution is hardly vitiated by such nominalistic perplexities as "Why didn't a Lenin appear in Germany rather than Russia in 1917-1918?" In view of the great tidal movements of History, it might be more appropriate to explore--Lenin's strong will and Kerensky's psychological flaccidity aside--whether the traditional proletariat was ever capable of creating a "workers' state," indeed, what that statist concept really meant when working men and women were obliged to devote the greater amount of their lives to arduous labor at the expense of their participation in managing social affairs. Caprice, accident, irrationality, and "imaginaries" certainly enter into social development for better or worse. But they have literally no meaning if there is no ethical standard by which to define the "other" of what we are presupposing with our standard.[13] Seemingly accidental or eccentric factors must be raised to the level of social theory rather than shriveled to the level of nominalistic minutiae if we are to understand them.

Despite the accidents, failures, and other aberrations that can alter the course of rational social and individual development, there is a "legacy of freedom," as I named a key chapter in my book *The Ecology of Freedom*, a tradition of increasing approximation of humanity toward freedom and self-consciousness, in ideas and moral values and the overall terrain of social life. Indeed, the existence of History as a coherent unfolding of real emancipatory potentialities is clearly verified by the existence of Civilization, the potentialities of History embodied and partially actualized. It consists of the concrete advances, material as well as cultural and psychological, that



humanity has made toward greater degrees of freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation, as well as rationality itself. To have transcended the limitations of the kinship tie; to have gone beyond mere foraging into agriculture and industry; to have replaced the parochial band or tribe with the increasingly universal city; to have devised writing, produced literature, and developed richer forms of expression than nonliterate peoples could have ever imagined--all of these and many more advances have provided the conditions for evolving increasingly sophisticated notions of individuality and expanding notions of reason that remain stunning achievements to this very day.

It is dialectical reason rather than instrumental reason that apprehends the development of this tradition. Indeed, dialectical logic can hardly be treated coequally with eruptions of brutality, however calculated they may be, since in no sense can episodic capacities be equated with an unfolding potentiality. A dialectical understanding of History apprehends *differentiae* in quality, logical continuity, and maturation in historical development, as distinguished from the kinetics of mere change or a simple directivity of "social dynamics." Rarefying projects for human liberation to the point that they are largely subjective "imaginaries," without relevance to the realities of the overall human experience and the insights of speculative reason, can cause us to overlook the existential impact of these developments and the promise they hold for ever-greater freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation. All too easily we take these achievements for granted without asking what kinds of human beings we would be if they had not occurred as a result of historical and cultural movements more fundamental than eccentric factors. These achievements, let us acknowledge quite clearly, are

Civilization, indeed a civilizing continuum that is nonetheless infused by terribly barbaric, indeed animalistic features. The civilizing process has been ambiguous, as I have emphasized in my "Ambiguities of Freedom,"[14] but it has nonetheless historically turned folk into citizens, while the process of environmental adaptation that humans share with animals has been transformed into a wide-ranging, strictly human process of innovation in distinctly alterable environments.[15] It is a process that reached its greatest universality primarily in Europe, however much other parts of the world have fed into the experience. Those of us who understandably fear that the barrier between Civilization and chaos is fragile actually presuppose the existence of Civilization, not simply of chaos, and the existence of rational coherence, not simply of irrational incoherence.

Moreover, the dialectic of freedom has emerged again and again in recurring struggles for freedom, ideological as well as physical, that have abidingly expanded overall goals of freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation--as much in social evolution as a whole as within specific temporal periods. The past is replete with instances in which masses of people, however disparate their cultures were, have tried to resolve the same millennia-old problems in remarkably similar ways and with remarkably similar views. The famous cry for equality that the English peasants raised in their 1381 revolt--"When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"--is as meaningful for contemporary revolts as it was six hundred years ago, in a world that presumably had a far different "imaginary" from our own. The denial of a rational universal History, of Civilization, of Progress, and of social continuity renders any historical perspective impossible and hence any

revolutionary praxis meaningless except as a matter of personal, indeed, often very personal, taste.

Even as social movements attempt to attain what they might call a rational society, in developing humanity's potentialities for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation, History may constitute itself as an ever-developing "whole." This whole, I should emphasize, must be distinguished from a terminal Hegelian "Absolute," just as demands for coherence in a body of views must be distinguished from the worship of such an "Absolute" and just as the capacity of speculative reason to educe in a dialectically logical manner the very real potentialities of humanity for freedom is neither teleological or absolutist, much less "totalitarian." [16] There is nothing teleological, mystical, or absolutist about History. "Wholeness" is no teleological referent, whose evolving components are merely parts of a predetermined "Absolute." Neither the rational unfolding of human potentialities nor their actualization in an eternally given "Totality" is predestined.

Nor is the working out of our potentialities some vague sort of suprahuman activity. Human beings are not the passive tools of a Spirit (Geist) that works out its complete and final self-realization and self-consciousness. Rather, they are active agents, the authentic "constituents" of History, who may or may not elaborate their potentialities in social evolution. Aborted the revolutionary tradition has been here, and discontinuous it has been there--and for all we know it may ultimately be aborted for humanity as such. Whether an "ultimate" rational society will even actually exist as a liberatory "end of history" is beyond anyone's predictive powers. We cannot say what the scope of a rational, free, and cooperative society would be, let alone presume to claim knowledge of its "limits." Indeed, insofar

as the historical process effected by living human agents is likely to expand our notions of the rational, the democratic, the free, and the cooperative, it is undesirable to dogmatically assert that they have any finality. History forms its own ideal of these notions at various times, which in turn have been expanded and enriched. Every society has the possibility of attaining a remarkable degree of rationality, given the material, cultural, and intellectual conditions that allow for it or, at least, are available to it. Within the limits of a slave, patriarchal, warrior, and urban world, for example, the ancient Athenian polis functioned more rationally than Sparta or other Greek poleis. It is precisely the task of speculative reason to educe what should exist at any given period, based on the very real potentialities for the expansion of these notions. To conclude that "the end of history" has been attained in liberal capitalism would be to jettison the historical legacy of these magnificent efforts to create a free society--efforts that claimed countless lives in the great revolutions of the past. For my part, I and probably many revolutionaries today want no place in such an "end of history"; nor do I want to forget the great emancipatory movements for popular freedom in all their many forms that occurred over the ages.

History, Civilization, and Progress are the rational social dispensations that form, even with all the impediments they face, a dialectical legacy of freedom. The existence of this legacy of freedom in no way denies the existence of a "legacy of domination,"[17] which remains within the realm of the irrational. Indeed, these "legacies" intertwine with and condition each other. Human ideals, struggles, and achievements of various approximations to freedom cannot be separated from the cruelties and barbarities that have marked social development over the centuries, often giving

rise to new social configurations whose development is highly unpredictable. But a crucial historical problematic remains, to the extent that reason can foresee a given development: Will it be freedom or domination that is nourished? I submit that Progress is the advance--and as everyone presumably hopes, the ascendancy--of freedom over domination, which clearly cannot be conceptually frozen in an ahistorical eternity, given the growing awareness of both hopes and oppressions that have come to light in only a few recent generations. Progress also appears in the overall improvement, however ambiguous, of humanity's material conditions of life, the emergence of a rational ethics, with enlightened standards of sensibility and conduct, out of unreflexive custom and theistic morality, and social institutions that foster continual self-development and cooperation. However lacking our ethical claims in relation to social practice may be, given all the barbarities of our time, we now subject brutality to much harsher judgments than was done in earlier times.

It is difficult to conceive of a rational ethics--as distinguished from unthinking custom and mere commandments of morality, like the Decalogue--without reasoned criteria of good and evil based on real potentialities for freedom that speculative reason can educe beyond a given reality. The "sufficient conditions" for an ethics must be explicated rationally, not simply affirmed in public opinion polls, plebiscites, or an "intersubjective" consensus that fails to clarify what constitutes "subjectivity" and "autonomy." Admittedly, this is not easy to do in a world that celebrates vaporous words, but it is necessary to discover truth rather than work with notions that stem from the conventional "wisdom" of our times. As Hegel insisted, even commonplace moral maxims like

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" raise many problems, such as what we really mean by "love." [18]

### III

I believe that we lack an adequate Left critique of the theoretical problems raised by classical Hegelianism, Marxism, anarchism, social democracy, and liberalism, with the result that there are serious lacunae in the critical exploration of these "isms." A comprehensive critical exploration would require an analysis not only of the failings of the subject matter under discussion, but of the hidden presuppositions of the critic. The critic would be obliged to clearly define what he or she means by the concepts he or she is using. This self-reflexive obligation cannot be bypassed by substituting undertheorized terms like "creativity," "freedom," or "autonomy" for in-depth analysis. The complexity of these ideas, their sweep, the traditions that underpin and divide them against one another, and the ease with which they can be abused and, in the academic milieu in which they are bandied around, detached from the lived material and social conditions of life--all require considerable exploration.

Among the important concepts and relationships that require elucidation is the tendency to reduce objectivity to the "natural law" of physical science.[19] In the conventional scientific sense of the term, "natural law" preordains the kinetic future of objects colliding with each other. It may even preordain an individual plant will become under the normal conditions required for its growth. Objectivity, however, has a multiplicity of meanings and does not necessarily correspond to the "laws" that the natural sciences seek to formulate. It involves not

only the materiality of the world in a very broad sense but also its potentialities, as a very real but as yet unrealized form structured to undergo elaboration. The evolution of key life-forms toward ever-greater subjectivity, choice, and behavioral flexibility--real potentialities and their degrees of actualization--and toward human intellectuality, language, and social institutionalization, is transparently clear. An objective potentiality is the implicit that may or may not be actualized, depending upon the conditions in which it emerges. Among humans, the actualization of potentiality is not necessarily restricted by anything besides aging and death, although it is not free to unfold unconditionally. But minimally, the actualization of humanity's potentialities consists in its attainment of a rational society. Such a society, of course, would not appear *ab novo*. By its very nature it would require development, maturation, or, more precisely, a History--a rational development that may be fulfilled by the very fact that the society is potentially constituted to be rational. If the self-realization of life in the nonhuman world is survival or stability, the self-realization of humanity is the degree of freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation, as well as rationality in society. Reduced merely or primarily to scientific "natural law," objectivity is highly attenuated. It does not encompass potentiality and the working of the dialectic in existential reality, let alone its presence, so to speak, as a standard for gauging reality against actuality in the unfolding of human phenomena.[20]

Marx's claim to have unearthed "the natural laws of capitalist production" was absurd, but to advance relativism as an alternative to it is equally absurd. In a younger, more flexible time, Marx insightfully claimed, "It is not enough that thought should seek its actualization; actuality itself must strive toward thought." [21] Thought, *qua* dialectical

reason, becomes transformative in shaping the present and the future insofar human rational praxis objectively actualizes the implicit. Today, when subjectivism reigns supreme and when the common response even to significant events is to erase any meaning and coherence from History, Civilization, and Progress, there is a desperate need for an objectivity that is immensely broader than natural science and "natural laws," on the one hand, and an emphasis on the idiosyncratic, "imaginary," and adventitious, on the other. If vulgar Marxists used "science" to turn the ethical claim that "socialism is necessary" into the teleological assertion that "socialism is inevitable," today's "post-Marxist" critics repeat a similar vulgarity by mordantly celebrating incoherence in the realm of social theory. The claim of socialism's inevitability was crudely deterministic; the claim of its necessity was a rational and ethical explication.

"Intersubjectivity" and "intersubjective relations," for their part, cannot explain in any meaningful way how humanity is rooted in biological evolution, or what we broadly call "Nature," least of all by deftly using the phrase "social construction" to bypass the very objective evolutionary reality that "Nature" connotes. Just as a subjectivized nexus of "intersubjective relations" dissolves the objectivity of social phenomena, so a subjectivized nexus of "social construction" dissolves the objectivity of natural evolution, as if neither social phenomena nor natural evolution had any actuality, aside from being a pair of simplistic epistemological categories. Here Kant reappears with a vengeance, with the possible difference that even his noumenal or unknowable external reality has disappeared.

Dialectic, it should be emphasized, cannot be reduced merely to a "method" on the grounds that such disparate



dialectical thinkers as Aristotle, John Scotus Eriugena, Hegel, and Marx comprehended different realms of knowledge and reality in different ways and periods. Humanity's knowledge of dialectic has itself been a process, and dialectical thinking has itself undergone development--a cumulative development, not a so-called "paradigm shift"--just as scientists have been obliged in the give-and-take or sublation of ideas to resolve one-sided insights into the nature of reality and its becoming.[22]

Although the broader objectivity that dialectical reasoning educes does not dictate that reason will prevail, it implies that it should prevail, thereby melding ethics with human activity and creating the basis for a truly objective ethical socialism or anarchism. Dialectical reason permits an ethics in history by upholding the rational influence of "what-should-be" as against "what-is." History, qua the dialectically rational, exercises a pressing "claim," so to speak, on our canons of behavior and our interpretation of events. Without this liberatory legacy and a human practice that fosters its unfolding, we have absolutely no basis for even judging what is creative or stagnant, rational or irrational, or good or evil in any constellation of cultural phenomena other than personal preference. Unlike science's limited objectivity, dialectical naturalism's objectivity is ethical by its very nature, by virtue of the kind of society it identifies as rational, a society that is the actualization of humanity's potentialities.[23] It sublates science's narrow objectivity to advance by rational inferences drawn from the objective nature of human potentialities, a society that increasingly actualizes those potentialities. And it does so on the basis of what should be as the fulfillment of the rational, that is to say, on rational knowledge of the "Good" and a conceptual congruence between the Good and the socially rational that can be embodied in free institutions.

It is not that social development is dialectical because it is necessarily rational as a traditional Hegelian might suppose, but rather that where social development is rational, it is dialectical or historical. We aver, in short, that we can educe from a uniquely human potentiality a rational development that advances human self-realization in a free, self-conscious, and cooperative society. Speculative reason here stakes out a claim to discern the rational development (by no means immune to irrational vicissitudes) of society as it should be--given human potentiality, as we know it in real life, to evolve from a tribal folk to a democratic citizenry, from mythopoesis to reason, from the submission of personhood in a folklike collectivity to individuality in a rational community--all as rational ends as well as existential realities. Speculative reason should always be called upon to understand and explain not only what has happened with respect to these problematics but why they recur in varying degrees and how they can be resolved.

In a very real sense, the past fifteen or more years have been remarkably ahistorical, albeit highly eventful, insofar as they have not been marked by any lasting advance toward a rational society. Indeed, if anything, they would seem to tilting toward a regression, ideologically and structurally, to barbarism, despite spectacular advances in technology and science, whose outcome we cannot foresee. There cannot be a dialectic, however, that deals "dialectically" with the irrational, with regression into barbarism--that is to say, a strictly Negative Dialectics. Both Adorno's book of that name and Horkheimer and Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which traced the "dialectical" descent of reason (in Hegel's sense) into instrumentalism, were little more than mixed farragoes of convoluted neo-Nietzschean verbiage, often brilliant, often

colorful, often excitingly informative, but often confused, rather dehumanizing and, to speak bluntly, irrational.[24] A "dialectic" that lacks any spirit of transcendence (Aufhebung) and denies the "negation of the negation" is spurious at its very core.[25] One of the earliest attempts to "dialectically" deal with social regression was the little-known "retrogression thesis," undertaken by Josef Weber, the German Trotskyist theorist who was the exile leader of the Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (IKD). Weber authored the IKD's program "Capitalist Barbarism and Socialism," which was published in November 1944 in Max Schachtman's New International during the bitterest days of the Second World War and posed the question that many thinking revolutionaries of that distant era faced: What forms would capitalism take if the proletariat failed to make a socialist revolution after the Second World War?[26] As the title of the IKD document suggests, not all Marxists, perhaps fewer than we may think, regarded socialism as "inevitable" or thought that there would necessarily be a socialist "end to history" after the war. Indeed, many who I knew as a dissident Trotskyist fifty years ago were convinced that barbarism was as serious a danger for the future as socialism was its greatest hope.[27] The prospect of barbarism that we face today may differ in form from what revolutionary Marxists faced two generations ago, but it does not differ in kind. The future of Civilization is still very much in the balance, and the very memory of alternative emancipatory visions to capitalism are becoming dimmer with each generation.

Although the "imaginary" and subjective are certainly elements in social development, contemporary capitalism is steadily dissolving the uniqueness of "imaginaries" of earlier, more diverse cultures. Indeed, capitalism is increasingly leveling and homogenizing society, culturally

and economically, to a point that the same commodities, industrial techniques, social institutions, values, even desires, are being "universalized" to an unprecedented degree in humanity's long career. At a time when the mass-manufactured commodity has become a fetish more potent than any archaic fetish that early cultures "imagined"; when the glossy tie and three-piece suit is replacing traditional sarongs, cloaks, and shoulder capes; when the word "business" requires fewer and fewer translations in the world's diverse vocabularies; and when English has become the lingua franca not only of so-called "educated classes" but people in ordinary walks of life (need I add more to this immensely long list?), it is odd that the idiosyncratic in various cultural constellations are now acquiring a significance in academic discourse that they rarely attained in the past. This discourse may be a way of side-stepping a much-needed examination of the challenges posed by recent capitalist developments, and instead mystifying them in convoluted discussions that fill dense academic tomes and, particularly in the case of Foucault and postmodernism, satisfying the "imaginaries" of self-centered individuals, for whom the paint spray can has become the weapon of choice with which to assault the capitalist system and hair shaved into a rooster comb the best way to affront the conventional petty bourgeoisie.

Stated bluntly: no revolutionary movement can grow if its theorists essentially deny Bloch's "principle of hope," which it so needs for an inspired belief in the future; if they deny universal History that affirms sweeping common problems that have besieged humanity over the ages; if they deny the shared interests that give a movement the basis for a common struggle in achieving a rational dispensation of social affairs; if they deny a processual rationality and a growing idea of the Good based on more than personalistic

(or "intersubjective" and "consensual") grounds; if they deny the powerful civilizatory dimensions of social development (ironically, dimensions that are in fact so useful to contemporary nihilists in criticizing humanity's failings); and if they deny historical Progress. Yet in present-day theoretics, a series of events replaces History, cultural relativism replaces Civilization, and a basic pessimism replaces a belief in the possibility of Progress. What is more sinister, mythopoesis replaces reason, and dystopia the prospect of a rational society. What is at stake in all these displacements is an intellectual and practical regression of appalling proportions--an especially alarming development today, when theoretical clarity is of the utmost necessity. What our times require is a social-analysis that calls for a revolutionary and ultimately popular movement, not a psycho-analysis that issues self-righteous disclaimers for "beautiful souls," ideologically dressed in cloaks of personal virtue.

Given the disparity between what rationally should be and what currently exists, reason may not necessarily become embodied in a free society. If and when the realm of freedom ever does reach its most expansive form, to the extent that we can envision it, and if hierarchy, classes, domination, and exploitation are ever abolished, we would be obliged to enter that realm only as free beings, as truly rational, ethical, and empathetic "knowing animals," with the highest intellectual insight and ethical probity, not as brutes coerced into it by grim necessity and fear. The riddle of our times is whether today's relativists would have equipped us intellectually and ethically to cross into that most expansive realm of freedom. We cannot merely be driven into greater freedom by blind forces that we fail to understand, as Marxists implied, still less by mere preferences that have no standing in anything more than an

"imaginary," "instincts," or libidinal "desires." [28] The relativists of our time could actually play a sinister role if they permitted the "imaginative" to loosen our contact with the objective world. For in the absence of rational objective standards of behavior, imagination may be as demonic as it may be liberatory when such standards exist; hence the need for informed spontaneity--and an informed imagination. The exhilarating events of May-June 1968, with the cry "Imagination to Power!" were followed a few years later by a surge in the popularity of nihilistic postmodernism and poststructuralism in academy, an unsavory metaphysics of "desire," and an apolitical call for "imagination" nourished by a yearning for "self-realization." More than ever, I would insist, we must invert Nietzsche's dictum "All facts are interpretations" and demand that all interpretations be rooted in "facts," that is, in objectivity. We must seek out broader interpretations of socialism than those that cast socialist ideals as a science and strangled its movements in authoritarian institutions. At a time when we teeter between Civilization and barbarism, the current apostles of irrationality in all their varied forms are the chthonic demons of a dark world who have come to life not to explicate humanity's problems but to effect a dispiriting denial of the role of rationality in History and human affairs. My disquiet today lies not in the absence of scientific "guarantees" that a libertarian socialist society will appear--at my age, that will never be my privilege to see--but in whether it will even be fought for in so decadent and desperate a period.

# **ANARCHISM: PAST AND PRESENT**

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

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Contributed to [Anarchy Archives](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archivehome.html) ("http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\_Archives/archivehome.html") Chuck Morse of the Institute for Anarchist Studies ("http://members.aol.com/iastudy/Default.htm")th the permission of the author.

Note: The following issue of COMMENT was presented as a lecture to the Critical Theory Seminar of the University of California at Los Angeles on May 29, 1980. My remarks are intended to emphasize the extreme importance today of viewing Anarchism in terms of the changing social contexts of our era - - not as an ossified doctrine that belongs to one or another set of European thinkers, valuable as their views may have been in their various times and places. Today, more than ever, the viability of Anarchism in America will depend upon its ability to speak directly -- in the language of the American people and to living problems of the American people -- rather than to resurrect ideas, expressions, slogans and a weary vernacular that belong to eras past. This is not to deny the internationalist spirit of Anarchism or its historical continuity, but rather to stress the need to solidarize with libertarian traditions and concepts that are clearly relevant to dominated peoples in the areas -- conceived in terms of place, time, and forms -- in which libertarian movements function.

## I.

There is a grave danger that Anarchism may be dealt with simplistically, the way we deal with most radical "isms" today -- as a fixed body of theory and practice that so often reduces Socialism to the textual works of Marx and Engels and their acolytes. I do not mean to deny the generic meaning of terms like "Socialism. " There are many types of Socialisms ranging from the utopian to the Leninist, from the ethical to the scientific. I simply wish to stake out the same claim for Anarchism. We must always remember that there are also many forms of Anarchism, notably anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-individualism, anarcho-collectivism, anarcho-communism, and, amusingly enough, anarcho-Bolshevism if I read the history of the Spanish Anarchist movement correctly. These Anarchist theories and movements have been burdened by all the intramural conflicts we encounter between Socialists, albeit in a less bloody and lethal form.

What really concerns me with the wide range of Anarchisms, however, goes well beyond the generic character of the term. I cannot stress strongly enough that Anarchism not only encompasses a wide variety of theories and movements but more importantly it has a very rich historical genesis and development. This is crucial to an understanding of what I have to say. More so than any radical movement with which we are familiar, Anarchism is a profoundly social movement as distinguished from the usual political movements we associate with The Left. Its vitality, its theoretical form, indeed its very *raison d'etre* stem from its capacity to express the millenia-long aspirations of peoples to create their own egalitarian or, at least, self-administered social structures, their own forms of



human consociation by which they can exercise control over their lives. In this sense, Anarchism really constitutes a folk or people's social philosophy and practice in the richest sense of the term, just as the folk song constitutes the emotional expression of a people in their esthetic or spiritual depths. The Hellenic origins of the terms *anarche* or "no rule" should not deceive us into thinking that it can be readily placed in the academic spectrum of social ideas. Historically, Anarchism has found expression in non-authoritarian clans, tribes and tribal federations, in the democratic institutions of the Athenian polis, in the early medieval communes, in the radical Puritan congregations of the English Revolution, in the democratic town meetings that spread from Boston to Charleston after 1760, in the Paris Commune of 1871, the soviets of 1905 and 1917, the Anarchist pueblos, barrios, and worker-controlled shops of the Spanish Revolution of 1936 -- in short, in the self-directed, early and contemporary, social forms of humanity that have institutionally involved people in face-to-face relations based on direct democracy, self-management, active citizenship, and personal participation.<sup>1</sup> It is within this electric public sphere that the Anarchist credo of direct action finds its real actualization. Indeed, direct action not only means the occupation of a nuclear power plant site but less dramatic, often prosaic, and tedious forms of self-management that involve patience, commitment to democratic procedures, lengthy discourse, and a decent respect for the opinions of others within the same community.

This institutional framework and sensibility is the authentic milieu of Anarchism, its very protoplasm. The theories that emerge from the activity of this protoplasm are the forms of self-reflexive rationality that give it coherence and consciousness. To my thinking, the "Digger"

Winstanley, the Enrage Varlat, the artisan Proudhon, the worker Pelloutier, and the Russian intellectuals Bakunin and Kropotkin voice at various levels of consciousness different, often clearly delineable, phases of humanity's organic evolution toward freedom. One can often associate these individuals or the ideas they developed with the actual development of the popular social forms from which they emerged or to which they gave ideological coherence. Thus one can justifiably associate Winstanley's ideas with the agrarian Anarchism of the yeoman communities in seventeenth-century England, Varlat with the urban neighborhood Anarchism of the revolutionary sections and Enrage movement of Paris in 1793, Proudhon with the artisan Anarchism of craftspeople in pre-industrial France, Bakunin's anarcho-collectivism with the peasant villages of Russia and Spain, Pelloutier's anarcho-syndicalism, with the industrial proletariat and emerging factory system and, perhaps most prophetically, Kropotkin's anarcho-communism with our own era, a body of theory that readily lends itself to the ecological, decentralist, technological, and urban issues that have come to the foreground of social life today.

The anti-statist and anti-political views of these Anarchist thinkers should not obscure the positive content of their views and their roots. The Marxian notion that human "socialization" reaches its most advanced historical form with bourgeois society -- a society that strips humanity of its remaining biosocial trappings -- would have been emphatically rejected by these Anarchists if only on the intuitive grounds that society can never be totally denatured. As I have argued elsewhere (see my "Beyond Neo-Marxism" in *Telos*, No. 36), society never frees itself of its natural matrix, even in the internal relations between individuals. The actual issue, if one is to learn from the

ecological problems of our time, is the nature of that nature in which society is rooted -- organic (as was the case in many precapitalist communities) or inorganic (as is the case in market society). The clan, tribe, polis, medieval commune, even the Parisian sections, the Commune, certainly the village and decentralized towns of the past, were rooted in bio-social relations. Market society with its atomization, competition, total objectification of the individual and her or his labor-power -- not to speak of the bureaucratic sinews that hold this lifeless structure together, the concrete, steel, and glass cities and suburbs that provide its environments, and quantification that permeates every aspect of its activity -- all of these not only deny life in the biological and organic sense but reduce it to its molecular components in the physical and inorganic sense. Bourgeois society does not achieve society's domination of nature; rather, it literally desocializes society by making it an object to be appropriated by inorganic nature, by the bourgeois in his inner being and his social being. The bureaucracy colonizes the social institutions of humanity; the concrete city, the organic relations of nature; cybernetics and the mass media, the individual's personality; in short, market "society" colonizes every aspect of personal and social life.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the umbilical cord that unites organic societies, in the sense and with the qualifications I have described them, with Anarchist theories and movements. Nor can I desist from noting the extent to which Marxism, by contrast, is linked to the most inorganic of all human structures, the state -- and at other layers of hierarchy, with that most inorganic of all oppressed classes, the proletariat and such institutionalized forms of centralized power as the factory, the party, and the bureaucracy. That the very "universality" of the proletariat

that Marx celebrates in the form of its dehumanization by capital, its association with a technological framework based on centralization, domination, and rationalization which presumably render it into a revolutionary force reveals the extent to which Marx's own theoretical corpus is rooted in bourgeois ideology in its least self-reflexive form. For this "universality" as we can now see celebrates the "hollowing out" of society itself, its increasing vulnerability to bureaucratic manipulation in industry and politics by capital and trade unions. "Schooled" by the nuclear family, by vocational supervisors, by the hierarchical factory structure, and by the division of labor, the "universality" of the proletariat turns out to be the facelessness of the proletariat -- its expression not of the general interests of humanity in its progress toward socialism but its particular interests, indeed, of interests as such, as the expression of bourgeois egoism. The factory does not unite the proletariat; it defines it -- and no tendency more clearly expresses the proletariat's human desires than its attempt to escape from the factory, to seek what the Berlin Dadaists of 1918 were to demand: "universal unemployment."

## II.

These far-reaching distinctions between Anarchism as a social movement and Marxism as a political one require further emendations. I have no quarrel with the great wealth of Marx's writings, particularly his work on alienation, his analysis of the commodity relationship and the accumulation of capital. His historical theories require the correction of the best work of Max Weber and Karl Polanyi. But it is not Marx's writings that must be updated. Their limits are defined by their fundamentally bourgeois origins and their incredible susceptibility to political, that is, state-oriented ideologies. Historically, it is not accidental

that Anarchism in Spain, in the Ukraine, and, in its Zapatista form in Mexico, could be crushed only by a genocidal destruction of its social roots, notably the village. Marxian movements, where they suffer defeat, are crushed merely by demolishing the party. The seeming "atavism" of Anarchism -- its attempts to retain artisanship, the mutual aid of the community, a closeness to nature and enlightened ethical norms -- are its virtues insofar as they seek to retain those richly articulated, cooperative, and self-expressive forms of human consociation scaled to human dimensions. The seeming "effectiveness" of Marxism -- its attempt to replicate the state in the form of the party, its emphasis on a political apparatus, its scientific thrust and its denial of a prophetic ethical vision -- are its vices insofar as they do not demolish the bourgeois state but incorporate it into the very substance of protest and revolution.

Not accidentally, Marxism has been most sharply alienated from itself. The attempt to "update" Marxian theory, to give it relevance beyond the academy and reformist movements, has added an obfuscating eclectic dimension to its ideological corpus. In response to the Russian general strike of 1905, Rosa Luxemburg was obliged to make the "mass strike" -- a typical Anarchist "strategy" -- palatable to the Second International -- this, not without grossly distorting Engel's view on the subject and the Anarchist view as well.<sup>2</sup> Lenin was to perform much the same acrobatics in *State and Revolution* in 1917 when events favored the Paris Commune as a paradigm, again assailing the Anarchists while concealing Marx's own denigrating judgment of the uprising in the later years of his life. Similar acrobatics were performed by Mandel, Gorz, et al in May-June 1968, when all of France was swept into a near-revolutionary situation.

What is significant, here, is the extent to which the theory follows events which are essentially alien to its analysis. The emergence of the ecology movement in the late 1960s, of feminism in the early 1970s, and more belatedly, of neighborhood movements in recent years has rarely been viewed as a welcome phenomenon by Marxist theorists until, by the sheer force of events, it has been acknowledged, later distorted to meet economic, Marxist criteria, and attempts are ultimately made to absorb it. At which point, it is not Anarchism, to which these issues are literally indigenous, that has been permitted to claim its relevancy and legitimacy to the problems of our era but rather Marxism, much of which has become the ideology of state capitalism in half of the world. This obfuscating development has impeded the evolution of revolutionary consciousness at its very roots and gravely obstructs the evolution of a truly self-reflexive revolutionary movement.

By the same token, Anarchism has acquired some bad Marxist habits of its own, notably an ahistorical and largely defensive commitment to its own past. The transformation of the sixties counterculture into more institutionalized forms and the decline of the New Left has created among many committed Anarchists a longing for the ideological security and pedigree that currently afflicts many Marxist sects. This yearning to return to a less inglorious past, together with the resurgence of the Spanish CNT after Franco's death, has fostered an Anarchism that is chillingly similar in its lack of creativity to sectarian forms of proletarian socialism, notably anarcho-sindicalism. What is lacking in both cases is the proletariat and the historical constellation of circumstances that marked the hundred-year-old era of 1848 to 1938. Anarchist commitments to the factory, to the struggle of wage labor versus capital, share all the vulgarities of sectarian Marxism. What redeems the

anarcho-syndicalists from outright congruence with authoritarian Marxism is the form their libertarian variant of proletarian socialism acquires. Their emphasis on an ethical socialism, on direct action, on control from below, and their apolitical stance may serve to keep them afloat, but what tends to vitiate their efforts -- this quite aside from the historical decline of the workers movement as a revolutionary force -- is the authoritarian nature of the factory, the pyramidal structure fostered by syndicalist theory, and the reliance anarcho-syndicalists place on the unique role of the proletariat and the social nature of its conflict with capital.

Viewed broadly, anarcho-syndicalism, Proudhonianism, and Bakuninism belong to an irretrievable past. I say this not because they lack ideological coherence and meaning -- indeed, Proudhon's emphasis on federalism still enjoys its original validity -- but simply because they speak to epochs which have faded into history. There is much they can teach us, but they have long been transcended by historically new issues -- in my view, more fundamental in their libertarian implications -- to which the entire Left must now address itself. This does not mean the "death" or even the "transcendence" of Anarchism as such once we view the term in its generic and historical meaning, for the issues that confront us are more distinctly social than they have ever been at any time in the past. They literally involve the recreation of a new public sphere as distinguished from the state with the forms, institutions, relations, sensibilities, and culture appropriate to a world that is faced with desocialization at every level of life. For Marxism, these issues are fatal and, in fact, render Marxism itself into ideology in a socially destructive sense.

### III.

We are no longer living in a world where revolutionary consciousness can be developed primarily or even significantly around the issue of wage labor versus capital. I do not wish to denigrate the significance of this century-old conflict. That a class struggle exists between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (however broadly we choose to define the term "proletariat") hardly requires discussion, anymore than the fact that we live in a capitalist society that is ruled by a capitalist class (again, however broadly we choose to define the term "capitalist"). What is really at issue is that a class struggle does not mean a class war in the revolutionary sense of the term. If the past century has taught us anything, I submit it has demonstrated that the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has been neither more nor less revolutionary than the conflict between the plebians and patricians in the ancient world or the serfs and the nobility in the feudal world. Both conflicts did not simply end in an impasse; they never contained the authentic possibilities of transcending the social, economic, and cultural forms within which they occurred. Indeed, the view of history as a history of class struggle is a highly convoluted one that is not exhausted by conflicting economic interests, by class consciousness and identity, or by the economically motivated methods that have so easily rooted socialist and syndicalist ideologists in economic reductionism or what is blithely called a "class analysis."

What lies on the horizon of the remaining portion of this century is not the class struggle as we have known it in the metaphors of proletarian socialism -- Socialist or Anarchist. The monumental crisis bourgeois society has created in the form of a disequilibrium between humanity and nature, a crisis that has telescoped an entire geological epoch into a mere century; the expansive notion of human freedom that



has given rise of feminism in all its various forms; the hollowing out of the human community and citizenship that threatens the very claims of individuality, subjectivity, and democratic consciousness, perhaps the greatest claim the bourgeois epoch has made for itself as a force for progress; the terrifying sense of powerlessness in the face of ever-greater urban, corporate, and political gigantism; the steady demobilization of the political electorate in a waning era of institutional republicanism --all of these sweeping regressions have rendered an economistic interpretation of social phenomena, a traditional "class analysis," and largely conventional political strategies in the forms of electoral politics and party structures grossly inadequate. One must truly torture these issues and grossly warp them into utterly distorted forms to fit them into Marxian categories. Perhaps no less significantly, the far-reaching politicization of the economy itself in the form of state capitalism or its various approximations and the emergence of a highly elaborated bureaucracy have given to the state sweeping historical functions that go far beyond its earlier role as a so-called "executive committee of the ruling class." Indeed, to an appalling extent, they have turned the state into a substitution for society itself.

One must realize the entirely new conditions this constellation of circumstances has produced for radicalism, the extent to which they redefine the revolutionary project theoretically and practically. The technical progress that Socialism once regarded as decisive to humanity's domination of nature and as preconditions for human freedom have now become essential in sophisticating the domination of human by human. Technology now savagely reinforces class and hierarchical rule by adding unprecedented instrumentalities of control and destruction to the forces of domination. The wedding of the economy to

the state, far from simplifying the revolutionary project as Engels so naively believed in *Anti-Duhring*, has reinforced the powers of the state with resources that the most despotic regimes of the past never had at their command. The growing recognition that the proletariat has become - and probably has always been -- an organ of capitalist society, not a revolutionary agent gestating within its womb, has raised anew the problem of the "revolutionary agent" in an entirely new and non-Marxian form. Finally, the need for the revolutionary project to view itself as a cultural project (or counterculture, if you will) that encompasses the needs of human subjectivity, the empowerment of the individual, the aestheticization of the revolutionary ideal has led, in turn, to a need to consider the structural nature, internal relations, and institutional forms of a revolutionary movement that will compensate, if only in part, for the cultural, subjective, and social negation of the public and the private sphere. Indeed, we must redefine the very meaning of the word "Left" today. We must ask if radicalism can be reduced to a crude form of social democracy that operates within the established order to acquire mass, mindless constituencies or if it must advance a far-reaching revolutionary challenge to desocialization and to every aspect of domination, be it in everyday life or in the broader social arena of the coming historic epoch.

#### IV.

Whatever else Anarchism meant in the past -- be it the millenarian movements of Christianity, the peasant movements of the Anabaptists, the Makhnovite and Zapatista militias, the Parisian Enrages and Communards, the Proudhonian artisans, or the early industrial workers who entered the CGT in France and the CNT in Spain -- it is clear to me that contemporary Anarchism must address

itself in the most sophisticated and radical terms to capitalist, indeed to hierarchical society, in its advanced and, I genuinely believe, its terminal forms. To relegate Anarchism to an ahistorical moral movement based on the virtues of "natural man" and his proclivities for mutual aid, to define it merely in terms of its opposition to the state as the source of all evil, worse, to describe Anarchism merely in terms of one of its variants -- the Anarchism of Stirner, Proudhon, Bakunin, or Kropotkin, -- is to grossly misread Anarchism as a historical movement, to ignore its existence as a social movement in a specific social context. Anarchism does not have the proprietary character of Marxism with its body of definable texts, commentators, and their offshoots. Conceived as a social movement rather than a political one, it is not only deeply woven into the development of humanity but demands historical treatment.

Do I mean to say, then, that Anarchism dissolves into history and has no theoretical identity? My reply would be an emphatic "No." What unites all Anarchist theories and movements are not only their defense of society against the state, of direct action against political action; more fundamentally, I believe, Anarchism by definition goes beyond class exploitation (whose significance it never denies) into hierarchical domination, whose historical significance it increasingly analyzes as the source of authority as such. The domination of the young by the old in tribal gerontocracies, of women by men in patriarchal families, the crude objectification of nature -- all precede class society and economic exploitation. In fact, they remain the crucial residual sphere of authority that Marxism and Socialism retain all too comfortably in their notions of a classless society. Anarchism, in effect, provides the materials for an analysis of the nature of freedom and the nature of oppression that go beyond the conventional

economistic, nexus of capitalist society into the very sensibility, structure, and nature of human consociation as such. The genesis of hierarchy, which for Marx was an inevitable extension of biology into society, is seen as a social phenomenon within the Anarchist framework, one which has its most consolidating source in patriarchy and the supremacy of the male's civil domain over the woman's domestic domain. I know of no more brilliant statement of this far-reaching shift than Horkheimer's and Adorno's passage on "animals" at the end of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "For millennia men dreamed of acquiring absolute mastery over nature, of converting the cosmos into one immense hunting-ground. " (p. 248) Inevitably, the genesis of hierarchy and domination yields the objectification of nature as mere natural resources, of human beings as mere human resources, of community as mere urban resources in short, the reduction of the world itself to inorganic technics and a technocratic sensibility that sees humankind as a mere instrument of production.

I have tried to show elsewhere that Marx sophisticates and extends this trend into socialism and, unwittingly, reduces socialism to ideology. (See my "Marxism as Bouregois Sociology," *Our Generation*, Vol. 13, No. 3) What concerns me for the present is that Anarchism, often intuitively, assembles the materials for a deeper, richer, and more significantly, a broader insight and grasp into the dialectic of domination and freedom, this by reaching beyond the factory and even the marketplace into hierarchical relations that prevail in the family, the educational system, the community, and in fact, the division of labor, the factory, the relationship of humanity to nature, not to speak of the state, bureaucracy, and the party. Accordingly, the issues of ecology, feminism, and community are indigenous concerns of Anarchism,

problems which it often advances even before they acquire social immediacy -- not problems which must be tacked on to its theoretical corpus and distorted to meet the criteria of an economic, class-oriented viewpoint. Hence, Anarchism, by making these issues central to its social analyses and practice has acquired a relevance that, by far, overshadows most trends in present-day socialism. Indeed, Anarchism has become the trough in which Socialism eclectically nourishes itself on an alien diet of "socialist feminism," the "economics of pollution," and the "political economy of urbanism."

Secondly, Anarchism has faced the urgent problem of structuring itself as a revolutionary movement in the form of the very society it seeks to create. It should hardly be necessary to demolish the preposterous notion that hierarchical forms of organization are synonymous with organization as such, anymore than it should be necessary to demolish the notion that the state has always been synonymous with society. What uniquely distinguishes Anarchism from other socialisms is its commitment to a libertarian confederal movement and culture, based on the coordination of human-scaled groups, united by personal affinity as well as ideological agreement, controlled from below rather than from "above," and committed to spontaneous direct action. Here, it fosters embryonic growth, cell by cell as it were, as distinguished from bureaucratic growth by fiat and inorganic accretion. At a time when consociation is faced with the deadly prospect of dissociation, Anarchism opposes social form to political form, individual empowerment through direct action to political powerlessness through bureaucratic representation. Thus Anarchism is not only the practice of citizenship within a new public sphere, but the self-administration of the revolutionary movement itself. The very process of

building an Anarchist movement from below is viewed as the process of consociation, self-activity and self-management that must ultimately yield that revolutionary self that can act upon, change and manage an authentic society.

I have merely scratched the wails of a considerable theoretical corpus and critique that would require volumes to develop in detail. Let me emphasize that the most advanced Anarchist theories, today, do not involve a mystical return to a "natural man," a crude anti-statism, a denial of the need for organization, a vision of direct action as violence and terrorism, a mindless rejection of sophisticated theory, an opaqueness to what is living in the work of all Socialist theories. Anarchist critique and reconstruction reach far and deep into the Socialist and bourgeois traditions. If Anarchism is the "return of a ghost," as Adorno once insisted, we may justly ask why this "ghost" continues to haunt us today. This reality can only be answered rationally if one remembers that the "ghost" is nothing less than the attempt to restore society, human consociation at the present level of historical development, in the face of an all-ubiquitous state and bureaucracy with its attendant depersonalization of the individual and its demobilization of the public and the public sphere. By the same token, the bourgeois essence of Socialism, particularly in its Marxian form, lies in its inglorious celebration of the massification of the citizen into the proletarian, of the factory as the public sphere, of cultural impoverishment as "class consciousness," of the retreat from the social to the economic, of the triumph of technics over nature and of science over ethics. If Anarchism is a "ghost," it is because human consociation itself threatens to become spectral; if Marxism is a "living presence," it is because the market threatens to devour social life. Adorno's

metaphors become confused in the name of a false "historicism" where even the past actually enjoys more vitality than the present, a vitality that can never be recovered without giving life to the "ghost" itself. If the state, bureaucracy, and "masses" are to be exorcised, it is not Anarchism that will be removed from the stage of history but Marxism, with its centralized parties, hierarchies, economistic sensibilities, political strategies, and class mythologies.

## V.

There is much I have been obliged to omit. My limited time makes it impossible for me to deal with such delectable questions as the nature of the "revolutionary agent" today, the relationship of Anarchist practice to the political sphere (a. more complex issue than is generally supposed when one recalls that Anarchists played a significant role in the electoral activities of the Montreal Citizens Movement), the details of Anarchist organizational structures, the relationship of Anarchism to the counterculture, to feminism, to the ecology movement, to neo-Marxist tendencies, and the like.

But allow me to conclude with this very important consideration. At a time when the proletariat is quiescent -- historically, I believe -- as a revolutionary class and the traditional factory faces technological extinction, Anarchism has raised almost alone those ecological issues, feminist issues, community issues, problems of self-empowerment, forms of decentralization, and concepts of self-administration that are now at the foreground of the famous "social question." And it has raised these issues from within its very substance as a theory and practice directed against hierarchy and domination, not as

exogenous problems that must be "coped" with or warped into an economistic interpretation subject of class analysis and problems of material exploitation.

### FOOTNOTES

(1) It would be well, at this point, to stress that I am discussing the institutional structure of the social forms cited above. That they all variously may have excluded women, strangers, often non-conformists of various religious and ethnic backgrounds, not to speak of slaves and people lacking property, does not diminish humanity's capacity to recreate them on more advanced levels. Rather, it indicates that despite their historical limitations, such structures were both possible and functional, often with remarkable success.

A free society will have to draw its content from the higher canons of reason and morality, not from - "models" that existed in the past. What the past recovers and validates is the human ability to approximate freedom, not the actualization of freedom in the fullness of its possibilities.

(2) A distortion all the more odious because the Social Democratic rank-and-file had been deeply moved, ideologically as well as emotionally, by the 1905 events. "The anarchists and syndicalists who had previously been driven underground by orthodox Social Democracy now rose to the surface like mushrooms on the periphery of the SPD," observes Peter Nettl rather disdainfully in his biography of Luxemburg; "when it came to something resembling 'their' general strike they felt they were close to legitimacy once more." And, indeed, with good reason: "For the first time for years anarchist speakers appeared on provincial Socialist platforms by invitation. The orthodox party press led by Vorwarts was much more cautious; but it, too, gave pride of place [albeit if not of doctrine -- M. B.] to



Russian events and for the first few months abstained from wagging blunt and cautious fingers over the differences between Russian chaos and German order." (Peter Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Oxford University Press, 1969, abridged version, pp. 203-4).

# **TO REMEMBER SPAIN**

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

## **Contents**

Preface

1. An Overview of the Spanish Libertarian Movement
2. After Fifty Years: The Spanish Civil War

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## PREFACE

These essays are less an analysis of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War of 1936-39 than an evocation of the greatest proletarian and peasant revolution to occur over the past two centuries. Although they contain a general overview and evaluation of the Anarchist and Anarchosyndicalist movements (the two should be clearly distinguished) in the three-year struggle at the end of the 1930s, they are not intended to be a full account of those complex events.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Spanish Revolution was the farthest-reaching movement that the Left ever produced, for reasons the essays that follow will make clear. The Spanish proletariat and peasantry, led largely by Anarchist militants whose names will never be known to us, strained the limits of what we in the 1930s called "proletarian socialism" and went appreciably beyond them. Far more than the leaders of the Anarchosyndicalist National Confederation of Labor and the Iberian Anarchist Federation (CNT-FAI) expected or apparently even wanted, Anarchists and Anarchosyndicalists spontaneously formed the famous industrial and agrarian collectives that so markedly distinguished the Spanish Revolution from any that had preceded it. They provided the militiamen and women who died by the thousands in the early fighting against the Francoist generals who led the military uprising of July 1936 in behalf of the Spanish landlords, the industrial bourgeoisie, and the Church.

The endeavors of the Anarchists and their Left Socialist allies in the Spanish Revolution must never be forgotten, lest today's Left lose a sense of continuity with the revolutionary era -- its idealism, principles, and ideas. The

loss of this continuity would contribute to political opportunism and to a fashionable ideological pluralism that mingles reformist politics with radical rhetoric as the need arises.

The essays that follow attempt to reach a wider readership than do the more academic studies of the events. The first essay, retitled here "An Overview of the Spanish Libertarian Movement," consists of my September 1973 introductory essay to Sam Dolgoff's *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939* (New York: Free Life Editions, 1974), which was more of a compendium of excerpts than a comprehensive work in its own right. The second essay, "After Fifty Years: The Spanish Civil War," published in *New Politics*, n.s., vol. 1, no. 1 (Summer 1986), was written to commemorate the half-century anniversary of the Spanish Revolution.\* I wish to thank my friends Phyllis and Julius Jacobson, the editors of *New Politics*, for their kind permission to reprint the essay here.

I dedicate this book to the CNT-FAI revolutionaries Gastón Leval and José Peirats -- two astonishingly honest and committed comrades.

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## AN OVERVIEW OF THE SPANISH LIBERTARIAN MOVEMENT

In the morning hours of July 18, 1936, General Francisco Franco issued the pronunciamiento from Las Palmas in Spanish North Africa that openly launched the struggle of Spain's reactionary military officers against the legally elected Popular Front government in Madrid.

The Franco pronunciamiento left little doubt that, in the event of victory by the Spanish generals, the parliamentary republic would be replaced by a clearly authoritarian state, modeled institutionally on similar regimes in Germany and Italy. The Francoist forces or "Nationalists," as they were to call themselves, exhibited all the trappings and ideologies of the fascist movements of the day: the raised open-palm salute, the appeals to a "folk-soil" philosophy of order, duty, and obedience, and the avowed commitments to smash the labor movement and end all political dissidence. To the world, the conflict initiated by the Spanish generals seemed like another of the classic struggles waged between the "forces of fascism" and the "forces of democracy" that reached such acute proportions in the thirties. What distinguished the Spanish conflict from similar struggles in Italy, Germany, and Austria, however, was the massive resistance with which the "forces of democracy" seemed to oppose to the Spanish military. Franco and his military co-conspirators, despite the wide support they enjoyed among the officer cadres in the army, grossly miscalculated the popular opposition they would encounter. The so-called "Spanish Civil War" lasted nearly three years -- from July 1936 to March 1939 -- and claimed an estimated million lives.

For the first time, so it seemed to many of us in the thirties, an entire people with dazzling courage had arrested the terrifying success of fascist movements in central and southern Europe. Scarcely three years earlier, Hitler had pocketed Germany without a shred of resistance from the massive Marxist-dominated German labor movement. Austria, two years before, had succumbed to an essentially authoritarian state after a week of futile street-fighting by Socialist workers in Vienna. Everywhere fascism seemed "on the march" and "democracy" in retreat. But Spain had seriously resisted -- and continued to resist for years despite the armaments, aircraft, and troops which Franco acquired from Italy and Germany. To radicals and liberals alike, the Spanish Civil War was being waged not only on the Iberian Peninsula but in every country where "democracy" seemed threatened by the rising tide of domestic and international fascist movements. The Spanish Civil War, we were led to believe, was a struggle between a liberal republic that was valiantly and with popular support trying to defend a democratic parliamentary state against authoritarian generals -- an imagery that is conveyed to this very day by most books on the subject and by that shabby cinematic documentary *To Die in Madrid*.

What so few of us knew outside Spain, however, was that the Spanish Civil War was in fact a sweeping social revolution by millions of workers and peasants who were concerned not to rescue a treacherous republican regime but to reconstruct Spanish society along revolutionary lines. We would scarcely have learned from the press that these workers and peasants viewed the Republic almost with as much animosity as they did the Francoists. Indeed, acting largely on their own initiative against "republican" ministers who were trying to betray them to the generals, they had raided arsenals and sporting-goods stores for

weapons and with incredible valor had aborted military conspiracies in most of the cities and towns of Spain. We were almost totally oblivious to the fact that these workers and peasants had seized and collectivized most of the factories and land in republican-held areas, establishing a new social order based on direct control of the country's productive resources by workers' committees and peasant assemblies. While the republic's institutions lay in debris, abandoned by most of its military and police forces, the workers and peasants had created their own institutions to administer the cities in Republican Spain, formed their own armed workers' squads to patrol the streets, and established a remarkable revolutionary militia force with which to fight the Francoist forces -- a voluntaristic militia in which men and women elected their own commanders and in which military rank conferred no social, material, or symbolic distinctions. Largely unknown to us at that time, the Spanish workers and peasants had made a sweeping social revolution. They had created their own revolutionary social forms to administer the country as well as to wage war against a well-trained and well-supplied army. The "Spanish Civil War" was not a political conflict between a liberal democracy and a fascist military corps but a deeply socio-economic conflict between the workers and peasants of Spain and their historic class enemies, ranging from the landowning grandes and clerical overlords inherited from the past to the rising industrial bourgeoisie and bankers of more recent times.

The revolutionary scope of this conflict was concealed from us -- by "us" I refer to the many thousands of largely Communist-influenced radicals of the "red" thirties who responded to the struggle in Spain with the same fervor and agony that young people of the sixties responded to the struggle in Indochina. We need not turn to Orwell or

Borkenau, radicals of obviously strong anti-Stalinist convictions, for an explanation of this fervor. Burnett Bolloten, a rather politically innocent United Press reporter who happened to be stationed in Madrid at the time, conveys his own sense of moral outrage at the misrepresentation of the Spanish conflict in the opening lines of his superbly documented study, *The Grand Camouflage*:

Although the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936, was followed by a far-reaching social-revolution in the anti-Franco camp -- more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages -- millions of discerning people outside of Spain were kept in ignorance, not only of its depth and range, but even of its existence, by virtue of a policy of duplicity and dissimulation of which there is no parallel in history.

Foremost in practicing this deception upon the world, and in misrepresenting in Spain itself the character of the revolution, were the Communists, who, although but an exiguous minority when the Civil War began, used so effectually the manifold opportunities which that very upheaval presented that before the close of the conflict in 1939 they became, behind a democratic frontispiece, the ruling force in the left camp.

The details of this deception could fill several large volumes. The silence that gathers around Spain, like a bad conscience, attests to the fact that the events are very much alive -- as are the efforts to misrepresent them. After nearly forty years the wounds have not healed. In fact, as the recent revival of Stalinism suggests, the disease that produced the purulence of counterrevolution in Spain still lingers on in the American left. But to deal with the



Stalinist counterrevolution in Spain is beyond the scope of these remarks. It might be useful, however, to examine the revolutionary tendencies that unfolded prior to July 1936 and explore the influence they exercised on the Spanish working class and peasantry. Their collectives were not the results of virginal popular spontaneity, important as popular spontaneity was, nor were they nourished exclusively by the collectivist legacy of traditional Spanish village society. Revolutionary ideas and movements played a crucial role of their own and their influence deserves the closest examination.

The Spanish generals started a military rebellion in July 1936; the Spanish workers and peasants answered them with a social revolution -- and this revolution was largely anarchist in character. I say this provocatively even though the Socialist UGT was numerically as large as the anarchosindicalist CNT.<sup>1</sup> During the first few months of the military rebellion, Socialist workers in Madrid often acted as radically as anarchosindicalist workers in Barcelona. They established their own militias, formed street patrols, and expropriated a number of strategic factories, placing them under the control of workers' committees. Similarly, Socialist peasants in Castile and Estramadura formed collectives, many of which were as libertarian as those created by anarchist peasants in Aragon and the Levant. In the opening "anarchic" phase of the revolution, so similar to the opening phases of earlier revolutions, the "masses" tried to assume direct control over society and exhibited a remarkable élan in improvising their own libertarian forms of social administration.

Looking back beyond this opening phase, however, it is fair to say that the durability of the collectives in Spain, their social scope, and the resistance they offered to the Stalinist

counterrevolution, depended largely on the extent to which they were under anarchist influence. What distinguishes the Spanish Revolution from those which preceded it is not only the fact that it placed much of Spain's economy in the hands of workers' committees and peasant assemblies or that it established a democratically elected militia system. These social forms, in varying degrees, had emerged during the Paris Commune and in the early period of the Russian Revolution. What made the Spanish Revolution unique was its workers' control and collectives which had been advocated for nearly three generations by a massive libertarian movement and which became one of the most serious issues to divide the so-called "republican" camp (together with the fate of the militia system). Owing to the scope of its libertarian social forms, not only did the Spanish Revolution prove to be "more profound" (to borrow Bolloten's phrase) than the Bolshevik Revolution, but the influence of a deeply rooted anarchist ideology and the intrepidity of anarchist militants virtually produced a civil war within the civil war.

Indeed, in many respects, the revolution of 1936 marked the culmination of more than sixty years of anarchist agitation and activity in Spain. To understand this, we must go back to the early 1870s, when the Italian anarchist Giuseppe Fanelli introduced Bakunin's ideas to groups of workers and intellectuals in Madrid and Barcelona. Fanelli's encounter with young workers of the Fomento de las Artes in Madrid, a story told with great relish by Gerald Brenan is almost legendary: the volatile speech that the tall bearded Italian anarchist who hardly knew a word of Spanish delivered to a small but enthusiastic audience that scarcely understood his free-wheeling mixture of French and Italian. By dint of sheer mimicry, tonal inflections, and a generous use of cognates, Fanelli managed to convey enough of Bakunin's

ideals to gain the group's adherence and to establish the founding Spanish section of the International Working Men's Association or so-called "First International." Thereafter, the "Internationalists," as the early Spanish anarchists were known, expanded rapidly from their circles in Madrid and Barcelona to Spain as a whole, taking strong root especially in Catalonia and Andalusia. Following the definitive split between the Marxists and Bakuninists at the Hague Congress of the IWMA in September 1872, the Spanish section remained predominantly Bakuninist in its general outlook. Marxism did not become a significant movement in Spain until the turn of the century, and even after it became an appreciable force in the labor movement, it remained largely reformist until well into the thirties. During much of its early history, the strength of the Spanish Socialist Party and the UGT lay in administrative areas such as Madrid rather than in predominantly working-class cities like Barcelona.<sup>2</sup> Marxism tended to appeal to the highly skilled, pragmatic, rather authoritarian Castilian; anarchism, to the unskilled, idealistic Catalans and the independent, liberty-loving mountain villagers of Andalusia and the Levant. The great rural masses of Andalusian day-workers or *braceros*, who remain to this day among the most oppressed and impoverished strata of European society, tended to follow the anarchists. But their allegiances varied with the fortunes of the day. In periods of upheaval, they swelled the ranks of the Bakuninist IWMA and its successor organizations in Spain, only to leave it in equally large numbers in periods of reaction.

Yet however much the fortunes of Spanish anarchism varied from region to region and from period to period, whatever revolutionary movement existed in Spain during this sixty-year period was essentially anarchist. Even as anarchism began to ebb before Marxian social-democratic

and later Bolshevik organizations after the First World War, Spanish anarchism retained its enormous influence and its revolutionary élan. Viewed from a radical standpoint, the history of the Spanish labor movement remained libertarian and often served to define the contours of the Marxist movements in Spain. "Generally speaking, a small but well-organized group of Anarchists in a Socialist area drove the Socialists to the Left," observes Brennan, "whereas in predominantly Anarchist areas, Socialists were outstandingly reformist." It was not socialism but rather anarchism that determined the metabolism of the Spanish labor movement -- the great general strikes that swept repeatedly over Spain, the recurring insurrections in Barcelona and in the towns and villages of Andalusia, and the gun battles between labor militants and employer-hired thugs in the Mediterranean coastal cities.

It is essential to emphasize that Spanish anarchism was not merely a program embedded in a dense theoretical matrix. It was a way of life: partly the life of the Spanish people as it was lived in the closely knit villages of the countryside and the intense neighborhood life of the working class barrios; partly, too, the theoretical articulation of that life as projected by Bakunin's concepts of decentralization, mutual aid, and popular organs of self-management. That Spain had a long tradition of agrarian collectivism is discussed in this book and examined in some detail in Joaquin Costa's *Colectivismo Agrario en España*. Inasmuch as this tradition was distinctly precapitalist, Spanish Marxism regarded it as anachronistic, in fact as "historically reactionary." Spanish socialism built its agrarian program around the Marxist tenet that the peasantry and its social forms could have no lasting revolutionary value until they were "proletarianized" and "industrialized." Indeed, the sooner the village decayed the better, and the more rapidly

the peasantry became a hereditary proletariat, "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself" (Marx) -- a distinctly hierarchical and authoritarian "mechanism" -- the more rapidly Spain would advance to the tasks of socialism.

Spanish anarchism, by contrast, followed a decisively different approach. It sought out the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village, nourished what was living and vital in them, evoked their revolutionary potentialities as liberatory modes of mutual aid and self-management, and deployed them to vitiate the obedience, hierarchical mentality, and authoritarian outlook fostered by the factory system. Ever mindful of the "embourgeoisment" of the proletariat (a term continually on Bakunin's lips in the later years of his life), the Spanish anarchists tried to use the precapitalist traditions of the peasantry and working class against the assimilation of the workers' outlook to an authoritarian industrial rationality. In this respect, their efforts were favored by the continuous fertilization of the Spanish proletariat by rural workers who renewed these traditions daily as they migrated to the cities. The revolutionary élan of the Barcelona proletariat -- like that of the Petrograd and Parisian proletariats -- was due in no small measure to the fact that these workers never solidly sedimented into a hereditary working class, totally removed from precapitalist traditions, whether of the peasant or the craftsman. Along the Mediterranean coastal cities of Spain, many workers retained a living memory of a noncapitalist culture -- one in which each moment of life was not strictly regulated by the punch clock, the factory whistle, the foreman, the machine, the highly regulated work day, and the atomizing world of the large city. Spanish anarchism flourished within a tension created by these antagonistic traditions and sensibilities. Indeed, where

a "Germanic proletariat" (to use another of Bakunin's cutting phrases) emerged in Spain, it drifted either toward the UGT or toward the Catholic unions. Its political outlook, reformist when not overtly conservative, often clashed with the more *déclassé* working class of Catalonia and the Mediterranean coast, leading to conflicting tendencies within the Spanish proletariat as a whole.

Ultimately, in my view, the destiny of Spanish anarchism depended upon its ability to create libertarian organizational forms that could synthesize as the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village with an industrial economy and a highly urbanized society. I speak here of no mere programmatic "alliance" between the Spanish peasantry and proletariat but more organically, of new organizational forms and sensibilities that imparted a revolutionary libertarian character to two social classes who lived in conflicting cultures. That Spain required a well-organized libertarian movement was hardly a matter of doubt among the majority of Spanish anarchists. But would this movement reflect a village society or a factory society? Where a conflict existed, could the two be melded in the same movement without violating the libertarian tenets of decentralization, mutual aid, and self-administration? In the classical era of "proletarian socialism" between 1848 and 1939, an era that stressed the "hegemony" of the industrial proletariat in all social struggles, Spanish anarchism followed a historic trajectory that revealed at once the limitations of the era itself and the creative possibilities for anarchic forms of organization.

By comparison with the cities, the Spanish villages that were committed to anarchism raised very few organizational problems. Brennan's emphasis on the *braceros* notwithstanding, the strength of agrarian anarchism in the

south and the Levant lay in the mountain villages, not among the rural proletariat that worked the great plantations of Andalusia. In these relatively isolated villages, a fierce sense of independence and personal dignity whetted the bitter social hatreds engendered by poverty, creating the rural "patriarchs" of anarchism whose entire families were devoted almost apostolically to "the Idea." For these sharply etched and rigorously ascetic individuals, defiance of the State, the Church, and conventional authority in general was almost a way of life. Knitted together by the local press -- and at various times there were hundreds of anarchist periodicals in Spain -- they formed the sinews of agrarian anarchism from the 1870s onwards and, to a large extent, the moral conscience of Spanish anarchism throughout its history.

Their agrarian collectives reflected to a remarkable extent the organizational forms which the anarchists fostered among all the villages under their influence before the 1936 revolution. The revolution in rural communities essentially enlarged the old IWMA and later CNT nuclei, membership groups, or quite simply clans of closely knit anarchist families into popular assemblies. These usually met weekly and formulated the policy decisions of the community as a whole. The assembly form comprised the organizational ideal of village anarchism from the days of the first truly Bakuninist congress of the Spanish IWMA in Córdoba in 1872, stressing the libertarian traditions of Spanish village life.<sup>3</sup> Where such popular assemblies were possible, their decisions were executed by a committee elected from the assembly. Apparently, the right to recall committee members was taken for granted and they certainly enjoyed no privileges, emoluments, or institutional power. Their influence was a function of their obvious dedication and capabilities. It remained a cardinal principle of Spanish

anarchists never to pay their delegates, even when the CNT numbered a million members.<sup>4</sup> Normally, the responsibilities of elected delegates had to be discharged after working hours. Almost all the evenings of anarchist militants were occupied with meetings of one sort or another. Whether at assemblies or committees, they argued, debated, voted, and administered, and when time afforded, they read and passionately discussed "the Idea" to which they dedicated not only their leisure hours but their very lives. For the greater part of the day, they were working men and women, obrera consciente, who abjured smoking and drinking, avoided brothels and the bloody bull ring, purged their talk of "foul" language, and by their probity, dignity, respect for knowledge, and militancy tried to set a moral example for their entire class. They never used the word "god" in their daily conversations (salud was preferred over adios) and avoided all official contact with clerical and state authorities, indeed, to the point where they refused to legally validate their lifelong "free unions" with marital documents and never baptized or confirmed their children. One must know Catholic Spain to realize how far-reaching were these self-imposed mores -- and how quixotically consistent some of them were with the puritanical traditions of the country.<sup>5</sup>

It is appropriate to note at this point that the myth, widely disseminated by the current sociological literature on the subject, that agrarian anarchism in Spain was antitechnological in spirit and atavistically sought to restore a neolithic "Golden Age" can be quite effectively refuted by a close study of the unique educational role played by the anarchists. Indeed, it was the anarchists, with inexpensive, simply written brochures, who brought the French enlightenment and modern scientific theory to the peasantry, not the arrogant liberals or the disdainful



Socialists. Together with pamphlets on Bakunin and Kropotkin, the anarchist press published simple accounts of the theories of natural and social evolution and elementary introductions to the secular culture of Europe. They tried to instruct the peasants in advanced techniques of land management and earnestly favored the use of agricultural machinery to lighten the burdens of toil and provide more leisure for self-development. Far from being an atavistic trend in Spanish society, as Hobsbawm (in his *Primitive Rebels*) and even Brenan would have us believe, I can say with certainty from a careful review of the issue that anarchism more closely approximated a radical popular enlightenment.

In their personal qualities, dedicated urban anarchists were not substantially different from their rural comrades. But in the towns and cities of Spain, these urban anarchists faced more difficult organizational problems. Their efforts to create libertarian forms of organization were favored, of course, by the fact that many Spanish workers were either former villagers or were only a generation or so removed from the countryside.<sup>6</sup> Yet the prospect for libertarian organization in the cities and factories could not depend upon the long tradition of village collectivism -- the strong sense of community -- that existed in rural anarchist areas. For within the factory itself -- the realm of toil, hierarchy, industrial discipline, and brute material necessity -- "community" was more a function of the bourgeois division of labor with its exploitative, even competitive connotations, than of humanistic cooperation, playfully creative work, and mutual aid. Working-class solidarity depended less upon a shared meaningful life nourished by self-fulfilling work than the common enemy -- the boss -- who exploded any illusion that under capitalism the worker was more than an industrial resource, an object to be coldly

manipulated and ruthlessly exploited. If anarchism can be partly regarded as a revolt of the individual against the industrial system, the profound truth that lies at the heart of that revolt is that the factory routine not only blunts the sensibility of the worker to the rich feast of life; it degrades the worker's image of his or her human potentialities, of his or her capacities to take direct control of the means for administering social life.

One of the unique virtues that distinguished the Spanish anarchists from socialists was their attempt to transform the factory domain itself -- a transformation that was to be effected in the long run by their demand for workers' self-management of production, and more immediately, by their attempt to form libertarian organizations that culminated in the formation of the syndicalist CNT. However, the extent to which workers' self-management can actually eliminate alienated labor and alter the impact of the factory system on the worker's sensibilities requires, in my view, a more probing analysis than it has hitherto received. The problem of the impact of the factory system on workers became crucial as the proletarian element in the CNT grew, while the anarchists sought to develop characteristics of initiative and self-management that were directly opposed to the characteristics inculcated by the factory system.

No sizable radical movement in modern times had seriously asked itself if organizational forms had to be developed which promoted changes in the most fundamental behavior patterns of its members. How could the libertarian movement vitiate the spirit of obedience, of hierarchical organization, of leader-and-led relationships, of authority and command instilled by capitalist industry? It is to the lasting credit of Spanish anarchism -- and of anarchism generally -- that it posed this question.<sup>7</sup> The term "integral

personality" appears repeatedly in Spanish anarchist documents and tireless efforts were made to develop individuals who not only cerebrally accepted libertarian principles but tried to practice them. Accordingly, the organizational framework of the movement (as expressed in the IWMA, the CNT, and the FAI) was meant to be decentralized, to allow for the greatest degree of initiative and decision-making at the base, and to provide structural guarantees against the formation of a bureaucracy. These requirements, on the other hand, had to be balanced against the need for coordination, mobilized common action, and effective planning. The organizational history of anarchism in the cities and towns of Spain -- the forms the anarchists created and those which they discarded -- is largely an account of the pull between these two requirements and the extent to which one prevailed over the other. This tension was not merely a matter of experience and structural improvisation. In the long run, the outcome of the pull between decentralization and coordination depended on the ability of the most dedicated anarchists to affect the consciousness of the workers who entered anarchist influenced unions -- specifically unions of a syndicalist character whose aims were not only to fight for immediate material gains but also to provide the infrastructure for a libertarian society.

Long before syndicalism became a popular term in the French labor movement of the late 1890s, it already existed in the early Spanish labor movement. The anarchist influenced Spanish Federation of the old IWMA, in my opinion, was distinctly syndicalist. At the founding congress of the Spanish Federation at Barcelona in June 1870, the "commission on the theme of the social organization of the workers" proposed a structure that would form a model for all later anarcho-syndicalist labor

unions in Spain, including the CNT. The commission suggested a typical syndicalist dual structure: organization by trade and organization by locality. Local trade organizations (Secciones de oficio) grouped together all workers from a common enterprise and vocation into large occupational federations (Uniones de oficio) whose primary function was to struggle around economic grievances and working conditions. A local organization of a miscellaneous trades gathered up all those workers from different vocations whose numbers were too small to constitute effective organizations along vocational lines. Paralleling these vocational organizations, in every community and region where the IWMA was represented, the different local Secciones were grouped together, irrespective of trade, into local geographic bodies (Federaciones locales) whose function was avowedly revolutionary -- the administration of social and economic life on a decentralized libertarian basis.

This dual structure forms the bedrock of all syndicalist forms of organization. In Spain, as elsewhere, the structure was knitted together by workers' committees, which originated in individual shops, factories, and agricultural communities. Gathering together in assemblies, the workers elected from their midst the committees that presided over the affairs of the vocational Secciones de oficio and the geographic Federaciones locales. They were federated into regional committees for nearly every large area of Spain. Every year, when possible, the workers elected the delegates to the annual congresses of the Spanish Federation of the IWMA, which in turn elected a national Federal Council. With the decline of the IWMA, syndicalist union federations surfaced and disappeared in different regions of Spain, especially Catalonia and Andalusia. The first was the rather considerable Workers' Federation of the

1880s. Following its suppression, Spanish anarchism contracted either to nonunion ideological groups such as the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region or to essentially regional union federations like the Catalan-based Pact of Union and Solidarity of the 1890s and Workers' Solidarity of the early 1900s. Except for the short-lived Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region, established in 1900 on the initiative of a Madrid bricklayers' union, no major national syndicalist federation appeared in Spain until the organization of the CNT in 1911. With the establishment of the CNT, Spanish syndicalism entered its most mature and decisive period. Considerably larger than its rival, the UGT, the CNT became the essential arena for anarchist agitation in Spain.

The CNT was not merely "founded"; it developed organically out of the Catalan Workers' Solidarity and its most consolidated regional federation, the Catalan federation (Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña.) Later, other regional federations were established from local unions in each province -- many of them lingering on from the Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region -- until there were eight by the early 1930s. The national organization, in effect, was a loose collection of regional federations which were broken down into local and district federations and finally into sindicatos, or individual unions. These sindicatos (earlier, they were known by the dramatic name of sociedades de resistencia al capital -- resistance societies to capital) were established on a vocational basis and, in typical syndicalist fashion, grouped into geographic and trade federations (federaciones locales and sindicatos de oficio) . To coordinate this structure, the annual congresses of the CNT elected a National Committee which was expected to

occupy itself primarily with correspondence, the collection of statistics, and aid to prisoners.

The statutes of the Catalan regional federation provide us with the guidelines used for the national movement as a whole. According to these statutes, the organization was committed to "direct action," rejecting all "political and religious interference." Affiliated district and local federations were to be "governed by the greatest autonomy possible, it being understood by this that they have complete freedom in all the professional matters relating to the individual trades which integrate them." Each member was expected to pay monthly dues of ten centimes (a trifling sum) which was to be divided equally among the local organization, the Regional Confederation, the National Confederation, the union newspaper (Solidaridad Obrera -- "Workers' Solidarity"), and the all-important special fund for "social prisoners."

By statute, the Regional Committee -- the regional equivalent of the CNT's National Committee -- was expected to be merely an administrative body. Although it clearly played a directive role in coordinating action, its activities were bound by policies established by the annual regional congress. In unusual situations, the Committee could consult local bodies, either by referendums or by written queries. In addition to the annual regional congresses at which the Regional Committee was elected, the Committee was obliged to call extraordinary congresses at the request of the majority of the local federations. The local federations, in turn, were given three months' notice before a regular congress so that they could "prepare the themes for discussion." Within a month before the congress, the Regional Committee was required to publish the submitted "themes" in the union newspaper, leaving

sufficient time for the workers to define their attitudes toward the topics to be discussed and instruct their delegates accordingly. The delegations to the congress, whose voting power was determined by the number of members they represented, were elected by general assemblies of workers convened by the local and district federations.

These statutes formed the basis for the CNT's practice up to the revolution of 1936. Although they notably lacked any provision for the recall of the committee members, the organization in its heroic period was more democratic than the statutes would seem to indicate. A throbbing vitality existed at the base of this immense organization, marked by active interest in the CNT's problems and considerable individual initiative. The workers' centers (*centros obreros*), which the anarchists had established in the days of the IWMA, were not only the local offices of the union; they were also meeting places and cultural centers where members went to exchange ideas and attend lectures. All the affairs of the local CNT were managed by committees of ordinary unpaid workers. Although the official union meetings were held only once in three months, there were "conferences of an instructive character" every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. The solidarity of the *sindicatos* was so intense that it was not always possible to maintain an isolated strike. There was always a tendency for a strike to trigger off others in its support and generate active aid by other *sindicatos*.

In any case, this is the way the CNT tried to carry on its affairs and during favorable periods actually functioned. But there were periods when repression and sudden, often crucial, turns in events made it necessary to suspend annual or regional congresses and confine important policy-

making decisions to plenums of leading committees or to "congresses" that were little more than patchwork conferences. Charismatic leaders at all levels of the organization came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner. Nor is the syndicalist structure itself immune to bureaucratic deformations. It was not very difficult for an elaborate network of committees, building up to regional and national bodies, to assume all the features of a centralized organization and circumvent the wishes of the workers' assemblies at the base.

Finally, the CNT, despite its programmatic commitment to libertarian communism and its attempt to function in a libertarian manner, was primarily a large trade union federation rather than a purely anarchist organization. Angel Pestaña, one of its most pragmatic leaders, recognized that roughly a third of the CNT membership could be regarded as anarchists. Many were militants rather than revolutionaries; others simply joined the CNT because it was the dominant union in their area or shop. And by the 1930s, the great majority of CNT members were workers rather than peasants. Andalusians, once the largest percentage of members in the anarchist-influenced unions of the previous century, had dwindled to a minority, a fact which is not noted by such writers as Brennan and Hobsbawm who overemphasize the importance of the rural element in the anarchosyndicalist trade unions.

With the slow change in the social composition of the CNT and the growing supremacy of industrial over village values in its leadership and membership, it is my view that the confederation would have eventually turned into a fairly conventional Latin-type of trade union. The Spanish anarchists were not oblivious to these developments. Although syndicalist unions formed the major arena of



anarchist activity in Europe, anarchist theorists were mindful that it would not be too difficult for reformist leaders in syndicalist unions to shift organizational control from the bottom to the top. They viewed syndicalism as a change in focus from the commune to the trade union, from all the oppressed to the industrial proletariat, from the streets to the factories, and, in emphasis at least, from insurrection to the general strike.

Malatesta, fearing the emergence of a bureaucracy in the syndicalist unions, warned that "the official is to the working class a danger only comparable to that provided by the parliamentarian; both lead to corruption and from corruption to death is but a short step." Although he was to change his attitude toward syndicalism, he accepted the movement with many reservations and never ceased to emphasize that "trade unions are, by their very nature, reformist and never revolutionary." To this warning he added that the "revolutionary spirit must be introduced, developed and maintained by the constant actions of revolutionaries who work from within their ranks as well as from outside, but it cannot be the normal, natural definition of the Trade Union's function."

Syndicalism had divided the Spanish anarchist movement without really splitting it. Indeed, until the establishment of the FAI, there was rarely a national anarchist organization to split.<sup>8</sup> Yet a Spanish anarchist movement held together on two levels: by means of well-known periodicals like *La Revista Blanca* and *Tierra y Libertad*, and in the form of small circles of dedicated anarchists, both inside and outside the syndicalist unions. Dating as far back as the 1880s these typically Hispanic groups of intimates, traditionally known as *tertulias*, met at favorite cafes to discuss ideas and plan actions. They gave themselves

colorful names expressive of their high-minded ideals (Ni Rey ni patria) or their revolutionary spirit (Los Rebeldes) or quite simply their sense of fraternity (Los Afines) . The Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region to which I have already alluded, founded in Valencia in 1888, consciously made these tertulias the strands from which it tried to weave a coherent movement. Decades later, they were to reappear in the FAI as grupos de afinidad (affinity groups) with a more formal local and national structure.

Although Spanish anarchism did not produce an effective national movement until the founding of the FAI, the divisions between the anarchosyndicalists and anarchocommunists were highly significant. The two tendencies of Spanish anarchism worked in very different ways and were mutually disdainful of each other. The anarchosyndicalists functioned directly in the unions. They accepted key union positions and placed their emphasis on organizing, often at the expense of propaganda and ideological commitment. As "practical men," Catalan anarchosyndicalists such as José Rodríguez Romero and Tomás Herreros were ready to make compromises, more precisely, to form alliances with "pure-and-simple" trade unionists.

The anarchocommunists were the "fanatics over there" in the editorial offices of Tierra y Libertad -- "purists" like Juan Barón and Francisco Cardenal, who regarded the anarchosyndicalists as deserters to reformism and held faithfully to the communist doctrines that formed the basis of the old Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region. They were not disposed to trade union activism and stressed commitment to libertarian communist principles. It was not their goal to produce a large "mass movement" of workers who wore lightly the trappings of libertarian ideals, but to

help create dedicated anarchists in an authentically revolutionary movement, however small its size or influence. Once fairly influential, their terrorist tactics at the turn of the century and the ensuing repression had greatly depleted their numbers.

The founding of the FAI in the summer of 1927 was expected to unite these two tendencies. Anarchosyndicalist needs were met by requiring that every *faísta* become a member of the CNT and by making the union the principal arena of anarchist activity in Spain. The needs of the anarchocommunists were met by the very fact that an avowedly anarchist organization was established nationally, apart from the CNT, and by making the affinity group the basis for a vanguard movement avowedly dedicated to the achievement of libertarian communism.<sup>9</sup> *Tierra y Libertad* was adopted as the FAI's organ. But by establishing an anarchist organization for the express purpose of controlling the CNT, or at least to keep it from falling into the hands of reformists or infiltrators from the newly founded Spanish Communist Party, the anarchosyndicalists had essentially enveloped the anarchocommunists in syndicalist activity. By 1933, the FAI's control over the CNT was fairly complete. Systematic organizational work had purged the union of Communists, while its reformist leaders either left on their own accord or had defensively camouflaged themselves with revolutionary rhetoric. No illusion should exist that this success was achieved with an overly sensitive regard for democratic niceties, although the militancy of the *faístas* unquestionably attracted the greatest majority of CNT workers. But the FAI's most well-known militants -- Durruti, the Ascaso brothers, García Oliver -- included terrorism in their repertory of direct action. Gunplay, especially in "expropriations" and in dealing with recalcitrant employers, police agents, and blacklegs, was

not frowned upon. These atentados almost certainly intimidated the FAI's less prominent opponents in the CNT, although "reformists" like Pestaña and Peiró did not hesitate to publicly criticize the FAI in the harshest terms.

Despite its influence in the CNT, this remarkable anarchist organization remained semisecret up to 1936 and its membership probably did not exceed 30,000. Structurally, it formed a near-model of libertarian organization. Affinity groups were small nuclei of intimate friends which generally numbered a dozen or so men and women. Wherever several of these affinity groups existed, they were coordinated by a local federation and met, when possible, in monthly assemblies. The national movement, in turn, was coordinated by a Peninsular Committee, which ostensibly exercised very little directive power. Its role was meant to be strictly administrative in typical Bakuninist fashion. Affinity groups were in fact remarkably autonomous during the early thirties and often exhibited exceptional initiative. The intimacy shared by the faístas in each group made the movement very difficult for police agents to infiltrate and the FAI as a whole managed to survive the most severe repression with surprisingly little damage to its organization. As time passed, however, the Peninsular Committee began to grow in prestige. Its periodic statements on events and problems often served as directives to the entire movement. Although by no means an authoritarian body, it eventually began to function as a central committee whose policy decisions, while not binding in the organization, served as more than mere suggestions. Indeed, it would have been very difficult for the Peninsular Committee to operate by fiat; the average faísta was a strong personality who would have readily voiced disagreement with any decision that he or she found particularly unpalatable. But the FAI increasingly became

an end in itself and loyalty to the organization, particularly when it was under attack or confronted with severe difficulties, tended to mute criticism.

There can be no question that the FAI raised enormously the social consciousness of the average ceneteista. More than any single force apart from employer recalcitrance, it made the CNT into a revolutionary syndicalist organization, if not a truly anarchosyndicalist one. The FAI stressed a commitment to revolution and to libertarian communism and gained a considerable following within the CNT (a more dedicated following in anarchist Saragossa than in syndicalist Barcelona). But the FAI was not able to completely rid the CNT of reformist elements (the union attracted many workers by its militant fight for improved economic conditions) and the sedimentation of the CNT along hierarchical lines continued.

In its attempt to control the CNT, the FAI in fact became a victim of the less developed elements in the union. Peirats quite rightly emphasizes that the CNT took its own toll on the FAI. Just as reformists inside the union were predisposed to compromise with the bourgeoisie and the State, so the FAI was compelled to compromise with the reformists in order to retain its control over the CNT. Among the younger, less experienced faístas, the situation was sometimes worse. Extravagant militancy which fetishized action over theory and daring over insight rebounded, after failure, in the crudest opportunism.

In the balance: the CNT had provided a remarkably democratic arena for the most militant working class in Europe; the FAI added the leavening of a libertarian orientation and revolutionary deeds within the limits that a trade union could provide. By 1936, both organizations had

created authentically libertarian structures to the extent that any strictly proletarian class movement could be truly libertarian. If only by dint of sheer rhetoric -- and doubtless, considerable conviction and daring actions -- they had keyed the expectations of their memberships to a revolution that would yield workers' control of the economy and syndicalist forms of social administration. This process of education and class organization, more than any single factor in Spain, produced the collectives. And to the degree that the CNT-FAI (for the two organizations became fatally coupled after July 1936) exercised the major influence in an area, the collectives proved to be generally more durable, communist and resistant to Stalinist counterrevolution than other republican-held areas of Spain.

Moreover, in the CNT-FAI areas, workers and peasants tended to show the greatest degree of popular initiative in resisting the military uprising. It was not Socialist Madrid that first took matters into its own hands and defeated its rebellious garrison: it was anarchosyndicalist Barcelona that can lay claim to this distinction among all the large cities of Spain. Madrid rose against the Montana barracks only after sound trucks broadcast the news that the army had been defeated in the streets and squares of Barcelona. And even in Madrid, perhaps the greatest initiative was shown by the local CNT organization, which enjoyed the allegiance of the city's militant construction workers.

The CNT-FAI, in effect, revealed all the possibilities of a highly organized and extremely militant working class -- a "classical" proletariat, if you will, whose basic economic interests were repeatedly frustrated by a myopic intransigent bourgeoisie. It was out of such "irreconcilable" struggles that anarchosyndicalism and revolutionary

Marxism had developed their entire tactical and theoretical armamentarium.

But the CNT-FAI also revealed the limitations of that type of classical struggle -- and it is fair to say that the Spanish Revolution marked the end of a century-long era of so-called "proletarian revolutions" which began with the June uprising of the Parisian workers in 1848. The era has passed into history and, in my view, will never again be revived. It was marked by bitter, often uncompromising struggles between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, an era in which the working class had not been admitted into its "share" of economic life and had been virtually denied the right to form its own protective institutions. Industrial capitalism in Spain was still a relatively new phenomenon, neither affluent enough to mitigate working class unrest nor sure of its place in political life -- yet still asserting an unqualified right to ruthlessly exploit its "hired hands." But this new phenomenon was already beginning to find its way if not toward traditional European liberal political forms, then toward authoritarian ones which would give it the breathing space to develop.

The economic crisis of the thirties (which radicals throughout the world viewed as the final "chronic crisis" of capitalism), coupled with the myopic policies of the Spanish liberals and ruling classes, turned the class struggle in Spain into an explosive class war. The agrarian reform policies of the early thirties republic turned out to be farcical. The liberals were more preoccupied with baiting the Church than dealing seriously with the long-range or even short-range economic problems of the peninsula. The Socialists, who joined the liberals in governing the country, were more concerned with promoting the growth of the UGT at the expense of the CNT than in improving the

material conditions of the working class as a whole. The CNT, strongly influenced by volatile the faístas whose radical education had been acquired in the pistolero battles of the early twenties, exploded into repeated insurrections -- uprisings which its leaders probably knew were futile, but were meant to stimulate the revolutionary spirit of the working class. These failures by all the elements of Spain in the early republican years to meet the promise of reform left no recourse but revolution and civil war. Except for the most dedicated anarchists, it was a conflict that no one really wanted. But between 1931, when the monarchy was overthrown, and 1936, when the generals rebelled, everyone was sleep-walking into the last of the great proletarian revolutions -- perhaps the greatest in terms of its short-lived social programs and the initiative shown by the oppressed. The era seemed to have collected all its energies, its traditions, and its dreams for its last great confrontation - - and thereafter was to disappear.

It is not surprising that the most communistic collectives in the Spanish Revolution appeared in the countryside rather than the cities, among villagers who were still influenced by archaic collectivistic traditions and were less ensnared in a market economy than their urban cousins. The ascetic values which so greatly influenced these highly communistic collectives often reflected the extreme poverty of the areas in which they were rooted. Cooperation and mutual aid in such cases formed the preconditions for survival of the community. Elsewhere, in the more arid areas of Spain, the need for sharing water and maintaining irrigation works was an added inducement to collective farming. Here, collectivization was also a technological necessity, but one which even the republic did not interfere with. What makes these rural collectives important is not only that many of them practiced communism, but that they



functioned so effectively under a system of popular self-management. This belies the notion held by so many authoritarian Marxists that economic life must be scrupulously "planned" by a highly centralized state power and the odious canard that popular collectivization, as distinguished from statist nationalization, necessarily pits collectivized enterprises against each other in competition for profits and resources.

In the cities, however, collectivization of the factories, communications systems, and transport facilities took a very different form. Initially nearly the entire economy in CNT-FAI areas had been taken over by committees elected from among the workers and were loosely coordinated by higher union committees. As time went on this system was increasingly tightened. The higher committee began to preempt the initiative to the lower although their decisions still had to be ratified by the workers of the facilities involved. The effect of this process was to tend to centralize the economy of CNT-FAI areas in the hands of the union. The extent to which this process unfolded varied greatly from industry to industry and area to area, and with the limited knowledge we have at hand, generalizations are very difficult to formulate. With the entry of the CNT-FAI into the Catalan government in 1936, the process of centralization continued and the union-controlled facilities became wedded to the state. By early 1938 a political bureaucracy had largely supplanted the authority of the workers' committees in all "republican"-held cities. Although workers' control existed in theory, it had virtually disappeared in fact.

If the commune formed the basis for the rural collectives, the committee formed the basis for the industrial collectives. Indeed, apart from the rural communes, the

committee system predominated wherever the State power had collapsed -- in villages and towns as well as factories and urban neighborhoods. "All had been set up in the heat of action to direct the popular response to the military coup d'état," observe Pierre Broué and Emile Témime:

They had been appointed in an infinite number of ways. In the villages, the factories, and on the work sites, time had sometimes been taken to elect them, at least summarily, at a general meeting. At all events, care had been taken to see that all parties and unions were represented on them, even if they did not exist before the Revolution, because the Committee represented at one and the same time as the workers a whole and the sum total of their organizations: in more than one place those elected came to an understanding as to who was to represent one or another union, who would be the "Republican" and who the "Socialist." Very often, in the towns, the most active elements appointed themselves. It was sometimes the electors as a whole who chose the men to sit on the Committee of each organization, but more often the members of the Committee were elected either by a vote within their own organization or were quite simply appointed by the local governing committees of the parties and unions.

The nearly forty years that separate our own time from the Spanish revolution have produced sweeping changes in Western Europe and America, changes that are also reflected in Spain's present social development. The classical proletariat that fought so desperately for the minimal means of life is giving way to a more affluent worker whose main concern is not material survival and employment, but a more human way of life and meaningful work. The social composition of the labor force is changing as well -- proportionately, more toward commercial,

service, and professional vocations than unskilled labor in mass manufacturing industries. Spain, like the rest of Western Europe, is no longer predominantly an agricultural country; the majority of its people live in towns and cities, not in the relatively isolated villages that nourished rural collectivism. In a visit to working class Barcelona during the late sixties, I seemed to see as many American-style attaché cases as lunch boxes.

These changes in the goals and traits of the nonbourgeois classes in capitalist society are the products of the sweeping industrial revolution that followed the Second World War and of the relative affluence or expectations of affluence that have brought all the values of material scarcity into question. They have introduced a historic tension between the irrationality of present lifeways and the utopian promise of a liberated society. The young workers of the late sixties and early seventies tend to borrow their values from relatively affluent middle-class youth, who no longer hypostasize the work ethic, puritanical mores, hierarchical obedience, and material security, but rather free time for self-development, sexual liberation in the broadest sense of the term, creative or stimulating work as distinguished from mindless labor, and an almost libidinal disdain for all authority. In Spain it is significant that privileged university students, who tended to play a reactionary role in the thirties, are among the most radical elements of society in the sixties and seventies. Together with young workers and intellectuals in all fields, they are beginning to accept in varying degrees the personalistic and utopistic goals that make the puritanical and overly institutionalized anarchosyndicalism of the CNT-FAI seem anachronistic.

The limitations of the trade union movement, even in its anarchosyndicalist form, have become manifestly clear. To

see in trade unions (whether syndicalist or not) an inherent potentiality for revolutionary struggle is to assume that the interests of workers and capitalists, merely as classes, are intrinsically incompatible. This is demonstrably untrue if one is willing to acknowledge the obvious capacity of the system to remake or to literally create the worker in the image of a repressive industrial culture and rationality. From the family, through the school and religious institutions, the mass media, to the factory and finally trade union and "revolutionary" party, capitalist society conspires to foster obedience, hierarchy, the work ethic, and authoritarian discipline in the working class as a whole; indeed, in many of its "emancipatory" movements as well.

The factory and the class organizations that spring from it play the most the compelling role in promoting a well-regulated, almost unconscious docility in mature workers -- a docility that manifests itself not so much in characterless passivity as in a pragmatic commitment to hierarchical organizations and authoritarian leaders. Workers can be very militant and exhibit strong, even powerful character traits in the most demanding social situations; but these traits can be brought as much, if not more readily, to the service of a reformist labor bureaucracy as to a libertarian revolutionary movement. They must break with the hold of bourgeois culture on their sensibilities -- specifically, with the hold of the factory, the locus of the workers' very class existence -- before they can move into that supreme form of direct action called "revolution," and further, construct a society they will directly control in their workshops and communities.

This amounts to saying that workers must see themselves as human beings, not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as "proletarians"; as self-affirming individuals, not as

"masses." And the destiny of a liberated society must be the free commune, not the confederation of factories, however self-administered; for such a confederation takes a part of society -- its economic component -- and reifies it into the totality of society. Indeed, even that economic component must be humanized precisely by our bringing an "affinity of friendship" to the work process, by diminishing the role of onerous work in the lives of the producers, indeed, by a total "transvaluation of values" (to use Nietzsche's phrase) as it applies to production and consumption as well as social and personal life.

Even though certain aspects of the libertarian revolution in Spain have lost their relevance, anarchist concepts themselves that can encompass and fully express a "post-scarcity mentality" can be much more relevant to the present than the authoritarian ideologies of the 1930s, despite the tendency of these ideologies to fill the vacuum left by the absence of meaningful libertarian alternatives and organizations. Such anarchist concepts could no longer rely in practical terms on the collectivist traditions of the countryside; these traditions are virtually gone as living forces although perhaps the memory of the old collectivist traditions lives among Spanish youth in the same sense that American youth have turned to the tribal traditions of the American Indians for cultural inspiration. With the decline of the nuclear family and in reaction to urban atomization, the commune has everywhere acquired a new relevance for young and even older people -- a shared, mutually supportive way of life based on selective affinity rather than kinship ties. Burgeoning urbanization has posed more sharply than ever the need for decentralistic alternatives to the megalopolis; the gigantism of the city, the need for the human scale. The grotesque bureaucratization of life, which in Camus's words reduces everyone to a functionary, has

placed a new value on nonauthoritarian institutions and direct action. Slowly, even amidst the setbacks of our time, a new self is being forged. Potentially, this is a libertarian self that could intervene directly in the changing and administration of society -- a self that could engage in the self-discipline, self-activity, and self-management so crucial to the development of a truly free society. Here the values prized so highly by traditional anarchocommunism establish direct continuity with a contemporary form of anarchocommunism that gives consciousness and coherence to the intuitive impulses of this new sensibility.

But if these goals are to be achieved, contemporary anarchocommunism cannot remain a mere mood or tendency, wafting in the air like a cultural ambiance. It must be organized -- indeed, well-organized -- if it is to effectively articulate and spread this new sensibility; it must have a coherent theory and extensive literature; it must be capable of dueling with the authoritarian movements that try to denature the intuitive libertarian impulses of our time and channel social unrest into hierarchical forms of organization. On this score, Spanish anarchism is profoundly relevant for our time, and the Spanish Revolution still provides the most valuable lessons in the problem of self-management that we can cull from the past.

To deal with these problems, perhaps I can best begin by saying that there is little, in fact, to criticize in the structural forms that the CNT and the FAI tried to establish. The CNT, almost from the outset, organized its locals as factory rather than craft unions, and the nationwide occupational federations (the *Uniones de oficio*, or "internationals" as we would call them) which emerged with the IWMA were abandoned for local federations (the *Federaciones locales*). This structure situated the factory in the community, where

it really belonged if the "commune" concept was to be realistic, rather than in an easily manipulatable industrial network that easily lent itself to statist nationalization. The centros obreros, the local federations, the careful mandating of delegates to congresses, the elimination of paid officials, the establishment of regional federations, regional committees, and even a National Committee, would all have been in conformity with libertarian principles had all of these institutions lived up to their intentions. Where the CNT structure failed most seriously was in the need to convene frequent assemblies of workers at the local level, and similarly, frequent national and regional conferences to continually reevaluate CNT policies and prevent power from collecting in the higher committees. For as frequent as meetings may have been -- committees, subcommittees, and regional and national committee meetings -- the regular and close communication between workers and the "influential militants" did tend to become ruptured.

Confusion developed over the crucial problem of the locus for making policy decisions. The real place for this process should have been shop assemblies, regular congresses, or when events and circumstances required rapid decisions, conferences of clearly mandated and recallable delegates elected for this purpose by the membership. The sole responsibility of the regional and national committees should have been administrative -- that is, the coordination and execution of policy decisions formulated by membership meetings and conference or congress delegates.

Nevertheless, the structure of the CNT as a syndicalist union and that of the FAI as an anarchist federation was, in many respects, quite admirable. Indeed, my principal criticisms in the pages above have been not so much of the

forms themselves, but of the departures the CNT and the FAI made from them. Perhaps even more significantly, I've tried to explain the social limitations of the period -- including the mystique about the classical proletariat -- that vitiated the realization of these structural forms.

Another issue that was a crucial problem for the FAI and which is still a source of confusion for anarchists at the present time is the problem of the "influential militant" -- the more informed, experienced, "strong," and oratorically gifted individuals who tended to formulate policy at all levels of the organization.

It will never be possible to eliminate the fact that human beings have different levels of knowledge and consciousness. Our prolonged period of dependence as children, the fact that we are largely the products of an acquired culture and that experience tends to confer knowledge on the older person would lead to such differences even in the most liberated society. In hierarchical societies, the dependence of the less-informed on the more-informed is commonly a means of manipulation and power. The older, more experienced person, like the parent, has this privilege at his or her disposal and, with it, an alternative: to use knowledge, experience, and oratorical gifts as means of domination and to induce adulation -- or for the goal of lovingly imparting knowledge and experience, for equalizing the relationship between teacher and taught, and always leaving the less experienced and informed individual free to make his or her decisions.

Hegel brilliantly draws the distinction between Socrates and Jesus: the former was a teacher who sought to arouse a quest for knowledge in anyone who was prepared to



discuss; the latter, an oracle who pronounced for adoring disciples to interpret exegetically. The difference, as Hegel points out, lay not only in the character of the two men but in that of their "followers." Socrates' friends had been reared in a social tradition that "developed their powers in many directions. They had absorbed that democratic spirit which gives an individual a greater measure of independence and makes it impossible for any tolerably good head to depend wholly and absolutely on one person. . . . They loved Socrates because of his virtue and his philosophy, not virtue and his philosophy because of him." The followers of Jesus, on the other hand, were submissive acolytes: "Lacking any great store of spiritual energy of their own, they had found the basis of their conviction about the teaching of Jesus principally in their friendship with him and dependence on him. They had not attained truth and freedom by their own exertions; only by laborious learning had they acquired a dim sense of them and certain formulas about them. Their ambition was to grasp and keep this doctrine faithfully and to transmit it equally faithfully to others without any addition, without letting it acquire any variations in detail by working on it themselves."

The FAI -- illegal by choice, sometimes terrorist in its tactics, and aggressively "macho" in its almost competitive daring -- developed deeply personal ties within its affinity groups. Durruti's grief for the death of Francisco Ascaso revealed real love, not merely the friendship that stems from organizational collaboration. But in the FAI both friendship and love were often based on a demanding association, one that implicitly required conformity to the most "heroic" standards established by the most "daring" militants in the group. Such relationships are not likely to shatter over doctrinal disagreements or what often seem like "mere" points of theory. Eventually these relationships

produce leaders and led; worse, the leaders tended to patronize the led and finally manipulate them.

To escape this process of devolution, an anarchist organization must be aware of the fact that the process can occur, and it must be vigilant against its occurrence. To be effective, the vigilance must eventually express itself in more positive terms. It cannot coexist with an adulation of violence, competitive daring, and mindless aggressiveness, not to speak of an equally mindless worship of activism and "strong characters." The organization must recognize that differences in experiences and consciousness do exist among its members and handle these differences with a wary consciousness -- not conceal them with euphemisms like "influential militant." The taught as well as the teacher must first ask himself or herself whether domination and manipulation is being practiced -- and not to deny that a systematic teaching process is taking place. Moreover, everyone must be fully aware that this teaching process is unavoidable within the movement if relationships are eventually to be equalized by imparted knowledge and the fruits of experience. To a large extent, the conclusions one arrives about the nature of this process are almost intuitively determinable by the behavior patterns that develop between comrades. Ultimately, under conditions of freedom, social intercourse, friendship, and love would be of the "free-giving" kind that Jacob Bachofen imputed to "matriarchal" society, not the demanding censorious type he associated with patriarchy. Here, the affinity group or commune would achieve the most advanced and libertarian expression of its humanity. Merely to strive for this goal among its own brothers and sisters would qualitatively distinguish it from other movements and provide the most assurable guarantee that it would remain true to its libertarian principles.

Our period, which stresses the development of the individual self as well as social self-management, stands in a highly advantageous position to assess the authentic nature of libertarian organization and relationships. A European or American civil war of the kind that wasted Spain in the thirties is no longer conceivable in an epoch that can deploy nuclear weapons, supersonic aircraft, nerve gas, and a terrifying firepower against revolutionaries. Capitalist institutions must be hollowed out by a molecular historical process of disengagement and disloyalty to a point where any popular majoritarian movement can cause them to collapse for want of support and moral authority. But the kind of development such a change will produce -- whether it will occur consciously or not, whether it will have an authoritarian outcome or one based on self-management -- will depend very much upon whether a conscious, well-organized libertarian movement can emerge.

## **NOTES**

1. Both the UGT and the CNT probably numbered more than a million members each by the summer of 1936. The officious, highly bureaucratic UGT tended to overstate its membership figures. The more amorphous decentralized CNT -- the more persecuted of the two labor federations -- often exercised much greater influence on the Spanish working class than its membership statistics would seem to indicate.
2. Madrid, although with a largely Socialist labor movement, was the home of an intensely active anarchist movement. Not only were the Madrid construction workers strongly anarchosyndicalist, but at the turn of the century,

many Madrid intellectuals were committed to anarchism and established a renowned theoretical tradition for the movement that lingered on long after anarchist workers had cut their ties with the Spanish intelligentsia.

3. I would not want to argue here, that the Spanish village formed a paradigm for a libertarian society. Village society differed greatly from one region of Spain to another -- some areas retaining undisturbed their local democratic traditions, others ruled tyrannically by the Church, the nobility, caciques, and custom. Quite often, both tendencies coexisted in a very uneasy equilibrium, the democratic still vital but submerged by the authoritarian.

4. In the case of the CNT there were exceptions to this rule. The National Secretary was paid an average worker's salary, as was the clerical staff of the National Committee and the editors and staffs of daily newspapers. But delegates to the national, regional, and local committees of the CNT were not paid and were obliged to work at their own trades except when they lost time during working hours on union business. This is not to say that there were no individuals who devoted most of their time to the dissemination of anarchist ideas. "Traveling about from place to place, on foot or mule or on the hard seats of third-class railway carriages, or even like tramps or ambulant bullfighters under the tarpaulins of goods wagons," observes Brennan, "whilst they organized new groups or carried on propagandist campaigns, these 'apostles of the idea,' as they were called, lived like mendicant friars on the hospitality of the more prosperous workers" -- and, I would add, "villagers." This tradition of organizing, which refers to the 1870s, did not disappear in later decades; to the contrary, it became more systematic and perhaps more securely financed as the CNT began to compete with the UGT for the allegiance of the Spanish workers and peasants.

5. Yet here I must add that to abstain from smoking, to live by high moral standards, and especially to abjure the consumption of alcohol was very important at the time. Spain was going through her own belated industrial revolution during the period of anarchist ascendancy with all its demoralizing features. The collapse of morale among the proletariat, with rampant drunkenness and venereal diseases, and the collapse of sanitary facilities, was the foremost problem which Spanish revolutionaries had to deal with, just as black radicals today must deal with similar problems in the ghetto. On this score, the Spanish anarchists were eminently successful. Few CNT workers, much less committed anarchists, would have dared to show up drunk at meetings or misbehave overtly among their comrades. If one considers the terrible working and living conditions of the period, alcoholism was not as serious a problem in Spain as it was in England during the industrial revolution.

6. In "black" (purely anarchistic) Saragossa, where the working class was even more firmly committed to anarchist principles than the Barcelona proletariat, Raymond Carr quite accurately emphasizes that "strikes were characterized by their scorn for economic demands and the toughness of their revolutionary solidarity: strikes for comrades in prison were more popular than strikes for better conditions."

7. For Marx and Engels, organizational forms to change the behavioral patterns of the proletariat were not a problem. This question could be postponed until "after the revolution." Indeed, Marx viewed the authoritarian impact of the factory ("the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself") as a positive factor in producing a disciplined, united proletariat. Engels, in an atrocious diatribe against the anarchists titled "On Authority," explicitly used the factory structure -- its hierarchical forms and the obedience it demanded -- to

justify his commitment to authority and centralization in working-class organizations. What is of interest here is not whether Marx and Engels were "authoritarians" but the way in which they thought out the problem of proletarian organization -- the extent to which the matrix for their organizational concepts was the very economy which the social revolution was meant to revolutionize.

8. The disappearance of Bakunin's Alliance of Social Democracy in Spain scattered the forces of Spanish anarchism into small local nuclei which related on a regional basis through conferences, periodicals, and correspondence. Several regional federations of these nuclei were formed, mainly in Catalonia and Andalusia, only to disappear as rapidly as they emerged.

9. I employ the word "vanguard" provocatively, despite its unpopularity in many libertarian circles today, because this term was widely used in the traditional anarchist movement. Some anarchist publications even adopted it as a name. There can be no doubt that an anarchist obrera consciente regarded himself or herself as an "advanced person" and part of a small avant-garde in society. In its most innocuous sense, the use of this term meant that such a person merely enjoyed a more advanced social consciousness than the majority of less developed workers and peasants, a distinction that had to be overcome by education. In a less innocuous sense, the word provided a rationale for elitism and manipulation, to which some anarchist leaders were no more immune than their authoritarian Socialist opponents. The word "leader," on the other hand, was eschewed for the euphemism "influential militant," although in fact the more well-known anarchist "influential militants" were certainly leaders. This self-deception was not as trifling as it may seem. It prevented the Spanish anarchists from working out the serious problems that emerged from real differences in

consciousness among themselves or between themselves and the great majority of undeveloped ceneteistas.

### AFTER FIFTY YEARS:

Between myth and reality there lies a precarious zone of transition that occasionally captures the truth of each. Spain, caught in a world-historic revolution fifty years ago, was exactly such an occasion -- a rare moment when the most generous, almost mythic dreams of freedom seemed suddenly to become real for millions of Spanish workers, peasants, and intellectuals. For this brief period of time, this shimmering moment, as it were, the world stood breathlessly still, while the red banners of revolutionary socialism and the red-and-black banners of revolutionary anarchosyndicalism floated over most of Spain's major cities and thousands of her villages.

Taken together with the massive, spontaneous collectivization of factories, fields, even hotels and restaurants, the oppressed classes of Spain reclaimed history with a force and passion of an unprecedented scope and gave a stunning reality in many areas of the peninsula to the ageless dream of a free society. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 was, at its inception, the last of the classical European workers' and peasants' revolutions -- not, let me make it clear, a short-lived "uprising," a cadre-controlled "guerrilla war," or a simple civil conflict between regions for national supremacy. And like so many life-forms that appear for the last time, before fading away forever, it was the most far-reaching and challenging of all such popular movements of the great revolutionary era that encompasses Cromwellian England of the late 1640s and

the working-class uprisings of Vienna and Asturias of the early 1930s.

It is not a myth but a sheer lie -- the cretinous perversion of history by its makers in the academy -- to depict the Spanish Civil War as a mere prelude to World War II, an alleged conflict between "democracy and fascism." Not even World War II deserves the honor of this ideological characterization. Spain was seized by more than a civil war: it was in the throes of a profound social revolution. Nor was this revolution, like so many self-styled ones of recent years, simply the product of Spain's struggle for modernization. If anything, Spain was one of those very rare countries where problems of modernization helped inspire a real social revolution rather than a reaction or adaptation to Western and Eastern Europe's economic and social development. This seemingly "Third World" feature of the Spanish Civil War and, above all, the extraordinary alternatives it posed to capitalism and authoritarian forms of socialism make the revolution hauntingly relevant to liberation movements today. In modernizing the country, the Spanish working class and peasantry literally took over much of its economy and managed it directly in the form of collectives, cooperatives, and union-networked syndicalist structures. Democratically-run militias, free of all ranking distinctions and organized around a joint decision-making process that involved the soldiers as well as their elected "commanders," moved rapidly to the military fronts.

To have stopped Franco's "Army of Africa," composed of foreign legionnaires and Moorish mercenaries -- perhaps the blood-thirstiest and certainly one of the most professionalized troops at the disposal of any European nation at the time -- and its well-trained Civil Guards and police auxiliaries, would have been nothing less than



miraculous once it established a strong base on the Spanish mainland. That hastily formed, untrained, and virtually unequipped militiamen and women slowed up Franco's army's advance on Madrid for four months and essentially stopped it on the outskirts of the capital is a feat for which they have rarely earned the proper tribute from writers on the civil war of the past half century.

Behind the "Republican" lines, power lay essentially in the hands of the trade unions and their political organizations: the million-member General Confederation of Workers (UGT), the labor federation of the Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), and the equally large General Confederation of Labor (CNT), strongly influenced by the semi-clandestine Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI). Additionally, another leftist organization, the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), whose more radical members and leaders had been rooted in a Trotskyist tradition in earlier years, followed up the more influential socialists and anarchists. In Catalonia, the POUM outnumbered by far the Communist and Socialist Parties which united to form the predominantly Communist-controlled Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC). The Communist Party (PCE) at the inception of the revolution was inconsequential in numbers and influence, lagging far behind the three major left-wing organizations and their unions.

The wave of collectivizations that swept over Spain in the summer and autumn of 1936 has been described in a recent BBC-Granada documentary as "the greatest experiment in workers' self-management Western Europe has ever seen," a revolution more far-reaching than any which occurred in Russia during 1917-21 and the years before and after it.<sup>1</sup> In anarchist industrial areas like Catalonia, an estimated three-quarters of the economy was placed under workers' control,

as it was in anarchist rural areas like Aragon. The figure tapers downward where the UGT shared power with the CNT or else predominated: 50 percent in anarchist and socialist Valencia, and 30 percent in socialist and liberal Madrid. In the more thoroughly anarchist areas, particularly among the agrarian collectives, money was eliminated and the material means of life were allocated strictly according to need rather than work, following the traditional precepts of a libertarian communist society. As the BBC-Granada television documentary puts it: "The ancient dream of a collective society without profit or property was made reality in the villages of Aragon. . . . All forms of production were owned by the community, run by their workers."

The administrative apparatus of "Republican" Spain belonged almost entirely to the unions and their political organizations. Police in many cities were replaced by armed workers' patrols. Militia units were formed everywhere -- in factories, on farms, and in socialist and anarchist community centers and union halls, initially including women as well as men. A vast network of local revolutionary committees coordinated the feeding of the cities, the operations of the economy, and the meting out of justice, indeed, almost every facet of Spanish life from production to culture, bringing the whole of Spanish society in the "Republican" zone into a well-organized and coherent whole. This historically unprecedented appropriation of society by its most oppressed sectors -- including women, who were liberated from all the constraints of a highly traditional Catholic country, be it the prohibition of abortion and divorce or a degraded status in the economy -- was the work of the Spanish proletariat and peasantry. It was a movement from below that overwhelmed even the revolutionary organizations of the

oppressed, including the CNT-FAI. "Significantly, no left organization issued calls for revolutionary takeovers of factories, workplaces or the land," observes Ronald Fraser in one of the most up-to-date accounts of the popular movement. "Indeed, the CNT leadership in Barcelona, epicenter of urban anarchosyndicalism, went further: rejecting the offer of power presented to it by President Companys [the head of the Catalan government], it decided that the libertarian revolution must stand aside for collaboration with the Popular Front forces to defeat the common enemy. The revolution that transformed Barcelona in a matter of days into a city virtually run by the working class sprang initially from individual CNT unions, impelled by their most advanced militants; and as their example spread it was not only large enterprises but small workshops and businesses that were being taken over.<sup>2</sup>

I quote Fraser to emphasize the remarkable power of education and discussion, and the critical examination of experience in the development of many segments of the Spanish working class and peasantry. For Communists like Eric Hobsbawm to designate these segments, largely influenced by anarchist ideas, as "primitive rebels" is worse than prejudice; it represents ideology mechanically imposed on the flux of history, organizing it into "stages" of development in flat contradiction to real life and freezing it into categories that exist solely in the mind of the historian. Since Spain, as we are told, was a predominately agrarian country, in fact, "feudal" in its social structure, its proletariat must have been "undeveloped" and its peasantry caught in a fever of "millennarian" expectations. These "primitive" features of Spain's development somehow account, so the story goes, for the more than one million members of the anarchosyndicalist CNT out of a population of twenty-four million. Spain's bourgeoisie, it is further

argued, was the cowed stepchild of the country's territorial grandees, its clerics, and its bloated officer corps; Spain needed a "bourgeois-democratic" revolution, akin to the French and American, as a "historical precondition" for a "socialist" one. This "stages theory," with its salad of "preconditions," was invoked with considerable effectiveness by the Communist International in the 1930s against the reality of an authentic workers' and peasants' revolution. Where it could not be completely concealed from the outside world, the revolution was denounced by the Communists as "premature" in a "balance of history" that was determined somewhere in the foreign commissariat of Stalinist Russia and resolutely assaulted by the PCE on a scale that brought "Republican" Spain to the edge of a civil war within the civil war.

Recent accounts of Spain and the revolution of 1936 give us a very different picture of the country's society from its portrayal by the Communists, their liberal allies, and even by such well-intentioned observers as Gerald Brenan and Franz Borkenau. Despite its outward trappings, Spain was not the overwhelmingly agrarian and "feudal" country we were taught it was two generations ago. From the turn of the century to the coming of the Second Republic in 1931, Spain had undergone enormous economic growth with major changes in the relative weight of the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors. From 1910 to 1930 the peasantry had declined from 66 percent to 45.5 percent of the working population, while industrial workers had soared from 15.8 percent to 26.5 percent and those in services from 18.1 percent to 27.9 percent. Indeed, the peasantry now formed a minority of the population, not its traditional majority, and a substantial portion of the "peasantry" owned land, particularly in areas that adhered to the highly conservative "National Front" as against the liberal-socialist-communist

coalition under the rubric of the "Popular Front." Indeed, omitting the Center parties the "Popular Front" -- whose election in February 1936 precipitated the military plots that led to the Francoist rebellion six months later -- received only 54 percent of the vote in a voting procedure and under circumstances that favored them. Moreover, as Edward Malefakis has shown in his thoroughly researched study of agrarian unrest in the period leading up to the civil war, the CNT had its greatest strength among the industrial working class of Catalonia, not among the "millennarian" agricultural day-workers of the South. Many of these *braceros* joined socialist unions in the 1930s, pushing the reformist Socialist party in an increasingly revolutionary direction.<sup>3</sup>

Spain's rapid rate of industrialization and the shift of the country from "feudal" to essentially capitalist forms of agriculture occurred well in advance of the "Popular Front" victory. The decade of the 1920s under the fairly indulgent, Mussolini-type dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (a Spanish parody of Italian fascism in which leading Socialists like Largo Caballero actually held official positions as did other UGT chieftains), saw an economic modernization of the country that almost equaled and in some cases exceeded the boom years under Franco between 1960 and 1973. Illiteracy was substantially decreased, and economic expansion was accelerated; hence the very sizable middle class or service workers with middle-class values that could be played against the militant working class of Spain.

The greatest single reservoir of economic unrest was in the south: Andalusia's plantation or *latifundia* society, structured around the cultivation of olives, cereals, grapes -- and the large workforce of desperately poor, half-starved landless day-laborers. Caught in the trammels of Spain's

quasifeudal grandes, hundreds of thousands of braceros lived in bitter desperation, a way of life that contrasted with the opulence and cold arrogance of the royalist upper class of nobles and bourgeois who were to form the cutting edge of Franco's rebellion and were the principal beneficiaries of his victory.

Periodic uprisings of the braceros had culminated in an agrarian war in 1918-20 and were put down mercilessly, leaving a legacy of savage class hatred that expressed itself in the burning of crops, farm buildings, and rural mansions (many of which were turned into virtual fortresses during times of social unrest), and assassinations on both sides of the class barrier. Long before the 1930s, Andalusia became, for all practical purposes, an occupied territory where Civil Guards patrolled the countryside and, together with armed thugs hired by landowners, fired wantonly at striking braceros and created the endemic violence that claimed an appalling toll during the first weeks of the civil war. Yet here too, agriculture was largely capitalistic in its orientation toward the marketplace. Andalusia's produce was cultivated largely for international trade. Noble titles often concealed bourgeois avarice in its most unfeeling form, and upper-class references to the "tradition" of Spain barely camouflaged pernicious greed and privilege.

What cannot be ignored after presenting this tableau is the extent to which the crisis that led to the 1936 revolution was cultural as well as economic. Spain was a land of several nations: Basques and Catalans who sought autonomy for their respective cultures and viewed Spanish lifeways with a measure of disdain; Castilians who appeared as the collective oppressors of the peninsula, despite their own internal divisions; an arrogant nobility that fed on images of Spain's "golden era" and lived in

almost parochial isolation from the real Spain that surrounded them; an incestuous officer caste that belonged to one of the country's lingering "orders" and for whom "national regeneration" had devolved from the values of liberalism and "modernity" to those of sheer reaction; finally, a virtually medieval Church that was excessively propertied, rigidly hierarchical, and often bitterly hated because of the contrast between its pious rhetoric of human "brotherhood" and its patent partisanship with the upper classes.

Above all, Spain was a land in which cultures were in dramatic transition between town and country, feudalism and capitalism -- a nostalgic world that looked back to a past of aristocratic supremacy and forward to a future of plebeian egalitarianism that found its most radical form in a huge anarchosyndicalist movement. What made the Spanish working class so uniquely revolutionary, in my view, was its well-rooted ancestry in the countryside -- in a relatively slow-paced, organic agrarian world that clashed sharply with the highly rationalized, mechanized industrial world of the cities. In the force-field of these two cultures, Spanish workers in the Mediterranean coastal cities retained an obduracy, a sense of moral tension, a feeling for preindustrial lifeways, and a commitment to community that cannot be conveyed to a generation immured in the received wisdom and prepackaged lifeways of a highly commodified, market-oriented era.

The intensity of this force-field was heightened by a Spanish heritage of strong sociability: urban barrios were actually intimate villages within the city, knitted together by cafes, community centers and union halls and energized by a vital outdoor public life that stood at sharp variance

with the aristocratic mythos of the Spanish past and the hated Church which had abdicated all claims to public service. The elite classes of the country, so completely divorced from those who worked for them, were highly protective of the privileges conferred upon them by pedigree, status, and landed wealth, which often produced fissures as bourgeois parvenus began to enter a social terrain guarded for centuries by tradition and history.

Accordingly, one always "belonged" in a deeply social, cultural, regional, class, and economic sense -- whether it was to a part of Spain, to a hierarchy, a caste, a clan, an institution (be it the army or a union), and finally, to a neighborhood, village, town, city, and province, precisely in that order of loyalty. In this cultural sense affiliations and antagonisms often overrode economic considerations to an extent that is now barely comprehensible. To cite only one example, the workers of Saragossa, even more anarchist in their ideology than their syndicalistic comrades in Barcelona, disdained strikes for "paltry" economic demands; they normally put down their tools in behalf of their brothers and sisters in prisons or over issues of politics, human rights, and class solidarity. In one truly incredible instance, these "pure" anarchists declared a twenty-four-hour general-strike because the German Communist leader, Ernst Thälmann, had been arrested by Hitler.

Behind this vibrantly radical culture was a rich tradition of direct action, self-management, and confederal association. Spain had barely become a nation-state under Ferdinand and Isabella -- the "Catholic monarchs" who conquered the last Moorish strongholds on the peninsula -- when the monarchy was faced with a historic crisis. Under the Comuneros (translated literally, the Communards), Castile's



major cities rose up in revolt to demand what was virtually a form of nationhood structured primarily around a confederation of municipalities. In this remarkable moment when a confederal political system hovered as an alternative to a centralized nation-state, Castilian cities created short-lived ward democracies and neighborhood assemblies and enfranchised people in the lowest ranks of the community on a scale that would have sent a shudder of fear through Europe's ruling elites, possibly comparable to the impact of the Paris Commune of 1871.<sup>4</sup> Such confederal movements percolated through Spanish history for generations . They took real-life form in the extraordinary power of local society over centralized state institutions, exploding in movements like the Federalists of Pi y Margall of the early 1870s and the anarchists schooled in the writings of Bakunin. But Spanish localism and confederalism were not strictly an anarchist phenomenon: they were Spanish to the core and infused the most traditional socialists, even the Basque nationalists, who advanced municipalist notions of political control against the centralized state's authority well into the 1930s.

Spanish radicalism, in effect, raised questions and provided answers that have a unique relevance to the problems of our day: local autonomy, confederalism, collectivism, self-management, and base democracy in opposition to state centralism, nationalization, managerial control, and bureaucracy. The world did not know this in 1936, nor does it understand the scope of these issues adequately today. Indeed, Spanish radicalism also raised ideological images that history rendered obsolete in Europe: images of a classical proletarian insurrection, barricades, a syndicalist triumph of revolutionary trade unions, and inchoate notions of emancipation cloaked in a Bolshevik mantle claimed by Stalin rather than in Spain's own popular traditions. It was

this swirling vortex of social dislocations that the Spanish army tried to still, a vortex of institutional relics, an agrarian crisis where large-scale agribusiness dressed in aristocratic vestments was pitted against a ragged, land-hungry, labor force of day-workers, and an arrogant nobility, an avaricious bourgeoisie, an inordinately materialistic Church, and a servile middle class against the most volatile proletariat and peasantry Europe had seen in a century of revolutionary anarchism and socialism.

The events leading to the outbreak of civil war can be dealt with summarily. In Spain, history seems to repeat itself first as farce and only later as tragedy. The social dislocations that followed World War I seem almost a comic anticipation of the developments that preceded Franco's uprising. A wave of revolutionary unrest gave way in 1923 to the military dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, a pleasure-loving, rather dissolute Andalusian aristocrat who easily came to terms with the UGT and the Socialists at the expense of their anarchosyndicalist rivals and who essentially ignored the Spanish Communist Party because of its sheer insignificance. The boom years of the 1920s were followed by a rapid decline in Primo's authoritarian government, which pulled the props out from underneath the monarchy itself. In April 1931 Spain returned after some two generations to a republican political system, seemingly with almost universal enthusiasm -- but the system's authority waned quickly when a liberal-Socialist coalition tried to address the crucial agrarian problems that had beleaguered all Spanish governments for generations. Hammered on the right by the attempted military coup of General Sanjurjo (August 1932) and by anarchosyndicalist insurrectionism on the left which culminated in the Casas Viejas massacre of Andalusian peasants (January 1933), the coalition lay in the debris of its own ill-starred reforms.

In the summer of 1933, Spain's multitude of parties and organizations began to regroup and polarize. In November of that year, a coalition of the right, the Spanish Confederation of Right Groups (CEDA) replaced the liberal-Socialist coalition headed by Manuel Azaña. The forces that consigned the first "Republican" government in some sixty years to the historic garbage heap now formed the impetus for a radical shift to the two extremes. Disenchanted with liberal ineptitude and subjected to increasing internal pressure by the influx of Andalusian braceros, the Socialist Party veered sharply from reformism to revolutionism in little more than a year. Just as the CEDA found the newly formed fascistic Falange on its far right, so Largo Cabellero (now styled the "Lenin of Spain") found the recent POUM, a melding of two independent revolutionary Marxist groups, on his far left and the anarchosyndicalists in a state of chronic revolution still further off on their own.

The barricades that the Viennese Socialist workers raised early in 1934 in the face of a reactionary assault on their very existence had their bloody Spanish counterpart eight months later in the "October Revolution" of 1934, when Asturian miners, raising red and red-and-black flags over the mountain towns and cities of northern Spain, became the epicenter of a general uprising throughout the country. It was then that the increasingly well-known commander of the "Army of Africa," one Francisco Franco, brought Moorish troops as well as foreign legionnaires onto Spanish soil for the first time in five hundred years to defend "Christian Civilization" from "red barbarism." In a taste of the fierce counterrevolutionary retribution that was yet to come, two thousand miners were executed in the aftermath of the Asturias uprising and tens of thousands of Socialists,

anarchosyndicalists, in smaller numbers Communists, and even some liberals found themselves in Spanish jails while the rest of the country smoldered in a savage class and regional hatred that found its full satisfaction two years later.

Under an ostensibly shared eagerness to free the October prisoners and in fear of growing rightist provocation of the kind that had finally brought the Viennese Socialists into insurrection, a "Popular Front" was slapped together from such widely disparate political groups as the Republican left, the Socialists, the Esquerra (Luis Companys's Catalan nationalists), the Communist Party, the Syndicalist Party (a political arm of the dissident anarchosyndicalist, Angel Pestaña), and the POUM (in Catalonia). The term "Popular Front" apparently originated in the French Communist Party and the Soviet-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance (May 1935) in which both countries vowed to aid each other if either was "threatened or in danger of aggression." With the Popular Front, all Western Communist Parties and all their front organizations made a sharp volte face from a previous totally insane policy of revolutionary adventurism, in which even the CNT was dubbed "reformist," to a queasy "line" of total accommodation to the "forces of democracy" and an abject surrender of all radical principles to reformism. That the new gospel of leftists joining with liberals was nothing less than Stalin's wholesale prostitution of the world's Communist Parties for "non-aggression" and preferably "mutual assistance" pacts between Russia and any power that was prepared to enter the Stalinist brothel became clear by 1936.

It is difficult today, when radical theory has retreated to the couloirs of the academy and radical practice to the smoke-filled rooms of liberal politicians, to recognize the crisis of

conscience that "Popular Frontism" created in the Communist movement. Contrary to recent myths that the "Popular Front" was a welcome change of line, a waning generation from the era can still recall how American left-wing socialists taunted Communist Party members for the rapid desertion of their revolutionary ideals. In Spain, this took the form of the particularly cutting remark: "Vote Communist and Save Capitalism." The numbers who left "the Party" in bitterness were probably immense throughout the world. Yet neither "anti-fascism" nor a passion for "bourgeois democracy" can explain what kept thousands of revolutionary Communists in the Stalinist movement. That Communist parties were able to acquire more members in unprecedented numbers, many of whom were very tentative in their commitments, attests to the fact that even in the "red thirties," Western Europe and America contained more liberals than radicals. It also attests to the uncritical, often mindless loyalty of Communists to the Soviet Union as the "first Socialist country" in the world and to the legacy of the October Revolution -- even as its leaders were being slaughtered en masse by Stalin's NKVD.

Equally fundamentally the "Popular Front" introduced a doctrinal crisis into the corpus of revolutionary Marxism. The very *raison d'être* for a Communist Party anywhere in the world had been Social Democracy's legacy of "betrayals," creating the need for a new revolutionary movement. "Betrayal," in the language of the day, meant the abandonment of Marx's basic, indeed unswerving strategy of revolutionary independence for all authentic "workers' parties." This precept, forcefully voiced by Marx and Engels in their famous "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (March 1850), warned that "everywhere workers' candidates are put up alongside of the bourgeois-democratic candidates . . . to

preserve their independence." As if in anticipation of "popular frontism" a century later both men forbade Communists from allowing "themselves to be seduced by such arguments of the democrats as, for example, that by so doing they are splitting the democratic party and making it possible for the reactionaries to win."<sup>5</sup>

To abandon these precepts was to assail the authenticity of Communism as such, indeed, to discard the most fundamental principles of Bolshevism as a truly Marxist politics. It had been on the strength of these strategic ideas that the Bolshevik Party had come to power in 1917 and defined itself as a revolutionary movement. For Stalin in the Popular Front to adopt exactly what Marx Engels, and Lenin had regarded as the most "treacherous" features of "bourgeois democracy" and Social Democracy reduced world Communist movements to mere guardians of the Soviet Union and an extension of Stalinist foreign policy. If anything could justify so abject a role for Communists, it was their belief -- held consciously or not -- that Russia was the main force for the achievement of world socialism. This doctrinal mystification essentially replaced the power of the oppressed to change society and thereby change themselves in a supreme act of self-empowerment, with the power of a "workers' state" to instrumentally redesign society.

The logic of this mentality had disastrous ramifications, ones that exist today even as they did fifty years ago. This Popular Front mystification was to turn socialism from a social movement into a largely diplomatic one. World Communist Parties which had been spawned in a period of authentic revolution were to be denatured by the mythos of a socialism achieved by international power politics into mere tools for preserving or abetting the interests of a nation-state. The Popular Front, in effect, not only planted

socialism in a geographical area and divested it of its ethical calling to redeem humanity; it rendered the "ideal," with all its visionary and critical meanings over the course of history, territorial and invested it with the fixity of the "real," notably as a mere instrument of national policy.\*

The argument between the compromised Communist movement of the Popular Front and its leftist critics unfolded on a multitude of levels over the three tortured years that preceded the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939. Left Socialists generally called it "class collaboration," with blunt clarity; the forfeiture of the very sense of revolutionary purpose that alone could defeat fascism, much less achieve socialism; the proclivity of liberals to deliver democratic liberties to fascists rather than yield power to an insurgent working class. Remote as the Popular Front era seems today, it is striking that leftist challenges to it have been supported by reality to an uncanny extent.

In Spain, the victory of the Popular Front in February 1936 virtually unleashed a revolution by itself. The organizations that orchestrated its electoral success allowed a government of liberal mice, marked by timidity and a fear of the working class and peasantry, to preside over their destiny. The incongruity between the bumbling Azaña regime in Madrid and the wave of strikes, rural land seizures, and gun-battles that swept over Spain between February and July, when Franco finally "pronounced" against the "Republic," is so stark and the logic of events that left only two choices by the summer of 1936 -- either libertarian revolution or bloody authoritarian reaction -- is so compelling that Franco's easy success in transporting the "Army of Africa" from Spanish Morocco to the mainland was an act of governmental betrayal in its own right.

The CNT placed all its militants on alert and blanketed Barcelona with workers patrols, but the other leftist parties which had formed the "Popular Front" were essentially quiescent. Even after Franco rose and the government attempted to strike a deal with the military, causing people to fill the streets demanding arms, the Communist and Socialist Parties jointly declared: "It is a difficult, not a desperate time. The government is sure it has adequate means to crush this criminal move. Should its means prove inadequate, the Republic has the Popular Front's solemn promise. It is ready to intervene in the struggle if it is asked to help. The government commands and the Popular Front obeys."<sup>6</sup>

It is not the case that no one knew early on that the army garrisons would rise -- or, for that matter, when and where. Owing to its excellent intelligence service, which had penetrated the military, police, and security forces generally, the CNT had warned months in advance that the army was planning a coup in the summer of 1936 and that its base would be Spanish Morocco. Even more compelling, Colonel Escofet, the Republican police chief of Barcelona, had learned from informers and wiretaps that the rising would occur on July 19 at 5 A.M., exactly as the conspirators had originally planned, and he gave this information to the Catalan and Madrid governments. They met his information with disbelief -- not because they regarded a coup as incredible but because they could not act upon the information without arming the people. That alternative was simply excluded. Indeed, as Escofet later frankly admitted, he blandly lied to CNT leaders who came to him demanding arms by "saying they could go home since the rising had been postponed."<sup>7</sup>



The very opposite, in fact, had happened: the rising was pushed forward by two days. As early as the morning of July 17, when Franco's aides broadcast news of the army rebellion, the naval station near Madrid intercepted the report and brought it to the Ministry of the Navy. The only decisive action the government took was to conceal it from the people -- indeed, like Escofet, to lie by announcing the utterly false story that the uprising in Seville had been crushed. The lie was all the more horrendous because thousands of workers in the city were being systematically executed by the military after army rebels had vanquished them. It was only from popular initiative -- first in Barcelona, where the army was defeated after two days of fighting by the combined action of the workers and sympathetic Civil Guards, and later in Madrid, Valencia, Málaga, and virtually all the major cities in central Spain -- that coordinated resistance emerged from the political centers of the country.

There were no sensational victories by the army and no decisive failures by the people. Apart from the Andalusian cities which Franco and his generals quickly captured, as often by ruse as by arms, the pronunciamiento was essentially a military failure, and the conflict dragged on to its bloody conclusion for the greater part of three years. That Franco was able to establish himself on the mainland was due to the hesitation of the "Popular Front" regime which misled the people; partly because the leftist parties, fearful of challenging the government's authority, seemed to be sleepwalking through the opening days of the rebellion, and partly because this very government was negotiating with the military rather than arming the people. As a result, radical urban centers like Seville, Granada, and to the surprise of the army itself, Oviedo in Asturias and Saragossa in Aragon, fell to local military commanders by

sheer ruse because the workers had been kept in ignorance of what was happening elsewhere in Spain. The slaughter that occurred in all these cities when the army took over initiated a terrible hemorrhaging of the Spanish working class and peasantry, a bloodletting that turned Spain into a cemetery for more than thirty-five years. As Pierre Broué and Emile Témime conclude in their excellent account of the revolution and civil war, "In effect, each time that the workers' organizations allowed themselves to be paralyzed by their anxiety to respect Republican legality and each time their leaders were satisfied with what was said by the officers, the latter prevailed. On the other hand, the Movimiento of the generals] was repulsed where the workers had time to arm and whenever they set about the destruction of the Army as such, independently of their leaders' position or the attitude of 'legitimate' public authorities."8

There is nothing in this account that a revolutionary socialist or anarchist could not have predicted from the day the "Popular Front" came to power. The liberals played out their classical role with almost textbook exactness. The Socialist Party, divided between a cynical right and an irresolute left, was eaten away by indecision and a failure of nerve that brought its own conservative chieftains to the point of treachery. Finally, the anarchosyndicalist leaders, far less decisive than their rank-and-file militants, refused to take power in their Catalan stronghold as a matter of principle in the opening weeks of the revolution -- only to compromise their most basic antistatist doctrines later by humbly entering the central government as ministerial fixtures. Harried by Communist and liberal assaults on the militia system and the collectivization, and by an increasingly deadly Stalinist terror, the CNT-FAI leadership withdrew into a posture of plaintive clients of the "Popular

Front," whining rather than fighting against the rollback of the revolution that had been the result of a popular movement more than of their own efforts.

But what no one seems to have expected was the resoluteness with which the Spanish Communist Party played out its counterrevolutionary role, abetted by Soviet weapons, "Comintern" agents, NKVD experts, and in no small part, individual members of the "International Brigades," who provided the PCE with some of its best assassins. The initial response of the Communists to Franco's pronunciamiento was designed to bolster the reputation of the liberal government which was trying to come to terms with the insurgent generals. More than any organization that professed to be "leftist," the PCE opened its doors to the most conservative elements that found themselves behind the "Republican" lines, becoming the rallying point for domestic reaction, and steadily ate away at the revolution in the name of "antifascism." Not only did it try to arrest collectivization, it tried to reverse it , restoring hierarchy in the institutions that formed the infrastructure of Spanish life and speaking openly for the bourgeois interest in Spanish society. The files of Mundo Obrero, the PCE's principal organ, are filled with journalistic declamations, manifestos, and editorials that denounce the militias in favor of a fully officered "Popular Army," lend support to the liberals and right-wing Socialists against criticism by the Socialist left and the anarchists, and denounce any exercise of power by the unions and revolutionary committees with the cry, "The slogan today is all power and authority to the People's Front government" (Daily Worker, September 11, 1936).

To explain why any self-professed radicals remained in the PCE is almost impossible without analyzing the

organization's sense of priorities: the wishful identification of "socialism" on the part of its more committed members with a nation-state, even at the expense of a popular movement that was actively emancipatory elsewhere. In this very real sense, the Spanish Communist Party was no more Spanish than its Soviet counterpart and as a result of its identification of "communism" with Stalin's national policies, no more communist than the Catholic Basque movements that opposed Franco.

The "leftist" government formed by Largo Caballero in September 1936 was aimed at mobilizing Socialist, anarchosyndicalist, and Communist leaders not only against the army but against the revolution initiated by their own rank-and-file. As Largo Caballero attested after he had been removed from office, Soviet intervention in Spanish affairs was brutally overt and demanding. The revolution was blemishing the Soviet Union's image as a respectable nation-state in the pursuit of diplomatic alliances. It had to be stopped. Caballero was anything but a revolutionary, but he had a real base in the Spanish Socialist Party which gave him enough freedom to act according to his own judgment, a fatal flaw in the eyes of the Communists.

Nevertheless it was under this regime that the revolution expired. On September 30, the "Popular Army" was proclaimed, to the delight of the liberals, Communists, and right-wing Socialists; indeed, nearly all parties and organizations on the left abetted the transformation of the militias into a conventional army. The distribution of weapons, equipment, and resources among different sectors of the front and to different regions of the country was scandalously governed by political considerations. They were even abandoned to Franco if the Communists and their allies suspected they would become available to the

anarchosyndicalists. To cite one of many examples, Spain's only prewar cartridge factory in the "Republican" zone, at Toledo, was permitted to fall into the hands of Francoist forces rather than remove it to Barcelona which would have strengthened the revolutionary movement -- this, despite pleas by José Tarradellas, the deputy of the Catalan premier Luis Companys, who personally visited Madrid to present his request for its removal. 9

Reinforced by Soviet arms and the huge membership that it acquired largely from the middle classes, the PCE launched an outright assault on the collectives and the revolutionary committees, even purging the anarchosyndicalists, which Pravda, the organ of the Soviet Communist Party, declared "will be conducted with the same energy with which it was conducted in the U.S.S.R" (December 17, 1936). "Chekist organizations recently discovered in Madrid," warned the anarchosyndicalist newspaper Solidaridad Obrera on April 25, 1937, referring to NKVD-type secret prisons and police forces ". . . are directly linked with similar centers under a unified leadership and a preconceived plan of national scope." We do not have to go to George Orwell, a victim of these "Chekists" (the term applied to the Bolshevik secret police during the Russian Revolution), for personal verification of the charge. Pravda had already projected the formation of this network, and after the war, numerous anarchosyndicalists and POUMists gave detailed accounts of their own experiences at the hands of this Communist-controlled system of internal repression.

The decisive point in destroying the popular movement and reducing its militants to passivity came in early May 1937, when Catalan security forces under the personal command of the Communist commissioner of public safety, Salas, tried to seize the CNT-controlled telephone building in

Barcelona. The attack triggered off a virtual insurrection by the Catalan working class, which had been nursing months of grievances against the Communists and liberals. Within hours, barricades were raised all over the city, and the "Lenin Barracks," the Communist military stronghold, was completely surrounded by armed workers. The insurrection spread beyond Barcelona to Lérida, where the Civil Guards surrendered their arms to the workers, to Tarragona, Girona, and to militiamen on the Aragon front, who prepared to send detachments to the CNT urban centers. The dramatic five days between May 3 and 8, when CNT workers could have reclaimed their dwindling revolutionary conquests, were days not of defeat but of treachery -- no less by the clique that led the CNT than the Communists, who were prepared to create a civil war within the civil war, irrespective of its toll on the struggle against the Francoists. Lacking even a modicum of this resoluteness, the "anarchist ministers," Montseny and García Oliver induced the CNT workers to lay down their arms and return to their homes. This self-inflicted defeat turned into an outright rout when superbly armed "Republican" assault guards entered Barcelona in force to contain its restive population. Barcelona had been turned from the center of the revolution into the cowed occupied zone of outright counterrevolution -- at a cost in life, it may be noted, comparable to the losses the city had suffered in the army's uprising a year earlier.

The failure of the insurrection -- the famous "May Days" -- opened wide the gates of the Communist-led counterrevolution. Largo Caballero was forced to resign, replaced by Juan Negrín, who leaned heavily on PCE support up to the very end of the war. Two months later, the POUM was officially outlawed, and Andres Nín, its most gifted leader, murdered by Soviet agents in collusion with

Thälmann Battalion members of the International Brigades. The anarchosyndicalists, too, suffered heavily, especially with the assassination of Carlo Bernieri, the authentic voice of Italian anarchism and a sharp critic of the CNT leadership. There is also compelling evidence that members of the Garibaldi Battalion of the International Brigades were implicated in his murder during the May Days. By August, the notorious Military Investigation Service (SIM) was formed under Negrín's premiership to intensify the Stalinist terror inflicted on militant anarchosyndicalists and POUM-ists. In the same month, the Moscow-trained thug Enrique Lister, led his Communist 11th Division into the last rural strongholds of anarchism, where he disbanded the Council of Aragon and an indeterminable number of collectives and cowed the revolutionary movement, under orders, by his own admission, to "shoot all the anarchists I had to."<sup>10</sup> The "Republican" government aimed the Belchite campaign, one of the bloodiest in the civil war," as much at demolishing the Council of Aragon, that anarchist state-within-the-state, as at achieving any significant results against the Nationalists," observes David Mitchell in his oral-history accounts of the civil war.<sup>11</sup>

Thereafter, the "Spanish war," as it was nonchalantly called by a bored world in the late 1930s, became nothing but a war -- and a nightmare for the Spanish people. Army and people alike were now completely demoralized and "utterly pessimistic," observes Josep Costa, a CNT union leader who fought on the Aragon front. "The men were like lambs going to a slaughter. There was no longer an army, no longer anything. All the dynamic had been destroyed by the treachery of the Communist party in the May events. We went through the motions of fighting because there was an enemy in front of us. The trouble was that we had an enemy behind us too. I saw a comrade lying dead with a wound in

the back of the neck that couldn't have been inflicted by the Nationalists. We were constantly urged to join the Communist party. If you didn't you were in trouble. Some men deserted to escape the bullying." That Communist execution squads were wandering over battlefields after the troops had pushed forward and were killing wounded anarchosyndicalists with their characteristic black-and-red insignia has also been told to me by CNT men who participated in the Battle of the Ebro, the last of the major "Republican" offensives in the civil war.

The end of the war on April 1, 1939, did not end the killings. Franco systematically slaughtered some 200,000 of his opponents between the time of his victory and the early 1940s in a carnage of genocidal proportions that was meant to physically uproot the living source of the revolution. No serious ideological efforts at conversion were made in the aftermath of the Francoist victory. Rather, it was a vindictive counterrevolution that had its only parallel, given the population and size of Spain, in Stalin's one-sided civil war against the Soviet people.

A revolutionary civil war of the kind that occurred in Spain is no longer possible, in my view, today -- at least, not in the so-called "First World." Capitalism itself, as well as the classes that are said to oppose it, has changed significantly over the past fifty years. The Spanish workers were formed by a cultural clash in which a richly communal world, largely precapitalist, was brought into opposition to an industrial economy that had not yet pervaded the character structure of the Spanish people. Far from yielding a "backward" or "primitive" radical movement, these tensions between past and present created an enormously vital one in which the traditions of an older, more organic society heightened the critical perceptions and creative élan of a



large worker-peasant population. The embourgeoisement of the present-day proletariat, not to speak of its loss of nerve in the face of a robotic and cybernetic technology, are merely evidence of the vastly changed social conditions and the overall commodification of society that has occurred since 1936.

Military technology, too, has changed. The weapons with which the Franco forces and the "Republicans" fought each other seem like toys today, when neutron bombs can be at the service of a completely ruthless ruling class. Force alone can no longer oppose force with any hope of revolutionary success. On this score, the greatest power lies with the rulers of society, not with the ruled. Only the hollowing out of the coercive institutions in the prevailing society, such as occurred in Portugal fairly recently and certainly in the Great French Revolution of two centuries ago -- where the old society, divested of all support, collapsed at the first thrust -- can yield radical social change. The barricade is a symbol, not a physical bulwark. To raise it denotes resolute intent at best -- it is not a means to achieve change by insurrection. Perhaps the most lasting physical resistance the Spanish workers and peasants could have organized, even with Franco's military successes, would have been guerrilla warfare, a form of struggle whose very name and greatest traditions during modern times are Spanish. Yet none of the parties and organizations in the "Republican" zone seriously contemplated guerrilla warfare. Instead, conventional armies opposed conventional armies largely in trenches and as columns, until Franco's plodding strategy and overwhelming superiority of supplies swept his opponents from the field.

Could revolutionary warfare have defeated Franco? By this I mean a truly political war which sought to capture the

hearts of the Spanish people, even that of the international working class, which exhibited a measure of class consciousness and solidarity that seems monumental by present-day standards. This presupposes the existence of working-class organizations that minimally would not have been a burden on the awakened people of Spain -- and hopefully, would have contributed to the popular impetus. Given these conditions, my answer would be yes, as proved to be the case in Barcelona at the beginning, where Franco's army was defeated earlier than elsewhere. Franco's forces, which failed to gain victories in central Spain's major cities, could have been kept from taking such key radical centers as Seville, Córdoba, Oviedo, and Saragossa -- the latter two of strategic importance, linking the most industrialized urban regions of Spain, the Basque country, and Catalonia. But the regime temporized with the aid of the "Popular Front" parties -- particularly the Communists and right-wing Socialists -- while confused workers in these key cities fell victim in almost every case to military ruses, not combat. With far greater determination than its enemies, the military drove a wedge between the Basques and Catalans that the "Popular Army" never overcame.

Even so, Franco's forces stalled significantly at various times in the war, such that Hitler expected his "crusade" to fail.<sup>12</sup> The death blow to popular resistance was delivered by the Communist Party, which was willing to risk the collapse of the entire war effort in its program to dissolve the largely libertarian revolution -- one which had tried, faintheartedly enough, to come to a *modus vivendi* with its opponents on the "left." But no such understanding was possible: the PCE sought to make the "Spanish war" respectable primarily in the Soviet Union's interests and to cloak itself for all the democratic world to see in the trappings of bourgeois virtue. The revolution had tarnished

this image and challenged the explicitly counterrevolutionary function which the entire Communist International had adopted in the service of Soviet diplomacy. Hence not only did the Spanish Revolution have to be exterminated, its exterminators had to be seen as such. The "Reds" had to be regarded as a safe bet by London, Paris, and Washington -- and they gradually were as the conflict in Spain came to an end.

By the time the war was internationalized by unstinting German and Italian aid to Franco and the Soviet Union's highly conditional and limited assistance to the "Republicans" -- in exchange, I may add, for Spain's sizable gold reserves -- revolutionary victory was impossible. The May Days could have produced a "Catalan Commune," a sparkling legacy on which the Spanish people could have nourished their hopes for future struggles. It might even have become an inspiration for radical movements throughout the world. But the CNT, already partly bureaucratized in 1936, became appallingly so by 1937, with the acquisition of buildings, funds, presses, and other material goodies. This reinforced and rigidified the top-down hierarchical structure that is endemic to syndicalist organization. With the May Days, the union's ministerial elite completely arrested the revolution and acted as an outright obstacle to its advance in later moments of crisis.

The Communist Party of Spain won all its demands for an army, decollectivization, the extermination of its most dangerous opponents, the Stalinization of the internal security forces, and the conversion of the social revolution into a "war against fascism" -- and it lost the war completely. Soviet aid, selective and unreliable at best, came to an end in November 1938, nearly a half-year before Franco's victory, while Italian and German aid

continued up to the end. When Stalin moved toward a pact with Hitler, he found the "Spanish war" an embarrassment and simply denied it further support. The "Western democracies" did nothing for "Republican" Spain despite that regime's success in suppressing internal revolution and its Western-oriented policy in international affairs. Thus, it denied Spanish Morocco, a major reservoir of Franco's troops, the independence that might have turned it against the rebel army, despite promises by Moroccan nationalists of support.

What was lost in Spain was the most magnificent proletariat that radical movements had ever seen either before or after 1936-39 -- a classical working class in the finest socialist and anarchist sense of the term. It was a proletariat that was destroyed not by a growing material interest in bourgeois society but by physical extermination. This occurred largely amidst a conspiracy of silence by the international press in which the liberal establishment played no less a role than the Communist. It is appalling that Herbert M. Matthews, the New York Times's principal correspondent on the so-called "Loyalist" side of the war, could write as recently as 1973, "I would say that there was a revolution of sorts, but it should not be exaggerated. In one basic sense, there was no revolution at all, since the republican government functioned much as it did before the war."<sup>13</sup> Whether this is stupidity or collusion with the forces that ended the "revolution of sorts," I shall leave for the reader to judge. But it was correspondents of this political temper who fed news of the "Spanish war" to the American people in the 1930s.

The literature that deals with the conflict, generally more forthright than what was available for years after the war, has grown enormously, supported by oral historians of

considerable ability. Has the American left learned from these accounts or from the Spanish collectives, industrial as well as agricultural, which offer dramatic alternative models of revolutionary modernization to the conventional ones based on nationalized economies and centralized, often totalitarian, control? My answer would have to be a depressing no. The decline of the "New Left" and the emergence of a more "orthodox" one threatens to create a new myth of the "Popular Front" as a golden era of radicalism. One would suppose that the new material on Spain, largely left-wing in orientation, has been read by no one. The "Spanish war" is no longer cloaked in silence, but the facts are being layered over with a sweet sentimentality for the aging survivors of the "Lincoln Battalion" and the Mom-Pop stereotypes in films like *Seeing Red*.

The truth, indeed, is out -- but the ears to hear it and the minds to learn from it seem to have been atrophied by a cultivated ignorance and a nearly total loss of critical insight. "Partyness" has replaced politics, mindless "loyalty" has replaced theory, "balance" in weighing the facts has replaced commitment, and an ecumenical "radicalism" that embraces Stalinists and reformists under the shredded banner of "unity" and "coalition" has replaced the integrity of ideas and practice. That the banner of "unity" and "coalition" became Spain's shroud and was used with impunity to destroy its revolution and risk delivering the country to Franco is as remote from the collective wisdom of the left today as it was fifty years ago in the cauldron of a bloody civil war.

Ultimately, the integrity of the Spanish left could be preserved only if it articulated the most deep-seated traditions of the Spanish people: their strong sense of community, their traditions of confederalism and local

autonomy, and their profound mistrust of the state. Whether the American left shares with the Spanish left the popular legacy that the latter cleansed and rescued from the right is a crucial problem that cannot be discussed here. But insofar as the anarchists gave these traditions coherence and a radical thrust, converting them into a political culture, not merely a contrived "program," they survived generations of incredible persecution and repression. Indeed, only when the Socialists resolved the problem of the relationship between a political movement and a popular one by establishing their famous "houses of the people" or *casas del pueblo* in Spain's villages, neighborhoods, and cities did they become a vital movement in Spanish life and politics.

The "Popular Front" ruptured this relationship by replacing a popular culture with the "politics" of backroom "coalitions." The utterly disparate parties that entered into "coalitions" were united solely by their shared fear of the popular movement and of Franco. The left's need to deal with its own relationship to popular traditions which have a latent radical content -- to cleanse these traditions and bring out their emancipatory aspirations -- remains a legacy of the Spanish Civil War that has not been earnestly confronted, either by anarchists or by socialists. Until the need to form a political culture is clearly defined and given the centrality it deserves, the Spanish Revolution will remain not only one of the most inexplicable chapters of radical history but the conscience of the radical movement as a whole.

#### NOTES

1. The Spanish Civil War (Part Five, "Inside the Revolution"), a six-part documentary produced by BBC-Granada, Ltd. This series is by far the best visual presentation of the Spanish Civil War I have seen and

contains an enormous amount of original oral history. It is a primary source for material on the subject.

2. Ronald Fraser, "The Popular Experience of War and Revolution" in *Revolution and War in Spain, 1931-1939*, Paul Preston, ed. (London and New York, 1983), pp. 226-27. This book is another valuable source.

3. See Edward E. Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain: Origins of the Civil War* (London and New Haven, 1970), pp. 284-92.

4. For an evaluation of the alternative approaches that Europe faced in the sixteenth century, including the Comunero revolt, see my *Urbanization Without Cities*. Manuel Castells's *The City and the Grassroots* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983) contains a fascinating account of the revolt and its implications, in what I am inclined to believe is a departure from Castells's more traditional Marxist approach. For an English account of the Comunero revolt and a useful criticism of historical writing on the subject, see Stephan Haliczer's *The Comuneros of Castile* (Madison, 1981). For a general background on the relationship between Spanish anarchism and the popular culture of Spain, see my book *The Spanish Anarchists* (New York, 1976; AK Press, 1994).

5. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers), p. 182.

6. Quoted in Pierre Broué and Emile Témime, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (Cambridge, 1972), pg. 100.

7. Quoted in David Mitchell, *The Spanish Civil War* (London and New York, 1982) p. 31. This book is based on the BBC-Granada television series, but just as the series does not contain a good deal of material in the book, so the book does not contain a good deal of material in the series. The interested reader is therefore well advised to consult both.

8. Broué and Témime, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
9. See the interview with Tarradellas in Part Five of the BBC-Granada Spanish Civil War documentary.
10. Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
11. *Ibid*, p. 158-59. Although the motives behind the Belchite campaign verge on the incredible, they were not uncommon. Other cases of major conflicts -- and crises -- in the Spanish Civil War were motivated by similar political considerations, with no concern for the lives lost and the damage inflicted on the "coalition" against Franco.
12. Denis Smyth, "Reflex Reaction: Germany and the Onset of the Spanish Civil War," in Preston, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
13. Quoted in Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 59.



## **CRITICISMS:**

## **ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT:**

### **DEEP ECOLOGY, ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM AND THE FUTURE OF ANARCHIST THOUGHT**

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There is very little I can add to the outstanding criticism Brian Morris levels at deep ecology. Indeed, Morris's contribution to the debate around eco-mysticism generally has been insightful as well as incisive, and I have found his writings an educational experience that hopefully will reach a very wide audience in the United States in addition to Britain.

I should hope that his review of Arne Naess's Ecology, Community and Lifestyle has revealed the intellectual poverty of the 'father of deep ecology' and the silliness of the entire deep ecology 'movement'. Rodney Aitchey's rather airy, often inaccurate, and mystical Deep Ecology: Not Man Apart, it would seem to me, is perhaps the best argument against deep ecology that I have seen in quite a

while. But after dealing with deep ecologists in North America for quite a few years, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the acolytes of Naess et al operate on faith and are motivated in their allegiances by theological rather than rational impulses. There is no reasoned argument, I suspect, that will shake a belief-system of this kind - hence I will leave discussion of the issues involved to others who still have the energy to deal with mindless dogmas.

I would add - or possibly reinforce - only one observation to the incisive ones that Morris makes. One wonders whether deep ecology's biocentric maxim that all living beings can be equitable with one another in terms of their 'intrinsic worth' would have had any meaning during the long eras of organic evolution before human beings emerged. The entire conceptual framework of deep ecology is entirely a product of human agency - a fact that imparts to the human species a unique status in the natural world. All ethical systems (including those that can be grounded in biotic evolution) are formulated by human beings in distinctly cultural situations. Remove human agency from the scene, and there is not the least evidence that animals exhibit behaviour that can be regarded as discursive, meaningful, or moral. When Elisee Reclus, the anarchist geographer, tells us that pussycats are (as cited by George Woodcock in his introduction to the Marie Fleming biography of Reclus) 'natural anarchists', or worse, that 'there is not a human sentiment which on occasion they [i.e. cats] do not understand or share, not an idea which they do not divine [sic!], not a desire but what they forestall it', Reclus is writing ethological and ecological nonsense. That anarchist writers celebrate the author of such an anthropomorphic absurdity as

'ecological' is regrettable to say the least. To the extent that 'intrinsic worth' is something more than merely an agreeable intuition in modern ecological thought, it is an 'attribute' that human beings formulate in their minds and a 'right' that they may decide to confer on animals and other creatures. It does not exist apart from the operations of the human mind or humanity's social values.

To turn from the silliness of deep ecology to the preposterous elucidation of anarchosyndicalism that Graham Purchase advances is a thankless task that I would ignore were it not scheduled to be published in book form. Purchase's piece, 'Social Ecology, Anarchism and Trade Unionism', is a malicious essay that begins by accusing me of writing belligerently and 'insult(ing) American anarchists and trade unionists' then goes on to heap upon me some of the most vituperative and ad hominem attacks that I've encountered in a long time. Not only am I 'at best unconstructive and at worst positively harmful', Purchase warns his readers, but worse, I am consumed by 'an insatiable appetite for controversy'. Having advanced this no doubt balanced, unprovocative, and objective evaluation of my role in the anarchist movement, Purchase displays his psychoanalytic acumen by alleging that I suffer from 'an unhealthy desire to be the intellectual leader and founder of a 'new' ecological movement', that I exhibit evidence of 'intellectual schizophrenia', and finally that I 'filch all the major ecological insights of anarchist theory and practice [and] dress them up in a socialist-feminist [!] cum neo-hegelian garb and go on to more or less claim them as [my] own'. As if this level of vituperation were not enough - no doubt it is intended to subdue my own 'insatiable appetite for controversy'! - Purchase goes on

to characterise the body of views that I have advanced over a dozen or so books and scores of articles as 'an intellectual outrage' .

To correct Purchase's often convoluted account of the evolution of my views-presumably I was an 'anarchist-ecologist' in the late 1960s and 1970s, only to mutate into an 'outrageous' anti-syndicalist and hence anti-anarchist 'social ecologist' in the 1980s and 1990s - would be as tedious as it would be futile. I shall leave it to serious readers of my work to sort out the absurdities of his account. Suffice it here to make a few points. No one, least of all I, believes that we can radically alter society without the support of the proletariat and working people of all kinds. But to assume that industrial workers will play the 'hegemonic' role that Marxists traditionally assigned to them - and that the anarcho-syndicalists merely echoed - is to smother radical thought and practice with a vengeance. My criticism of theories that assign a hegemonic role to the proletariat in the struggle for an anarchist society - generically denoted by labour historians as 'proletarian socialism' - is simply that they are obsolete . The reasons for the passage of the era of proletarian socialism into history have been explored not only by myself but by serious radical theorists of all kinds - including anarchists. From decades of experience in my own life, I learned that industrial workers can more easily be reached as men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, indeed, as neighbours and citizens. They are often more concerned about community problems, pollution, public education, democracy, morality, and the quality of their lives than about whether they 'control' the factories in which they are ruthlessly exploited. Indeed, the majority of workers and

trade-union members with whom I worked for years in foundries and auto plants were more eager to get out of their factories after working hours were over than to ponder production schedules and vocational assignments.

Is it inconceivable that we have misread the historical nature of the proletariat (more a Marxian failing, I may add, than a traditional anarchist one) as a revolutionary hegemonic class? Is it inconceivable that the factory system, far from organising and radicalising the proletariat, has steadily assimilated it to industrial systems of command and obedience? Have capitalism and the working class stood still since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or have they both undergone profound changes that pose major challenges to - and significantly vitiate the claims of - anarchosyndicalists as well as traditional Marxists? With remarkable prescience, Bakunin himself expressed his fears about the possible 'embourgeoisement' of the working class and, more generally, that the 'masses have allowed themselves to become deeply demoralised, apathetic, not to say castrated by the pernicious influence of our corrupt centralised, statist civilisation'. Bakunin's fears were not merely an expression of a strategic view that applies only to his own time, but a historic judgement that still requires explication, not equivocation. Today, so-called 'progressive' capitalist enterprises have succeeded quite admirably by giving workers an appreciable share in hiring, firing and setting production quotas, bringing the proletariat into complicity with its own exploitation.

Purchase not only ignores these momentous developments and the analyses that I and others have

advanced; he grossly misinterprets and demagogically redefines any criticism of syndicalism, indeed, trade-unionism, as an expression of hostility toward anarchism as such. Assuming that Purchase knows very much about the history of anarchism and syndicalism, this line of argument is manipulative and an outright distortion; but to be generous, I will say that it reveals a degree of ignorance and intolerance that deserves vigorous reproval. In fact, in the late nineteenth-century, when syndicalism emerged as an issue among anarchists, it was furiously debated. The outstanding luminaries of the anarchist movement at the the turn of the century - such as Errico Malatesta, Elisee Reclus, Emma Goldman, Sebastian Faure, and others - initially opposed syndicalism for a variety of reasons, many of which show a great deal of prescience on their part. And in time, when they came to accept it, many of them did so in a highly prudent manner. Malatesta, in his fundamental criticism of syndicalism, argued that the generation of a revolutionary spirit 'cannot be the normal, natural definition of the Trade Union's function'. Although he eventually accepted anarchosyndicalism with apparent reluctance, he continued to call for a far more expansive form of anarchist organisation and practice than many syndicalists were prepared to accept.

In practice, anarchist groups often came into outright conflict with anarchosyndicalist organisations - not to speak of syndicalist organiza- tions, many of which eschewed anarchism. Early in the century, the Spanish anarchocommunists, influenced primarily by Juan Baron and Francisco Cardinal, the editors of *Tierra y Libertad*, furiously denounced the anarchosyndicalists who were later to form the CNT as 'deserters' and 'reformists'. Similar conflicts developed in Italy, France, and the

United States, and perhaps not without reason. The record of the anarcho-syndicalist movement has been one of the most abysmal in the history of anarchism generally. In the Mexican Revolution, for example, the anarcho-syndicalist leaders of the Casa del Obrero Mundial shamefully placed their proletarian 'Red Battalions' at the service of Carranza, one of the revolution's most bloodthirsty thugs, to fight the truly revolutionary militia of Zapata - all to obtain a few paltry reforms, which Carranza withdrew once the Zapatista challenge had been broken with their collaboration. The great Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon justly denounced their behaviour as a betrayal.

Nor can much be said in defence of the leaders of the CNT in Spain. They swallowed their libertarian principles by becoming 'ministers' in the Madrid government late in 1936, not without the support of many of their followers, I should add, and in May 1937 they used their prestige to disarm the Barcelona proletariat when it tried to resist the Stalinist counterrevolution in the Catalan capital. In the United States, lest present-day anarcho-syndicalists get carried away by legendary movements like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), they should be advised that this syndicalist movement, like others elsewhere, was by no means committed to anarchism. 'Big Bill' Haywood, its most renowned Leader, was never an anarchist. Still other IWW leaders, many of whom tilted toward an anarchist outlook, not only became Communists in the 1920s but became ardent Stalinists in the 1930s and later. It is worth noting that serious Spanish anarchists, even those who joined the CNT, regarded the influence of the CNT's trade-unionist mentality on the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) as



deleterious and ultimately disastrous. Toward the end of the civil war, it was questionable whether the FAI controlled the CNT or, more likely, whether the CNT, with its strong trade-union mentality, had essentially diluted the FAI's anarchist principles. As Malatesta had so perceptively declared, even as he cautiously accepted the amalgamation of anarchist with syndicalist principles under the pressure of a growing syndicalist movement in Europe, 'trade unions are, by their nature, reformist and never revolutionary' (emphasis added). For an oaf like Graham Purchase to bombastically equate syndicalism with anarchism - an act of arrogance that is as fatuous as it is ignorant - and then to go on and essentially equate trade unionism with syndicalism deserves only disdain.

The authentic locus of anarchists in the past was the commune or municipality, not the factory, which was generally conceived as only part of a broader communal structure, not its decisive component. Syndicalism, to the extent that it narrowed this broader outlook by singling out the proletariat and its industrial environment as its locus, also crucially narrowed the more sweeping social and moral landscape that traditional anarchism had created. In large part this ideological retreat reflected the rise of the factory system in the closing years of the last century in France and Spain, but it also echoed the ascendancy of a particularly vulgar form of economistic Marxism (Marx, to his credit, did not place much stock in trade unionism), to which many naive anarchists and nonpolitical trade unionists succumbed. After the Revolution by Abad de Santillan, one of the movers and shakers of Spanish anarchosyndicalism, reflects this shift toward a pragmatic economism in such a way that makes his views almost indistinguishable from those of the Spanish socialists - and, of course, that brought him into

collusion with the Catalan government, literally one of the grave-diggers of Spanish anarchism. Syndicalism - be it anarchosyndicalism or its less libertarian variants - has probably done more to denature the ethical content of anarchism than any other single factor in the history of the movement, apart from anarchism's largely marginal and ineffectual individualist tendencies. Indeed, until anarchism shakes off this syndicalist heritage and expands its communalistic and communistic heritage, it will be little more than a rhetorical and mindless echo of vulgar Marxism and the ghost of an era that has long passed into history.

But as the Germans say, genug! I've had it with Purchase and his kind. Let them explore more thoroughly the historical and textual bases of anarchist theory and practice before they leap into print with inanities that reveal their appalling ignorance of the intellectual and practical trajectories of their own beliefs. And they should also take some pains to read what I have written on the history and failings of the workers' movement before they undertake to criticize my own views. What I strongly resent, however, is the fatuous implication - one that even more sensible anarchists sometimes imply - that I 'filch' my ecological views from 'anarchist theory and practice'. In fact, I have been overly eager to cite anarchist antecedents for social ecology (as I call my eco-anarchist views), and I have done so wherever I could. The Ecology of Freedom, written in 1982 - that is, during the period when, according to Purchase, I abandoned my anarchist views for social ecology - opens with an epigraph from Kropotkin's Ethics. In the Acknowledgments section of that book, I observed that 'Peter Kropotkin's writings on mutual aid and anarchism remain an abiding tradition to which I am committed'.

For reasons that I shall explain, this is a bit of an overstatement so far as Kropotkin is concerned, but the text contains no less than nine favourable, often laudatory references to him, including an extensive quotation from Mutual Aid with which I expressed my warm approval. If I have not mentioned Elisee Reclus, it was because I knew nothing about his work and views until I read Marie Fleming's 1988 biography of him for the first time only a few weeks ago. And in retrospect, I doubt that I would have quoted cited him in any case.

Try as I have to cite my affinity with anarchist writers of the past guardians of the anarchist ossuary often miss a very crucial point. Social ecology is a fairly integrated and coherent viewpoint that encompassed a philosophy of natural evolution and of humanity's place in that evolutionary process; a reformulation of dialectics along ecological lines; an account of the emergence of hierarchy; a historical examination of the dialectic between legacies and epistemologies of domination and freedom; an evaluation of technology from an historical, ethical, and philosophical standpoint; a wide-ranging critique of Marxism, the Frankfurt School, justice, rationalism, scientism, and instrumentalism; and finally, an eduction of a vision of a utopian, decentralized, confederal, and aesthetically grounded future society based on an objective ethics of complementarity. I do not present these ideas as a mere inventory of subjects but as a highly coherent viewpoint. The Ecology of Freedom, moreover, must be supplemented by the later Urbanization Without Cities, The Philosophy of Social Ecology, and Remaking Society, not to speak of quite a few important essays published mainly in Green Perspectives, if one is to recognize that social ecology is more than the sum of its parts.

Whether adequately or not, the holistic body of ideas in these works endeavours to place 'eco-anarchism', a term that to the best of my knowledge has come into existence entirely as a result of my writings, on a theoretical and intellectual par with the best systematic works in radical social theory. To pick this corpus apart by citing an antecedent, in the writings of some prominent nineteenth-century anarchists, for an idea I developed in this whole, and thereby deal with only part of what I have tried to integrate into a meaningful and relevant whole for our times, is simply fatuous. One could similarly reduce systematic accounts of any body of social or even scientific theory by citing historical antecedents for various constituent fragments. If there is any 'filching' going on, it may well be by the guardians of the anarchist ossuary who have turned the rather smug boast 'We said it long ago' into a veritable industry, while themselves benefiting from whatever prestige anarchism has gained over the past decades by virtue of its association with social ecology. I would not make such an assertion, had I not been provoked by the arrogance and dogmatism of these guardians in my encounters with them. To set the record straight: The fact is that Kropotkin had no influence on my turn from Marxism to anarchism - nor, for that matter, did Bakunin or Proudhon. It was Herbert Read's 'The Philosophy of Anarchism' that I found most useful for rooting the views that I slowly developed over the fifties and well into the sixties in a libertarian pedigree; hence the considerable attention he received in my 1964 essay, 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought'. Odd as it may seem, it was my reaction against Marx and Engels's critiques of anarchism, my readings into the Athenian polis, George Woodcock's informative history of

anarchism, my own avocation as a biologist, and my studies in technology that gave rise to the views in my early essays - not any extensive readings into the works of early anarchists. Had I been 'born into' the anarchist tradition, as some of our more self-righteous anarchists claim to have been, I might well have taken umbrage at Proudhon's exchange-oriented contractualism and after my long experience in the workers' movement, I would have felt bothered by the rubbish about syndicalism advanced by Graham Purchase and his kind.

Purchase's fatuous attempt to distinguish my post-1980 writings on social ecology from my presumably 'true-blue' anarchist writings before that date leaves a number of facts about the development of social ecology unexplained. I wrote my earliest, almost book-length work on the ecological dislocations produced by capitalism, 'The Problems of Chemicals in Food', in 1952, while I was a neo-Marxist and had in no way been influenced by anarchist thinkers. Many of Marx's views heavily contributed to my notion of post-scarcity, very much a 'pre-1980' outlook to which I still adhere. (Certain Spanish anarchists, I may add, held similar views in the 1930s, as I discovered decades later when I wrote *The Spanish Anarchists*.) I say all of this without being in the least concerned that my anarchist views may be 'adulterated' by some of Marx's concepts. With Bakunin, I share the view that Marx made invaluable contributions to radical theory, contributions one can easily value without accepting his authoritarian politics or perspectives. For anarchists to foolishly demonize Marx - or even Hegel, for that matter- is to abandon a rich legacy of ideas that should be brought to the service of libertarian thought, just as the fascinating work of many biologists should be brought to the service of

biological thought. Which does not mean that we have to accept Marx's gross errors about centralism, his commitment to a 'worker's party', his support of the nation-state, and the like, any more than learning from Hegel's dialectic means that we must necessarily accept the existence of the 'Absolute', a strict teleological system, a hybridized corporate parliamentary monarchy, or what he broadly called 'absolute idealism'.

By the same token, we will be deceiving nobody but ourselves if we celebrate the insights of traditional anarchism without dealing forthrightly with its shortcomings. Due honour should certainly be given to Proudhon for developing federalistic notions of social organization against the nation-state and defending the rights of craftspeople and peasants who were under the assault of industrial capitalism—a system that Marx dogmatically celebrated in so many of his writings. But it would be sheer myopia to ignore Proudhon's commitment to a contractual form of economic relationships, as distinguished from the communistic maxim 'from each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her needs'. His contractualism permeated his federalistic concepts and can scarcely be distinguished from bourgeois conceptions of 'right'. I say this despite some attempts that have been made to cast his proclivity for contractual exchanges into a quasi-philosophical notion of 'social contract'

Even if Proudhonism really were a social contract theory, this would be quite unsatisfactory, in my eyes. Nor can we ignore Richard Vernon's observation in his introduction to Proudhon's *The Principle of Federalism* that Proudhon viewed federalism as an abridgment of his earlier, largely personalistic anarchism. If thought out

carefully, Proudhon's views seem to be premised on the existence of free-floating, seemingly 'sovereign' individuals, craftspersons, or even collectives structured around contractual, exchangelike relationships and property ownership rather than on a communistic system of 'ownership' and distribution of goods.

Bakunin, in turn, was an avowed collectivist, not a communist, and his views on organization in particular were often at odds with themselves. (I might remind Purchase, here, that Fourier was in no sense a socialist, anarchist or even a revolutionary, despite his many rich insights.) Maximoff's later assemblage of small portions of Bakunin's many writings under the rubric of 'scientific anarchism' would probably have astonished Bakunin, just as many of Bakunin's insights would shock orthodox anarchists today. I, for one, would generally agree with Bakunin, for example, that 'municipal elections always best reflect the real attitude and will of the people', although I would want to restate his formulation to mean that municipal elections can more accurately reflect the popular will than parliamentary ones. But how many orthodox anarchists would agree with Bakunin's view - or even my qualified one? The extreme resistance I have encountered from anarchist traditionalists and 'purists' on this issue has virtually foreclosed any possibility of developing a libertarian, participatory, municipalist, and confederal politics today as part of the anarchist tradition.

Given his time and place, Kropotkin was perhaps one of the most farseeing of the theorists I encountered in the libertarian tradition. It was not until the late sixties, when reprints of his works began to appear in American bookshops, that I became familiar with his Fields,

Factories, and Workshops (and at a later time, Colin Ward's excellent abridgment of this book), and it was not until the mid-sixties that I read portions of *Mutual Aid* - that is, the centre portion that deals with medieval cities. To be quite frank, these books did not appreciably affect my views; rather, they confirmed them and reinforced my commitment to anarchism. In much the same way, my 1974 book *The Limits of the City*, structured around a very large essay I wrote in 1958, unknowingly paralleled some of Marx's observations on the relationship between town and country that he expressed in the *Grundrisse*, which was not available to me in English translation until the 1960s. Indeed, it was mainly my study of urban development over the course of history that nourished *The Limits of the City*, a work strongly influenced by Marx's *Capital*. My book mentions Kropotkin only incidentally as figuring in the history of city planning in the later-appended pages. I cite this background to note how nonsensical Purchase's distinction between my pre-1980 and my post-1980 development really is, and to point out how little Purchase seems to know about my writings, much less their 'pedigree' and the diversity of ideological, philosophical and historical sources that have nourished my writings.

Far from pillaging from Kropotkin and other anarchist writers, I have tended in the past, let me repeat, to overstate my obligation to them. I never agreed with free-booting notions of anarchism that rest as much on ordinary professional and scientific associations as they do on the broader notion of a commune based on civic unity and popular assemblies. Moreover, a revolutionism that is primarily rooted in a 'revolutionary instinct' (Bakunin) and a mutualism that is primarily rooted in a



'social instinct' (Kropotkin) are little more than vague substitutes for serious explanations. Instinct theory has to be dealt with very cautiously, lest it devolve into outright sociobiology. Kropotkin's rather loose attribution of 'social instinct' to animals generally in order to validate mutualism is particularly troubling, in my view, not only because it is based on a highly selective study of animals - he tends to ignore a host of solitary animals, including highly advanced mammals. Even more troubling is that he tends to confuse animal troops, herds, packs, and transient communities with societies: that is to say, with highly mutable institutions, alterable as they are by virtue of the distinctly human ability to form, develop, subvert, and overthrow them according to their interests and will.

Elisee Reclus, for his part, carried certain elements of Kropotkin's outlook to the point of absurdity. I am at a loss to understand how cats 'understand or share' or 'forestall' our 'sentiments', 'desires', and ideas', as Reclus asserted they do in the quotation I cited near the beginning of this article. I am certain that my doubts about so saintly and gentle an anarchist as Reclus will place me in the bad graces of cat owners but I find such anthropomorphism naive. His view that 'secret harmony exists between the earth and people', one that 'imprudent societies' will always regret if they violate it, is far too vague, at times even mystical to be regarded as more than a generous sentiment. One may surely respect such sentiments, but countless writers (including some very reactionary nature romantics) have reiterated them more emphatically to regard them as eco-anarchist in nature. Deep ecology, eco-theology, and air-headed spiritualists have found more 'secret harmonies' between humanity and nonhuman nature than I know what to do with. I

would certainly praise Reclus as an anarchist and a resolute revolutionary, but I would be disquieted if his particular views on the natural world were identified apart from their good intentions, with eco-anarchism.

Yes, let us give Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus, Malatesta, and other leading anarchist thinkers due honour and respect for what they did in their time and what they have to offer to ours. But cannot anarchism go further than the terrain they charted out a century ago? If some of us try to do so, must we live under the tyranny of ossuary guardians like Graham Purchase, who can be expected to lift a bony finger from out of the crypt and reprove us for ignoring nineteenth-century anarchists' passages on ecologically oriented social relationships and humanity's relationship to nature - a hint here, an antecedent fragment there, even a sizable passage - whose formulations are inadequate today and were often quite erroneous to begin with? We can certainly build on views advanced by the great anarchist thinkers of the past. But must we ignore the need for more sophisticated notions of confederalism, anti-statism, decentralism, definitions of freedom, and sensitivity to the natural world, than those that they advanced? There are many notions that were central to their views that we are obliged to discard. Such advances, hopefully, and the coherence they provide are part of the history of cultural development as a whole. Is anarchism to be immunized from further developments and revisions by the guardians of its ossuary? I would hope not, especially since anarchism - almost by definition - is the exercise of freedom not only in the social realm but also in the realm of thought. To lock anarchism into a crypt and condemn any innovative body of libertarian ideas as booty 'filched' from a sacred precinct is an affront to the libertarian

spirit and all that the libertarian tradition stands for. Times do change. The proletariat and, more marginally, the peasantry which anarchosyndicalism turned as a 'historical subject', or agents for revolution, are numerically diminishing at best or are being integrated into the existing system at worst. The most crucial contradictions of capitalism are not those within the system but between the system and the natural world. Today, a broad consensus is growing among all oppressed people - by no means strictly industrial workers - that ecological dislocation has produced monumental problems, problems that may well bring the biosphere as we know it to an end. With the emergence of a general human interest, largely the need to maintain and restore a viable biosphere, an interest around which people of highly disparate backgrounds and social strata may yet unite, anarchosyndicalism is simply archaic, both as a movement and as a body of ideas. If anarchist theory and practice cannot keep pace with - let alone go beyond - historic changes that have altered the entire social, cultural, and moral landscape and effaced a good part of the world in which traditional anarchism was developed, the entire movement will indeed become what Theodor Adorno called it - 'a ghost'. If every attempt to provide a coherent, contemporary interpretation of the anarchist tradition is fragmented, shattered, and parcelled out to antecedents whose views were often more appropriate to their times than they are to ours, the libertarian tradition will fade back into history as surely as the anarchic Anabaptists have disappeared. Then capitalism and the Right will indeed have society completely under their control, and self-styled libertarian ideas may well become relics in an ideological museum that will be as remote to the coming century as Jacobinism is to our own.

COMMENTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL  
ECOLOGY NETWORK GATHERING AND THE  
"DEEP SOCIAL ECOLOGY" OF JOHN CLARK

MURRAY BOOKCHIN

--September 20, 1995

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I

Between August 14 and 19, 1995, an international social ecology network gathering met near Dunoon, Scotland, to discuss the topic "Democracy and Ecology." Its agenda featured, among other presentations, a one-hour summary of a long essay by John Clark titled "The Politics of Social Ecology: Beyond the Limits of the City."

My age and growing disabilities prevented me from attending the gathering, which caused me some concern since Clark has broken with social ecology and become, as he impishly denominated himself in *The Trumpeter*,

an organ of the deep ecology "movement," a "deep social ecologist, or social deep ecologist" (Clark, Trumpeter, p. 104). For quite some time, in fact, Clark's writings in the deep ecology and anarchist press had already been fundamentally at odds with social ecology and were blurring major differences between the two tendencies, at a time when it is of essential importance to distinguish them clearly. The views he had been advancing were essentially mystical and, from a social ecological and social anarchistic perspective, reactionary.

I strongly objected in two personal conversations with Michael Small, the gathering's convener, that highlighting Clark as a major speaker was legitimating him as a social ecologist--when he had been in the process of shedding social ecology for quite some time. Not only did I feel that Clark's tendency to grossly confuse--and even mislead--people who regard themselves as social ecologists would likely create problems at the gathering; I was also deeply concerned that the gathering would not remain the "educational experience" or "interchange of views" among social ecologists that it was intended to be, but attempt to function instead as a founding congress for a social ecology network.

Further, I voiced to Small my strong fears that any "statement" that might emerge from such a gathering would almost certainly compromise the basic principles of social ecology. Small, in turn, assured me emphatically that "we would know how to deal with Clark" (or words to that effect) and that the gathering would remain strictly educational in nature. To express my own views on social ecology as unequivocally as possible, I sent on to the gathering several "Theses on

Social Ecology in a Period of Reaction" that I had written.

As it turned out, some of my deepest concerns about this gathering appear to have been confirmed. It does appear to have tried to function as something of a founding congress, by producing a one-page draft statement of "Principles of the International Social Ecology Network." To my astonishment, I learned that when the committee was formed to draft the statement, Clark was nominated to participate--and that he did participate in its preparation. The confused, indeed bizarrely hybridized nature of the draft statement that resulted from the committee's work appears to be due in large measure to the wrangling that Takis Fotopoulos, editor of *Society and Nature*, who also sat on the committee, was obliged to engage in with Clark. Fotopoulos, who is explicitly committed to libertarian municipalism, had to defend the document's meager political contents against Clark's insistent efforts to denature it in favor of spiritualistic formulations.

Having piggybacked his Taoist version of ecology atop social ecology for many years, John Clark's more recent writings often involve an unsavory denaturing of concepts filched from social ecology and from serious social anarchist movements of the past. (I shudder to think what older Spanish anarchist comrades whom I came to know like Gaston Leval and Jose Peirats would have made of his misuse of the phrase "affinity group.") Now, as he shifts his ideological identification from "social ecologist" to "social deep ecologist," he can in all probability look forward to a new career among deep ecologists as a revered apostate, riding on the current wave of antihumanism and mysticism that threatens to

render the ecology movement socially irrelevant. Indeed, he has already plunged with vigor into his new career by writing appreciatively of the works of Father Thomas Berry, Arne Naess, et al. in the deep ecology press, while his own "surregionalist" writings have been republished with appreciation in the lifestyle anarchist periodical *The Fifth Estate*.

Happily, Small has apparently had second thoughts about the way he organized the gathering. But let me suggest that Clark has no more place on a policymaking body at a social ecology organizing gathering than I have on a similar body at a deep ecology organizing gathering, let alone as a featured speaker. He has every right to attend or call gatherings and conferences based on views and writings that he supports, and I would earnestly encourage all who share his views to partake of such transcendental experiences for as long as they like and wherever they please.

But the evidence that Clark had no place on this committee lies in the statement itself: in its mixed messages, some of which are sharply at odds with each other; in its relegation of libertarian or confederal municipalism to a secondary status among a collection of largely communitarian options; and in its queasy tilt toward a personalistic lifestyle outlook, indeed toward a narcissism that has already produced ugly results in Euro-American anarchism, whatever the latter word has come to mean in the absence of the qualifying adjective social.

We are facing a real crisis in this truly counterrevolutionary time--not only in society's relationship with the natural world but in human

consciousness itself. By designating himself as a "social deep ecologist or a deep social ecologist," Clark has obfuscated earnest attempts to demarcate the differences between a deadening mystical, often religious, politically inert, and potentially reactionary tendency in the ecology movement, and one that is trying to emphasize the need for fundamental social change and fight uncompromisingly the "present state of political culture."

## II

As to the essay that Clark summarized and apparently distributed at the Scotland gathering, it reveals how far he has drifted from social ecology, and more importantly, it reflects the kind of irresponsible thinking that increasingly marks the present period. This document, titled "The Politics of Social Ecology: Beyond the Limits of the City," bears the following caveat: "Note: This is a draft. Please do not copy or quote it. Comments are welcome"

Bluntly speaking, I regard this caveat as scandalous. Clark is not simply circulating his paper to a few friends and colleagues for comment, which is what one usually does with essays so marked, before their publication. Instead, he seems to have distributed this twenty-six-page single-spaced propaganda tract against libertarian municipalism to a gathering of several score people from different parts of the world. Having distributed the essay and summarized its contents in his presentation, Clark apparently permitted the participants to take his "restricted" criticism of libertarian municipalism back home to their respective countries, where they would be likely to circulate it further.



In short, despite his injunction against quoting from the essay, Clark clearly brought his attack on libertarian municipalism into the public sphere and used it to try to obstruct an attempt by social ecologists to build a movement on terms with which he disagrees. And what those terms are, Clark has recently made clear in his house organ, the Delta Greens Quarterly: "We need a spiritual revolution more than a political platform, and a regenerated community more than a political movement" (Clark, Delta Greens, p. 2).

It is clear, then, that Clark is trying to immunize himself to criticism by abjuring people from explicitly quoting from his essay. Such behavior may wash at academic conferences, if you please, but it is a scandalous ploy in the political sphere. Clark should not be permitted to shield himself from criticism of his widely distributed attack on social ecology, and I have no intention whatever of honoring his grossly dishonorable abjuration. Behind his patina of uplifting spirituality, his behavior exhibits an immorality that beggars some of the worst hypocrisies I have encountered in decades of political life, and he should be held morally as well as intellectually accountable for his behavior.

### III

The central component of Clark's dispute with me is his objection to libertarian municipalism, a view that I have long argued constitutes the politics of social ecology, notably a revolutionary effort in which freedom is given institutional form in public assemblies that

become decision-making bodies. It depends upon libertarian leftists running candidates at the local municipal level, calling for the division of municipalities into wards, where popular assemblies can be created that bring people into full and direct participation in political life. Having democratized themselves, municipalities would confederate into a dual power to oppose the nation-state and ultimately dispense with it and with the economic forces that underpin statism as such. Libertarian municipalism is thus both a historical goal and a concordant means to achieve the revolutionary "Commune of communes."

Libertarian or confederal municipalism is above all a politics that seeks to create a vital democratic public sphere. In my *Urbanization Without Cities* as well as other works, I have made careful but crucial distinctions between three societal realms: the social, the political, and the state. What people do in their homes, what friendships they form, the communal lifestyles they practice, the way they make their living, their sexual behavior, the cultural artifacts they consume, and the rapture and ecstasy they experience on mountaintops--all these personal as well as materially necessary activities belong to what I call the social sphere of life. Families, friends, and communal living arrangements are part of the social realm. Apart from matters of human rights, it is the business of no one to sit in judgment of what consenting adults freely engage in sexually, or of the hobbies they prefer, or the kinds of friends they adopt, or the mystical practices they may choose to perform.

However much all aspects of life interact with one another, none of these social aspects of human life properly belong to the public sphere, which I explicitly

identify with politics in the Hellenic sense of the term. In creating a new politics based on social ecology, we are concerned with what people do in this public or political sphere, not with what people do in their bedrooms, living rooms, or basements.

Clark, for his part, claims to go "beyond" the political realm, and expansively attempts to make cooperative institutions outside the political sphere--what I consider parts of the social realm, not the political--into central parts of his approach to social change. "Political programs [no less!] must be placed within the context of the development of a strong, many-sided ecological communitarian culture," he writes--and verily it is a "culture" (not a politics) of "producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, land trusts, and other more limited cooperative forms," possibly like the "Mondragon system [which] is certainly not revolutionary [but] has achieved notable successes in instituting more cooperative and democratic forms of production" (p. 22). In effect, Clark dispenses with the distinction between the political and the social. Doubtless, the workplace is a realm that a municipality and confederation of municipalities has to reclaim for the political sphere in the future--in a municipalized economy. But to include it now in that sphere, replete with "bosses" (p. 6), no less, is to dissolve the political into the social as it exists today and to make the untransformed realm of exploitation analogous to the transformative realm of freedom.

Clark's accusation that I "prioritize" the municipality over the family and other domestic arrangements causes me some puzzlement. Even a modicum of a historical perspective shows that it is precisely the municipality

that most individuals must deal with directly, once they leave the social realm and enter the public sphere. Doubtless the municipality is usually the place where even a great deal of social life is existentially lived--school, work, entertainment, and simple pleasures like walking, bicycling, and disporting themselves, which does not efface its distinctiveness as a unique sphere of life.

Clark, however, thoroughly confuses people's private satisfactions--and for that matter, their personal needs, responsibilities, and duties--with the political public sphere. Indeed, he writes about their relationships in a startling way: "Millions of individuals [!] in modern society [!] deal most directly with the mass media," he tells us, "by way of their television sets, radios, newspapers and magazines, until they go to work and deal with bosses, coworkers and technologies, after which they return to the domestic hearth [!] and further bombardment by the mass media" (p. 6).

This reduction of the historico-civilizational domain introduced by the city simply to individuals "most directly" dealing "with their television sets, radios, newspapers, and magazines" is not without a certain splendor, putting as it does our "relationships" with the modern mass media on an equal plane with the relationships that free or increasingly free citizens could have in the civic sphere or political domain.

Not even democracy itself is immune to dissolution into the private and personal. "It would be a mistake to associate democracy with any form of decision-making," Clark advises. For the "ultimate [!] expression of democracy," he tells us, "is the creation of a democratic

system of values in a community that is embodied in the lives and social practices of all the people. Every [!] action in every [!] sphere of life [!] is a kind [!] of legislating, whether one does so through unthinkingly mimicking others or through expressing something that has never existed before" (p. 20).

Is democracy really to be reduced merely to Clark's irresponsible "surregionalist" wordplay? Is it to be so trivialized that it includes the "legislating" we do in our privies? The gasps we emit after orgasms? The Walter Mitty fantasies we have while inserting carburetors into an automobile engine on an assembly line? If Clark can put "unthinking mimicking" on the same plane as rational discourse, we have broken away not only from politics but from adulthood and must surrender a historic achievement--democracy--to the darkness of infantile mimesis.

#### IV

One of the more bizarre features of Clark's essay is that he attempts to mine social ecology, especially my own writings, in order to justify his obfuscation of the political and social. He looks for places where I upheld the importance of cooperatives or countercultural endeavors, apparently in an attempt to show that I once considered cooperatives and communal living arrangements to be quintessentially political at an earlier stage of my thinking, rather than cultural or social, and that the development of my libertarian municipalist ideas has constituted a replacement of this older idea in my work.

In fact, most of Clark's citations from my works are outright distortions that are crudely removed from their context. On page 2 of his essay, to take just one example, the reader is told that "especially in [my] early works from the mid-60's, [I] expressed considerable enthusiasm for a variety of approaches to political, economic and cultural change." Whereupon, turning to my essay "The Forms of Freedom"--which I wrote nearly thirty years ago (in January 1968)--Clark adduces a passage wherein I favorably envision "young people renewing social life just as they renew the human species" by leaving large cities, founding "nuclear ecological communities" as "the modern city begins to shrivel, to contract and to disappear" (emphasis added). Clark not only warps this quotation by removing it from its context in "The Forms of Freedom" but he jumbles the "political, economic and cultural," as though in the development of my thinking, confederal municipalism later replaced this "variety of approaches" to political life.

Let me state from the outset that I never declared even in the 1980s and 1990s that confederal municipalism is a substitute for the manifold dimensions of cultural or even private life. "The Forms of Freedom," the essay from which Clark draws the quotation, is overwhelmingly devoted to validating, of all things, civic popular assemblies. Or--dare I use the words?--libertarian municipalism, although I did not yet call it by that name (reprinted in Post-Scarcity Anarchism, hereinafter cited as PSA). Thus, within the space of eight pages of PSA, I discuss the Athenian ecclesia (for four pages), the Parisian revolutionary sections of the 1790s (for another four pages), and later the ecclesia and the sections again, for another three pages. On page 168, I even point to the "famous problem of 'dual power'" and

the "danger of the incipient state" that might emerge in any revolution (PSA, p. 168)--themes that have been central to my writings in the late 1980s and 1990s. These continuities in my work conveniently escape Clark's observation.

The passage that Clark quotes from "The Forms of Freedom" on "young people" who will renew "social life," as it happens, appears in the last paragraph of this lengthy essay, the overwhelming bulk of which explicitly focuses on how we can begin to physically decentralize large cities. Clark thus distorts the sense in which I "envision young people renewing social life" and minimizes my emphasis on popular assemblies, from neighborhood "sections" to new citywide Athenian-type "ecclesias" and new municipalities as the bases for a future libertarian society. I emphasized these themes back in 1968 and even in my writings of the 1950s. So emphatically did I stress the importance of participation in local elections in my lead article ("Spring Offensives and Summer Vacations") in the last issue of *Anarchos* (in 1972), that Judith Malina, with the aid of an anarchist printer, inserted a criticism of electoralism into the magazine without my consent or that of the editors (an illustration of the "morality" to which some of our high-minded anarchists are prone).

Clark's *modus operandi* marks nearly every quotation he adduces to support his claim that my views underwent a transformation--as though a transformation as such were somehow reprehensible. Still, ideas similar to libertarian municipalism--the "final step," in which "the municipality becomes the central political reality, and the municipal assembly, becomes the preeminent organ [!] of democratic politics" (p. 2), as he puts it in his very

crude rephrasing--are described in many of my 1960s and 1970s writings, including "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" (February 1965, in PSA pp. 80-81) and "Self-Management and the New Technology" (June 1979, in *Toward an Ecological Society*, hereinafter cited as TES, p. 115). When Clark pulls a quotation from "Toward a Vision of the Urban Future" (December 1978, in TES, pp. 182-83) to support his claim that I "look with favor on a variety of popular initiatives" such as "block committees, equity programs, ad hoc committees," and the like [Clark, p. 2]), it is on a page directly opposite from one on which ideas of libertarian municipalism appear. His endeavor to portray me as a fickle thinker whose "political vision has moved from radical utopianism, to revolutionary anarchism, to municipal socialism"--no less!--is completely cynical. That I have anything in common with "municipal socialism" and that I abandoned "radical utopianism" for "revolutionary anarchism"--as though the two were incompatible--rests entirely on his grossly misleading quotations.

Most alarming, however, is Clark's elimination of the distinctiveness of the realms of the political, social, and state, replacing the political realm with the personal, or more precisely, dissolving the political into the personal and even abolishing it. He variously absorbs political practices into lifestyle pleasures and personalistic protests, and public organizational life into inert communes and collectives.

Let me emphasize that I do look with favor upon cooperative initiatives--"backyard revolutions," to use the phrase of the communitarian social democrat Harry Boyte--as laudable educational exercises in popular self-management. At the time when they occurred in the



1970s and 1980s, in places like New York City's Lower East Side, they suggested a hopeful trend toward local control. Contrary to what Clark seems to maintain, however, I never believed they were basic solutions to our political problems nor lasting substitutes for a municipalist politics. Let me further add that, regrettably, nearly all these cooperative initiatives have failed, even as experiments, and have either faded from the municipal scenes in which they emerged, stagnated as moribund relics of an era washed away by the social reaction of the 1990s, or regrettably, become purely privatized, like the condominium dwellings so notable in New York and other major cities.

A good many have become thriving capitalistic enterprises in their own right. As Clark himself concedes, cooperative enterprises may "adopt capitalist principles of rationality" that they then mystify with an ecocapitalist "message." Under the present social order, no food coop, however well-intentioned, will ever replace the Grand Union supermarket chain, nor will any collective department store replace Wal-Mart. And it turns out that even the Mondragon system has become increasingly hierarchical and profit-oriented over time rather than "cooperative and democratic." Indeed, as Clark admits, "it is true that cooperatives have not fully [!] transformed society, and it not likely that they will quickly [!] do so" (p. 22).

## V

An important component of Clark's attack is an assault on the concept of citizenship, which is basic to libertarian municipalism. Clark applauds my

counterposition of the "citizen" to the "dominant representations of the self as an egoistic calculator" (p. 3), and he notes that I regard the citizen as the "'nuclear unit' of a new politics." But typically, he then proceeds to suggest that my "image has limitations" (p. 3).

Alas, don't we all? I hold no views that are carved in stone, least of all "unlimited" views that encompass reality for all time. (Clark expresses his own ideas in this essay with so many qualifiers--such as if, maybe, possibly, and probably--that it is unclear whether he has any concrete views of his own at all.) But what is the limitation of my discussion of citizenship? The limitation is that I impart to this "nuclear unit," says Clark, a "privileged form of self-identity" (p. 3).

This pedestrian criticism is precisely of the sort that could be expected from a middle-class philistine. Are we talking about politics or self-identity? Or for that matter, about "self-images," as Clark puts it a few lines later? These terms, all so very different in meaning, are for Clark all of a piece, synonyms for a hazy "selfhood" that in reality takes significantly different forms, depending upon the circumstances in which it is developed, how it is expressed, and the understanding that individuals have of what constitutes their selves.

To be sure, people have very different "self-identities" and "self-images." They are fathers and mothers, children and siblings, males and females, professors and students, and even deep ecologists and social ecologists (despite Clark's own attempts to blur this last distinction). People also eat, sleep, drink, work, and think (hopefully) and are likely to form an infinite number of "imaginary self-images." And they are

political beings as well, participating as citizens in the public sphere.

To remedy the limitations of my presumably narrow concept of "citizenship," Clark invites the reader to contrast it with his own expansive category of "personhood," which will allow us, he says, to think of ourselves as "not only as citizens of a town, city or neighborhood, but also as citizens of our ecosystem, of our bioregion, of our georegion, and of the earth itself" (p. 3). Fortified with this deep ecology babble, Clark recommends to the reader a "bioregional politics" that "expands our view of the political, by associating it more with the processes of ecologically-grounded cultural creativity and with a mutualistic, cooperative process of self-expression between human community and nature" (p. 24). The conclusion Clark finally draws from his laborious critique is the need for enlightened individuals to establish, again, "affinity groups, small communities, internally-democratic process in their own self-organization" (p. 24).

Clark's professions of being a superlative dialectician notwithstanding, his capacity to dissolve all the phases or "moments" that make up a development into a cosmic "Oneness" is strikingly evident here. Indeed, not only does he dissolve the political into the social and the social into the personal, but the personal suddenly explodes into an airy "earth citizen," complete with "fellow citizens," presumably bears, bees, rivers, rocks, and volcanos. Why it is that Clark, borrowing as he so often does from the ecotheological claptrap generated by Father Thomas Berry, does not reduce us to "mammalhood" in the course of reducing us from

"citizenship" to "personhood" is beyond my understanding.

In fact, not only does Clark reduce the notion of citizenship to "personhood," he etherealizes personhood to vastly "global" proportions. And lest we believe that Clark's seminal discovery of "personhood" means something more than different facets of a quasi-Heideggerian "Being" or "Dasein," he exuberantly declares, "Each person would . . . see the fundamental source of his or her identity in being a member of the human community, or perhaps more ecologically, as a member of the earth community. And we would then be a long way from municipalism" (p. 4).

Yes--indeed we would! In so hazy and vacuous a view of citizenship, not only has the personal failed to become the political, but the political completely disappears into the personal and even into the cosmic. Not surprisingly, it is a highly subjectivized "personhood" that Clark turns into an inchoate "Being," of which everything--political, social, psychological, vocational, ecological, and economic--becomes a mere dimension. As used by Clark, the word citizen becomes so elastic, diffuse, and vacuous that we are lost in a "night in which all cows are black," to use an aphorism popularized by Hegel. This flattened view of human reality allows nothing to come into clear relief, philosophical definition, developmental elaboration, or theoretical articulation.

Today, the concept of citizenship has already undergone serious erosion through the reduction of citizens to "constituents" of statist jurisdictions or to "taxpayers" who sustain statist institutions. To further

reduce citizenship to "personhood" is nothing short of reactionary. It took long millennia for History to create the concept of the citizen as a self-managing and competent agent in democratically shaping a polity. During the French Revolution the term *citoyen* was used precisely to efface the status-generated relegation of individuals to mere "subjects" of the Bourbon kings. Moreover, revolutionaries of the last century--from Marx to Bakunin--referred to themselves as "citizens" long before the appellation "comrade" replaced it.

Clark's reductionism "liberates" us from the need to think out the kinds of institutions that would be required in a rational, ecological society; the kind of politics we should appropriately practice; in fact, the very existence of a qualitatively unique sphere called the *civitas*, and its history or dialectic. Nor would we be obliged to develop a general civic interest that could make for a community distinguishable from a privatistic "affinity group," or a commune in a Louisiana bayou, or a crash pad in New Orleans, or a food cooperative, or a neighborhood committee.

Thus, for Clark to flippantly diminish the uniqueness of citizenship, so pregnant with political meaning, to a hippie metaphor for "surregionalist" effusions about the earth and its inhabitants is grossly regressive. In the name of being "expansive," Clark actually diminishes people to mere components of a planetary domain, not unlike James Lovelock's arrogant designation of human beings as mere "intelligent fleas" that parasitize the sacred body of "Gaia."

Clark's seemingly widened scope of "citizenship" thereby divests citizenship of its crucial political content-

-in the name of broadening that content or going "beyond" it. So all-encompassing and vacuous does citizenship become that it is stripped of its rich historical content. We lose sight of the fact that the citizen, as he or she should be, culminates the transformation of ethnic tribal folk, whose societies were structured around biological facts like kinship, gender differences, and age groups, and should be part of a secular, rational, and humane community. Indeed, much of the National Socialist war against "Jewish cosmopolitanism" was in fact an ethnically (völkisch) nationalistic war against the Enlightenment ideal of the citizen.

For it was precisely the depoliticized, indeed, animalized "loyal subject" rather than the citizen that the Nazis incorporated into their racial image of the German Volk, the abject, status-defined creature of Hitler's hierarchical Führerprinzip. Once citizenship becomes contentless as a result of the deflation of its existential political reality or, equally treacherously, by the expansion of its historic development into a "planetary" metaphor, we have come a long way toward accepting the barbarism that the capitalist system is now fostering with Heideggerian versions of ecology.

## VI

Having divested citizenship of its historical and civic meaning, Clark suddenly backtracks from the transcendental, indeed the cosmic "earth citizenship" into which he has vaporized civic citizenship, into an earthy concern for the mundane, by claiming that I deemphasize "the role of economic class analysis" (p. 4). While he concedes that I emphasize "transclass issues like

ecology, feminism, and a sense of civic responsibility to neighborhoods and communities," he again proceeds to raise a smokescreen by noting that these transclass issues are in fact "both class and transclass issues, since they have a general character, but also a quite specific meaning in relation to economic class, not to mention gender, ethnicity, and other considerations" (p. 4).

I hardly need the campus-bound John Clark to advise me that class, gender, and ethnic antagonisms exist and, particularly in the case of class, have to be fought out to revolutionary conclusions. I have frequently criticized deep ecologists for treating "humanity" as an abstract category, without differentiating between exploited and exploiter, oppressed and oppressor. Indeed, in my bitter debate with deep ecology beginning in 1987, I cited repeatedly that the real malefactors in the ecological crisis are not human beings as such but capitalists guided by a grow-or-die marketplace relationship. Remarkably, the same John Clark who now takes it upon himself to remind me about the existence of class in fact abstained, with Olympian disdain, from participating in the social ecology-deep ecology debate, persistently remaining aloof even as it attained heated proportions. In the light of such hauteur, it is galling for him now to sally forth to remind me that oppressions in the world divide humanity. Never, to my knowledge, has he criticized his newly found deep ecology friends for inveighing against "humanity" as such rather than those members of humanity who oppress and dominate and exploit; nor has he challenged deep ecologists for speaking of the "human species" as a mere a zoological category, bereft of social attributes and distinctions. His tendency in *The Trumpeter* to gloss over the incredible contradictions in Arne Naess (a Gandhian anarchist who upholds, in

Ecology, Community, Lifestyle, the need for a strong, centralized state and finds value in India's caste system), Father Berry's maledictions on the human species in *The Dream of the Earth*, and David Foreman's regression to his earlier misanthropic views, bespeaks an intellectual servility that is beneath contempt.

The fact is that "the People" I invoke, and which Clark criticizes, does not include Chase Manhattan Bank, General Motors, or any class exploiters and economic bandits. Nor is "humanity" a mere biological species that, in Father Berry's language, has to be "reinvented"--thereby tossing our species's biological uniqueness and its enormously important social history out of the window. The "People" I am addressing are an oppressed humanity, all of whom must--if they are to eliminate their oppressions--try to remove their shared roots of oppression as such.

So do let us agree that we cannot ignore class interests by completely absorbing them into transclass ones. But in our time, particularization is being overemphasized, to the point where any shared struggle must now overcome not only differences in class, gender, ethnicity, "and other issues," but nationalism, religious zealotry, and identity based on even minor distinctions in status. The role of the revolutionary movement for over two centuries has been to emphasize our shared humanity precisely against ruling status groups and ruling classes--which Marx, even in singling out the proletariat as hegemonic, viewed as a "universal class." Nor are all "images" that people have of themselves as classes, genders, races, nationalities, and cultural groups rational or humane, or evidence of consciousness, or desirable from a radical viewpoint. In



principle, given Clark's sweeping oscillations from the ethereal heights of "earth citizenship" to the material dross of class beings, there is no reason why différance as such should not entangle us and paralyze us completely in our multifarious and self-enclosed "particularity," in postmodernist, indeed Derridean fashion.

The deformations of the past were created in vast measure by the famous "social question," notably by class exploitation, which in great measure could have been remedied by technological advances. In short, they were scarcity societies--albeit not that alone, if you please. Of course a new social-ecological sensibility has to be created, as do new values and relationships, and it will be done partly by overcoming economic need, however economic need is construed. In this respect, Clark says nothing new--or alien to social ecology

Still, history casts a dark and long shadow on the endeavors of largely spiritualistic movements, for which Clark and his new deep ecology colleagues exhibit such an affinity--movements that tried for thousands of years to "redeem" humanity with love, care, sharing, and even more powerfully, religion, gods, goddesses, and witchcraft, as well as ecstasy and imagination. Their failure can be measured by the extent to which Windows 95 has captivated millions and Wal-Mart is cornering the consumer market.

Indeed, today, when parochial differences among the oppressed have been reduced to microscopic divisions, it is all the more important for a revolutionary movement to resolutely point out the common sources of oppression

as such and the extent to which commodification has universalized them--particularly global capitalism (a word that barely find a place in Clark's tract). Little doubt should exist that a call for an end to economic exploitation must be a central feature in any social ecology program and movement, which are part of the Enlightenment tradition and its revolutionary outcome.

The essence of dialectic--a term that drops from Clark's lips into cosmic oblivion--is to always search out what is new in any development: specifically, for the purposes of this discussion, the emergence a transclass People, such as oppressed women, people of color, even the middle classes, as well as subcultures defined by sexual preferences and lifestyles. To particularize distinctions (largely created by the existing social order) to the point of reducing oppressed people to seemingly "diverse persons"--indeed, to mere "personhood"--is to feed into the current privatistic fads of our time and to remove all possibilities for collective social action and revolutionary change.

## VII

Given Clark's Taoist proclivities, we should not be surprised to find that he rejects intervention into the natural world and attempts to "manage" the "world's future," even to "'forge' a self," as "Promethean." In general, Asian mystics and deep ecology quietists denounce the figure of Prometheus because they oppose virtually all human intervention into first nature as "anthropocentric," except to satisfy people's "vital needs" (such as for computers, perhaps).

I must confess that being called a Promethean causes no chills to run up my spine, especially in a time when a pious quietism has become so widespread. Prometheus's greatest malfeasance against the Olympian deities was his sympathy for humanity, to whom he gave fire and the arts that they needed for a decent life, not any proclivity to "dominate Nature," whatever such a formulation would have meant to the Greeks, who passionately denounced hubris. Nor can we forget that the great democratic tragedian Aeschylus singled out Prometheus as a heroic figure for his defiance of the deities as well as for his humanism.

The sins of the Prometheans, common wisdom has it today, include the imposition of technology upon the natural world, and behind the anti-Promethean thinking lies a very privileged disdain for human intervention as such into the natural world, especially for technology--a prejudice that I explore in my forthcoming book *Re-enchanting Humanity*. Yet whether we like it or not, the human species was organized by biological evolution--not by a technophilic plot--to mediate its relationship with the nonhuman world technologically. That is to say, human beings are biologically unique organisms precisely in that they have the nervous system and anatomy to intervene into first nature and "manage" their future--to innovate, not merely to adapt to a pregiven environment, as nearly all other life-forms do. Humans are the only life-form--largely as a result of evolution--that has a rational sense of futurity and that can think out goals on an unprecedentedly high level of generality and expressiveness.

The current antitechnological impulse is not without its own hypocrisies. Gary Snyder, the best-known poet

of deep ecology, celebrated his own acquisition of a personal computer for a full page in *The Whole Earth Review*, while the Fifth Estate anarchist crowd, militantly critical of technology and the "industrial system" generally, recently purchased a computer to produce their periodical, proclaiming it was a necessity but nonetheless adding, "we hate it," as though great revolutions had never been stirred up by hand presses. This kind of sham about technology goes on quite frequently, as though the key technological issue of our time were not whether technology is used rationally and ecologically but whether technology as such is intrinsically bad or good.

Clark's anti-Prometheanism points to a growing tendency in liberal circles these days to demand of all of us a demeanor that is passive-receptive, quietistic, and ultimately submissive. Quite recently, the Oklahoma City bombing and the violent American landscape generally have been attributed in whole or in part to the "cult of violence" in American history--as exemplified by, say, Patrick Henry's famous declaration, "Give me liberty or give me death" on the eve of the American Revolution, and by the embattled verses in the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." ("He hath trampled out the vintage . . . his terrible swift sword.") Apparently fighting--even dying!--for a righteous cause is now frowned upon in polite circles as violent (*Boston Globe*, p. 1). By the same reasoning, we should dispense with great, fervent revolutionary hymns like "The Marseillaise," "The Internationale," "A Las Barricadas" and replace them with the insipid saccharine fare of Mary Poppins. What a sterile and gray world it would be if we did! What feebleness would prevail over robustness and combativeness in a worthy cause! Here

Clark can claim his palm. I, for one, want to deal neither with him nor his supporters, who are graying the world in the name of greening it.

## VIII

Social ecology involves a revolutionary politics. It is an attempt to create a dual power to challenge the nation-state and replace it with a confederation of democratized municipalities. A revolutionary situation does not exist now, nor did it in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. For Clark to accuse me of believing that "social revolution" was "imminent" in the 1970s, then call it evidence of my "remarkable psychological naiveté" that I did is particularly odious (p. 2). Indeed, had he represented my views with a modicum of respect, he might have consulted "Revolution in America," an article I wrote in December 1967 and that was published as the lead article in the first issue of *Anarchos* in 1968. I had no illusions, as this article clearly indicates, that there was a revolutionary situation in the United States, even at the peak moment of the 1960s countercultural agitation. In the article's opening lines I explicitly state, "There is no revolutionary situation in the United States today. Indeed, there is not even a prerevolutionary situation." Despite the 1960s euphoria, I emphatically declared, that the New Left was far removed from gaining much more than a hearing for its views among the American people.

On the other hand, it was far from psychologically "naive" to believe that we were in a long-range revolutionary era in the 1960s and early 1970s. In fact, anyone with eyes in his or her head could have

reasonably supposed that those years marked the initiation of a "revolutionary epoch." It was not only leftists who held this view, as I recall, but even many reactionary antileftists, as I am sure Clark--initially a fan of Barry Goldwater during that decade--must recall. Indeed, we still may be in that revolutionary epoch today, in the very broad sense that social changes are occurring with breathtaking rapidity and unpredictability.

My alleged belief in an imminent revolutionary situation, Clark notes in passing, is "reminiscent of Bakunin's extravagant predictions of rapid social transformation as the people's nature is transformed . . . through the alchemy of revolution" (p. 2). Astonishingly, this self-proclaimed anarchist would apparently deny a basic fact of historical revolutions, that both during and after those revolutions people undergo very rapid transformations in character. My own writings on this point are still as valid today as they were when I wrote them. One has only to study 1917 to learn how the Russian people managed, in a span of only a few days, to overthrow a tsarist monarchy that had been in business for several centuries and to generate a vibrant political culture (which the Bolsheviks themselves destroyed during and after the civil war of 1918-21). Regrettably, the Russian anarchists, instead of creating a strong political movement in major Russian cities during this truly revolutionary situation, were largely occupied with building fruitless enterprises like collective housing (especially in Moscow and Petrograd), a "communitarian" culture that was easily crushed by the Cheka (the secret police) and the more focused but increasingly tyrannical Communist party. For Clark to dismiss the transformations that revolutionary people

undergo raises serious questions about his own acceptance of the possibility of revolutionary change as such.

Indeed, Clark's criticisms of social ecology often imply that he himself favors liberal reformism. In our 1991 critique of a draft program of the Left Green Network, Janet Biehl and I had the nerve, in his eyes, to "attack the left Greens for their demand to 'cut the Pentagon budget by 95 percent,' and their proposals for 'a \$10 per hour minimum wage,' 'a thirty-hour work week with no loss of income,' and a 'workers' superfund.'" (p. 9; quoting from Bookchin and Biehl 1991).

I should point out that the Left Green Network, which Howard Hawkins and I initiated in the late 1980s to counter the largely reformist and often mystical U.S. Greens, initially tried to radicalize the Green movement, such as it was, and deflect many of its members from collaborating with the Democratic Party. The centerpiece of the Network's original program was libertarian municipalism, which entailed an uncompromising fight for a direct democracy and a frontal attack on the existing social order. Subsequently, Hawkins, the author of the draft program that Janet and I criticized, attempted to curry popularity among a variety of reformists, syndicalists, socialists, and social democrats by increasingly denaturing the original tenets of the Left Greens until he not only called for "democratizing the United Nations" but began to support Third Party bids for statewide and national offices. His draft program's absurd demand for a 95 percent cut in Pentagon expenditures implicitly legitimated the very existence of the Pentagon and was part of a politically opportunistic tendency that had to be opposed resolutely.

Before Hawkins began to warp it, the Left Green program had been frankly revolutionary and tried to point out that liberal economic demands viewed as ends in themselves merely supply a humane patina for capitalism, just as a nonsense demand for reducing the Pentagon's budget or claptrap about "democratizing the United Nations" legitimates the Pentagon and the United Nations alike. Nor did Janet and I think it the job of Left Greens, as a revolutionary tendency, to legitimate the wage system (read: capitalism) by raising commonplace economic demands, including more pay, shorter hours, and a modicum of "workers' control," as Hawkins's program called for. All of these seemingly "Left" Green demands had been raised by reformists who were and still are denaturing what remains of the Left everywhere in the United States. Coming from Hawkins, in particular, they threatened dissolve a left-wing program into a basically liberal one. Hence the thrust of our criticism. We wanted the Left Green Network to clearly stand for basic social change, not advance a cacophony of demands that intermingled radical appeals with liberal views.

In his defense of reformism, Clark observes that over a century ago, the Chicago "anarchists who fought for the forty-hour work week did not give up their goal of the abolition of capitalism." There is a point to be made here about the relationship of reforms to revolution, which Clark separates as two separate efforts rather than seeing them as dialectically intertwined. For the Chicago anarchists, the eight-hour day was not a mere "reform" for rendering the "what is" more palatable; nor was the fight for it separate from the goal of insurrection. On the contrary, the eight-hour demand was designed to



reinforce what was virtually an armed conflict that pitted an increasingly militant proletariat against an intractable bourgeoisie. The Chicago anarchists hoped that the eight-hour-day struggle would generate a revolutionary struggle--not the achievement of an economic trade union demand, still less a food coop or a "countercultural" commune.

In the Left Green Network, it was Janet's and my hope to create what is most notably absent and very needed today: a revolutionary Left, not another hodgepodge of reformist (largely personalistic) "improvements." Particularly in the transitional program I advanced for the Left Greens, we always placed our seemingly "reformist" demands in the context of basic social change and formulated them in terms of institutional developments that would pit popular assemblies against the state and the capitalist economy. Admirable as charity may be, we were not interested, despite all the goodwill in the world, in enhancing the probity of the United Way or Catholic Charities any more than we were eager to enhance the reputation of the United Nations. Cast within this transitional perspective, even the demand for a municipally controlled food coop has a very different meaning--and, let me emphasize, a stridently political one--from a food coop that is engaged primarily in merchandising "good food." Removed from a libertarian municipalist context and political movement focused on achieving revolutionary municipalist goals as a dual power against corporations and the state, food coops are little more than benign enterprises that capitalism and the state can easily tolerate with no fear of challenge.

Clark's solicitude for Hawkins's later reformist program might seem merely another instance of tepid liberalism, were it not for the fact that during while this battle was taking place, as in the social ecology-deep ecology fight, he stood "above" the fray, with academic "objectivity." If these observations seem "sectarian" to him, I readily agree. It makes all the difference in the world whether one tries to enlarge the directly democratic possibilities that exist within a republican system, or whether one raises typical trade unionist and social democratic demands that are designed to render capitalism and the state more palatable. Contrary to Clark's grossly invidious claim that I ever regarded a revolution as "imminent," the demands I proffered for a transitional program based on municipally controlled projects such as credit unions and community gardens are designed to do in the economic sphere what popular assemblies and participation in local elections are meant to do in the political sphere.

That I regard them as transitional should have alerted Clark to the fact that I regard an "apocalyptic revolution" as a remote possibility--one that requires education, the formation of a movement, and the patience to cope with defeats. For Clark to raise a smokescreen about my "unrealistic predictions of immediate change," so similar to those "made by Bakunin and other nineteenth-century anarchist revolutionaries" (who, frankly, I admire for their revolutionary outlook) (p. 11), while commending my "far-reaching list of transitional proposals" only two pages earlier, leaves me to conclude that he is not seeking to fundamentally change society by revolutionary means.

Clark's attempt to establish an "imminent" revolution as a precondition for libertarian municipalism--even as he alludes with "admiration" to my transitional program--is nothing more than a crude endeavor to raise formidable structural obstacles to any serious democratic program and movement. However much he invokes a "political culture," he is basically speaking of a personalistic subculture that actually lacks any politics or contact with a broad public. That libertarian municipalism is a project for entering into the public sphere; that it calls for a radical presence in a community that addresses the question of who shall exercise power in a lived sense; indeed, that it is truly a political culture that seeks to re-empower the individual and sharpen his or her sensibility as a living citizen--all of these completely elude Clark as even meaningful concepts in his "surregionalist" cosmos.

## IX

It is perhaps a result of his own reformist views that Clark tries to debunk libertarian municipalism from every remotely questionable point, and from every possible angle. Indeed, he uses the most philistine (and demagogic) methods to deflate the very possibility of a directly democratic rational society as well as its viability under virtually any social conditions.

Libertarian municipalism, he objects, would be impossible to carry out in huge metropolitan areas as they exist today. The thousands of assemblies into which, say, New York or Paris would have to be divided would be unmanageable for making policy decisions. "How will the vast [!] number of assemblies in a city

determine road-building or general transportation policy?" he asks. How would the thousands of assemblies that would exist in present-day metropolitan Paris be coordinated confederally? That this numbers game, which would divide a large city into assemblies by veritably imposing a mechanical grid on it, totally disregards the transformative role of confederal municipalism in no way troubles Clark when he comes to speak of his own "vast network" of affinity groups (p. 19).

In fact, he warns us, "in assemblies of hundreds, thousands or even potentially [!] tens of thousands of members [!] . . . there is an enormous potential for manipulation and power-seeking behavior" (p. 12, emphasis added). The "large assemblies" into which a large city would have to be divided, he tells us, would be subject to "competitiveness, egotism, theatrics, demagoguery, charismatic leadership, factionalism [!], aggressiveness, obsession with procedural details, domination by discussion by manipulative minorities, and passivity [!] of the majority." By contrast, "elected representatives or delegates can be chastised for betraying the people when they seem to act contrary to the will or interest of the community" (p. 13). Indeed! We do not have to search very far to find that "competitiveness, egotism, theatrics, demagoguery, charismatic leadership" and the like were as endemic to 1960s and 1970s communes, food cooperatives, and lifestyle anarchoid groups (albeit obscured by a patina of intimacy, care, and love) as they are to the workaday bourgeois world, where manipulation and power are at least easily discernable to millions of people.

Nor must we insist that everyone in a free community attend its assembly meetings, as our criterion for whether it is democratic, as Clark implies in his discussion of the Athenian polis (p. 15). Such assemblies have to be open to everyone, and they surely should encourage everyone to attend. Indeed, there is a certain arrogance, if not coercion, in requiring that everyone be in attendance, irrespective of his or her inclinations, before an assembly can be regarded as democratic. In the history of direct democracies, even the best-attended, assembly halls or areas were hardly filled to the brim under all circumstances. It seems quite inappropriate to be told by Clark, who perennially complained to me in the past of how poorly his own "affinity group" meetings in New Orleans were attended, that a democracy must be judged by the attendance of its citizens at popular assemblies. Dare I suggest that Clark is searching for any cheap shot he can find to denigrate libertarian municipalism--or would such an assertion be evidence of my "forceful" language?

For Clark to mechanically impose a grid on huge metropolitan areas and then awe us with the unwieldy numbers of assemblies that would emerge is sheer sophistry. No one who seriously accepts a libertarian municipalist approach believes that society as it exists and cities as they are structured today can suddenly be transformed into a directly democratic and rational society. As I have emphasized again and again, a libertarian municipalist practice begins, minimally, with an attempt to enlarge local freedom at the expense of state power. And it does this by example, by education, and by entering the public sphere (that is, into local elections or extralegal assemblies), where ideas can be raised among ordinary people that open the possibility of

a lived practice. In short, libertarian municipalism involves a vibrant politics in the real world to change society and public consciousness alike, not a program directed at navel gazing, psychotherapy, and "surregionalist manifestoes." It tries to forge a movement that will enter into open confrontation with the state and the bourgeoisie, not cravenly sneak around them murmuring Taoist paradoxes.

Despite Clark's Taoist proclivities, his fears of an assembly's passivity in the face of factions and charismatic leaders are quite likely to be fulfilled if enough people adhere to the nostrums of Lao-Tsu's Tao Te Ching. And if anything will stir them into active citizens, I believe it will be precisely factionalism--a strident clash of ideas where real differences exist--which Clark tries to mellow out with his obscuring of differences within the ecology movement.

Libertarian municipalism may indeed begin in a limited way in civic wards, here and there, as well as in small cities and towns. It would pose demands, if necessary through extralegal popular assemblies, for increased democracy--more far-reaching, to be sure, than even the city halls that François Mitterand (no less!) proposed for each arrondissement of Paris, the very city that Clark finds so intractable to institutional decentralization. Or a similar proposal that Mayor Lindsay (no less!) proposed for New York City. Mitterand, to be sure, had his own ulterior motives: to diminish the power of Jacques Chirac as mayor, not to democratize Paris. Lindsay, for his part, was eager to seem like a 1960s populist rather than a Republican Party hack. The irony of these two examples lies not in the motives of Mitterand and Lindsay, half-hearted as

their proposals were in any case, but in the fact that our soaringly imaginative "surregionalist" exhibits even less political imagination than a Parisian socialist hack and a New York liberal fop.

## X

In enlightening us about the polis (p. 14), Clark advises that "advocates of direct democracy have always appealed to the Greek polis for evidence of the feasibility of their ideal," whereupon he quickly reminds us about "the exclusion of women, slaves, and foreigners"--the usual philistine complaint thrown against libertarian municipalism. I would remind Clark that libertarian municipalists are also libertarian communists, who obviously oppose hierarchy, including patriarchy and chattel slavery.

Indeed, Clark forewarns his readers, if the agonistic behavior of outstanding Greek democrats served to promote the polis's larger interests, "the fact that libertarian municipalism comes out of traditions that are very much products [!] of patriarchal society should thus lead us to reflect very carefully [!] on the possible [!] ways in which competitive, egoistic power-seeking values might [!] be subtly perpetuated through such a system" (p. 15). Nor does Clark spare us his philistine complaints that Athenian citizens sometimes followed the guidance of charismatic, agonistic, and wealthy leaders, and that the assembly had political factions, et cetera, etcetera. Inasmuch as libertarian municipalism comes out of traditions that are "very much a product of a patriarchal society," then--beware!

As it turns out, in fact, the "Greek polis" is neither an ideal nor a model for anything--except perhaps for Rousseau, who greatly admired Sparta. It is the Athenian polis whose democratic institutions I often describe and that has the greatest significance for the democratic tradition. In the context of libertarian municipalism, its significance is to provide us with evidence that a people, for a time, could quite self-consciously establish and maintain a direct democracy, despite the existence of slavery, patriarchy, economic and class inequalities, agonistic behavior, and even imperialism, which existed throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. For Clark to raise all of these ghosts about ancient democracy is a particularly cheap ploy.

The fact is that we must look for what is new and innovative in a historical period, even as we acknowledge continuities with social structures that prevailed in the past. Ancient Athens and other parts of Greece, it is worth noting in this postmodern era, was the arena for the emergence not only of direct democracy but of Western philosophy, drama, political theory, mathematics, science, and analytical and dialectical logic.

On the other hand, I could hardly derive democratic ideas from the Chinese Taoist tradition, rooted as it is in quietism and a credo of resignation and submission to noble and royal power (not to speak of the exclusion of women from socially important roles). Elites who studied the Tao Te Ching, for their part, could easily find it a useful handbook for ruling and manipulating a servile peasantry. Depending upon which translation the English reader uses, both interpretations are valid, but



what is clear to everyone but the blind is that quietism underlies the entire work.

In fact, short of the hazy Neolithic village traditions that Marija Gimbutas, Riane Eisler, and William Irwin Thompson hypostasize, Clark will have a hard time finding any tradition that was not patriarchal to one degree or another. Rejecting all patriarchal societies as sources of institutional study would mean that we must abandon not only the Athenian polis but the free medieval communes and their confederations, the comunero movement of sixteenth-century Spain, the revolutionary Parisian sections of 1793, the Paris Commune of 1871--and even the Spanish anarchist collectives of 1936-37. All of these institutional developments, be it noted, were marred to one degree or another by patriarchal values, although happily we always have the "Surregionalist Manifesto" by Max Cafard (aka John Clark) to which we can repair, or possibly to the writings of Hakim Bey.

Or we can follow Clark's advice and repair to bioregionalism. As he tells us, "bioregional politics expands our view of the political by associating it more with the processes of ecologically grounded cultural creativity and with a mutualistic, cooperative process of self-expression between the human community and nature" (p. 24). Alas, bioregionalism, as expressed by Clark, is not only a mystification of first (biological) nature at the expense of second (social and cultural) nature; its irrelevance to improving the human condition is nothing less than incredible. One has only to view the terrible conflict in the former Yugoslavia, raging in areas that are almost identical bioregionally but are grossly dissimilar culturally, to recognize how meaningless and

mystifying are Clark's expectations of his bioregional "politics."

I myself experience the absurdity of bioregionalism only too vividly in my own area, where a large lake--Lake Champlain--ostensibly defines a lake bioregion. But on the Vermont side of the lake, a very populist state constitution permits everyone to be armed (its roots are in the American Revolution, whose partisans feared professional armies); the judiciary is humane and electable; subcultures are tolerated; nearly all public officials hold office for only two years, in contrast to the typical American four-year term; and town meeting democracy is lively. On the other side of the lake, but in the same bioregion, New Yorkers labor under restrictive gun control laws and high crime rates; an increasingly authoritarian state government; capital punishment; legislation that automatically sentences any felon to life imprisonment after three felonies; and a massively bureaucratic system of public administration and decision-making. Every time I look outside my window, where New York State is a visible presence only a few miles away, I can only swoon over the fact that Vermont and New York share a large lake--and bioregion--in common. The tendency of physiography among ecomystics and spiritualists to overtake and devour vast sociocultural differences is nothing less than dazzling.

The extent to which Clark absorbs second nature into first nature, the social into the biological, ignores the extent to which the sociosphere today encompasses the biosphere, to which first nature has been absorbed into second nature, and reveals a stunning neglect of the decisive importance of society in determining the future of the natural world. We can no longer afford a naive

nature romanticism, which may be very alluring to juveniles but has been contributing a great deal to the strident nationalism and growing ecofascism that is emerging in the Western world.

## XI

Within his bioregionalist framework, the alternative that Clark explicitly offers to libertarian municipalism is a "vast network [no less!] of small groups and local institutions in which . . . individuals would express their hopes and ideals for the community, and . . . a vibrant democratic media of communication in which citizens would exchange ideas, and shape the values of the community" (p. 11, emphasis added). One may ask breathtakingly: What institutional forms does Clark propose to constitute this communitarian network, apart from cooperatives and communes? In fact, the alternative he seems to offer to my "simplified" notion of decision-making by a popular assembly is--a "popular judiciary" (p. 11)!

Allow me to point out the singularly absurd incongruities in Clark's presentation. From a mere "communitarian" whose sense of "reality" seems to cause him to eschew all hope--imminent or otherwise--for an effective and transformative municipalist movement, Clark becomes almost manically euphoric in his hopes for what his "vast network" of "small groups and institutions" can achieve! I will not sully Clark's soaring vision of burgeoning "small groups and institutions" by asking how this "vast network" will be established and how its components will interact, or whether it will have any ties more substantial than a lofty

"change of values," such as even the most radical Christian heretics over a thousand of years never carried off.

Through the "judicial institutions," as he suggests? Or perhaps we should choose "citizens' committees," as Clark also suggests, apparently forgetting that he previously inflated the very concept of citizenship beyond any civic sense to cosmic proportions. Let us get away from Clark's academic circumlocutions and understand what the author of *The Anarchist Moment* is really calling for here: courts and councils, or bluntly speaking, systems of representation.

It would seem, then, that in Clark's glowing vision of utopia, judicial institutions and *de facto* soviets are the cement that will hold together the "vast network of small groups and institutions." But will standards as tenuous as "values" prevent Clark's judicial institutions from degenerating into Robespierist "revolutionary tribunals"? And why shouldn't "citizens' committees" degenerate into a sovietist hierarchy, as I warned they could in "*The Forms of Freedom*"?

In fact, the institution to which Clark is perhaps most sympathetic is that "ultimate expression of democracy," the "idea [that] is expressed in the Taoist idea of the ruler sage, the ruler who does not rule, the one who 'does nothing' and 'claims no credit,' yet accomplishes more than anyone else" (p. 20). A mere earthling who lives in a real city on a real planet in a real world would surely have to spin like a whirling dervish before remotely "grasping" (forgive the Promethean term) this supreme and profound piece of Taoist wisdom. The value of Taoism as something more than a pacifier of Asian

peasants, whom Chinese emperors and lords dispatched to the "sink of death" as quickly as possible, is dubious to say the least, and in fact, it has been a prop for despotism for centuries.

In short, Clark manages to find all sorts of "potential dangers" lurking within directly democratic institutions, only to propose judicial and representative policy-making institutions that historically have lent themselves to authoritarian forms of rule. Having commented *ex cathedra* on all the "potential dangers" that beset the empowerment of citizens' assemblies, this lifestyle anarchist, with truly elitist arrogance, nonetheless airily proposed courts and policy-making "citizens' councils" as solutions and remains sublimely oblivious to the prospect that a "vast network of small groups" or a system of courts to judge their behavior could degenerate into a system of dictatorial tribunals. Yes--there are potential dangers everywhere and in everything, but it is reason and a directly democratic society that are most likely to counter or remove them, not an effluvium of contradictory rhetoric.

## XII

On the subject of *paideia*, Clark claims that I think that the "citizenry" as it exists today has the cultural and intellectual background to practice libertarian municipalism in its fully developed form--a form whose fruition has yet to be determined by historical factors that no one at present can foresee (pp. 8-9). Hence ordinary people as they are today, Clark tells us, may not have the capacity to maintain a direct democracy. "An extensive process of self-education in democratic group processes

would be necessary before large numbers of people would be able to work together cooperatively in large meetings," he writes, recapitulating my own call for fostering a public sphere for the education of large numbers of people in the give-and-take of local political life (p. 13).

Although one can offer guidelines of varying merit, suggestions, reflections, and often practical institutional and educational changes, it seems necessary to remind Clark repeatedly that libertarian municipalism is a transformative process, a dialectic, indeed, a development in which ideas, institutions, practices, and historical forces must interact on the face of the real earth, not in Clark's ethereal one. But then Clark asks us to consider whether "the citizens [in a free assembly] can in fact intelligently [!] and usefully [!] consider [the] alternatives" that strictly technical experts propose for their consideration (p. 13, original emphasis). Even more alarmingly, when he sniffs at "anarchist critiques of existing bureaucracy"--I thought they were critiques of any bureaucracy!--Clark tells us that "it does not seem desirable" that administrators should be "mindless," that is, be transparent, under the complete control of the free people in free assembly (p. 11). Thus contrasting the competence of experts with the ability of citizens to intelligently and usefully discuss the experts' conflicting alternatives, he leaves us with virtually mindless and unworkable assemblies, representative bodies (courts or councils), an absence of transparency in political relations, and finally, the likelihood that society would best be governed by elites or experts.

### XIII

It is hardly surprising that Clark, whose background in the libertarian right wing is totally alien to the socialist tradition, finds the slogan "From each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her need" problematical. How, he brightly asks, "are the abilities and needs determined?" (p. 17).

The whole point behind this great revolutionary slogan is that in a communistic post-scarcity economy, abilities and needs are not, strictly speaking, "determined"--that is, subject to bourgeois calculation. In a society in which the very idea of an economy has been replaced by ethical (instead of productive) relationships, labor units, Proudhonian contracts, Rawlsian justice, and the like would not even be relevant. A basic decency and humaneness would replace these instrumentalities, which have their origins in hierarchy, class rule, and scarcity.

It is a more than reasonable assumption that when a rational society is achieved, its citizens will at least be more rational than Max Cafard and his ilk. If "primal" peoples, living in a basically scarcity situation (all the claptrap of Marshall Sahlins to the contrary notwithstanding), could rely on usufruct and the principle of the irreducible minimum for the production and distribution of goods, a post-scarcity society guided by reason would certainly not require contractual or arithmetical strictures of one kind or another to share the means of life without concern for who gets what and why. In any case, if humanity achieves a libertarian communist society, it will be the people who live in it who will make decisions about the production and distribution of goods, not Max Cafard or myself.

Clark's discussion of my notion of the municipalized economy (p. 16), a notion that he applauds as "compelling," is inevitably qualified by a "however," following which we are told that a municipal economy "might [!] be looked upon not as the primary realm, but one area among many in which economic transformation might [!] begin. It is possible [!] to imagine [!] a broad spectrum of self-managed enterprises, individual producers and small partnerships that would enter into a growing cooperative economic sector that would incorporate social ecological values" (p. 16). A transitional period that allows for proprietary rights for small enterprises, Clark suggests, could "continue to exist in the long term, alongside cooperative forms of production" (p. 17).

What "might" happen and what it is "possible to imagine," alas, are not what is likely to happen if a municipalized economy coexists "in the long term" with essentially privately owned enterprises such as "individual producers and small partnerships." Owing to the fact that such enterprises, as forms of private property, must exchange commodities, they presuppose the existence of a market economy and the near certainty that if such an economy remains "long term," competition will force even the smallest enterprise eventually either to grow or to die, to accumulate capital or to disappear, to devour rival enterprises or to be devoured. Such a regressive process might indeed occur during the transitional phase of a libertarian municipalist politics, and we must be acutely mindful of the dangers it poses.



But, alas, all social and economic change is filled with risk. For example, we "might" lose! We "might" be suppressed! We "might" have to rise in a futile insurrection! Or then again, we "might" not! My point is that if we are to build a movement for a rational society, rather than a spiritual congregation for the greater glory of "surregionalism," risk should not become an excuse for making compromises that will assuredly lead us to failure. And to posit the market as a "long term" condition of economic life is to guarantee our failure. If history and Marx's brilliant insights in *Capital* reveal anything, it is that the "long term" market that Clark entertains will prevail ultimately over all his "communitarian" and private enterprises, as well as all his cherished values.

#### XIV

The final objection that Clark raises to libertarian municipalism is that impedes the free play of the imagination. "It is inconceivable," he declares emphatically, that "most creative thought" should occur in "popular assemblies," notably, in the most democratic realm of rational dialogue (p. 11, emphasis in the original). Libertarian municipalism, despite its emphasis on *paideia*, is indifferent to the need for new sensibilities, politics, and values, Clark implies, and to help us along, he invokes Cornelius Castoriadis's notion of the "social imaginary," without which, he says, "it is impossible [!] to comprehend the power of the dominant culture over the individual" (p. 20).

Again, one waits breathlessly for an elucidation of this "imaginary," but Clark never delivers one. Instead

we are firmly told that we must make "an imaginary break [!] with what is, in order to create new liberatory cultural possibilities" (p. 20). To elucidate this startling millennial transformation, Clark trots out Hegel to remind us that a "position becomes idealist" or merely "concerned with morality rather than ethics" when it "fails to confront the real possibilities for practice." How practical and realistic must one be! it is tempting to cry--only to be warned, on the other hand, that to limit one's imagination "to possibilities that can be easily or certainly achieved produces a cynical realism and excludes the necessary utopian dimensions from politics" (p. 20). Indeed, imagination, Clark enjoins us, must be so expansive and so sweeping that it must encompass "the unexpected--indeed the 'impossible,'" no less! (p. 20).

For nearly twenty painstaking, nitpicking, tortured pages, we have been subjected to arguments over the most trivial practicalities involved in creating assemblies in a metropolitan area: how they will coordinate themselves even to adopt designs for road-building, what rules will guide their determination of "needs" and "abilities," and how they will prevent policy from being made by administrative committees, et cetera ad nauseam. Now we are suddenly invited to make an "imaginary break"--or perhaps an apocalyptic break?--"with what is," indeed, to "imagine" nothing less than "the impossible" as the key solution to our problems!

In short, when Clark offers his own solution, he warns us not to become mired in the same mundane practicalities with which he has been assiduously flogging libertarian municipalism for a score of pages. Not only must we soar into the empyrean heights of

imagination but--yea, think "the impossible" as a key to unlocking our problems!

## XV

Clark warns his readers (who are still sworn to maintain public silence) that libertarian municipalism is likely to be a marginal movement; indeed, building such a movement might consume the "energy" of "well-intentioned activists," who would try "to transform their local communities . . . while achieving limited success for a long period of time" (p. 21).

It is galling in the extreme for Clark to ask, "given the present [!] state of political culture, given the actual [!] public to which appeals must be addressed, and not least of all [!] the system of communication and knowledge which any attempt to persuade must confront, what are the real possibilities to organize groups and movement under a [libertarian municipalist] banner?" (p. 8). But Clark never lacks a refuge: notably, a "social imagination" coupled with "practical experimentation." Put bluntly; if you can't create it in real life, dream it up as a "social imaginary" (p. 22). Indeed, much of Clark's disquisition can properly be reduced to a Castoriadian "imaginary," in which a pseudo-cultural, overwhelmingly subjective haze obscures bitter realities that revolutionaries have to face and think through in the present time of reaction.

One is tempted to exclaim: Splendid, Professor Clark! If you think it is hopeless, then be kind enough to stay away from social ecology gatherings and conferences that are trying, at least, to realize these possibilities, and

whose view of reality is not boxed into the present state of affairs. Stay away from people who seek to change the world, not simply live within it! I refer to serious social ecologists who are not fixated on "what is" but are concerned with truth, rationality, and "what should be," a broader vision of a future world that is more than a collection of food coops, communes, and crash pads.

## XVI

To examine what is at issue in the problems of municipalism, confederalism, citizenship, the social, and the political, we must ground these notions in a historical background where we can locate the meaning of the city (properly conceived in distinction to the megalopolis), the citizen, and the political sphere in the human condition.

Historical experience began to advance beyond a conception of mere cyclical time, trapped in the stasis of eternal recurrence, into a creative history insofar as intelligence and wisdom--more properly, reason--began to inform human affairs. Over the course of a hundred thousand years or so, as we now know, *Homo sapiens sapiens* slowly overcame the sluggishness of their more animalistic cousins, the Neanderthals, and, amidst ups and downs, entered as an increasingly active agent into the surrounding world--both to meet their more complex needs (material as well as ideological), and to alter that environment by means of tools and, yes, instrumental rationality. Life became longer, more acculturated aesthetically, and more secure, and potentially at least, human communities tried to define and resolve the

problems of freedom and consciousness at various levels of their development.

The necessary conditions--or preconditions, as socialists of all kinds recognized in the last century and a half--for freedom and consciousness involved technological advances that, in a rational society, could emancipate people from the immediate, animalistic concerns of self-maintenance, increase the realm of freedom from constrictions imposed upon it by preoccupations with material necessity, and place knowledge on a rational, systematic, and coherent basis to the extent that this was possible. These conditions at least involved humanity's self-emancipation from the overpowering theistic creations of its own imagination (creations largely formulated by shamans and priests for their own self-serving ends, as well as by apologists for hierarchy)--notably, mythopoesis, mysticism, antirationalism, and fears of demons and deities, calculated to produce subservience and quietism in the face of the social powers that be.

That the necessary and sufficient conditions for this emancipation have never existed in a "one-to-one" relationship with each other--and it would have been miraculous if they had--has provided the fuel for Castoriadis's rather disordered essays on the omnipotence of "social imaginaries," for Theodor Adorno's basic nihilism, and for frivolous anarcho-chaotics who, in one way or another, have debased the Enlightenment's ideals and the classical forms of socialism and anarchism. True--the discovery of the spear did not produce an automatic shift from "matriarchy" to "patriarchy," nor did the discovery of the plow produce an automatic shift from "primitive

communism" to private property, as evolutionary anthropologists of the last century supposed. Indeed, it cheapens any discussion of history and social change to create "one-to-one" relations between technological and cultural developments, a tragic feature of Friedrich Engels's simplification of his mentor's ideas.

In fact, social evolution is very uneven and combined, which one would hope Castoriadis learned from his Trotskyist past. No less significantly, social evolution, like natural evolution, is profligate in producing a vast diversity of social forms and cultures, which are often incommensurable in their details. If our goal is to emphasize the vast differences that separate one society from another rather than identify the important thread of similarities that bring humanity to the point of a highly creative development, "the Aztecs, Incas, Chinese, Japanese, Mongols, Hindus, Persians, Arabs, Byzantines, and Western Europeans, plus everything that could be enumerated from other cultures" do not resemble each other, to cite the naive obligations that Castoriadis places on what he calls "a 'rational dialectic' of history" and, implicitly, on reason itself (Castoriadis, p. 63). Indeed, it is unpardonable nonsense to carelessly fling these civilizations together without regard for their place in time, their social pedigrees, the extent to which they can be educed dialectically from one another, or an explanation of why as well as descriptions of how they differ from each other. By focusing entirely on the peculiarity of individual cultures, one reduces the development of civilizations in an eductive sequence to the narrow nominalism that Stephen Jay Gould applied to organic evolution--even to the point where the "autonomy" so prized by Castoriadis can be dismissed as a purely subjective "norm," of no greater value in this

postmodernist world of interchangeable equivalences than authoritarian "norms" of hierarchy.

But if we explore very existential developments toward freedom from toil and freedom from oppression in all its forms, we find that there is a History to be told of rational advances--without presupposing teleologies that predetermine that History and its tendencies. If we can give material factors their due emphasis without reducing cultural changes to strictly automatic responses to technological changes and without locating all highly variegated societies in a nearly mystical sequence of "stages of development," then we can speak intelligibly of definite advances made by humanity out of animality, out of the timeless "eternal recurrence" of relatively stagnant cultures, out of blood, gender, and age relationships as the basis for social organization, and out of the image of the "stranger," who was not kin to other members of a community, indeed, who was "inorganic," to use Marx's term, and hence subject to arbitrary treatment beyond the reach of customary rights and duties, defined as they were by tradition rather than reason.

Important as the development of agriculture, technology, and village life was in moving toward this moment in human emancipation, the emergence of the city was of the greatest importance in freeing people from mere ethnic ties of solidarity, in bringing reason and secularity, however rudimentarily, into human affairs. For it was only by this evolution that segments of humanity could replace the tyranny of mindless custom with a definable and rationally conditioned *nomos*, in which the idea of justice could begin to replace tribalistic "blood vengeance"--until later, when it was replaced by

the idea of freedom. I speak of the emergence of the city, because although the development of the city has yet to be completed, its moments in History constitute a discernable dialectic that opened an emancipatory realm within which "strangers" and the "folk" could be reconstituted as citizens, notably, secular and fully rational beings who approximate, in varying degrees, humanity's potentiality to become free, rational, fully individuated, and rounded.

Moreover, the city has been the originating and authentic sphere of politics in the Hellenic democratic sense of the term, and of civilization--not, as I have emphasized again and again, the state. Which is not to say that city-states have not existed. But democracy, conceived as a face-to-face realm of policy-making, entails a commitment to the Enlightenment belief that all "ordinary" human beings are potentially competent to collectively manage their political affairs--a crucial concept in the thinking, all its limitations aside, of the Athenian democratic tradition, and more radically, of those Parisian sections of 1793 that gave an equal voice to women as well as all men. At such high points of political development, in which subsequent advances often self-consciously built on and expanded more limited earlier ones, the city became more than a unique arena for human life and politics, and municipalism--civicism--which the French revolutionaries later identified with "patriotism"--became more than an expression of love of country. Even when Jacobin demagogues gave it chauvinistic connotations, "patriotism" in 1793 meant that the "national patrimony" was not the "property of the King of France" (whose title the Revolution, in its early stages, changed to the "King



of the French"). France, in effect, now belonged to all the people.

Over the long run, the city was conceived as the sociocultural destiny of humanity, a place where, by late Roman times, there were no "strangers" or ethnic "folk," and by the French Revolution, no custom or demonic irrationalities, but rather citoyens who lived in a free terrain, organized themselves into discursive assemblies, and advanced canons of secularity and fraternité, or more broadly, solidarity and philia, hopefully guided by reason.

Moreover, the French revolutionary tradition was strongly confederalist until the dictatorial Jacobin Republic came into being--wiping out the Parisian sections as well as the ideal of a fête de la fédération. One must read Jules Michelet's account of the Great Revolution to learn the extent to which civicism was identified with municipal liberty and fraternité with local confederations, indeed a "republic" of confederations, between 1790 and 1793. One must explore the endeavors of Jean Varlet and the Evêché militants of May 30-31, 1793, to understand how close the Revolution came in the insurrection of June 2 to constructing the cherished confederal "Commune of communes" that lingered in the historical memory of the Parisian fédérés, as they designated themselves, in 1871.

Hence, let me stress that a libertarian municipalist politics is not a mere "strategy" for human emancipation; it is a rigorous and ethical concordance, as I have already noted, of means and ends (of instrumentalities, so to speak) with historic goals--which implies a concept of History as more than mere chronicles or a scattered

archipelago of self-enclosed "social imaginaries." The civitas, humanly scaled and democratically structured, is the potential home of a universal humanitas that far transcends the parochial blood tie of the tribe, the geozoological notion of the "earthling," and the anthropomorphic and juvenile "circle of all Beings" (from ants to pussycats) promoted by Father Berry and his acolytes. It is the immediate sphere of public life--not the most "intimate," to use Clark's crassly subjectivized word--which, to be sure, does not preclude but indeed should foster intimacy in the form of solidarity and complementarity.

The civitas, humanly scaled and democratically structured, is the initiating arena of rational reflection, discursive decision-making, and secularity in human affairs. It speaks to us from across the centuries in Pericles's magnificent funeral oration and in the earthy, amazingly familiar, and eminently secular satires of Aristophanes, whose works demolish Castoriadis's emphasis on the "mysterium" and "closure" of the Athenian polis to the modern mind. No one who reads the chronicles of Western humanity can ignore the rational dialectic that underlies the accumulation of mere events and that reveals an unfolding of the human potentiality for universality, rationality, secularity, and freedom in an educative relationship that alone should be called History. This History, to the extent that it has culminations at given moments of development, on which later civilizations built, is anchored in the evolution of a secular public sphere, in politics, in the emergence of the rational city--the city that is rational institutionally, creatively, and communally. Nor can imagination be excluded from History, but it is an imagination that must be elucidated by reason. For

nothing can be more dangerous to a society, indeed to the world today, than the kind of unbridled imagination, unguided by reason, that so easily lent itself to Nuremberg rallies, fascist demonstrations, Stalinist idolatry, and death camps.

## XVII

Clark crudely effaces this vast movement toward citification and the emergence of the citizen by decontextualizing the city of its historical development. Indeed, he writes off the lessons--the failings and achievements of municipal history--by advising his readers that they "must avoid idealizing [!] past forms such as the polis, medieval free cities, or revolutionary sections and [Parisian] communes," lest they miss "their flaws, limitations, and especially, their ideological aspects"--as if our exploration of them (which Clark outrageously transmutes into "idealizations") ignored their limitations. This man can only conceive of libertarian municipalism (coarsely enough, as "municipal socialism"!) as a "strategy," weighing its chances of success against its possible failings, and recklessly shifting his critical positions from outright elitism to the "possible" failure of full popular participation in assembly meetings. The importance of distinguishing policy-making from administration, so crucial in understanding power relationships in free municipalities (a point regarding which Marx so significantly erred in *The Civil War in France*), is eclipsed by philistine concerns about the dangers of charismatic leaders and "factionalism"--as though factionalism, which terrified the oligarchical American constitutionalists of 1787, were a danger even to a republican polity!

This distinction must be emphasized because Clark radically collapses the political domain--the most immediate public sphere that renders a face-to-face democracy possible--into the social sphere. Thus, we are told that it is "not clear . . . why the municipality should be considered quite so fundamental" if municipalism "rejects the view of some anarchists and many utopians that the most intimate personal sphere, whether identified with the affinity group [!], the familial group or the communal living group is most fundamental socially and politically" (pp. 5-6, emphasis added). In this rambling conflation of the most "immediate" with the most "intimate," of the "political" with the "personal," and of the "familial" and communal "living group" with the "political," Clark reduces the public sphere--the arena of the political or the self-management of the polis--to the bedroom, living room, and kitchen, or, if you like, to the café and park, in short, to the personal. One could dwell at considerable length on this overly subjectivistic, narcissistic, indeed Yuppie vision of social life. If "some anarchists and many utopians" ignore the historic development of humanity out of the parochial kin-oriented domestic life that prevailed in tribal society, toward the confederation of free cities, so much the worse for current anarchism--which indeed has largely failed to distinguish politics of any kind from statism, not to speak of "utopianism," whatever that may be today. Indeed, nothing has been more paralyzing to anarchism (an ecumenical word that encompasses vastly contradictory ideologies) than the proclivity of many young anarchists today to relegate public activity to throwing a brick at a plate-glass window or painting numbingly moronic "revolutionary" and largely personalistic slogans on walls.

Nor can we ignore Clark's wild swings from "mediations" that justify elitist administrative councils, to "vast networks" of affinity groups, communes, and coops; his criticism of a presumably apocalyptic revolution on one page and his plea for an "imaginary break" with existing conditions that will encompass "the impossible" on the next; his philosophical idealism that assigns to imagination a sovereignty over human affairs, that contrasts to his flip-flop concern for material class interests--not to speak of his mechanical grids and endless "possibilities" that might frustrate almost any political activity, including the activities of his own "network," with its very imaginary forms of interaction.

This methodology, if such it can be called, is not evidence of intellectual roundedness, especially if all of his complaints against libertarian municipalism can be used more effectively against his own alternatives, but a crude etherealization of "democracy." It coincides completely with the lifestyle anarchism of Hakim Bey, who despises every attempt to change society apart from personalistic, bluntly "chaotic," explosions of personal self-indulgence. In Clark's "surregionalist" world, democracy exists primarily insofar as we "imagine" it and presumably personally "practice" it in every sphere of life. It is notable that Clark's journey "beyond the limits of the city" makes no mention of capitalism but patently accepts a market economy, presumably of small partnerships and enterprises.

But what is fundamentally at issue in going "beyond Clark" is the ideological fluff from which his intuitions arise. The cultural and social barbarism that is closing around this period is above all marked by ideologies of

regression: a retreat into an often mythic prelapsarian past; a narcissistic egocentricity in which the political disappears into the personal; and an "imaginary" that dissolves the various phases of a historical development into a black hole of "Oneness" or "interconnectedness," so that all the moments of a development are flattened out. Underpinning this ideological flattening is a Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*, a passive-receptive, indeed quietistic, "letting things be," that is dressed up in countervailing Taoist "contraries"--each of which cancels out its opposite to leave practical reason with a blank sheet upon which anything can be scrawled, however hierarchical or oppressive. The Taoist ruler, who Clark adduces, who does not rule, who does nothing yet accomplishes more than anyone else, is a contradiction in terms, a mutual cancellation of the very concepts of "ruler" and "sage"--or, more likely, a tyrant who shrewdly manipulates his or her subject while pretending to be self-effacing and removed from the object of his or her tyranny.

The Chinese ruling classes played at this game for ages. What Marx's fetishism of commodities is for capitalism, this Heideggerian *Gelassenheit* is for present-day ideology, particularly for deep ecology and all its "social ecological" offspring. Thus, we do not change the world; we "dwell" in it. We do not reason out a course of action; we "intuit" it, or better, "imagine" it. We do not pursue a rational eduction of the moments that make up an evolution; instead, we relapse into a magical reverie, often in the name of an aesthetic vanguardism that surrenders reality to fancy or imagination.

Hence the explosion these days of mystical ecologies, primitivism, technophobia, anticivilizationalism,

irrationalism, and cheap fads from devil worship to angelology. Put the prefix bio- before a word, and you are come up with the most inane, often asocial body of "ideas" possible, such as bioregionalism, which overrides the very fundamental cultural differences that demarcate one community or group of communities from another by virtue of a common watershed, lake, or mountain range.

We can now begin to see the face of a barbarism that is culturally devolutionary, of "new social movements" that are irrelevant to the problems of human experience at best and quietistic, submissive, and self-effacing at worst. If we require "a spiritual revolution more [!] than a political platform, and a regenerated community more [!] than a political movement"; indeed, if democracy is an "imaginary" and that the process of legislating is everywhere, in everything we do; if we must build a vast network of affinity groups, communes, and other largely personalist entities; if we must "dwell" in Taoist quietism--not only on Father Berry's "Earth," but within the bosom of the present society--then indeed, we need no "political movement." A vast network of ashrams will do--and no bourgeois would have cause to fear this development.

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## **POSTMODERNISM:**

### **ANARCHY AND ORGANIZATION**

#### **A LETTER TO THE LEFT**

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The essay originally was written in reply to an attack by Huey Newton on anarchist forms of organization.

There is a hoary myth that anarchists do not believe in organization to promote revolutionary activity. This myth was raised from its resting place by Marcuse in a L'Express interview some months ago and reiterated again by Huey Newton in his "In Defence of Self-Defence," which New Left Notes decided to reprint in the recent National Convention issue.

To argue the question of "organization" versus "non-organization" is ridiculous; this issue has never been in dispute among serious anarchists, except perhaps for those lonely "individualists" whose ideology is rooted more in an extreme variant of classical liberalism than anarchy. Yes, anarchists believe in organization - in national organization and international organization. Anarchist organization have ranged from loose, highly

decentralized groups to "vanguard" movements of many thousands, like the Spanish FAI, which functioned in a highly concerted fashion.

The real question at issue is not organization versus non-organization, but rather, what kind of organization. What different kinds of anarchist organizations have in common is that they are developed organically from below, not engineered into existence from above. They are social movements, combining a creative revolutionary life-style with a creative revolutionary theory, not political parties, whose mode of life is indistinguishable from the surrounding bourgeois environment and whose ideology is reduced to rigid "tried-and-tested programs." They try to reflect as much as is humanly possible the liberated society they seek to achieve, not slavishly duplicate the prevailing system of hierarchy, class, and authority. They are built around intimate groups of brothers and sisters, whose ability to act in common is based on initiative, convictions freely arrived at, and deep personal involvement, not a bureaucratic apparatus, fleshed out by docile memberships and manipulated from the top by a handful of all-knowing "leaders."

I don't know who Huey is arguing with when he speaks of "anarchists" who believe all they have to do is "just express themselves individually" in order to achieve freedom. Tim Leary? Allen Ginsberg? The Beatles? Certainly not the revolutionary anarchist communists I know -- and I know a large and fairly representative number. Nor is it clear to me where Huey acquired his facts on the May-June revolt in France. The "Communist party and the other progressive parties" of the French "Left" hadn't merely "lagged behind the people," as

Huey seems to believe; these "disciplined" and "centralized" organizations tried in every way to obstruct the revolution and re-direct it back into traditional parliamentary channels. Even the "disciplined," "centralized" Trotskyist FER and the Maoist groups opposed the revolutionary students as "ultra-leftists," "adventurists," and "romantics" right up to the first street fighting in May. Characteristically, most of the "disciplined," "centralized" organizations of the French "Left" either lagged outrageously behind the events of, in the case of the "Communist Party and progressive parties," shamelessly betrayed the students and workers to the system.

I find it curious that while Huey accuses the French Stalinist hacks of merely having "lagged behind the people" he holds the anarchists and Danny Cohn-Bendit responsible for the people being "forced to turn back to DeGaulle." I visited France shortly after the May-June revolt and I can substantiate with out the least difficulty how resolutely Danny Cohn Bendit, the March 22nd Movement, and the anarchists tried to develop the assembly forms and action committees into a "structural program" (indeed, it went far beyond mere "program") to replace the DeGaulle government. I could show quite clearly how they tried to get the workers to retain their hold on the factories and establish direct economic contacts with the peasants: in short, how they tried to replace the French political and economic structure by creative, viable revolutionary forms. In this, they met with continual obstruction from the "disciplined" "centralized" parties of the French "Left" including a number of Trotskyist and Maoist sects.

There is another myth that needs to be exploded -- the myth that social revolutions are made by tightly disciplined cadres, guided by a highly centralized leadership. All the great social revolutions are the work of deep-seated historic forces and contradictions to which the revolutionary and his organization contributes very little and, in most cases, completely misjudges. The revolutions themselves break out spontaneously. The "glorious party" usually lags behind these events -- and, if the uprising is successful, steps in to commandeer, manipulate, and almost invariably distort it. It is then that the revolution reaches its real period of crises: will the "glorious party" re-create another system of hierarchy, commination and power in its sacred mission to "protect the revolution," or will it be dissolved into the revolution together with the dissolution of hierarchy, domination and power as such? If a revolutionary organization is not structured to dissolve into the popular forms created by the revolution once its function as a catalyst is completed; if its own forms are not similar to the libertarian society it seeks to create, so that it can disappear into the revolutionary forms of the future -- then the organization becomes a vehicle for carrying the forms of the past into the revolution. It becomes a self-perpetuating organism, a state machine that, far from "withering away", perpetuates all the archaic conditions for its own existence.

There is far more myth than reality to the claim that a tightly "centralized" and "disciplined" party promotes the success of a revolution. The Bolsheviks were split, divided, and riddled by factional strife from October, 1917 to March, 1921. Ironically, it was only after the last White armies had been expelled from Russia that Lenin managed to completely centralize and discipline his

party. Far more real have been the endless betrayals engineered by the hierarchical, "disciplined," highly "centralized" parties of the "Left," such as the Social Democratic and Communist.

They followed almost inexorably from the fact that every organization (however revolutionary its rhetoric and however well-intentioned its goals) which models itself structurally on the very system it seeks to overthrow becomes assimilated and subverted by bourgeois relations. It's seeming effectiveness becomes the source of its greatest failures.

Undeniably problems arise which can be solved only by committees, by co-ordination, and by a high measure of self-discipline. To the anarchist, committees must be limited to the practical tasks that necessitate their existence, and they must disappear once their functions are completed. Co-ordination and self-discipline must be achieved voluntarily, by virtue of the high moral and intellectual caliber of the revolutionary. To seek less than this is to accept, as a "revolutionary," a mindless robot, a creature of authoritarian training, a manipulable agent whose personality and outlook are utterly alien, indeed antithetical, to any society that could be remotely regarded as free.

No serious anarchist will disagree with Huey's plea on the "necessity for wiping out the imperialist structure by organized groups." If at all possible we must work together. We must recognize too, that in the United States, the heartland of world Imperialism today, an economy and technology has been developed which could remove, almost overnight, all the problems that Marx once believed justified the need for a state. It

would be a disastrous error to deal with an economy of potential abundance and cybernated production from a theoretical position which was still rooted in a technological era based on coal, crude machines, long hours of toil, and material scarcity. It is time we stop trying to learn from Mao's China and Castro's Cuba -- and see the remarkable economic reality under our very eyes for all men to enjoy once the American bourgeois colossus can be tumbled and its resources brought to the service of humanity.

Murray Bookchin

SOCIAL ANARCHISM OR LIFESTYLE  
ANARCHISM:  
AN UNBRIDGEABLE CHASM

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

For some two centuries, anarchism -- a very ecumenical body of anti-authoritarian ideas -- developed in the tension between two basically contradictory tendencies: a personalistic commitment to individual autonomy and a collectivist commitment to social freedom. These tendencies have by no means been reconciled in the history of libertarian thought. Indeed, for much of the last century, they simply coexisted within anarchism as a minimalist credo of opposition to the State rather than as a maximalist credo that articulated the kind of new society that had to be created in its place.

Which is not to say that various schools of anarchism did not advocate very specific forms of social organization, albeit often markedly at variance with one another. Essentially, however, anarchism as a whole advanced what Isaiah Berlin has called 'negative freedom,' that is to say, a formal 'freedom from,' rather than a substantive 'freedom to.' Indeed, anarchism often celebrated its commitment to negative freedom as evidence of its own pluralism, ideological tolerance, or creativity -- or even, as more than one recent postmodernist celebrant has argued, its incoherence.

Anarchism's failure to resolve this tension, to articulate the relationship of the individual to the collective, and to enunciate the historical circumstances that would make

possible a stateless anarchic society produced problems in anarchist thought that remain unresolved to this day. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, more than many anarchists of his day, attempted to formulate a fairly concrete image of a libertarian society. Based on contracts, essentially between small producers, cooperatives, and communes, Proudhon's vision was redolent of the provincial craft world into which he was born. But his attempt to meld a patroniste, often patriarchal notion of liberty with contractual social arrangements was lacking in depth. The craftsman, cooperative, and commune, relating to one another on bourgeois contractual terms of equity or justice rather than on the communist terms of ability and needs, reflected the artisan's bias for personal autonomy, leaving any moral commitment to a collective undefined beyond the good intentions of its members.

Indeed, Proudhon's famous declaration that 'whoever puts his hand on me to govern me is an usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy' strongly tilts toward a personalistic, negative freedom that overshadows his opposition to oppressive social institutions and the vision of an anarchist society that he projected. His statement easily blends into William Godwin's distinctly individualistic declaration: 'There is but one power to which I can yield a heartfelt obedience, the decision of my own understanding, the dictates of my own conscience.' Godwin's appeal to the 'authority' of his own understanding and conscience, like Proudhon's condemnation of the 'hand' that threatens to restrict his liberty, gave anarchism an immensely individualistic thrust.

Compelling as such declarations may be -- and in the United States they have won considerable admiration



from the so-called libertarian (more accurately, proprietary) right, with its avowals of 'free' enterprise - they reveal an anarchism very much at odds with itself. By contrast, Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin held essentially collectivist views -- in Kropotkin's case, explicitly communist ones. Bakunin emphatically prioritized the social over the individual. Society, he writes, 'antedates and at the same time survives every human individual, being in this respect like Nature itself. It is eternal like Nature, or rather, having been born upon our earth, it will last as long as the earth. A radical revolt against society would therefore be just as impossible for man as a revolt against Nature, human society being nothing else but the last great manifestation or creation of Nature upon this earth. And an individual who would want to rebel against society . . . would place himself beyond the pale of real existence.'[1]

Bakunin often expressed his opposition to the individualistic trend in liberalism and anarchism with considerable polemical emphasis. Although society is 'indebted to individuals,' he wrote in a relatively mild statement, the formation of the individual is social:

'even the most wretched individual of our present society could not exist and develop without the cumulative social efforts of countless generations. Thus the individual, his freedom and reason, are the products of society, and not vice versa: society is not the product of individuals comprising it; and the higher, the more fully the individual is developed, the greater his freedom -- and the more he is the product of society, the more does he receive from society and the greater his debt to it.'[2]

Kropotkin, for his part, retained this collectivistic emphasis with remarkable consistency. In what was probably his most widely read work, his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* essay on 'Anarchism,' Kropotkin distinctly located the economic conceptions of anarchism on the 'left-wing' of 'all socialisms,' calling for the radical abolition of private property and the State in 'the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound, in lieu of the present hierarchy from the center to the periphery.' Kropotkin's works on ethics, in fact, include a sustained critique of liberalistic attempts to counterpose the individual to society, indeed to subordinate society to the individual or ego. He placed himself squarely in the socialist tradition. His anarchocommunism, predicated on advances in technology and increased productivity, became a prevailing libertarian ideology in the 1890s, steadily elbowing out collectivist notions of distribution based on equity. Anarchists, 'in common with most socialists,' Kropotkin emphasized, recognized the need for 'periods of accelerated evolution which are called revolutions,' ultimately yielding a society based on federations of 'every township or commune of the local groups of producers and consumers.' [3]

With the emergence of anarchosyndicalism and anarcho-communism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the need to resolve the tension between the individualist and the collectivist tendencies essentially became moot. Anarcho-individualism was largely marginalized by mass socialistic workers' movements, of which most anarchists considered themselves the left wing. In an era of stormy social upheaval, marked by the rise of a mass working-class movement that culminated in the 1930s and the Spanish Revolution,

anarchosyndicalists and anarchocommunists, no less than Marxists, considered anarcho-individualism to be petty-bourgeois exotica. They often attacked it quite directly as a middle-class indulgence, rooted far more in liberalism than in anarchism.

The period hardly allowed individualists, in the name of their 'uniqueness,' to ignore the need for energetic revolutionary forms of organization with coherent and compelling programs. Far from indulging in Max Stirner's metaphysics of the ego and its 'uniqueness,' anarchist activists required a basic theoretical, discursive, and programmatically oriented literature, a need that was filled by, among others, Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (London, 1913), Diego Abad de Santillan's *El organismo económico de la revolución* (Barcelona, 1936), and G. P. Maximoff's *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (English publication in 1953, three years after Maximoff's death; the date of original compilation, not provided in the English translation, may have been years, even decades earlier). No Stirnerite 'Union of Egoists,' to my knowledge, ever rose to prominence -- even assuming such a union could be established and survive the 'uniqueness' of its egocentric participants.

#### INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHISM AND REACTION

To be sure, ideological individualism did not fade away altogether during this period of sweeping social unrest. A sizable reservoir of individualist anarchists, especially in the Anglo-American world, were nourished by the ideas of John Locke and John Stuart Mill, as well as Stirner himself. Home-grown individualists with varying

degrees of commitment to libertarian views littered the anarchist horizon. In practice, anarcho-individualism attracted precisely individuals, from Benjamin Tucker in the United States, an adherent of a quaint version of free competition, to Federica Montseny in Spain, who often honored her Stirnerite beliefs in the breach. Despite their avowals of an anarchocommunist ideology, Nietzscheans like Emma Goldman remained cheek to jowl in spirit with individualists.

Hardly any anarcho-individualists exercised an influence on the emerging working class. They expressed their opposition in uniquely personal forms, especially in fiery tracts, outrageous behavior, and aberrant lifestyles in the cultural ghettos of fin de siècle New York, Paris, and London. As a credo, individualist anarchism remained largely a bohemian lifestyle, most conspicuous in its demands for sexual freedom ('free love') and enamored of innovations in art, behavior, and clothing.

It was in times of severe social repression and deadening social quiescence that individualist anarchists came to the foreground of libertarian activity -- and then primarily as terrorists. In France, Spain, and the United States, individualistic anarchists committed acts of terrorism that gave anarchism its reputation as a violently sinister conspiracy. Those who became terrorists were less often libertarian socialists or communists than desperate men and women who used weapons and explosives to protest the injustices and philistinism of their time, putatively in the name of 'propaganda of the deed.' Most often, however, individualist anarchism expressed itself in culturally defiant behavior. It came to prominence in anarchism

precisely to the degree that anarchists lost their connection with a viable public sphere.

Today's reactionary social context greatly explains the emergence of a phenomenon in Euro-American anarchism that cannot be ignored: the spread of individualist anarchism. In a time when even respectable forms of socialism are in pell-mell retreat from principles that might in any way be construed as radical, issues of lifestyle are once again supplanting social action and revolutionary politics in anarchism. In the traditionally individualist-liberal United States and Britain, the 1990s are awash in self-styled anarchists who -- their flamboyant radical rhetoric aside -- are cultivating a latter-day anarcho-individualism that I will call lifestyle anarchism. Its preoccupations with the ego and its uniqueness and its polymorphous concepts of resistance are steadily eroding the socialistic character of the libertarian tradition. No less than Marxism and other socialisms, anarchism can be profoundly influenced by the bourgeois environment it professes to oppose, with the result that the growing 'inwardness' and narcissism of the yuppie generation have left their mark upon many avowed radicals. Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of postmodernism, celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades.

During the 1970s, writes Katinka Matson, the compiler of a compendium of techniques for personal

psychological development, there occurred 'a remarkable change in the way we perceive ourselves in the world. The 1960s,' she continues, 'saw a preoccupation with political activism, Vietnam, ecology, be-ins, communes, drugs, etc. Today we are turning inward: we are looking for personal definition, personal improvement, personal achievement, and personal enlightenment.'[4] Matson's noxious little bestiary, compiled for Psychology Today magazine, covers every technique from acupuncture to the I Ching, from est to zone therapy. In retrospect, she might well have included lifestyle anarchism in her compendium of inward-looking soporifics, most of which foster ideas of individual autonomy rather than social freedom. Psychotherapy in all its mutations cultivates an inwardly directed 'self' that seeks autonomy in a quiescent psychological condition of emotional self-sufficiency -- not the socially involved self denoted by freedom. In lifestyle anarchism as in psychotherapy, the ego is counterposed to the collective; the self, to society; the personal, to the communal.

The ego -- more precisely, its incarnation in various lifestyles -- has become an id&eacuatae; fixe for many post-1960s anarchists, who are losing contact with the need for an organized, collectivistic, programmatic opposition to the existing social order. Invertebrate 'protests,' directionless escapades, self-assertions, and a very personal 'recolonization' of everyday life parallel the psychotherapeutic, New Age, self-oriented lifestyles of bored baby boomers and members of Generation X. Today, what passes for anarchism in America and increasingly in Europe is little more than an introspective personalism that denigrates responsible social commitment; an encounter group variously renamed a 'collective' or an 'affinity group'; a state of mind that

arrogantly derides structure, organization, and public involvement; and a playground for juvenile antics.

Consciously or not, many lifestyle anarchists articulate Michel Foucault's approach of 'personal insurrection' rather than social revolution, premised as it is on an ambiguous and cosmic critique of power as such rather than on a demand for the institutionalized empowerment of the oppressed in popular assemblies, councils, and/or confederations. To the extent that this trend rules out the real possibility of social revolution -- either as an 'impossibility' or as an 'imaginary' -- it vitiates socialistic or communistic anarchism in a fundamental sense. Indeed, Foucault fosters a perspective that 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. . . . Hence there is no single [read: universal] locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.' Caught as we all are in the ubiquitous embrace of a power so cosmic that, Foucault's overstatements and equivocations aside, resistance becomes entirely polymorphous, we drift futilely between the 'solitary' and the 'rampant.' [5] His meandering ideas come down to the notion that resistance must necessarily be a guerrilla war that is always present -- and that is inevitably defeated.

Lifestyle, like individualist, anarchism bears a disdain for theory, with mystical, and primitivistic filiations that are generally too vague, intuitional, and even antirational to analyze directly. They are more properly symptoms than causes of the general drift toward a sanctification of the self as a refuge from the existing social malaise. Nonetheless, largely personalistic anarchisms still have certain muddy theoretical premises that lend themselves to critical examination.

Their ideological pedigree is basically liberal, grounded in the myth of the fully autonomous individual whose claims to self-sovereignty are validated by axiomatic 'natural rights,' 'intrinsic worth,' or, on a more sophisticated level, an intuited Kantian transcendental ego that is generative of all knowable reality. These traditional views surface in Max Stirner's 'I' or ego, which shares with existentialism a tendency to absorb all of reality into itself, as if the universe turned on the choices of the self-oriented individual.

More recent works on lifestyle anarchism generally sidestep Stirner's sovereign, all-encompassing 'I,' albeit retaining its egocentric emphasis, and tend toward existentialism, recycled Situationism, Buddhism, Taoism, antirationalism, and primitivism -- or, quite ecumenically, all of them in various permutations. Their commonalities, as we shall see, are redolent of a prelapsarian return to an original, often diffuse, and even petulantly infantile ego that ostensibly precedes history, civilization, and a sophisticated technology -- possibly language itself -- and they have nourished more than one reactionary political ideology over the past century.

#### AUTONOMY OR FREEDOM?

Without falling into the trap of social constructionism that sees every category as a product of a given social order, we are obliged to ask for a definition of the 'free individual.' How does individuality come into being, and under what circumstances is it free?



When lifestyle anarchists call for autonomy rather than freedom, they thereby forfeit the rich social connotations of freedom. Indeed, today's steady anarchist drumbeat for autonomy rather than social freedom cannot be dismissed as accidental, particularly in Anglo-American varieties of libertarian thought, where the notion of autonomy more closely corresponds to personal liberty. Its roots lie in the Roman imperial tradition of *libertas*, wherein the untrammelled ego is 'free' to own his personal property -- and to gratify his personal lusts. Today, the individual endowed with 'sovereign rights' is seen by many lifestyle anarchists as antithetical not only to the State but to society as such.

Strictly defined, the Greek word *autonomia* means 'independence,' connoting a self-managing ego, independent of any clientage or reliance on others for its maintenance. To my knowledge, it was not widely used by the Greek philosophers; indeed, it is not even mentioned in F. E. Peters's historical lexicon of Greek Philosophical Terms. Autonomy, like liberty, refers to the man (or woman) who Plato would have ironically called the 'master of himself,' a condition 'when the better principle of the human soul controls the worse.' Even for Plato, the attempt to achieve autonomy through mastery of oneself constituted a paradox, 'for the master is also the servant and the servant the master, and in all these modes of speaking the same person is predicated' (*Republic*, book 4, 431). Characteristically, Paul Goodman, an essentially individualistic anarchist, maintained that 'for me, the chief principle of anarchism is not freedom but autonomy, the ability to initiate a task and do it one's own way' -- a view worthy of an aesthete but not of a social revolutionary.[6]

While autonomy is associated with the presumably self-sovereign individual, freedom dialectically interweaves the individual with the collective. The word freedom has its analogue in the Greek *eleutheria* and derives from the German *Freiheit*, a term that still retains a *gemeinschaftliche* or communal ancestry in Teutonic tribal life and law. When applied to the individual, freedom thus preserves a social or collective interpretation of that individual's origins and development as a self. In 'freedom,' individual selfhood does not stand opposed to or apart from the collective but is significantly formed -- and in a rational society, would be realized -- by his or her own social existence. Freedom thus does not subsume the individual's liberty but denotes its actualization.

The confusion between autonomy and freedom is all too evident in L. Susan Brown's *The Politics of Individualism* (POI), a recent attempt to articulate and elaborate a basically individualist anarchism, yet retain some filiations with anarcho-communism. [7] If lifestyle anarchism needs an academic pedigree, it will find it in her attempt to meld Bakunin and Kropotkin with John Stuart Mill. Alas, herein lies a problem that is more than academic. Brown's work exhibits the extent to which concepts of personal autonomy stand at odds with concepts of social freedom. In essence, like Goodman she interprets anarchism as a philosophy not of social freedom but of personal autonomy. She then offers a notion of 'existential individualism' that she contrasts sharply both with 'instrumental individualism' (or C. B. Macpherson's 'possessive [bourgeois] individualism') and with 'collectivism' -- leavened with extensive quotations from Emma Goldman, who was by no means the ablest thinker in the libertarian pantheon.

Brown's 'existential individualism' shares liberalism's 'commitment to individual autonomy and self-determination,' she writes (POI, p. 2). 'While much of anarchist theory has been viewed as communist by anarchists and non-anarchists alike,' she observes, 'what distinguishes anarchism from other communist philosophies is anarchism's uncompromising and relentless celebration of individual self-determination and autonomy. To be an anarchist -- whether communist, individualist, mutualist, syndicalist, or feminist -- is to affirm a commitment to the primacy of individual freedom' (POI, p. 2) -- and here she uses the word freedom in the sense of autonomy. Although anarchism's 'critique of private property and advocacy of free communal economic relations' (POI, p. 2) move Brown's anarchism beyond liberalism, it nonetheless upholds individual rights over -- and against -- those of the collective.

'What distinguishes [existential individualism] from the collectivist point of view,' Brown goes on, 'is that individualists' -- anarchists no less than liberals -- 'believe in the existence of an internally motivated and authentic free will, while most collectivists understand the human individual as shaped externally by others -- the individual for them is 'constructed' by the collective' (POI, p. 12, emphasis added). Essentially, Brown dismisses collectivism -- not just state socialism, but collectivism as such -- with the liberal canard that a collectivist society entails the subordination of the individual to the group. Her extraordinary suggestion that 'most collectivists' have regarded individual people as 'simply human flotsam and jetsam swept along in the current of history' (POI, p.12) is a case in point. Stalin

certainly held this view, and so did many Bolsheviks, with their hypostasization of social forces over individual desires and intentions. But collectivists as such? Are we to ignore the generous traditions of collectivism that sought a rational, democratic, and harmonious society -- the visions of William Morris, say, or Gustav Landauer? What about Robert Owen, the Fourierists, democratic and libertarian socialists, Social Democrats of an earlier era, even Karl Marx and Peter Kropotkin? I am not sure that 'most collectivists,' even those who are anarchists, would accept the crude determinism that Brown attributes to Marx's social interpretations. By creating straw 'collectivists' who are hard-line mechanists, Brown rhetorically counterposes a mysteriously and autogenetically constituted individual, on the one hand, with an omnipresent, presumably oppressive, even totalitarian collective, on the other. Brown, in effect, overstates the contrast between 'existential individualism' and the beliefs of 'most collectivists' -- to the point where her arguments seem misguided at best or disingenuous at worst.

It is elementary that, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ringing opening to the Social Contract notwithstanding, people are definitely not 'born free,' let alone autonomous. Indeed, quite to the contrary, they are born very unfree, highly dependent, and conspicuously heteronomous. What freedom, independence, and autonomy people have in a given historical period is the product of long social traditions and, yes, a collective development -- which is not to deny that individuals play an important role in that development, indeed are ultimately obliged to do so if they wish to be free.

Brown's argument leads to a surprisingly simplistic conclusion. 'It is not the group that gives shape to the individual,' we are told, 'but rather individuals who give form and content to the group. A group is a collection of individuals, no more and no less; it has no life or consciousness of its own' (POI, p. 12, emphasis added). Not only does this incredible formulation closely resemble Margaret Thatcher's notorious statement that there is no such thing as a society but only individuals; it attests to a positivistic, indeed naive social myopia in which the universal is wholly separated from the concrete. Aristotle, one would have thought, resolved this problem when he chided Plato for creating a realm of ineffable 'forms' that existed apart from their tangible and imperfect 'copies.'

It remains true that individuals never form mere 'collections' -- except perhaps in cyberspace; quite to the contrary, even when they seem atomized and hermetic, they are immensely defined by the relationships they establish or are obliged to establish with each other, by virtue of their very real existence as social beings. The idea that a collective -- and by extrapolation, society -- is merely a 'collection of individuals, no more and no less' represents an 'insight' into the nature of human consociation that is hardly liberal but, today particularly, potentially reactionary.

By insistently identifying collectivism with an implacable social determinism, Brown herself creates an abstract 'individual,' one that is not even existential in the strictly conventional sense of the word. Minimally, human existence presupposes the social and material conditions necessary for the maintenance of life, sanity, intelligence, and discourse; and the affective qualities

Brown regards as essential for her voluntaristic form of communism: care, concern, and sharing. Lacking the rich articulation of social relationships in which people are embedded from birth through maturity to old age, a 'collection of individuals' such as Brown posits would be, to put it bluntly, not a society at all. It would be literally a 'collection' in Thatcher's sense of free-booting, self-seeking, egoistic monads. Presumably complete unto themselves, they are, by dialectical inversion, immensely de-individuated for want of any aim beyond the satisfaction of their own needs and pleasures -- which are often socially engineered today in any case.

Acknowledging that individuals are self-motivated and possess free will does not require us to reject collectivism, given that they are also capable of developing an awareness of the social conditions under which these eminently human potentialities are exercised. The attainment of freedom rests partly on biological facts, as anyone who has raised a child knows; partly, on social facts, as anyone who lives in a community knows; and contrary to social constructionists, partly on the interaction of environment and inborn personal proclivities, as any thinking person knows. Individuality did not spring into being *ab novo*. Like the idea of freedom, it has a long social and psychological history.

Left to his or her own self, the individual loses the indispensable social moorings that make for what an anarchist might be expected to prize in individuality: reflective powers, which derive in great part from discourse; the emotional equipment that nourishes rage against unfreedom; the sociality that motivates the desire

for radical change; and the sense of responsibility that engenders social action.

Indeed, Brown's thesis has disturbing implications for social action. If individual 'autonomy' overrides any commitment to a 'collectivity,' there is no basis whatever for social institutionalization, decision-making, or even administrative coordination. Each individual, self-contained in his or her 'autonomy,' is free to do whatever he or she wants -- presumably, following the old liberal formula, if it does not impede the 'autonomy' of others. Even democratic decision-making is jettisoned as authoritarian. 'Democratic rule is still rule,' Brown warns. 'While it allows for more individual participation in government than monarchy or totalitarian dictatorship, it still inherently involves the repression of the wills of some people. This is obviously at odds with the existential individual, who must maintain the integrity of will in order to be existentially free' (POI, p. 53). Indeed, so transcendently sacrosanct is the autonomous individual will, in Brown's eyes, that she approvingly quotes Peter Marshall's claim that, according to anarchist principles, 'the majority has no more right to dictate to the minority, even a minority of one, than the minority to the majority' (POI, p. 140, emphasis added).

Denigrating rational, discursive, and direct-democratic procedures for collective decision-making as 'dictating' and 'ruling' awards a minority of one sovereign ego the right to abort the decision of a majority. But the fact remains that a free society will either be democratic, or it will not be achieved at all. In the very existential situation, if you please, of an anarchist society -- a direct libertarian democracy -- decisions would most certainly be made following open discussion. Thereafter the

outvoted minority -- even a minority of one -- would have every opportunity to present countervailing arguments to try to change that decision. Decision-making by consensus, on the other hand, precludes ongoing dissensus -- the all-important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter'challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible.

If anything, functioning on the basis of consensus assures that important decision-making will be either manipulated by a minority or collapse completely. And the decisions that are made will embody the lowest common denominator of views and constitute the least creative level of agreement. I speak, here, from painful, years-long experience with the use of consensus in the Clamshell Alliance of the 1970s. Just at the moment when this quasi-anarchic antinuclear-power movement was at the peak of its struggle, with thousands of activists, it was destroyed through the manipulation of the consensus process by a minority. The 'tyranny of structurelessness' that consensus decision-making produced permitted a well-organized few to control the unwieldy, deinstitutionalized, and largely disorganized many within the movement.

Nor, amidst the hue and cry for consensus, was it possible for dissensus to exist and creatively stimulate discussion, fostering a creative development of ideas that could yield new and ever-expanding perspectives. In any community, dissensus -- and dissident individuals -- prevent the community from stagnating. Pejorative words like dictate and rule properly refer to the silencing of dissenters, not to the exercise of democracy; ironically, it is the consensual 'general will' that could



well, in Rousseau's memorable phrase from the Social Contract, 'force men to be free.'

Far from being existential in any earthy sense of the word, Brown's 'existential individualism' deals with the individual ahistorically. She rarefies the individual as a transcendental category, much as, in the 1970s, Robert K. Wolff paraded Kantian concepts of the individual in his dubious *Defense of Anarchism*. The social factors that interact with the individual to make him or her a truly willful and creative being are subsumed under transcendental moral abstractions that, given a purely intellectual life of their own, 'exist' outside of history and praxis.

Alternating between moral transcendentalism and simplistic positivism in her approach to the individual's relationship with the collective, Brown's exposition fits together as clumsily as creationism with evolution. The rich dialectic and the ample history that shows how the individual was largely formed by and interacted with a social development is nearly absent from her work. Atomistic and narrowly analytic in many of her views, yet abstractly moral and even transcendental in her interpretations, Brown provides an excellent setting for a notion of autonomy that is antipodal to social freedom. With the 'existential individual' on one side, and a society that consists of a 'collection of individuals' and nothing more on the other, the chasm between autonomy and freedom becomes unbridgeable.

#### ANARCHISM AS CHAOS

Whatever Brown's own preferences may be, her book both reflects and provides the premises for the shift among Euro-American anarchists away from social anarchism and toward individualist or lifestyle anarchism. Indeed, lifestyle anarchism today is finding its principal expression in spray-can graffiti, post-modernist nihilism, antirationalism, neoprimitivism, anti-technologism, neo-Situationist 'cultural terrorism,' mysticism, and a 'practice' of staging Foucauldian 'personal insurrections.'

These trendy posturings, nearly all of which follow current yuppie fashions, are individualistic in the important sense that they are antithetical to the development of serious organizations, a radical politics, a committed social movement, theoretical coherence, and programmatic relevance. More oriented toward achieving one's own 'self-realization' than achieving basic social change, this trend among lifestyle anarchists is particularly noxious in that its 'turning inward,' as Katinka Matson called it, claims to be a politics -- albeit one that resembles R. D. Laing's 'politics of experience.' The black flag, which revolutionary social anarchists raised in insurrectionary struggles in Ukraine and Spain, now becomes a fashionable sarong for the delectation of chic petty bourgeois.

One of the most unsavory examples of lifestyle anarchism is Hakim Bey's (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson's) *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism*, a jewel in the New Autonomy Series (no accidental word choice here), published by the heavily postmodernist Semiotext(e)/Autono'media group in Brooklyn.[8] Amid paeans to 'Chaos,' 'Amour Fou,' 'Wild Children,'

'Paganism,' 'Art Sabotage,' 'Pirate Utopias,' 'Black Magic as Revolutionary Action,' 'Crime,' and 'Sorcery,' not to speak of commendations of 'Marxism-Stirnerism,' the call for autonomy is taken to lengths so absurd as to seemingly parody a self-absorbed and self-absorbing ideology.

T.A.Z. presents itself as a state of mind, an ardently antirational and anticivilizational mood, in which disorganization is conceived as an art form and graffiti supplants programs. The Bey (his pseudonym is the Turkish word for 'chief' or 'prince') minces no words about his disdain for social revolution: 'Why bother to confront a 'power' which has lost all meaning and become sheer Simulation? Such confrontations will only result in dangerous and ugly spasms of violence' (TAZ, p. 128). Power in quotation marks? A mere 'Simulation'? If what is happening in Bosnia with firepower is a mere 'simulation,' we are living in a very safe and comfortable world indeed! The reader uneasy about the steadily multiplying social pathologies of modern life may be comforted by the Bey's Olympian thought that 'realism demands not only that we give up waiting for 'the Revolution,' but also that we give up wanting it' (TAZ, p. 101). Does this passage beckon us to enjoy the serenity of Nirvana? Or a new Baudrillardian 'Simulation'? Or perhaps a new Castoriadian 'imaginary'?

Having eliminated the classical revolutionary aim of transforming society, the Bey patronizingly mocks those who once risked all for it: 'The democrat, the socialist, the rational ideology . . . are deaf to the music & lack all sense of rhythm' (TAZ, p. 66). Really? Have the Bey and his acolytes themselves mastered the verses and music of the Marseillaise and danced ecstatically to the rhythms

of Gliere's Russian Sailor's Dance? There is a wearisome arrogance in the Bey's dismissal of the rich culture that was created by revolutionaries over the past centuries, indeed by ordinary working people in the pre-rock-'n'-roll, pre-Woodstock era.

Verily, let anyone who enters the dreamworld of the Bey give up all nonsense about social commitment. 'A democratic dream? a socialist dream? Impossible,' intones the Bey with overbearing certainty. 'In dream we are never ruled except by love or sorcery' (TAZ, p. 64). Thus are the dreams of a new world evoked by centuries of idealists in great revolutions magisterially reduced by the Bey to the wisdom of his febrile dream world.

As to an anarchism that is 'all cobwebby with Ethical Humanism, Free Thought, Muscular Atheism, & crude Fundamentalist Cartesian Logic' (TAZ, p. 52) -- forget it! Not only does the Bey, with one fell swoop, dispose of the Enlightenment tradition in which anarchism, socialism, and the revolutionary movement were once rooted, he mixes apples like 'Fundamentalist Cartesian Logic' with oranges like 'Free Thought,' and 'Muscular Humanism' as though they were interchangeable or necessarily presuppose each other.

Although the Bey himself never hesitates to issue Olympian pronouncements and deliver petulant polemics, he has no patience with 'the squabbling ideologues of anarchism & libertarianism' (TAZ, p. 46). Proclaiming that 'Anarchy knows no dogmas' (TAZ, p. 52), the Bey nonetheless immerses his readers in a harsh dogma if there ever was one: 'Anarchism ultimately implies anarchy -- & anarchy is chaos' (TAZ, p. 64). So

saith the Lord: 'I Am That I Am' -- and Moses quaked before the pronouncement!

Indeed, in a fit of manic narcissism, the Bey ordains that it is the all-possessive self, the towering 'I,' the Big 'me' that is sovereign: 'each of us [is] the ruler of our own flesh, our own creations -- and as much of everything else as we can grab & hold.' For the Bey, anarchists and kings -- and beys -- become indistinguishable, inasmuch as all are autarchs:

Our actions are justified by fiat & our relations are shaped by treaties with other autarchs. We make the law for our own domains -- & the chains of law have been broken. At present perhaps we survive as mere Pretenders -- but even so we may seize a few instants, a few square feet of reality over which to impose our absolute will, our royaume. L'etat, c'est moi. . . . If we are bound by any ethics or morality, it must be one which we ourselves have imagined. (TAZ, p. 67)

L'Etat, c'est moi? Along with beys, I can think of at least two people in this century who did enjoy these sweeping prerogatives: Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Most of the rest of us mortals, rich and poor alike, share, as Anatole France once put it, the prohibition to sleep under the bridges of the Seine. Indeed, if Friedrich Engels's 'On Authority,' with its defense of hierarchy, represents a bourgeois form of socialism, T.A.Z. and its offshoots represent a bourgeois form of anarchism. 'There is no becoming,' the Bey tells us, 'no revolution, no struggle, no path; [if] already you're the monarch of your own skin -- your inviolable freedom awaits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs: a politics of dream, urgent as the blueness of sky' -- words that could be

inscribed on the New York Stock Exchange as a credo for egotism and social indifference (TAZ, p. 4).

Certainly, this view will not repel the boutiques of capitalist 'culture' any more than long hair, beards, and jeans have repelled the entrepreneurial world of haute fashion. Unfortunately, far too many people in this world -- no 'simulations' or 'dreams' -- do not own even their own skins, as prisoners in chain gangs and jails can attest in the most concrete of terms. No one has ever floated out of the earthly realm of misery on 'a politics of dreams' except the privileged petty bourgeois, who may find the Bey's manifestoes amenable particularly in moments of boredom.

For the Bey, in fact, even classical revolutionary insurrections offer little more than a personal high, redolent of Foucault's 'limit experiences.' 'An uprising is like a 'peak experience,'" he assures us (TAZ, p. 100). Historically, 'some anarchists . . . took part in all sorts of uprisings and revolutions, even communist & socialist ones,' but that was 'because they found in the moment of insurrection itself the kind of freedom they sought. Thus while utopianism has so far always failed, the individualist or existentialist anarchists have succeeded inasmuch as they have attained (however briefly) the realization of their will to power in war' (TAZ, p. 88). The Austrian workers' uprising of February 1934 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936, I can attest, were more than orgiastic 'moments of insurrection' but were bitter struggles carried on with desperate earnestness and magnificent 'lan, all aesthetic epiphanies notwithstanding.

Insurrection nonetheless becomes for the Bey little more than a psychedelic 'trip,' while the Nietzschean Overman, of whom the Bey approves, is a 'free spirit' who would 'disdain wasting time on agitation for reform, on protest, on visionary dreams, on all kinds of 'revolutionary martyrdom.' Presumably dreams are okay as long as they are not 'visionary' (read: socially committed); rather, the Bey would 'drink wine' and have a 'private epiphany' (TAZ, p. 88), which suggests little more than mental masturbation, freed to be sure from the constraints of Cartesian logic.

It should not surprise us to learn that the Bey favors the ideas of Max Stirner, who 'commits no metaphysics, yet bestows on the Unique [i.e. the Ego] a certain absoluteness' (TAZ, p. 68). To be sure, the Bey finds that there is a 'missing ingredient in Stirner': 'a working concept of nonordinary consciousness' (TAZ, p. 68). Apparently Stirner is too much the rationalist for the Bey. 'The orient, the occult, the tribal cultures possess techniques which can be 'appropriated' in true anarchist fashion. . . . We need a practical kind of 'mystical anarchism' . . . a democratization of shamanism, intoxicated & serene' (TAZ, p. 63). Hence the Bey summons his disciples to become 'sorcerers' and suggests that they use the 'Black Malay Djinn Curse.'

What, finally, is a 'temporary autonomous zone'? 'The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself, to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it' (TAZ, p. 101). In a TAZ we can 'realize many of our true Desires, even if only for a season, a brief Pirate Utopia, a warped free-zone in the old

Space/Time continuum)' (TAZ, p. 62). 'Potential TAZs' include 'the sixties-style 'tribal gathering,' the forest conclave of eco-saboteurs, the idyllic Beltane of the neopagans, anarchist conferences, and gay faery circles,' not to speak of 'nightclubs, banquets,' and 'old-time libertarian picnics' -- no less! (TAZ, p. 100). Having been a member of the Libertarian League in the 1960s, I would love to see the Bey and his disciples surface at an 'old-time libertarian picnic'!

So transient, so evanescent, so ineffable is a TAZ in contrast to the formidably stable State and bourgeoisie that 'as soon as the TAZ is named . . . it must vanish, it will vanish . . . only to spring up again somewhere else' (TAZ, p. 101). A TAZ, in effect, is not a revolt but precisely a simulation, an insurrection as lived in the imagination of a juvenile brain, a safe retreat into unreality. Indeed, declaims the Bey: 'We recommend [the TAZ] because it can provide the quality of enhancement without necessarily [!] leading to violence & martyrdom' (TAZ, p. 101). More precisely, like an Andy Warhol 'happening,' a TAZ is a passing event, a momentary orgasm, a fleeting expression of the 'will to power' that is, in fact, conspicuously powerless in its capacity to leave any imprint on the individual's personality, subjectivity, and even self-formation, still less on shaping events and reality.

Given the evanescent quality of a TAZ, the Bey's disciples can enjoy the fleeting privilege of living a 'nomadic existence,' for 'homelessness can in a sense be a virtue, an adventure' (TAZ, p. 130). Alas, homelessness can be an 'adventure' when one has a comfortable home to return to, while nomadism is the distinct luxury of those who can afford to live without earning their



livelihood. Most of the 'nomadic' hoboes I recall so vividly from the GreatDepression era suffered desperate lives of hunger, disease, and indignity and usually died prematurely -- as they still do, today, in the streets of urban America. The few gypsy-types who seemed to enjoy the 'life of the road' were idiosyncratic at best and tragically neurotic at worst. Nor can I ignore another 'insurrection' that the Bey advances: notably, 'voluntary illiteracy' (TAZ, p. 129). Although he advances this as a revolt against the educational system, its more desirable effect might be to render the Bey's various ex cathedra injunctions inaccessible to his readers.

Perhaps no better description can be given of T.A.Z.'s message than the one that appeared in Whole Earth Review, whose reviewer emphasizes that the Bey's pamphlet is 'quickly becom[ing] the countercultural bible of the 1990s . . . While many of Bey's concepts share an affinity with the doctrines of anarchism,' the Review reassures its yuppie clientele that he pointedly departs from the usual rhetoric about overthrowing the government. Instead, he prefers the mercurial nature of 'uprisings,' which he believes provide 'moments of intensity [that can] give shape and meaning to the entirety of life.' These pockets of freedom, or temporary autonomous zones, enable the individual to elude the schematic grids of Big Government and to occasionally live within realms where he or she can briefly experience total freedom. (emphasis added) [9]

There is an untranslatable Yiddish word for all of this: nebbich! During the 1960s, the affinity group Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers spread similar confusion, disorganization, and 'cultural terrorism,' only to disappear from the political scene soon thereafter.

Indeed, some of its members entered the commercial, professional, and middle-class world they had formerly professed to despise. Nor is such behavior uniquely American. As one French 'veteran' of May-June 1968 cynically put it: 'We had our fun in '68, and now it's time to grow up.' The same deadening cycle, with circled A's, was repeated during a highly individualistic youth revolt in Zurich in 1984, only to end in the creation of Needle Park, a notorious cocaine and crack hangout established by the city's officials to allow addicted young people to destroy themselves legally.

The bourgeoisie has nothing whatever to fear from such lifestyle declamations. With its aversion for institutions, mass-based organizations, its largely subcultural orientation, its moral decadence, its celebration of transience, and its rejection of programs, this kind of narcissistic anarchism is socially innocuous, often merely a safety valve for discontent toward the prevailing social order. With the Bey, lifestyle anarchism takes flight from all meaningful social activism and a steadfast commitment to lasting and creative projects by dissolving itself into kicks, postmodernist nihilism, and a dizzying Nietzschean sense of elitist superiority.

The price that anarchism will pay if it permits this swill to displace the libertarian ideals of an earlier period could be enormous. The Bey's egocentric anarchism, with its post-modernist withdrawal into individualistic 'autonomy,' Foucauldian 'limit experiences,' and neo-Situationist 'ecstasy,' threatens to render the very word anarchism politically and socially harmless -- a mere fad for the titillation of the petty bourgeois of all ages.

## MYSTICAL AND IRRATIONALIST ANARCHISM

The Bey's T.A.Z. hardly stands alone in its appeal to sorcery, even mysticism. Given their prelapsarian mentality, many lifestyle anarchists readily take to antirationalism in its most atavistic forms. Consider 'The Appeal of Anarchy,' which occupies the entire back page of a recent issue of Fifth Estate (Summer 1989). 'Anarchy,' we read, recognizes 'the imminence of total liberation [nothing less!] and as a sign of your freedom, be naked in your rites.' Engage in 'dancing, singing, laughing, feasting, playing,' we are enjoined -- and could anyone short of a mummified prig argue against these Rabelaisian delights?

But unfortunately, there is a hitch. Rabelais's Abbey of Th?l?me, which Fifth Estate seems to emulate, was replete with servants, cooks, grooms, and artisans, without whose hard labor the self-indulgent aristocrats of his distinctly upper-class utopia would have starved and huddled naked in the otherwise cold halls of the Abbey. To be sure, the Fifth Estate's 'Appeal of Anarchy' may well have in mind a materially simpler version of the Abbey of Th?l?me, and its 'feasting' may refer more to tofu and rice than to stuffed partridges and tasty truffles. But still -- without major technological advances to free people from toil, even to get tofu and rice on the table, how could a society based on this version of anarchy hope to 'abolish all authority,' 'share all things in common,' feast, and run naked, dancing and singing?

This question is particularly relevant for the Fifth Estate group. What is arresting in the periodical is the primitivistic, prerational, antitechnological, and anticivilizational cult that lies at the core of its articles.

Thus Fifth Estate's 'Appeal' invites anarchists to 'cast the magic circle, enter the trance of ecstasy, revel in sorcery which dispels all power' -- precisely the magical techniques that shamans (who at least one of its writers celebrates) in tribal society, not to speak of priests in more developed societies, have used for ages to elevate their status as hierarchs and against which reason long had to battle to free the human mind from its own self-created mystifications. 'Dispel all power'? Again, there is a touch of Foucault here that as always denies the need for establishing distinctly empowered self-managing institutions against the very real power of capitalist and hierarchical institutions -- indeed, for the actualization of a society in which desire and ecstasy can find genuine fulfillment in a truly libertarian communism.

Fifth Estate's beguilingly 'ecstatic' paean to 'anarchy,' so bereft of social content -- all its rhetorical flourishes aside -- could easily appear as a poster on the walls of a chic boutique, or on the back of a greeting card. Friends who recently visited New York City advise me, in fact, that a restaurant with linen-covered tables, fairly expensive menus, and a yuppie clientele on St. Mark's Place in the Lower East Side -- a battleground of the 1960s -- is named Anarchy. This feedlot for the city's petty bourgeoisie sports a print of the famous Italian mural *The Fourth Estate*, which shows insurrectionary fin de siècle workers militantly marching against an undepicted boss or possibly a police station. Lifestyle anarchism, it would seem, can easily become a choice consumer delicacy. The restaurant, I am told, also has security guards, presumably to keep out the local canaille who figure in the mural.

Safe, privatistic, hedonistic, and even cozy, lifestyle anarchism may easily provide the ready verbiage to spice up the pedestrian bourgeois lifeways of timid Rabelaisians. Like the 'Situationist art' that MIT displayed for the delectation of the avant-garde petty bourgeoisie several years ago, it offers little more than a terribly 'wicked' anarchist image -- dare I say, a simulacrum -- like those that flourish all along the Pacific Rim of America and points east'ward. The Ecstasy Industry, for its part, is doing only too well under contemporary capitalism and could easily absorb the techniques of lifestyle anarchists to enhance a marketably naughty image. The counterculture that once shocked the petty bourgeoisie with its long hair, beards, dress, sexual freedom, and art has long since been upstaged by bourgeois entrepreneurs whose boutiques, caf's, clubs, and even nudist camps are doing a flourishing 'business, as witness the many steamy advertisements for new 'ecstasies' in the Village Voice and similar periodicals.

Actually, Fifth Estate's blatantly antirationalistic sentiments have very troubling implications. Its visceral celebration of imagination, ecstasy, and 'primality' patently impugns not only rationalistic efficiency but reason as such. The cover of the Fall/Winter 1993 issue bears Francisco Goya's famously misunderstood Capriccio no. 43, 'Il sueno de la razon produce monstros' ('The sleep of reason produces monsters'). Goya's sleeping figure is shown slumped over his desk before an Apple computer. Fifth Estate's English translation of Goya's inscription reads, 'The dream of reason produces monsters,' implying that monsters are a product of reason itself. In point of fact, Goya avowedly meant, as his own notes indicate, that the monsters in the engraving are

produced by the sleep, not the dream, of reason. As he wrote in his own commentary: 'Imagination, deserted by reason, begets impossible monsters. United with reason, she is the mother of all arts, and the source of their wonders.'[10] By deprecating reason, this on-again, off-again anarchist periodical enters into collusion with some of the most dismal aspects of today's neo-Heideggerian reaction.

## AGAINST TECHNOLOGY AND CIVILIZATION

Even more troubling are the writings of George Bradford (aka David Watson), one of the major theorists at Fifth Estate, on the horrors of technology -- apparently technology as such. Technology, it would seem, determines social relations rather than the opposite, a notion that more closely approximates vulgar Marxism than, say, social ecology. 'Technology is not an isolated project, or even an accumulation of technical knowledge,' Bradford tells us in 'Stopping the Industrial Hydra' (SIH), that is determined by a somehow separate and more fundamental sphere of 'social relations.' Mass technics have become, in the words of Langdon Winner, 'structures whose conditions of operation demand the restructuring of their environments,' and thus of the very social relations that brought them about. Mass technics -- a product of earlier forms and archaic hierarchies -- have now outgrown the conditions that engendered them, taking on an autonomous life. . . . They furnish, or have become, a kind of total environment and social system, both in their general and individual, subjective aspects. . . . In such a mechanized pyramid . . . instrumental and social relations are one and the same.[11]

This facile body of notions comfortably bypasses the capitalist relations that blatantly determine how technology will be used and focuses on what technology is presumed to be. By relegating social relations to something less than fundamental -- instead of emphasizing the all-important productive process where technology is used -- Bradford imparts to machines and 'mass technics' a mystical autonomy that, like the Stalinist hypostasization of technology, has served extremely reactionary ends. The idea that technology has a life of its own is deeply rooted in the conservative German romanticism of the last century and in the writings of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Georg J'nger, which fed into National Socialist ideology, however much the Nazis honored their antitechnological ideology in the breach.

Viewed in terms of the contemporary ideology of our own times, this ideological baggage is typified by the claim, so common today, that newly developed automated machinery variously costs people their jobs or intensifies their exploitation -- both of which are indubitable facts but are anchored precisely in social relations of capitalist exploitation, not in technological advances per se. Stated bluntly: 'downsizing' today is not being done by machines but by avaricious bourgeois who use machines to replace labor or exploit it more intensively. Indeed, the very machines that the bourgeois employs to reduce 'labor costs' could, in a rational society, free human beings from mindless toil for more creative and personally rewarding activities.

There is no evidence that Bradford is familiar with Heidegger or J'nger; rather, he seems to draw his inspiration from Langdon Winner and Jacques Ellul, the

latter of whom Bradford quotes approvingly: 'It is the technological coherence that now makes up the social coherence. . . . Technology is in itself not only a means, but a universe of means -- in the original sense of *Univsum*: both exclusive and total' (quoted in *SIH*, p. 10).

In *The Technological Society*, his best-known book, Ellul advanced the dour thesis that the world and our ways of thinking about it are patterned on tools and machines (*la technique*). Lacking any social explanation of how this 'technological society' came about, Ellul's book concluded by offering no hope, still less any approach for redeeming humanity from its total absorption by *la technique*. Indeed, even a humanism that seeks to harness technology to meet human needs is reduced, in his view, into a 'pious hope with no chance whatsoever of influencing technological evolution.' [12] And rightly so, if so deterministic a worldview is followed to its logical conclusion.

Happily, however, Bradford provides us with a solution: 'to begin immediately to dismantle the machine altogether' (*SIH*, p. 10). And he brooks no compromise with civilization but essentially repeats all the quasi-mystical, anticivilizational, and antitechnological clichés that appear in certain New Age environmental cults. Modern civilization, he tells us, is 'a matrix of forces,' including 'commodity relations, mass communications, urbanization and mass technics, along with . . . interlocking, rival nuclear-cybernetic states,' all of which converge into a 'global megamachine' (*SIH*, p. 20). 'Commodity relations,' he notes in his essay 'Civilization in Bulk' (*CIB*), are merely part of this 'matrix of forces,' in which civilization is 'a machine' that has been a 'labor



camp from its origins,' a 'rigid pyramid of crusting hierarchies,' 'a grid expanding the territory of the inorganic,' and 'a linear progression from Prometheus' theft of fire to the International Monetary Fund.' [13] Accordingly, Bradford reproves Monica Sj'o and Barbara Mor's inane book, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* -- not for its atavistic and regressive theism, but because the authors put the word civilization in quotation marks -- a practice that 'reflects the tendency of this fascinating [!] book to posit an alternative or reverse perspective on civilization rather than to challenge its terms altogether' (CIB, footnote 23). Presumably, it is Prometheus who is to be reproved, not these two Earth Mothers, whose tract on chthonic deities, for all its compromises with civilization, is 'fascinating.'

No reference to the megamachine would be complete, to be sure, without quoting from Lewis Mumford's lament on its social effects. Indeed, it is worth noting that such comments have normally misconstrued Mumford's intentions. Mumford was not an antitechnologist, as Bradford and others would have us believe; nor was he in any sense of the word a mystic who would have found Bradford's anticivilizational primitivism to his taste. On this score, I can speak from direct personal knowledge of Mumford's views, when we conversed at some length as participants in a conference at the University of Pennsylvania around 1972.

But one need only turn to his writings, such as *Technics and Civilization* (TAC), from which Bradford himself quotes, to see that Mumford is at pains to favorably describe 'mechanical instruments' as 'potentially a vehicle of rational human purposes.' [14] Repeatedly

reminding his reader that machines come from human beings, Mumford emphasizes that the machine is 'the projection of one particular side of the human personality' (TAC, p. 317). Indeed, one of its most important functions has been to dispel the impact of superstition on the human mind. Thus:

In the past, the irrational and demonic aspects of life had invaded spheres where they did not belong. It was a step in advance to discover that bacteria, not brownies, were responsible for curdling milk, and that an air-cooled motor was more effective than a witch's broomstick for rapid long distance transportation. . . . Science and technics stiffened our morale: by their very austerities and abnegations they . . . cast contempt on childish fears, childish guesses, equally childish assertions. (TAC, p. 324)

This major theme in Mumford's writings has been blatantly neglected by the primitivists in our midst -- notably, his belief that the machine has made the 'paramount contribution' of fostering 'the technique of cooperative thought and action.' Nor did Mumford hesitate to praise 'the esthetic excellence of the machine form . . . above all, perhaps, the more objective personality that has come into existence through a more sensitive and understanding intercourse with these new social instruments and through their deliberate cultural assimilation' (TAC, p. 324). Indeed, 'the technique of creating a neutral world of fact as distinguished from the raw data of immediate experience was the great general contribution of modern analytic science' (TAC, p. 361).

Far from sharing Bradford's explicit primitivism, Mumford sharply criticized those who reject the machine

absolutely, and he regarded the 'return to the absolute primitive' as a 'neurotic adaptation' to the megamachine itself (TAC, p. 302), indeed a catastrophe. 'More disastrous than any mere physical destruction of machines by the barbarian is his threat to turn off or divert the human motive power,' he observed in the sharpest of terms, 'discouraging the cooperative processes of thought and the disinterested research which are responsible for our major technical achievements' (TAC, p. 302). And he enjoined: 'We must abandon our futile and lamentable dodges for resisting the machine by stultifying relapses into savagery' (TAC, p. 319).

Nor do his later works reveal any evidence that he relented in this view. Ironically, he contemptuously designated the Living Theater's performances and visions of the 'Outlaw Territory' of motorcycle gangs as 'Barbarism,' and he deprecated Woodstock as the 'Mass Mobilization of Youth,' from which the 'present mass-minded, over-regimented, depersonalized culture has nothing to fear.'

Mumford, for his own part, favored neither the megamachine nor primitivism (the 'organic') but rather the sophistication of technology along democratic and humanly scaled lines. 'Our capacity to go beyond the machine [to a new synthesis] rests upon our power to assimilate the machine,' he observed in *Technics and Civilization*. 'Until we have absorbed the lessons of objectivity, impersonality, neutrality, the lessons of the mechanical realm, we cannot go further in our development toward the more richly organic, the more profoundly human' (TAC, p. 363, emphasis added).

Denouncing technology and civilization as inherently oppressive of humanity in fact serves to veil the specific social relations that privilege exploiters over the exploited and hierarchs over their subordinates. More than any oppressive society in the past, capitalism conceals its exploitation of humanity under a disguise of 'fetishes,' to use Marx's terminology in *Capital*, above all, the 'fetishism of commodities,' which has been variously -- and superficially -- embroidered by the Situationists into 'spectacles' and by Baudrillard into 'simulacra.' Just as the bourgeoisie's acquisition of surplus value is hidden by a contractual exchange of wages for labor power that is only ostensibly equal, so the fetishization of the commodity and its movements conceals the sovereignty of capitalism's economic and social relations.

There is an important, indeed crucial, point to be made, here. Such concealment shields from public purview the causal role of capitalist competition in producing the crises of our times. To these mystifications, antitechnologists and anticivilizationists add the myth of technology and civilization as inherently oppressive, and they thus obscure the social relationships unique to capitalism -- notably the use of things (commodities, exchange values, objects -- employ what terms you choose) to mediate social relations and produce the techno-urban landscape of our time. Just as the substitution of the phrase 'industrial society' for capitalism obscures the specific and primary role of capital and commodity relationships in forming modern society, so the substitution of a techno-urban culture for social relations, in which Bradford overtly engages, conceals the primary role of the market and competition in forming modern culture.

Lifestyle anarchism, largely because it is concerned with a 'style' rather than a society, glosses over capitalist accumulation, with its roots in the competitive marketplace, as the source of ecological devastation, and gazes as if transfixed at the alleged break of humanity's 'sacred' or 'ecstatic' unity with 'Nature' and at the 'disenchantment of the world' by science, materialism, and 'logocentricity.'

Thus, instead of disclosing the sources of present-day social and personal pathologies, antitechnologism allows us to speciously replace capitalism with technology, which basically facilitates capital accumulation and the exploitation of labor, as the underlying cause of growth and of ecological destruction. Civilization, embodied in the city as a cultural center, is divested of its rational dimensions, as if the city were an unabated cancer rather than the potential sphere for universalizing human intercourse, in marked contrast to the parochial limitations of tribal and village life. The basic social relationships of capitalist exploitation and domination are overshadowed by metaphysical generalizations about the ego and la technique, blurring public insight into the basic causes of social and ecological crises -- commodity relations that spawn the corporate brokers of power, industry, and wealth.

Which is not to deny that many technologies are inherently domineering and ecologically dangerous, or to assert that civilization has been an unmitigated blessing. Nuclear reactors, huge dams, highly centralized industrial complexes, the factory system, and the arms industry -- like bureaucracy, urban blight, and contemporary media -- have been pernicious almost from their inception. But the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries did not require the steam engine, mass manufacture, or, for that matter, giant cities and far-reaching bureaucracies, to deforest huge areas of North America and virtually obliterate its aboriginal peoples, or erode the soil of entire regions. To the contrary, even before railroads reached out to all parts of the land, much of this devastation had already been wrought using simple axes, black-powder muskets, horse-driven wagons, and moldboard plows.

It was these simple technologies that bourgeois enterprise -- the barbarous dimensions of civilization of the last century -- used to carve much of the Ohio River valley into speculative real estate. In the South, plantation owners needed slave 'hands' in great part because the machinery to plant and pick cotton did not exist; indeed, American tenant farming has disappeared over the past two generations largely because new machinery was introduced to replace the labor of 'freed' black sharecroppers. In the nineteenth century peasants from semifeudal Europe, following river and canal routes, poured into the American wilderness and, with eminently unecological methods, began to produce the grains that eventually propelled American capitalism to economic hegemony in the world.

Bluntly put: it was capitalism -- the commodity relationship expanded to its full historical proportions -- that produced the explosive environmental crisis of modern times, beginning with early cottage-made commodities that were carried over the entire world in sailing vessels, powered by wind rather than engines. Apart from the textile villages and towns of Britain, where mass manufacture made its historic breakthrough, the machines that meet with the greatest opprobrium

these days were created long after capitalism gained ascendancy in many parts of Europe and North America.

Despite the current swing of the pendulum from a glorification of European civilization to its wholesale denigration, however, we would do well to remember the significance of the rise of modern secularism, scientific knowledge, universalism, reason, and technologies that potentially offer the hope of a rational and emancipatory dispensation of social affairs, indeed, for the full realization of desire and ecstasy without the many servants and artisans who pandered to the appetites of their aristocratic 'betters' in Rabelais's *Abbey of Thélème*. Ironically, the anti-civilizational anarchists who denounce civilization today are among those who enjoy its cultural fruits and make expansive, highly individualistic professions of liberty, with no sense of the painstaking developments in European history that made them possible. Kropotkin, for one, significantly emphasized 'the progress of modern technics, which wonderfully simplifies the production of all the necessities of life.' [15] To those who lack a sense of historical contextuality, arrogant hindsight comes cheaply.

#### MYSTIFYING THE PRIMITIVE

The corollary of antitechnologism and anticivilizationism is primitivism, an edenic glorification of prehistory and the desire to somehow return to its putative innocence. Lifestyle anarchists like Bradford draw their inspiration from aboriginal peoples and myths of an edenic prehistory. Primal peoples, he says, 'refused technology' -- they 'minimized the relative weight of

instrumental or practical techniques and expanded the importance of . . . ecstatic techniques.' This was because aboriginal peoples, with their animistic beliefs, were saturated by a 'love' of animal life and wilderness -- for them, 'animals, plants, and natural objects' were 'persons, even kin' (CIB, p. 11).

Accordingly, Bradford objects to the 'official' view that designates the lifeways of prehistoric foraging cultures as 'terrible, brutish and nomadic, a bloody struggle for existence.' Rather, he apotheosizes 'the primal world' as what Marshall Sahlins called 'the original affluent society,' affluent because its needs are few, all its desires are easily met. Its tool kit is elegant and light-weight, its outlook linguistically complex and conceptually profound yet simple and accessible to all. Its culture is expansive and ecstatic. It is propertyless and communal, egalitarian and cooperative. . . . It is anarchic. . . . free of work . . . It is a dancing society, a singing society, a celebrating society, a dreaming society. (CIB, p. 10)

Inhabitants of the 'primal world,' according to Bradford, lived in harmony with the natural world and enjoyed all the benefits of affluence, including much leisure time. Primal society, he emphasizes, was 'free of work' since hunting and gathering required much less effort than people today put in with the eight-hour day. He does compassionately concede that primal society was 'capable of experiencing occasional hunger.' This 'hunger,' however, was really symbolic and self-inflicted, you see, because primal peoples 'sometimes [chose] hunger to enhance interrelatedness, to play, or to see visions' (CIB, p. 10).



It would take a full-sized essay in itself to unscramble, let alone refute, this absurd balderdash, in which a few truths are either mixed with or coated in sheer fantasy. Bradford bases his account, we are told, on 'greater access to the views of primal people and their native descendants' by 'a more critical . . . anthropology' (CIB, p. 10). In fact, much of his 'critical anthropology' appears to derive from ideas propounded at the 'Man the Hunter' symposium, convened in April 1966 at the University of Chicago. [16] Although most of the papers contributed to this symposium were immensely valuable, a number of them conformed to the naive mystification of 'primitivity' that was percolating through the 1960s counterculture -- and that lingers on to this day. The hippie culture, which influenced quite a few anthropologists of the time, averred that hunting-gathering peoples today had been bypassed by the social and economic forces at work in the rest of the world and still lived in a pristine state, as isolated remnants of Neolithic and Paleolithic lifeways. Further, as hunter-gatherers, their lives were notably healthy and peaceful, living then as now on an ample natural largess.

Thus, Richard B. Lee, coeditor of the collection of conference papers, estimated that the caloric intake of 'primitive' peoples was quite high and their food supply abundant, making for a kind of virginal 'affluence' in which people needed to forage only a few hours each day. 'Life in the state of nature is not necessarily nasty, brutish, and short,' wrote Lee. The habitat of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, for example, 'is abundant in naturally occurring foods.' The Bushmen of the Dobe area, who, Lee wrote, were still on the verge of entry into the Neolithic, live well today on wild plants and meat, in spite of the fact that they are confined to the

least productive portion of the range in which Bushmen peoples were formerly found. It is likely that an even more substantial subsistence base would have been characteristic of these hunters and gatherers in the past, when they had the pick of African habitats to choose from. [17]

Not quite! -- as we shall see shortly.

It is all too common for those who swoon over 'primal life' to lump together many millennia of prehistory, as if significantly different hominid and human species lived in one kind of social organization. The word prehistory is highly ambiguous. Inasmuch as the human genus included several different species, we can hardly equate the 'outlook' of Aurignacian and Magdalenian foragers (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) some 30,000 years ago, with that of *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* or *Homo erectus*, whose tool kits, artistic abilities, and capacities for speech were strikingly different.

Another concern is the extent to which prehistoric hunter-gatherers or foragers at various times lived in nonhierarchical societies. If the burials at Sungir (in present Eastern Europe) some 25,000 years ago allow for any speculation (and there are no Paleolithic people around to tell us about their lives), the extraordinarily rich collection of jewelry, lances, ivory spears, and beaded clothing at the gravesites of two adolescents suggest the existence of high-status family lines long before human beings settled down to food cultivation. Most cultures in the Paleolithic were probably relatively egalitarian, but hierarchy seems to have existed even in the late Paleolithic, with marked variations in degree,

type, and scope of domination that cannot be subsumed under rhetorical paeans to Paleolithic egalitarianism.

A further concern that arises is the variation -- in early cases, the absence -- of communicative ability in different epochs. Inasmuch as a written language did not appear until well into historical times, the languages even of early *Homo sapiens sapiens* were hardly 'conceptually profound.' The pictographs, glyphs, and, above all, memorized material upon which 'primal' peoples relied for knowledge of the past have obvious cultural limitations. Without a written literature that records the cumulative wisdom of generations, historical memory, let alone 'conceptually profound' thoughts, are difficult to retain; rather, they are lost over time or woefully distorted. Least of all is orally transmitted history subject to demanding critique but instead easily becomes a tool for elite 'seers' and shamans who, far from being 'protopoets,' as Bradford calls them, seem to have used their 'knowledge' to serve their own social interests. [18]

Which brings us, inevitably, to John Zerzan, the anti'civiliza'tional primitivist par excellence. For Zerzan, one of the steady hands at *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, the absence of speech, language, and writing is a positive boon. Another denizen of the 'Man the Hunter' time warp, Zerzan maintains in his book *Future Primitive* (FP) that 'life before domestication/agriculture was in fact largely one of a leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality, and health' [19] -- with the difference that Zerzan's vision of 'primality' more closely approximates four-legged animality. In fact, in Zerzanian paleoanthropology, the anatomical distinctions between *Homo sapiens*, on the one hand, and *Homo*

habilis, Homo erectus, and the 'much-maligned' Neanderthals, on the other, are dubious; all early Homo species, in his view, were possessed of the mental and physical capacities of Homo sapiens and furthermore lived in primal bliss for more than two million years.

If these hominids were as intelligent as modern humans, we may be naively tempted to ask, why did they not innovate tech'no'logical change? 'It strikes me as very plausible,' Zerzan brightly conjectures, 'that intelligence, informed by the success and satisfaction of a gatherer-hunter existence, is the very reason for the pronounced absence of 'progress.' Division of labor, domestication, symbolic culture -- these were evidently [!] refused until very recently.' The Homo species 'long chose nature over culture,' and by culture here Zerzan means 'the manipulation of basic symbolic forms' (emphasis added) -- an alienating encumbrance. Indeed, he continues, 'reified time, language (written, certainly, and probably spoken language for all or most of this period), number, and art had no place, despite an intelligence fully capable of them' (FP, pp. 23, 24).

In short, hominids were capable of symbols, speech, and writing but deliberately rejected them, since they could understand one another and their environment instinctively, without recourse to them. Thus Zerzan eagerly agrees with an anthropologist who meditates that 'San/Bushman communion with nature' reached 'a level of experience that 'could almost be called mystical. For instance, they seemed to know what it actually felt like to be an elephant, a lion, an antelope" even a baobab tree (FP, pp. 33-34).

The conscious 'decision' to refuse language, sophisticated tools, temporality, and a division of labor (presumably they tried and grunted, 'Bah!') was made, we are told, by *Homo habilis*, who, I should note, had roughly half the brain size of modern humans and probably lacked the anatomical capacity for syllabic speech. Yet we have it on Zerzan's sovereign authority that *habilis* (and possibly even *Australopithecus afarensis*, who may have been around some 'two million years ago') possessed 'an intelligence fully capable' -- no less! -- of these functions but refused to use them. In Zerzanian paleoanthropology, early hominids or humans could adopt or reject vital cultural traits like speech with sublime wisdom, the way monks take vows of silence.

But once the vow of silence was broken, everything went wrong! For reasons known only to God and Zerzan.

The emergence of symbolic culture, with its inherent will to manipulate and control, soon opened the door to the domestication of nature. After two million years of human life within the bounds of nature, in balance with other wild species, agriculture changed our lifestyle, our way of adapting, in an unprecedented way. Never before has such a radical change occurred in a species so utterly and so swiftly. . . . Self-domestication through language, ritual, and art inspired the taming of plants and animals that followed. (FP, pp. 27-28, emphasis added)

There is a certain splendor in this claptrap that is truly arresting. Significantly different epochs, hominid and/or human species, and ecological and technological situations are all swept up together into a shared life 'within the bounds of nature.' Zerzan's simplification of the highly complex dialectic between humans and

nonhuman nature reveals a mentality so reductionist and simplistic that one is obliged to stand before it in awe.

To be sure, there is very much we can learn from preliterate cultures -- organic societies, as I call them in *The Ecology of Freedom* -- particularly about the mutability of what is commonly called 'human nature.' Their spirit of in-group cooperation and, in the best of cases, egalitarian outlook are not only admirable -- and socially necessary in view of the precarious world in which they lived -- but provide compelling evidence of the malleability of human behavior in contrast to the myth that competition and greed are innate human attributes. Indeed, their practices of usufruct and the inequality of equals are of great relevance to an ecological society.

But that 'primal' or prehistoric peoples 'revered' nonhuman nature is at best specious and at worst completely disingenuous. In the absence of 'nonnatural' environments such as villages, towns, and cities, the very notion of 'Nature' as distinguished from habitat had yet to be conceptualized -- a truly alienating experience, in Zerzan's view. Nor is it likely that our remote ancestors viewed the natural world in a manner any less instrumental than did people in historical cultures. With due regard for their own material interests -- their survival and well-being -- prehistoric peoples seem to have hunted down as much game as they could, and if they imaginatively peopled the animal world with anthropomorphic attributes, as they surely did, it would have been to communicate with it with an end toward manipulating it, not simply toward revering it.

Thus, with very instrumental ends in mind, they conjured 'talking' animals, animal 'tribes' (often patterned on their own social structures), and responsive animal 'spirits.' Understandably, given their limited knowledge, they believed in the reality of dreams, where humans might fly and animals might talk -- in an inexplicable, often frightening dream world that they took for reality. To control game animals, to use a habitat for survival purposes, to deal with the vicissitudes of weather and the like, prehistoric peoples had to personify these phenomena and 'talk' to them, whether directly, ritualistically, or metaphorically.

In fact, prehistoric peoples seem to have intervened into their environment as resolutely as they could. As soon as *Homo erectus* or later human species learned to use fire, for example, they seem to have put it to work burning off forests, probably stampeding game animals over cliffs or into natural enclosures where they could be easily slaughtered. The 'reverence for life' of prehistoric peoples thus reflected a highly pragmatic concern for enhancing and controlling the food supply, not a love for animals, forests, mountains (which they may very well have feared as the lofty home of deities both demonic and benign). [20]

Nor does the 'love of nature' that Bradford attributes to 'primal society' accurately depict foraging peoples today, who often deal rather harshly with work and game animals; the Ituri forest Pygmies, for example, tormented ensnared game quite sadistically, and Eskimos commonly maltreated their huskies. [21] As for Native Americans before European contact, they vastly altered much of the continent by using fire to clear lands for horticulture and for better visibility in hunting, to the

extent that the 'paradise' encountered by Europeans was 'clearly humanized.' [22]

Unavoidably, many Indian tribes seem to have exhausted local food animals and had to migrate to new territories to gain the material means of life. It would be surprising indeed if they did not engage in warfare to displace the original occupants. Their remote ancestors may well have pushed some of the great North American mammals of the last ice age (notably mammoths, mastodons, longhorn bison, horses, and camels) to extinction. Thickly accumulated bones of bison are still discernible in sites that suggest mass killings and 'assembly-line' butchering in a number of American arroyos. [23]

Nor, among those peoples who did have agriculture, was land use necessarily ecologically benign. Around Lake P'tzcuaro in the central Mexican highlands, before the Spanish conquest, 'prehistoric land use was not conservationist in practice,' writes Karl W. Butzer, but caused high rates of soil erosion. Indeed, aboriginal farming practices 'could be as damaging as any pre-industrial land-use in the Old World.' [24] Other studies have shown that forest overclearing and the failure of subsistence agriculture undermined Mayan society and contributed to its collapse. [25]

We will never have any way of knowing whether the lifeways of today's foraging cultures accurately mirror those of our ancestral past. Not only did modern aboriginal cultures develop over thousands of years, but they were significantly altered by the diffusion of countless traits from other cultures before they were studied by Western researchers. Indeed, as Clifford



Geertz has observed rather acidly, there is little if anything pristine about the aboriginal cultures that modern primitivists associate with early humanity. 'The realization, grudging and belated, that [the pristine primality of existing aborigines] is not so, not even with the Pygmies, not even with the Eskimos,' Geertz observes, 'and that these people are in fact products of larger-scale processes of social change which have made them and continue to make them what they are -- has come as something of a shock that has induced a virtual crisis in the field [of ethnography].' [26] Scores of 'primal' peoples, like the forests they inhabited, were no more 'virginal' at European contact than were the Lakota Indians at the time of the American Civil War, Dancing With Wolves to the contrary notwithstanding. Many of the much-touted 'primal' belief-systems of existing aborigines are clearly traceable to Christian influences. Black Elk, for example, was a zealous Catholic, [27] while the late-nineteenth-century Ghost Dance of the Paiute and Lakota was profoundly influenced by Christian evangelical millennialism.

In serious anthropological research, the notion of an 'ecstatic,' pristine hunter has not survived the thirty years that have passed since the 'Man the Hunter' symposium. Most of the 'affluent hunter' societies cited by devotees of the myth of 'primitive affluence' literally devolved -- probably very much against their desires -- from horticultural social systems. The San people of the Kalahari are now known to have been gardeners before they were driven into the desert. Several hundred years ago, according to Edwin Wilmsen, San-speaking peoples were herding and farming, not to speak of trading with neighboring agricultural chiefdoms in a network that extended to the Indian Ocean. By the year 1000,

excavations have shown, their area, Dobe, was populated by people who made ceramics, worked with iron, and herded cattle, exporting them to Europe by the 1840s together with massive amounts of ivory -- much of it from elephants hunted by the San people themselves, who doubtless conducted this slaughter of their pachyderm 'brothers' with the great sensitivity that Zerzan attributes to them. The marginal foraging lifeways of the San that so entranced observers in the 1960s were actually the result of economic changes in the late nineteenth century, while 'the remoteness imagined by outside observers . . . was not indigenous but was created by the collapse of mercantile capital.' [28] Thus, 'the current status of San-speaking peoples on the rural fringe of African economies,' Wilmsen notes, can be accounted for only in terms of the social policies and economies of the colonial era and its aftermath. Their appearance as foragers is a function of their relegation to an underclass in the playing out of historical processes that began before the current millennium and culminated in the early decades of this century. [29]

The Yuqu' of the Amazon, too, could easily have epitomized the pristine foraging society extolled in the 1960s. Unstudied by Europeans until the 1950s, this people had a tool kit that consisted of little more than a boar claw and bow-and-arrows: 'In addition to being unable to produce fire,' writes Allyn M. Stearman, who studied them, 'they had no watercraft, no domestic animals (not even the dog), no stone, no ritual specialists, and only a rudimentary cosmology. They lived out their lives as nomads, wandering the forests of lowland Bolivia in search of game and other foods provided by their foraging skills.' [30] They grew no

crops at all and were unfamiliar with the use of the hook and line for fishing.

Yet far from being egalitarian, the Yuqu' maintained the institution of hereditary slavery, dividing their society into a privileged elite stratum and a scorned laboring slave group. This feature is now regarded as a vestige of former horticultural lifeways. The Yuqu', it appears, were descended from a slave-holding pre-Columbian society, and 'over time, they experienced deculturation, losing much of their cultural heritage as it became necessary to remain mobile and live off the land. But while many elements of their culture may have been lost, others were not. Slavery, evidently, was one of these.'[31]

Not only has the myth of the 'pristine' forager been shattered, but Richard Lee's own data on the caloric intake of 'affluent' foragers have been significantly challenged by Wilmsen and his associates. [32] !Kung people had average lifespans of about thirty years. Infant mortality was high, and according to Wilmsen (pace Bradford!), the people were subject to disease and hunger during lean seasons. (Lee himself has revised his views on this score since the 1960s.)

Correspondingly, the lives of our early ancestors were most certainly anything but blissful. In fact, life for them was actually quite harsh, generally short, and materially very demanding. Anatomical assays of their longevity show that about half died in childhood or before the age of twenty, and few lived beyond their fiftieth year. They were more likely scavengers than hunter-gatherers and were probably prey for leopards and hyenas. [33]

To members of their own bands, tribes, or clans, prehistoric and later foraging peoples were normally cooperative and peaceful; but toward members of other bands, tribes, or clans, they were often warlike, even sometimes genocidal in their efforts to dispossess them and appropriate their land. That most blissed-out of ancestral humans (if we are to believe the primitivists), *Homo erectus*, has left behind a bleak record of interhuman slaughter, according to data summarized by Paul Janssens. [34] It has been suggested that many individuals in China and Java were killed by volcanic eruptions, but the latter explanations loses a good deal of plausibility in the light of the remains of forty individuals whose mortally injured heads were decapitated -- 'hardly the action of a volcano,' Corinne Shear Wood observes dryly. [35] As to modern foragers, the conflicts between Native American tribes are too numerous to cite at any great length -- as witness the Anasazi and their neighbors in the Southwest, the tribes that were to finally make up the Iroquois Confederacy (the Confederacy itself was a matter of survival if they were not to all but exterminate one another), and the unrelenting conflict between Mohawks and Hurons, which led to the near extermination and flight of remanent Huron communities.

If the 'desires' of prehistoric peoples 'were easily met,' as Bradford alleges, it was precisely because their material conditions of life -- and hence their desires -- were very simple indeed. Such might be expected of any life-form that largely adapts rather than innovates, that conforms to its pregiven habitat rather than alters it to make that habitat conform with its own wants. To be sure, early peoples had a marvelous understanding of the habitat in which they lived; they were, after all, highly intelligent

and imaginative beings. Yet their 'ecstatic' culture was unavoidably riddled not only by joy and 'singing . . . celebrating . . . dreaming,' but by superstition and easily 'manipulable fears.

Neither our remote ancestors nor existing aborigines could have survived if they held the 'enchanted' Disneyland ideas imputed to them by present-day primitivists. Certainly, Europeans offered aboriginal peoples no magnificent social dispensation. Quite to the contrary: imperialists subjected native peoples to crass exploitation, outright genocide, diseases against which they had no immunity, and shameless plunder. No animistic conjurations did or could have prevented this onslaught, as at the tragedy of Wounded Knee in 1890, where the myth of ghost shirts impregnable to bullets was so painfully belied.

What is of crucial importance is that the regression to primitivism among lifestyle anarchists denies the most salient attributes of humanity as a species and the potentially emancipatory aspects of Euro-American civilization. Humans are vastly different from other animals in that they do more than merely adapt to the world around them; they innovate and create a new world, not only to discover their own powers as human beings but to make the world around them more suitable for their own development, both as individuals and as a species. Warped as this capacity is by the present irrational society, the ability to change the world is a natural endowment, the product of human biological evolution -- not simply a product of technology, rationality, and civilization. That people who call themselves anarchists should advance a primitivism that verges on the animalistic, with its barely concealed

message of adaptiveness and passivity, sullies centuries of revolutionary thought, ideals, and practice, indeed defames the memorable efforts of humanity to free itself from parochialism, mysticism, and superstition and change the world.

For lifestyle anarchists, particularly of the anticivilizational and primitivistic genre, history itself becomes a degrading monolith that swallows up all distinctions, mediations, phases of development, and social specificities. Capitalism and its contradictions are reduced to epiphenomena of an all-devouring civilization and its technological 'imperatives' that lack nuance and differentiation. History, insofar as we conceive it as the unfolding of humanity's rational component -- its developing potentiality for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation -- is a complex account of the cultivation of human sensibilities, institutions, intellectuality, and knowledge, or what was once called 'the education of humanity.' To deal with history as a steady 'Fall' from an animalistic 'authenticity,' as Zerzan, Bradford, and their compatriots do in varying degrees in a fashion very similar to that of Martin Heidegger, is to ignore the expanding ideals of freedom, individuality, and self-consciousness that have marked epochs of human development -- not to speak of the widening scope of the revolutionary struggles to achieve these ends.

Anticivilizational lifestyle anarchism is merely one aspect of the social regression that marks the closing decades of the twentieth century. Just as capitalism threatens to unravel natural history by bringing it back to a simpler, less differentiated geological and zoological era, so anticivilizational lifestyle anarchism is complicit

with capitalism in bringing the human spirit and its history back to a less developed, less determinate, prelapsarian world -- the supposedly 'innocent' pretechnological and precivilizational society that existed before humanity's 'fall from grace.' Like the Lotus Eaters in Homer's *Odyssey*, humans are 'authentic' when they live in an eternal present, without past or future -- untroubled by memory or ideation, free of tradition, and unchallenged by becoming.

Ironically, the world idealized by primitivists would actually preclude the radical individualism celebrated by the individualist heirs of Max Stirner. Although contemporary 'primal' communities have produced strongly etched individuals, the power of custom and the high degree of group solidarity impelled by demanding conditions allow little leeway for expansively individualistic behavior, of the kind demanded by Stirnerite anarchists who celebrate the supremacy of the ego. Today, dabbling in primitivism is precisely the privilege of affluent urbanites who can afford to toy with fantasies denied not only to the hungry and poor and to the 'nomads' who by necessity inhabit urban streets but to the overworked employed. Modern working women with children could hardly do without washing machines to relieve them, however minimally, from their daily domestic labors -- before going to work to earn what is often the greater part of their households' income. Ironically, even the collective that produces Fifth Estate found it could not do without a computer and was 'forced' to purchase one -- issuing the disingenuous disclaimer, 'We hate it!' [36] Denouncing an advanced technology while using it to generate antitechnological literature is not only disingenuous but has sanctimonious dimensions: Such 'hatred' of computers seems more like

the belch of the privileged, who, having overstuffed themselves with delicacies, extol the virtues of poverty during Sunday prayers.

## EVALUATING LIFESTYLE ANARCHISM

What stands out most compellingly in today's lifestyle anarchism is its appetite for immediacy rather than reflection, for a naive one-to-one relationship between mind and reality. Not only does this immediacy immunize libertarian thinking from demands for nuanced and mediated reflection; it precludes rational analysis and, for that matter, rationality itself. Consigning humanity to the nontemporal, nonspatial, and nonhistorical -- a 'primal' notion of temporality based on the 'eternal' cycles of 'Nature' -- it thereby divests mind of its creative uniqueness and its freedom to intervene into the natural world.

From the standpoint of primitivist lifestyle anarchism, human beings are at their best when they adapt to nonhuman nature rather than intervene in it, or when, disencumbered of reason, technology, civilization, and even speech, they live in placid 'harmony' with existing reality, perhaps endowed with 'natural rights,' in a visceral and essentially mindless 'ecstatic' condition. T.A.Z., Fifth Estate, Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed, and lumpen 'zines' like Michael William's Stirnerite Demolition Derby -- all focus on an unmediated, ahistorical, and anticivilizatory 'primality' from which we have 'fallen,' a state of perfection and 'authenticity' in which we were guided variously by the 'bounds of nature,' 'natural law,' or our devouring egos.



History and civilization consist of nothing but a descent into the inauthenticity of 'industrial society.'

As I have already suggested, this mythos of a 'falling from authenticity' has its roots in reactionary romanticism, most recently in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose v'lkisch 'spiritualism,' latent in *Being and Time*, later emerged in his explicitly fascist works. This view now feeds on the quietistic mysticism that abounds in the antidemocratic writings of Rudolf Bahro, with its barely disguised appeal for 'salvation' by a 'Green Adolf,' and in the apolitical quest for ecological spiritualism and 'self-fulfillment' propounded by deep ecologists.

In the end, the individual ego becomes the supreme temple of reality, excluding history and becoming, democracy and responsibility. Indeed, lived contact with society as such is rendered tenuous by a narcissism so all-embracing that it shrivels consociation to an infantilized ego that is little more than a bundle of shrieking demands and claims for its own satisfactions. Civilization merely obstructs the ecstatic self-realization of this ego's desires, reified as the ultimate fulfillment of emancipation, as though ecstasy and desire were not products of cultivation and historical development, but merely innate impulses that appear *ab novo* in a desocialized world.

Like the petty-bourgeois Stirnerite ego, primitivist lifestyle anarchism allows no room for social institutions, political organizations, and radical programs, still less a public sphere, which all the writers we have examined automatically identify with statecraft. The sporadic, the unsystematic, the incoherent, the

discontinuous, and the intuitive supplant the consistent, purposive, organized, and rational, indeed any form of sustained and focused activity apart from publishing a 'zine' or pamphlet -- or burning a garbage can. Imagination is counterposed to reason and desire to theoretical coherence, as though the two were in radical contradiction to each other. Goya's admonition that imagination without reason produces monsters is altered to leave the impression that imagination flourishes on an unmediated experience with an unnuanced 'oneness.' Thus is social nature essentially dissolved into biological nature; innovative humanity, into adaptive animality; temporality, into precivilizational eternity; history, into an archaic cyclicity.

A bourgeois reality whose economic harshness grows starker and crasser with every passing day is shrewdly mutated by lifestyle anarchism into constellations of self-indulgence, inchoateness, indiscipline, and incoherence. In the 1960s, the Situationists, in the name of a 'theory of the spectacle,' in fact produced a reified spectacle of the theory, but they at least offered organizational correctives, such as workers' councils, that gave their aestheticism some ballast. Lifestyle anarchism, by assailing organization, programmatic commitment, and serious social analysis, apes the worst aspects of Situationist aestheticism without adhering to the project of building a movement. As the detritus of the 1960s, it wanders aimlessly within the bounds of the ego (renamed by Zerzan the 'bounds of nature') and makes a virtue of bohemian incoherence.

What is most troubling is that the self-indulgent aesthetic vagaries of lifestyle anarchism significantly erode the socialist core of a left-libertarian ideology that once

could claim social relevance and weight precisely for its uncompromising commitment to emancipation -- not outside of history, in the realm of the subjective, but within history, in the realm of the objective. The great cry of the First International -- which anarcho-syndicalism and anarchocommunism retained after Marx and his supporters abandoned it -- was the demand: 'No rights without duties, no duties without rights.' For generations, this slogan adorned the mastheads of what we must now retrospectively call social anarchist periodicals. Today, it stands radically at odds with the basically egocentric demand for 'desire armed,' and with Taoist contemplation and Buddhist nirvanas. Where social anarchism called upon people to rise in revolution and seek the reconstruction of society, the irate petty bourgeois who populate the subcultural world of lifestyle anarchism call for episodic rebellion and the satisfaction of their 'desiring machines,' to use the phraseology of Deleuze and Guattari.

The steady retreat from the historic commitment of classical anarchism to social struggle (without which self-realization and the fulfillment of desire in all its dimensions, not merely the instinctive, cannot be achieved) is inevitably accompanied by a disastrous mystification of experience and reality. The ego, identified almost fetishistically as the locus of emancipation, turns out to be identical to the 'sovereign individual' of laissez-faire individualism. Detached from its social moorings, it achieves not autonomy but the heteronomous 'selfhood' of petty-bourgeois enterprise.

Indeed, far from being free, the ego in its sovereign selfhood is bound hand and foot to the seemingly anonymous laws of the marketplace -- the laws of

competition and exploitation -- which render the myth of individual freedom into another fetish concealing the implacable laws of capital accumulation.

Lifestyle anarchism, in effect, turns out to be an additional mystifying bourgeois deception. Its acolytes are no more 'autonomous' than the movements of the stock market, than price fluctuations and the mundane facts of bourgeois commerce. All claims to autonomy notwithstanding, this middle-class 'rebel,' with or without a brick in hand, is entirely captive to the subterranean market forces that occupy all the allegedly 'free' terrains of modern social life, from food cooperatives to rural communes.

Capitalism swirls around us -- not only materially but culturally. As John Zerzan so memorably put it to a puzzled interviewer who asked about the television set in the home of this foe of technology: 'Like all other people, I have to be narcotized.'[37]

That lifestyle anarchism itself is a 'narcotizing' self-deception can best be seen in Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, where the ego's claim to 'uniqueness' in the temple of the sacrosanct 'self' far outranks John Stuart Mill's liberal pieties. Indeed, with Stirner, egoism becomes a matter of epistemology. Cutting through the maze of contradictions and woefully incomplete statements that fill *The Ego and His Own*, one finds Stirner's 'unique' ego to be a myth because its roots lie in its seeming 'other' -- society itself. Indeed: 'Truth cannot step forward as you do,' Stirner addresses the egoist, 'cannot move, change, develop; truth awaits and recruits everything from you, and itself is only through you; for it

exists only -- in your head.'[38] The Stirnerite egoist, in effect, bids farewell to objective reality, to the facticity of the social, and thereby to fundamental social change and all ethical criteria and ideals beyond personal satisfaction amidst the hidden demons of the bourgeois marketplace. This absence of mediation subverts the very existence of the concrete, not to speak of the authority of the Stirnerite ego itself -- a claim so all-encompassing as to exclude the social roots of the self and its formation in history.

Nietzsche, quite independently of Stirner, carried this view of truth to its logical conclusion by erasing the facticity and reality of truth as such: 'What, then, is truth?' he asked. 'A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms -- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically.' [39] With more forthrightness than Stirner, Nietzsche contended that facts are simply interpretations; indeed, he asked, 'is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretations?' Apparently not, for 'even this is invention, hypothesis.' [40] Following Nietzsche's unrelenting logic, we are left with a self that not only essentially creates its own reality but also must justify its own existence as more than a mere interpretation. Such egoism thus annihilates the ego itself, which vanishes into the mist of Stirner's own unstated premises.

Similarly divested of history, society, and facticity beyond its own 'metaphors,' lifestyle anarchism lives in an asocial domain in which the ego, with its cryptic desires, must evaporate into logical abstractions. But reducing the ego to intuitive immediacy -- anchoring it in mere animality, in the 'bounds of nature,' or in 'natural

law' -- would amount to ignoring the fact that the ego is the product of an ever-formative history, indeed, a history that, if it is to consist of more than mere episodes, must avail itself of reason as a guide to standards of progress and regress, necessity and freedom, good and evil, and -- yes! -- civilization and barbarism. Indeed, an anarchism that seeks to avoid the shoals of sheer solipsism on the one hand and the loss of the 'self' as a mere 'interpretation' on the other must become explicitly socialist or collectivist. That is to say, it must be a social anarchism that seeks freedom through structure and mutual responsibility, not through a vaporous, nomadic ego that eschews the preconditions for social life.

Stated bluntly: Between the socialist pedigree of anarcho-syndicalism and anarchocommunism (which have never denied the importance of self-realization and the fulfillment of desire), and the basically liberal, individualistic pedigree of lifestyle anarchism (which fosters social ineffectuality, if not outright social negation), there exists a divide that cannot be bridged unless we completely disregard the profoundly different goals, methods, and underlying philosophy that distinguish them. Stirner's own project, in fact, emerged in a debate with the socialism of Wilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess, where he invoked egoism precisely to counterpose to socialism. 'Personal insurrection rather than general revolution was [Stirner's] message,' James J. Martin admiringly observes [41] -- a counterposition that lives on today in lifestyle anarchism and its yuppie filiations, as distinguished from social anarchism with its roots in historicism, the social matrix of individuality, and its commitment to a rational society.

The very incongruity of these essentially mixed messages, which coexist on every page of the lifestyle 'zines,' reflects the feverish voice of the squirming petty bourgeois. If anarchism loses its socialist core and collectivist goal, if it drifts off into aestheticism, ecstasy, and desire, and, incongruously, into Taoist quietism and Buddhist self-effacement as a substitute for a libertarian program, politics, and organization, it will come to represent not social regeneration and a revolutionary vision but social decay and a petulant egoistic rebellion. Worse, it will feed the wave of mysticism that is already sweeping affluent members of the generation now in their teens and twenties. Lifestyle anarchism's exaltation of ecstasy, certainly laudable in a radical social matrix but here unabashedly intermingled with 'sorcery,' is producing a dreamlike absorption with spirits, ghosts, and Jungian archetypes rather than a rational and dialectical awareness of the world.

Characteristically, the cover of a recent issue of *Alternative Press Review* (Fall 1994), a widely read American feral anarchist periodical, is adorned with a three-headed Buddhist deity in serene nirvanic repose, against a presumably cosmic background of swirling galaxies and New Age paraphernalia -- an image that could easily join Fifth Estate's 'Anarchy' poster in a New Age boutique. Inside the cover, a graphic cries out: 'Life Can Be Magic When We Start to Break Free' (the A in Magic is circled) -- to which one is obliged to ask: How? With what? The magazine itself contains a deep ecology essay by Glenn Parton (drawn from David Foreman's periodical *Wild Earth*) titled: 'The Wild Self: Why I Am a Primitivist,' extolling 'primitive peoples' whose 'way of life fits into the pre-given natural world,' lamenting the Neolithic revolution, and identifying our 'primary task' as

being to 'unbuild' our civilization, and restore wilderness.' The magazine's artwork celebrates vulgarity -- human skulls and images of ruins are very much in evidence. Its lengthiest contribution, 'Decadence,' reprinted from Black Eye, melds the romantic with the lumpen, exultantly concluding: 'It's time for a real Roman holiday, so bring on the barbarians!'

Alas, the barbarians are already here -- and the 'Roman holiday' in today's American cities flourishes on crack, thuggery, insensitivity, stupidity, primitivism, anticivilizationism, antirationalism, and a sizable dose of 'anarchy' conceived as chaos. Lifestyle anarchism must be seen in the present social context not only of demoralized black ghettos and reactionary white suburbs but even of Indian reservations, those ostensible centers of 'primality,' in which gangs of Indian youths now shoot at one another, drug dealing is rampant, and 'gang graffiti greets visitors even at the sacred Window Rock monument,' as Seth Mydans reports in The New York Times (March 3, 1995).

Thus, a widespread cultural decay has followed the degeneration of the 1960s New Left into postmodernism and of its counter-culture into New Age spiritualism. For timid lifestyle anarchists, Halloween artwork and incendiary articles push hope and an understanding of reality into the ever-receding distance. Torn by the lures of 'cultural terrorism' and Buddhist ashrams, lifestyle anarchists in fact find themselves in a crossfire between the barbarians at the top of society in Wall Street and the City, and those at its bottom, in the dismal urban ghettos of Euro-America. Alas, the conflict in which they find themselves, for all their celebrations of lumpen lifeways (to which corporate barbarians are no strangers



these days) has less to do with the need to create a free society than with a brutal war over who is to share in the in the available spoils from the sale of drugs, human bodies, exorbitant loans -- and let us not forget junk bonds and international currencies.

A return to mere animality -- or shall we call it 'decivilization'? -- is a return not to freedom but to instinct, to the domain of 'authenticity' that is guided more by genes than by brains. Nothing could be further from the ideals of freedom spelled out in ever-expansive forms by the great revolutions of the past. And nothing could be more unrelenting in its sheer obedience to biochemical imperatives such as DNA or more in contrast to the creativity, ethics, and mutuality opened by culture and struggles for a rational civilization. There is no freedom in 'wildness' if, by sheer ferality, we mean the dictates of inborn behavioral patterns that shape mere animality. To malign civilization without due recognition of its enormous potentialities for self-conscious freedom -- a freedom conferred by reason as well as emotion, by insight as well as desire, by prose as well as poetry -- is to retreat back into the shadowy world of brutishness, when thought was dim and intellectuation was only an evolutionary promise.

#### TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNALISM

My picture of lifestyle anarchism is far from complete; the personalistic thrust of this ideological clay allows it to be molded in many forms provided that words like imagination, sacred, intuitive, ecstasy, and primal embellish its surface.

Social anarchism, in my view, is made of fundamentally different stuff, heir to the Enlightenment tradition, with due regard to that tradition's limits and incompleteness. Depending upon how it defines reason, social anarchism celebrates the thinking human mind without in any way denying passion, ecstasy, imagination, play, and art. Yet rather than reify them into hazy categories, it tries to incorporate them into everyday life. It is committed to rationality while opposing the rationalization of experience; to technology, while opposing the 'megamachine'; to social institutionalization, while opposing class rule and hierarchy; to a genuine politics based on the confederal coordination of municipalities or communes by the people in direct face-to-face democracy, while opposing parliamentarism and the state.

This 'Commune of communes,' to use a traditional slogan of earlier revolutions, can be appropriately designated as Communalism. Opponents of democracy as 'rule' to the contrary notwithstanding, it describes the democratic dimension of anarchism as a majoritarian administration of the public sphere. Accordingly, Communalism seeks freedom rather than autonomy in the sense that I have counterposed them. It sharply breaks with the psycho-personal Stirnerite, liberal, and bohemian ego as a self-contained sovereign by asserting that individuality does not emerge ab novo, dressed at birth in 'natural rights,' but sees individuality in great part as the ever-changing work of historical and social development, a process of self-formation that can be neither petrified by biologism nor arrested by temporally limited dogmas.

The sovereign, self-sufficient 'individual' has always been a precarious basis upon which to anchor a left libertarian outlook. As Max Horkheimer once observed, 'individuality is impaired when each man decides to fend for himself. . . . The absolutely isolated individual has always been an illusion. The most esteemed personal qualities, such as independence, will to freedom, sympathy, and the sense of justice, are social as well as individual virtues. The fully developed individual is the consummation of a fully developed society.'[42]

If a left-libertarian vision of a future society is not to disappear in a bohemian and lumpen demimonde, it must offer a resolution to social problems, not flit arrogantly from slogan to slogan, shielding itself from rationality with bad poetry and vulgar graphics. Democracy is not antithetical to anarchism; nor are majority rule and nonconsensual decisions incommensurable with a libertarian society.

That no society can exist without institutional structures is transparently clear to anyone who has not been stupefied by Stirner and his kind. By denying institutions and democracy, lifestyle anarchism insulates itself from social reality, so that it can fume all the more with futile rage, thereby remaining a subcultural caper for gullible youth and bored consumers of black garments and ecstasy posters. To argue that democracy and anarchism are incompatible because any impediment to the wishes of even 'a minority of one' constitutes a violation of personal autonomy is to advocate not a free society but Brown's 'collection of individuals' -- in short, a herd. No longer would 'imagination' come to 'power.' Power, which always exists, will belong either to the collective in a face-to-face and clearly institutionalized democracy,

or to the egos of a few oligarchs who will produce a 'tyranny of structurelessness.'

Not unjustifiably, Kropotkin, in his Encyclopaedia Britannica article, regarded the Stirnerite ego as elitist and deprecated it as hierarchical. Approvingly, he cited V. Basch's criticism of Stirner's individual anarchism as a form of elitism, maintaining 'that the aim of all superior civilization is, not to permit all members of the community to develop in a normal way, but to permit certain better endowed individuals 'fully to develop,' even at the cost of the happiness and the very existence of the mass of mankind.' In anarchism, this produces, in effect, a regression toward the most common individualism, advocated by all the would-be superior minorities to which indeed man owes in his history precisely the State and the rest, which these individualists combat. Their individualism goes so far as to end in a negation of their own starting-point -- to say nothing of the impossibility of the individual to attain a really full development in the conditions of oppression of the masses by the 'beautiful aristocracies.'[43]

In its amorality, this elitism easily lends itself to the unfreedom of the 'masses' by ultimately placing them in the custody of the 'unique ones,' a logic that may yield a leadership principle characteristic of fascist ideology.[44]

In the United States and much of Europe, precisely at a time when mass disillusionment with the state has reached unprecedented proportions, anarchism is in retreat. Dissatisfaction with government as such runs high on both sides of the Atlantic -- and seldom in recent memory has there been a more compelling popular

sentiment for a new politics, even a new social dispensation that can give to people a sense of direction that allows for security and ethical meaning. If the failure of anarchism to address this situation can be attributed to any single source, the insularity of lifestyle anarchism and its individualistic underpinnings must be singled out for aborting the entry of a potential left-libertarian movement into an ever-contracting public sphere.

To its credit, anarchosyndicalism in its heyday tried to engage in a living practice and create an organized movement -- so alien to lifestyle anarchism -- within the working class. Its major problems lay not in its desire for structure and involvement, for program and social mobilization, but in the waning of the working class as a revolutionary subject, particularly after the Spanish Revolution. To say that anarchism lacked a politics, however, conceived in its original Greek meaning as the self-management of the community -- the historic 'Commune of communes' -- is to repudiate a historic and transformative practice that seeks to radicalize the democracy inherent in any republic and to create a municipalist confederal power to countervail the state.

The most creative feature of traditional anarchism is its commitment to four basic tenets: a confederation of decentralized municipalities; an unwavering opposition to statism; a belief in direct democracy; and a vision of a libertarian communist society. The most important issue that left-libertarianism -- libertarian socialism no less than anarchism -- faces today is: What will it do with these four powerful tenets? How will we give them social form and content? In what ways and by what means will we render them relevant to our time and

bring them to the service of an organized popular movement for empowerment and freedom?

Anarchism must not be dissipated in self-indulgent behavior like that of the primitivistic Adamites of the sixteenth century, who 'wandered through the woods naked, singing and dancing,' as Kenneth Rexroth contemptuously observed, spending 'their time in a continuous sexual orgy' until they were hunted down by Jan Zizka and exterminated -- much to the relief of a disgusted peasantry, whose lands they had plundered. [45] It must not retreat into the primitivistic demimonde of the John Zerzans and George Bradfords. I would be the last to contend that anarchists should not live their anarchism as much as possible on a day-to-day basis -- personally as well as socially, aesthetically as well as pragmatically. But they should not live an anarchism that diminishes, indeed effaces the most important features that have distinguished anarchism, as a movement, practice, and program, from statist socialism. Anarchism today must resolutely retain its character as a social movement -- a programmatic as well as activist social movement -- a movement that melds its embattled vision of a libertarian communist society with its forthright critique of capitalism, unobscured by names like 'industrial society.'

In short, social anarchism must resolutely affirm its differences with lifestyle anarchism. If a social anarchist movement cannot translate its fourfold tenets -- municipal confederalism, opposition to statism, direct democracy, and ultimately libertarian communism -- into a lived practice in a new public sphere; if these tenets languish like its memories of past struggles in ceremonial pronouncements and meetings; worse still, if

they are subverted by the 'libertarian' Ecstasy Industry and by quietistic Asian theisms, then its revolutionary socialistic core will have to be restored under a new name.

Certainly, it is already no longer possible, in my view, to call oneself an anarchist without adding a qualifying adjective to distinguish oneself from lifestyle anarchists. Minimally, social anarchism is radically at odds with anarchism focused on lifestyle, neo-Situationist paeans to ecstasy, and the sovereignty of the ever-shriveling petty-bourgeois ego. The two diverge completely in their defining principles -- socialism or individualism. Between a committed revolutionary body of ideas and practice, on the one hand, and a vagrant yearning for privatistic ecstasy and self-realization on the other, there can be no commonality. Mere opposition to the state may well unite fascistic lumpens with Stirnerite lumpens, a phenomenon that is not without its historical precedents.

-- June 1, 1995

I would like to thank my colleague and companion, Janet Biehl, for her invaluable assistance in researching material for and editing this essay.

#### NOTES

1. The Political Philosophy of Bakunin, G. P. Maximoff editor (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953), p. 144.
2. Political Philosophy of Bakunin, p. 158.

3. Peter Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' the Encyclopaedia Britannica article, in Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp. 285-87.
4. Katinka Matson, 'Preface,' The Psychology Today Omnibook of Personal Development (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1977), n.p.
5. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 95-96. Heavenly will be the day when one can get straightforward formulations from Foucault, interpretations of whose views are often contradictory.
6. Paul Goodman, 'Politics Within Limits,' in Crazy Hope and Finite Experience: Final Essays of Paul Goodman, ed. Taylor Stoehr (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p. 56.
7. L. Susan Brown, The Politics of Individualism (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993). Brown's hazy commitment to anarchocommunism seems to derive more from a visceral preference than from her analysis.
8. Hakim Bey, T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1985, 1991). Bey's individualism might easily resemble that of the late Fredy Perlman and his anticivilizational acolytes and primitivists in Detroit's Fifth Estate, except that T.A.Z. rather confusedly calls for 'a psychic paleolithism based on High-Tech' (p. 44).
9. 'T.A.Z.,' The Whole Earth Review (Spring 1994), p. 61.
10. Cited by Jose Lopez-Rey, Goya's Capriccios: Beauty, Reason and Caricature, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 80-81.



11. George Bradford, 'Stopping the Industrial Hydra: Revolution Against the Megamachine,' *The Fifth Estate*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Winter 1990), p. 10.
12. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 430.
13. Bradford, 'Civilization in Bulk, *Fifth Estate* (Spring 1991), p. 12.
14. Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt Brace & World, 1963), p. 301. All page numbers herein refer to this edition.
15. Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 285.
16. The conference papers were published in Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968).
17. 'What Hunters Do for a Living, or, How to Make Out in Scarce Resources,' in Lee and DeVore, *Man the Hunter*, p. 43.
18. See particularly Paul Radin's *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), pp. 139-150.
19. John Zerzan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1994), p. 16. The reader who has faith in Zerzan's research may try looking for important sources like 'Cohen (1974)' and 'Clark (1979)' (cited on pages 24 and 29, respectively) in his bibliography -- they and others are entirely absent.
20. The literature on these aspects of prehistoric life is very large. Anthony Legge and Peter A. Rowley's 'Gazelle Killing in Stone Age Syria,' *Scientific American*, vol. 257 (Aug. 1987), pp. 88-95, shows that migrating animals could have been slaughtered with devastating effectiveness by the use of corrals. The classical study of the pragmatic aspects of animism is Bronislaw Malinowski's *Myth, Science and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954). Manipulative

anthropomorphization is evident in many accounts of transigrations from the human to nonhuman realm claimed by shamans, as in the myths of the Makuna reported by Kaj 'rhem, 'Dance of the Water People,' *Natural History* (Jan. 1992).

21. On the pygmies, see Colin M. Turnbull, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo* (New York: Clarion/Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 101-102. On the Eskimos, see Gontran de Montaigne Poncins's *Kabloona: A White Man in the Arctic Among the Eskimos* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 208-9, as well as in many other works on traditional Eskimo culture.

22. That many grasslands throughout the world were produced by fire, probably dating back to *Homo erectus*, is a hypothesis scattered throughout the anthropological literature. An excellent study is Stephen J. Pyne's *Fire in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). See also William M. Denevan, in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* (Sept. 1992), cited in William K. Stevens, 'An Eden in Ancient America? Not Really,' *The New York Times* (March 30, 1993), p. C1.

23. On the hotly debated issue of 'overkill' see *Pleistocene Extinctions: The Search for a Cause*, ed. P. S. Martin and H. E. Wright, Jr. . The arguments around whether climatic factors and/or human 'overkilling' led to massive extinctions of some thirty-five genera of Pleistocene mammals are too complex to be dealt with here. See Paul S. Martin, 'Prehistoric Overkill,' in *Pleistocene Extinctions: The Search for a Cause*, ed. P. S. Martin and H. E. Wright, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). I have explored some of the arguments in my introduction to the 1991 revised edition of *The Ecology of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose

Books). The evidence is still under debate. Mastodons, who were once regarded as environmentally restricted animals, are now known to have been ecologically more flexible and might have been killed off by Paleoindian hunters, possibly with far less compunction than romantic environmentalists would like to believe. I do not contend that hunting alone pushed these large mammals to extermination -- a considerable amount of killing would have been enough. A summary of arroyo drives of bison can be found in Brian Fagan, 'Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains,' *Archaeology* (May-June 1994), p. 38.

24. Karl W. Butzer, 'No Eden in the New World,' *Nature*, vol. 82 (March 4, 1993), pp. 15-17.

25. T. Patrick Cuthbert, 'The Collapse of Classic Maya Civilization,' in *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*, ed. Norman Yoffee and George L. Cowgill (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1988); and Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. chapter 5.

26. Clifford Geertz, 'Life on the Edge,' *The New York Review of Books*, April 7, 1994, p. 3.

27. As William Powers observes, the book *Black Elk Speaks* was published in 1932. There is no trace of Black Elk's Christian life in it.' For a thorough debunking of the current fascination with the Black Elk story, see William Powers, 'When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens,' *Social Text*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1991), pp. 43-56.

28. Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled With Flies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 127.

29. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, p. 3.

30. Allyn Maclean Stearman, *Yuqu': Forest Nomads in a Changing World* (Fort Worth and Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1989), p. 23.

31. Stearman, Yuqu', pp. 80-81.
32. Wilmsen, Land Filled with Flies, pp. 235-39 and 303-15.
33. See, for example, Robert J. Blumenschine and John A. Cavallo, 'Scavenging and Human Evolution,' *Scientific American* (October 1992), pp. 90-96.
34. Paul A. Janssens, *Paleopathology: Diseases and Injuries of Prehistoric Man* (London: John Baker, 1970).
35. Wood, *Human Sickness*, p. 20.
36. E. B. Maple, 'The Fifth Estate Enters the 20th Century. We Get a Computer and Hate It!' *The Fifth Estate*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 6-7.
37. Quoted in *The New York Times*, May 7, 1995. Less sanctimonious people than Zerzan have tried to escape the hold of television and take their pleasures with decent music, radio plays, books, and the like. They just don't buy them!
38. Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, ed. James J. Martin, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963), part 2, chap. 4, sec. C, 'My Self-Engagement,' p. 352, emphasis added.
39. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense' (1873; fragment), in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Portable Library, 1959), pp. 46-47.
40. Friedrich Nietzsche, fragment 481 (1883-1888), *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 267.
41. James J. Martin, editor's introduction to Stirner, *Ego and His Own*, p. xviii.
42. Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 135.
43. Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, pp. 287, 293.

44. Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' Revolutionary Pamphlets, pp. 292-93.
45. Kenneth Rexroth, Communalism (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 89.

## **SYNDICALISM:**

### **THE GHOST OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM**

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

**--November 6, 1992**

This manuscript was provided to [Anarchy Archives](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archive/home.html) ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/archive/home.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archive/home.html)) by the author.

One of the most persistent of human frailties is the tendency of individuals and groups to fall back, in times of a terribly fragmented reality, onto obsolete, even archaic ideologies for a sense of continuity and security. Today we find this not only on the right, where people are evoking the ghosts of Nazism and deadly forms of an embattled nationalism, but also on the "left" (whatever that word may mean anymore), where many people evoke ghosts of their own, be they the Neolithic goddess cults that many feminist and ecological sects celebrate or the generally anti-civilizational ambience that exists among young middle-class people throughout the English-speaking world.

Unfortunately, backward-looking tendencies are by no means absent among a number of self-professed anarchists, either, some of whom have turned to

mystical, often expressly primitivistic ideas imbricated with ecotheologies and goddess-worshipping ideologies of one kind or another. Still others have turned uncritically to the eternal verities of anarcho-syndicalism, even though it came to its end as a historical force in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-‘39. Enough critical literature on ecotheologies is now available that serious people can exorcise those ghosts from feminism and ecologism. But anarcho-syndicalism, one of the most cloistered of libertarian tendencies today, still evokes a great deal of sympathy owing to its roots in a once-insurgent labor movement.

What I find disturbing about much anarcho-syndicalist literature is its tendency to claim that anarcho-syndicalism is the alpha and omega of "true" anarchism, in contrast to other libertarian tendencies that involve a broader view of social struggle than one that is largely focused on traditional conflicts between wage labor and capital. Certainly not all anarcho-syndicalists would be unsympathetic to, say, eco-anarchism or a communitarian anarchism that is concerned with confederations of villages, towns, and cities, but a degree of dogmatism and stodgy fixity persists among worker-oriented anarchists that I believe should hardly be characteristic of left libertarians generally.

To be told, as anarcho-syndicalist theorist Helmut Rüdiger wrote in 1949, that syndicalism is the "only" ideology "that can relate anarchistic ideas to working people--that is, to the larger part of the population" [der großen Menge der Bevölkerung] seems a cruel joke in the world of the 1990s (Rüdiger, 1949, p. 160). At least the author of so sweeping a claim was an old-timer, an editor of *Arbetaren* (a Swedish syndicalist weekly), and

he penned them in 1949, when it was still unclear that the proletariat had ceased to be the "hegemonic" revolutionary class that it seemed to be a decade earlier. Rüdiger was also willing to broaden the scope of anarcho-syndicalist ideology by introducing some of the more community-oriented views of Proudhon into his ideas. But in conversations with and writings of more recent anarcho-syndicalists, I have increasingly come across similar claims maintaining that syndicalism or "workers' control" of industry is synonymous with anarchism. Many anarcho-syndicalists seem to regard any libertarian ideas that challenge even the "hegemony" of syndicalism in its various mutations -generally anarcho-syndicalist in character-"anti-proletarian," anti-"classist," and as propagating a cultural "deviation" from their own bedrock anarchist analysis of class conflict in capitalist society.

That the proletariat that once rallied to the banners of the Spanish National Confederation of Labor (CNT) and the early French General Confederation of Labor (CGT) has changed its apparent character, structure, and outlook over the past century; that capitalism today is no longer quite the capitalism that emerged generations ago; that vital issues have emerged that have a great deal to do with hierarchical structures based on race, gender, nationality, and bureaucratic status, not only economic classes; and that capitalism is now on a collision course with the natural world -all these problems and many more that are in such dire need of coherent analysis and sweeping solution tend to largely elude the anarcho-syndicalists I have encountered--that is, when they do not simply deal with them marginally, in metaphorical or economic terms. What is no less troubling, the trade-unionist mentality among some of my own anarcho-



syndicalist critics tends to obscure the fact that anarchism itself has historically made a response to social and cultural issues that is much broader than the class struggle between workers and bosses. The result is that today, the more wide-ranging tendencies in anarchist history are either ignored or simply written out of the movement's past. How successful I or anyone else am likely to be in challenging this deeply entrenched syndicalist mentality, with its claims to ideological "hegemony," is questionable. But at least the record of anarcho-syndicalism should be clarified and certain of the problems it presents should be confronted. Some attempt should be made to take into consideration the sweeping changes have occurred since the 1930s, to which many anarcho-syndicalists seem oblivious; certain truths that are part of the history of anarchism generally have to be redeemed and explored; and problems should be faced, disagreeable as they may be, and resolved as much as possible, or at least discussed without leaning on a fixed dogma as a substitute for frankness.

#### ANARCHISM: THE COMMUNAL DIMENSION

It is arguable whether anarchism is primarily a product of relatively modern individualistic ideologies, of Enlightenment rationalism, or of initially inchoate but popular attempts to resist hierarchical domination -the latter, an interpretation that I share with Kropotkin. In any case, the word anarchist already appeared in the English Revolution when a Cromwellian periodical denounced Cromwell's more radical critics as "Switzering anarchists" (Bookchin, n.d., vol. 1, p. 161). During the French Revolution, a generation before Proudhon employed the term to designate his own views,

royalists and Girondins repeatedly used the word anarchists to attack the enragés. That the Reformation peasants of Germany in the 1520s who rose up to defend their common lands and village autonomy in the name of an authentic folk version of Christianity are characterized as anarchist, as is Tolstoy despite his devout religiosity, should lay to rest any denials of the fact that the anarchist tradition encompasses expansive, folk-like movements.

It is questionable whether individualism as such is the sine qua non of anarchism -my own view of anarchism is strongly social-but anarchism can be seen as emerging in different social periods and conditions in many different forms. It can be found among tribal peoples who resisted the emergence of statist institutions; in the popular opposition of peasants, serfs, slaves, and yeomen to various systems of rule; in the conflict of the enragés and radical sectionnaires of the Parisian assemblies with the Jacobin centralists; and in the proletariat's struggle in its more heroic periods against capitalist exploitation - which is not to deny the presence of statist elements in many of these forms of popular resistance as well. Proudhon seems to have spoken largely for craftspeople and the emerging working classes of the nineteenth century; Bakunin, for peasants and an emerging industrial proletariat; avowed anarcho-syndicalists, for factory workers and the agricultural proletariat; Kropotkin, for oppressed people generally, in a still later period when a communistic society based on the principle "From each according to his or her ability, to each according to his or her needs" (or a "post-scarcity society," in my language), seemed eminently feasible.

I must emphasize that I am not trying to present a rigorous scheme here. It is the remarkable overlap of evolving social conditions and ideologies in the past two centuries that may well explain what seems like "confusion" in an unavoidably disparate body of libertarian ideas. It is important to emphasize, in my view, that anarchism is above all antihierarchical rather than simply individualistic; it seeks to remove the domination of human by human, not only the abolition of the state and exploitation by ruling economic classes. Indeed, far from being mainly individualistic or mainly directed against a specific form of class rule, anarchism has historically been most creative and challenging when it was focused on the commune rather than on its economic components such as the factory, and further that the confederal forms of organization that it elaborated were based on an ethics of complementarity rather than on a contractual system of services and obligations.

Indeed, the importance of the commune in traditional anarchist thought has not received the full attention it deserves, possibly due to the influence that Marxian economism had on anarchism and the hegemonic role it assigned to the industrial proletariat. This economism may also have been supported by Proudhon's influential writings, many of which anarchists cite without due regard to the time and circumstances in which they were written. Today only a diehard Proudhonian, for example, is likely to agree with Proudhon's belief, expressed in *The Principle of Federalism*, that "the idea of anarchy . . . means that political functions have been reduced to industrial functions, and that the social order arises from nothing but transactions and exchanges" (Proudhon, 1863, p. 11). Proudhon's economistic interpretation of

anarchy, with its focus on the self-sovereign individual as a contractual bearer of goods and services (a focus he shared with traditional liberalism in that he structured his views around individual contracts as well as a "social contract"), is not the most edifying of his ideas.

What I find most worth emphasizing in Proudhon is his highly communal notion of confederalism. He was at his best, allowing for certain reservations, when he declared that "the federal system is the contrary of hierarchy or administrative and governmental centralization"; that the "essence" of federal contracts is "always to reserve more powers for the citizen than for the state, and for municipal and provincial authorities than for the central power"; that "the central power" must be "imperceptibly subordinated . . . to the representatives of departments or provinces, provincial authority to the delegates of townships, and municipal authority to its inhabitants" (Proudhon, 1863, pp. 41, 45, 48). Indeed, Edward Hyams, in his highly sympathetic 1979 biography, glows with appreciation as he summarizes Proudhon's federalism:

It is of the essence of the Proudhonian federation contract that when entering into it, the contracting parties undertaking equivalent and reciprocal obligations towards each other, each reserves to himself a greater measure of rights, of liberty, authority and property than he concedes to the federal authority: the citizen remains master of and in his own house, restricting his rights only in so far as it is necessary to avoid encroaching on those of others in his parish or commune. The commune is self-governing through the assembly of citizens or their delegates, but it vests the county federal authority with certain powers which it thus surrenders. The county,

again self-governing through the assembly of delegates from the federated communes, vests the federal authority of the national federation of counties, with powers which it surrenders. So the federation of counties, or regions is the confederation into which the erstwhile sovereign state has been transformed; and it may, in its turn, enter into federative contracts with other such confederations. (Hyams, 1979, p. 254)

To be sure, Hyams places a disquieting emphasis on Proudhon's individualism of the citizen, who seems to exist in tension with his or her commune, and on contractual relationships as such. Hyams uncritically accepts Proudhon's notion of different confederal levels of society as each involving the "surrender" of rights rather than being structured into merely administrative and coordinative (as distinguished from policy-making) bodies. Nonetheless, Hyams's notion of Proudhon's "federation contract" has a certain modern ring to it. The proprietarian mentality that appears in so many of Proudhon's writings--which might well be mistaken for recent versions of "market socialism"--is dispensable. The point I wish to stress is that Proudhon here appears as a supporter of direct democracy and assembly self-management on a clearly civic level, a form of social organization well worth fighting for in an era of centralization and oligarchy.

Before Mikhail Bakunin became deeply involved with the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA) in the 1870s, he too placed a very strong emphasis on the commune or municipality in his vision of an anarchist society. In his *Revolutionary Catechism* of 1866 (not to be confused with Nechayev's of 1869), Bakunin observed:

First: all organizations must proceed by way of federation from the base to the summit, from the commune to the coordinating association of the country or nation. Second: there must be at least one autonomous intermediate body between the commune and the country, the department, the region, or the province. . . . The basic unit of all political organization in each country must be the completely autonomous commune, constituted by the majority vote of all adults of both sexes. . . . The province must be nothing but a free federation of autonomous communes. (Bakunin, 1866, pp. 82-83)

Even more boldly, as late as 1870 Bakunin drew an implicit distinction between national parliamentarism and local electoralism, patently favoring the latter over the former.

Due to their economic hardships the people are ignorant and indifferent and are aware only of things closely affecting them. They understand and know how to conduct their daily affairs. Away from their familiar concerns they become confused, uncertain, and politically baffled. They have a healthy, practical common sense when it comes to communal affairs. They are fairly well informed and know how to select from their midst the most capable officials. Under such circumstances, effective control is quite possible, because the public business is conducted under the watchful eyes of the citizens and vitally and directly concerns their daily lives. This why municipal elections always best reflect the real attitude and will of the people. Provincial and county governments, even when

the latter are directly elected, are already less representative of the people. (Bakunin, 1870, p. 223)[1]

For Peter Kropotkin, "the form that the social revolution must take [is] the independent commune" (Kropotkin, 1913, p. 163). Commenting on Bakunin's views, which Kropotkin held to be communist rather than collectivist in reality, he went on to add that federalism and autonomy in themselves are not enough. Although he critically greeted the Paris Commune of 1871 as an "attempt which opened a new era in history," elsewhere in his writings he saw it as a largely cloistered phenomenon, in which the commune itself, composed of a sizable number of Jacobins, was separated from the people. Not only would "socialism" have to become "communistic" in the economic sense, he averred; it would also have to have the political structure of "self-governing" communes, or in contemporary words, a "participatory democracy." In France, Spain, England and the United States, he wrote optimistically, "we notice in these countries the evident tendency to form into groups of entirely independent communes, towns and villages, which would combine by means of free federation, in order to satisfy innumerable needs and attain certain immediate ends. . . . The future revolutions in France and Spain will be communalist -not centralist" (Kropotkin, 1913, pp. 185-86).

Underpinning these visions of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin was a communalist ethics -mutualist in Proudhon, collectivist in Bakunin, and communist in Kropotkin -that corresponds to a sense of civic virtue and commitment. Whether it was regarded as contractual or complementary, confederalism was to constitute a moral cement and a source of communal solidarity that

transcended a bourgeois egotism based on self-interest. It was precisely this sensibility that gave anarchism the right to claim that--in contrast to Marx's emphasis on class economic interests, indeed on "interest" as such"--it was an ethical socialism, not simply a scientific socialism--Kropotkin's zeal in the latter respect notwithstanding (see Kropotkin, 1905, p. 298).

### ANARCHISM: THE SYNDICALIST DIMENSION

The historic opposition of anarchists to oppression of all kinds, be it that of serfs, peasants, craftspeople, or workers, inevitably led them to oppose exploitation in the newly emerging factory system as well. Much earlier than we are often led to imagine, syndicalism -essentially a rather inchoate but radical form of trade unionism - became a vehicle by which many anarchists reached out to the industrial working class of the 1830s and 1840s. In the nineteenth century the social contours of what may be called "proletarian anarchism" were very difficult to define. Were peasants, especially landless peasants, members of the working class? Could farmers with small landholdings be so regarded? What of intellectuals, fairly privileged technicians, office and service employees, civil servants, professionals, and the like, who rarely regarded themselves as members of the proletariat?

Marx and Engels personally eschewed terms like "workers," "toilers," and "laborers," although they were quite prepared to use these words in their popular works. They preferred to characterize industrial workers by the "scientifically" precise name of "proletarians"--that is, people who had nothing to sell but their labor power, and even more, who were the authentic producers of surplus



value on production lines (an attribute that even Marxists tend to ignore these days). Insofar as the European proletariat as a class evolved from displaced preindustrial strata like landless peasants who had drifted toward the cities, the factory system became their economic home, a place that -presumably unlike the dispersed farmsteads and villages of agrarian folk-"organized" them into a cohesive whole. Driven to immiseration by capitalist accumulation and competition, this increasingly (and hopefully) class-conscious proletariat would be inexorably forced to lock horns with the capitalist order as a "hegemonic" revolutionary class and eventually overthrow bourgeois society, laying the foundations for socialism and ultimately communism.[2]

However compelling this Marxian analysis seemed from the 1840s onward, its attempt to reason out the proletariat's "hegemonic" role in a future revolution by analogy with the seemingly revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie in feudal society was as specious as the latter was itself historically erroneous (see Bookchin, 1971, pp. 181-92). It is not my intention here to critically examine this fallacious historical scenario, which carries considerable weight among many historians to this very day. Suffice it to say that it was a very catchy thesis -and attracted not only a great variety of socialists but also many anarchists. For anarchists, Marx's analysis provided a precise argument for why they should focus their attention on industrial workers, adopt a largely economic approach to social development, and single out the factory as a model for a future society, more recently in particular, based on some form of "workers' control" and "federal" form of industrial organization. But here an array of problems confronted anarchists even

more than Marxists. How were they to relate to small farmers, craftspeople, *déclassé* elements, and intellectuals? Many of these groups were in fact more predisposed in the past to hold a broader libertarian perspective than were industrial workers, who after a generation or two of industrial discipline tended to accept the factory hierarchy as a normal, indeed "natural," way of life. And were industrial workers really as "hegemonic" in their class struggle with the "bosses" as the sturdy anarchist peasantry of Spain, many of whom were easily drawn to Bakuninist collectivism, or the largely craft-type workers who embraced Proudhonian mutualism, or the Zapatista Indian peons of Mexico who, like the Makhnovist Ukrainian militia, adhered to what was an intuitive anarchistic outlook? To the extent that anarchists tried to mingle their ethical views with Marxian claims to "scientific" precision, they laid the basis for tensions that would later seriously divide the anarchist movement itself and lead more economically oriented anarchists into compromises that vitiated the ethical thrust of anarchism as a social movement.

The involvement of anarchists with the IWMA reinforced the vague syndicalist trend that certainly had existed in their movement before the word "anarcho-syndicalism" was coined. As early as the 1870s, more than a decade before French anarchists proclaimed anarcho-syndicalism to be the best, often the only approach for achieving a libertarian society, Spanish anarchists influenced primarily by Bakuninism had created a diffuse but largely syndicalist union movement that combined the visions of a revolutionary general strike with insurrections and a commitment to a confederally organized system of "workers' control" (see

Bookchin, 1977, p. 137). Nor did French anarcho-syndicalism itself emerge *ex nihilo*: the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), established in 1895 with its dual chambers of local and national industrial confederations, encompassed a wide spectrum of reformist, revolutionary, "pure" syndicalist, and anarchist views. Anarcho-syndicalism never fully dominated the CGT's outlook even in its most militant period, the decade before the outbreak of the First World War (see Stearns, 1971, which shows how tame the CGT really was.)

Nor was anarcho-syndicalism ever completely accepted among anarchists as coeval with anarchism. Many outstanding anarchists opposed syndicalism as too parochial in its outlook and in its proletarian constituency. At the famous Amsterdam Congress of 1907, Errico Malatesta, the gallant Italian anarchist, challenged the view that anarcho-syndicalism should supersede anarcho-communism.[3] Without denying "the weapon which syndicalist forms of action might place in [anarchism's] hands," observes George Woodcock in his account of Malatesta's objections at the congress, Malatesta

insisted that syndicalism could be regarded only as a means, and an imperfect means at that, since it was based on a rigid class conception of society which ignored the fact that the interests of the workers varied so much that "sometimes workers are economically and morally much nearer to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat." . . . The extreme syndicalists, in Malatesta's view, were seeking an illusory economic solidarity instead of a real moral solidarity; they placed the interests of a single class above the true anarchist ideal

of a revolution which sought "the complete liberation of all humanity, at present enslaved from the triple economic, political and moral point of view." (Woodcock, 1962, p. 267)

This passage touches upon all the problems anarcho-syndicalism--not only "pure syndicalism"--were to create in the anarchist movement. Ideologically, anarcho-syndicalists slowly began to debase communist anarchism's emphases on the commune in favor of trade unions, on the humanistic ethics of mutualism in favor of the economistic interpretation of social conflict, on the opposition to a generalized notion of domination in favor of the particularistic class interests of the proletariat.

This is not to contend that anarchists should have ignored trade unions, economic problems, and class conflicts. But anarcho-syndicalists increasingly supplanted the communal, ethical, universalistic, and anti-domineering character of anarchism as a broad vision of freedom in all spheres of life with their own narrower one. Ultimately, the tendency to parochialize anarchism along economistic and class lines grossly constricted its scope to a trade-unionist mentality. As Malatesta himself warned, "Trade Unions are by their very nature reformist and never revolutionary." Moreover:

the real and immediate interests of organised workers, which is the Unions' role to defend, are very often in conflict with their [i.e., revolutionaries'] ideals and forward-looking objectives; and the Union can only act in a revolutionary way if permeated by a spirit of sacrifice and to the extent that the ideal is given precedence over interest, that is, only if, and to the extent

that, it ceases to be an economic Union and becomes a political and idealistic group. (Malatesta, 1922, p. 117; emphasis added)

Malatesta's fears, in fact, were subsequently realized with a vengeance. It is fair to say that the performance of the anarcho-syndicalist movement has been one of the most dismal in the two-century history of modern anarchism. A few examples may suffice to show what became a general affliction that burdened self-styled libertarian trade unions. In the Mexican Revolution, the anarcho-syndicalist leaders of the Casa del Obrero Mundial shamelessly placed their proletarian "Red Battalions" in the service of Carranza, one of the revolution's most blatant thugs, to fight against the revolutionary militia of Emiliano Zapata--all to gain a few reforms, which Carranza withdrew once the Zapatista challenge had been definitively broken with their collaboration. The great Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón justly denounced their behavior as a betrayal (Magón, 1977, p. 27).

In the United States, lest present-day anarcho-syndicalists get carried away by the legendary Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or "Wobblies," they should be advised that this syndicalist movement, like many others elsewhere, was by no means committed to anarchism. "Big Bill" Haywood, its most renowned leader, was never an anarchist, and after he jumped bail and fled to Moscow rather than face judicial challenges--to the shock of his "Wobbly" supporters--he eventually drifted toward the Communist "Red Trade International" (Profintern), however uncomfortable he may have felt with it. Still other "Wobblies" such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, William Z. Foster, Bob Minor, and Earl Browder,

who either were anarchists or tilted toward anarchism, found a comfortable home in the American Communist Party well into the 1940s and after. Many "Wobblies" who attended meetings of the Communist International soon began to shun Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Moscow, despite their close friendship with the two anarchists in the pre-Bolshevik period, as Goldman bitterly attested (Goldman, 1931, vol. 2, p. 906).

In France, where the ostensibly syndicalist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) generated the strong syndicalistic emphasis among anarchists throughout the world at the turn of the century, the union was never itself anarcho-syndicalist. Many French anarchists, to be sure, flocked into this very fragile confederation and tried to influence its members along libertarian lines. The CGT's members, however, no less than many of its leaders, tended toward reformist goals and eventually were absorbed into the Communist movement after the Bolshevik revolution. Not only was anarchist influence on the CGT limited at best, but as Peter Stearns tells us, "One strike resulted when a manager spoke of 'anarchy on the site,' for the ditchdiggers (in Paris, interestingly enough) felt that he had accused them of being anarchists." Further:

It is clear that, even in Paris, convinced syndicalists were a small minority of active union members. And only a minority of even the more excitable workers were unionized and therefore likely to be syndicalist; in Paris in 1908, that is, in the peak period of agitation by unskilled construction workers [who were the most likely candidates for supporters of an anarcho-syndicalist outlook--M.B.], only 40% belonged to a union. The

resentment some expressed against being called anarchists suggests a persistent distrust of radical doctrines, even among active strikers. (Stearns, 1971, pp. 58, 96)

Nor can much more be said about the CNT in Spain, which by 1938 comprised the most militant and socially conscious working class in the history of the labor movement and at least exhibited considerably more anarchist zeal than any other syndicalist union. Yet this extraordinary confederation tended repeatedly to move toward "pure and simple" trade unionism in Barcelona, whose working class might well have drifted into the Socialist General Union of Workers (UGT) had the Catalan bourgeoisie showed even a modicum of liberality and sophistication in dealing with the proletariat of that area. The Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) was organized in 1927 largely to prevent CNT moderates like Salvado Segui, who tended to hold class-collaborationist views, and the "Thirty," who were bitterly opposed to FAI militancy and that of insurgent CNT unions, from gaining control of the confederation as a whole. This moderate tendency came very much to the fore with the outbreak of the civil war.

A host of complex issues existed in the relationships between the Catalan state and the syndicalist CNT, which all but absorbed the FAI in the 1930s (often cojoining its acronym to that of the union as the "CNT-FAI"). But its anarcho-syndicalist leadership after the July 1936 uprising actually made no effort to collectivize the economy. Significantly, "no left organization issued calls for revolutionary takeovers of factories, workplaces or the land," as Ronald Fraser observes.

Indeed, the CNT leadership in Barcelona, epicentre of urban anarcho-syndicalism, went further: rejecting the offer of power presented to it by President [Luis] Companys, it decided that the libertarian revolution must stand aside for collaboration with the Popular Front forces to defeat the common enemy. The revolution that transformed Barcelona in a matter of days into a city virtually run by the working class sprang initially from individual CNT unions, impelled by their most advanced militants; and as their example spread it was not only large enterprises but small workshops and businesses that were being taken over. (Fraser, 1984, p. 226-27)

Fraser's interpretation is corroborated by Gaston Laval, one of the most distinguished anarchists in the Spanish libertarian movement, whose *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* (1975) is generally regarded as the most comprehensive work on the collectives. Laval emphasizes the importance of the usually unknown anarchist militants, a minority in the CNT, who constituted the authentic and most thoroughgoing impetus for collectivization. "It is clear," observes Laval, that

the social revolution which took place then did not stem from a decision by the leading organisms of the C.N.T. or from the slogans launched by the militants and agitators who were in the public limelight but who rarely lived up to expectations.

Leval does not specify which luminaries he means here, but continues:

It occurred spontaneously, naturally, not (and let us avoid demagogy) because "the people" in general had



suddenly become capable of performing miracles, thanks to a revolutionary vision which suddenly inspired them, but because, and it is worth repeating, among those people there was a large minority who were active, strong, guided by an ideal which had been continuing through the years a struggle started in Bakunin's time and that of the First International; for in countless places were to be found men, combattants, who for decades had been pursuing constructive objectives, gifted as they were with a creative initiative and a practical sense which were indispensable for local adaptation and whose spirit of innovation constituted a power leaven, capable of coming up with conclusive solutions at the required time. (Laval, 1975, p. 80)

These "combattants" were probably among the first to enlist in the militias in 1936 and to perish on the battlefronts of the civil war--an irreparable loss to the Spanish anarchist movement.

To sort out and critically appraise the different kinds of collectives or systems of "workers' control" that emerged after the street fighting in Barcelona, moreover, would require a volume substantially larger than Laval's *Collectives*. Laval, whose anarcho-syndicalist credentials are unimpeccable, frankly made the following observation:

Too often in Barcelona and Valencia, workers in each undertaking took over the factory, the works, or the workshop, the machines, raw materials, and taking advantage of the continuation of the money system and normal capitalist commercial relations, organised production on their own account, selling for their own

benefit the produce of their labour. (Laval, 1975, p. 227; emphasis added)

The Catalan government's decree of October 1936 "legalized" these collectives with the CNT's approval and opened the door to governmental participation in various "workers' control" committees, eventually all but turning them into nationalized enterprises. But even before this process was completed, Laval acknowledges, there was "a workers' neo-capitalism, a self-management straddling capitalism and socialism, which we maintain would not have occurred had the Revolution been able to extend itself fully under the direction of our Syndicates" (Laval, 1975, p. 227-28).

Whether or not the full "socialization" (that is, CNT control) of the collectivized factories and enterprises would have obviated the highly centralized economic tendency within the CNT, however syndicalistic, is arguable. In cases where the CNT actually achieved syndicalist control, "the union became like a large firm," notes Fraser in his remarkable oral history of the civil war, *Blood of Spain*. "Its structure grew increasingly rigid." Observes Eduardo Pons Prades, a member of the Libertarian youth, "From outside it began to look like an American or German trust," and he then goes on to declare that within the collectives (specifically the wood and furniture one), the workers

felt they weren't particularly involved in decision-making. If the "general staff" decided that production in two workshops should be switched, the workers weren't informed of the reasons. Lack of information--which could easily have been remedied by producing a news-sheet, for example--bred discontent, especially as the

CNT tradition was to discuss and examine everything. Fortnightly delegates' meetings became monthly and ended up, I think, being quarterly.[4] (Pons Prado quoted in Fraser, 1979, pp. 222-23)

That the Spanish workers and peasants in the mid-thirties made social changes and moved toward a degree of industrial and agricultural democracy unprecedented in the history of past revolutions--this, I must emphasize, at a time when the legitimacy of "proletarian socialism" seemed to be warranted by a century of rising working-class militancy and class consciousness--does not alter the problems raised by the prospect of a future society structured around trade unions and a very specific class interest. Certainly, to make anarcho-syndicalism the equivalent of anarchism as such must be vigorously challenged. Indeed, it is by no means a matter of purely historical interest to ask whether a tendency in the anarchist tradition is alive or dead--a problem that anyone sympathetic to syndicalist versions of anarchism faces especially today, in view of the pragmatic nature of its doctrine and orientation. And if it has no life among proletarians, we are obliged to ask why. For when we examine the possibilities, failings, and history of anarcho-syndicalism, we are examining how we define anarchism itself: whether its ideals can be built on the interests of a very particularistic part of society largely guided by limited economic interests (a problem that Malatesta clearly perceived), or on an ethical socialism or communism that includes but goes beyond the material interests of an oppressed humanity. If we cannot regard anarcho-syndicalism as viable, we must try to determine what, in the existing society, does offer some avenue to a free community of cooperative people who

still retain their autonomy and individuality in an increasingly massified world.

## WORKERS AND CITIZENS

What after all did anarcho-syndicalists mean by the "proletariat," apart from those who were prepared to include "agrarian workers" in unions (which the CGT did not do and the CNT largely neglected in the late 1920s and early 1930s)?

I have suggested that the concept was defined mainly along Marxian lines, albeit without Marx's more searching, if erroneous, economic analysis. It implicitly included key concepts on which Marx's theory of "historical materialism" rested, notably the notion of the economy as the "base" of social life and the privileging of the industrial workers as a historically "hegemonic" class. To their credit, nonsyndicalist anarchists who gave a friendly nod to syndicalism because of moral pressure tended at the same time to resist this troubling simplification of social issues and forces. On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, the CNT was largely composed of industrial workers (a fact, I may add, that belies Eric Hobsbawm's view of anarchists as "primitive rebels"). It had already lost most of its agrarian following to the Spanish Socialist rural unions, apart from a few strongholds in Andalusia and Aragon (see Malefakis, 1970). Gerald Brenan's image of Spanish anarchism as a peasant movement as late as the 1930s, although still rather popular, is largely flawed. It represents a typically Andalusian view of anarcho-syndicalism that advanced a limited perspective on the movement (Brenan, 1943).[5] In fact, the leftward shift of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in the 1930s can be explained in

great measure by the entry of thousands of Andalusian day laborers into Socialist-controlled unions, even while they still retained the anarchic impulses of the previous generation (Bookchin, 1977, pp. 274-75, 285, 288-90).

Despite the "moral tone" that anarchists gave to the CNT (as Pons Prado phrases it in the recent Granada video documentary), the highly economistic emphasis of leading CNT figures, or "cenetistas," such as Diego Abad de Santillán in his widely read work *After the Revolution*, reveals the extent to which syndicalism had absorbed anarchism in its image of a new society, unwittingly melding Marxian methods of struggle, organizational ideas, and rationalized concepts of labor with anarchism's professed commitment to "libertarian communism" (see citations in Bookchin, 1977, pp. 310-11). The CNT's notion of "socializing" production often involved a highly centralized form of production, not unlike the Marxist notion of a "nationalized" economy. It differed surprisingly little from statist forms of economic planning that slowly eroded workers' control on the factory level. Their efforts led to serious confrontations between the more anarchistic "moralists" and the syndicalistic "realists," whose libertarian views often served as a patina for a narrow trade unionist mentality (see Fraser, 1979, pp. 221-22; Peirats, n.d., pp. 295-96).[6]

Indeed, the CNT became more and more bureaucratic after the halcyon days of 1936, until its slogan of "libertarian communism" merely echoed its anarchic ideals of earlier decades (Peirats, n.d., p. 229-30). By 1937, especially after the May uprising, the union was anarcho-syndicalist only in name. The Madrid and Catalan governments had taken over most of the

industrial collectives, leaving only the appearance of workers' control in most industries.[7] The revolution was indeed over. It had been arrested and undermined not only by the Communists, the right-wing Socialists, and the liberals but by the "realists" in the CNT itself.

How did a change so sweeping occur in a period of time so brief, in an anarcho-syndicalist organization that had such a huge proletarian following? How is it that a professedly libertarian movement that, by Frederica Montseny's own admission (see Granada Films, n.d.), could have stopped the Franquista advance by using libertarian tactics alone--that is, the preservation of the militias, the collectivization of industry and agriculture, and the resolute defense of the revolutionary gains in the cities and countryside against an unswerving Communist strategy of counterrevolution--failed to do so? And failed in such a tragic, humiliating, and demoralizing fashion? Franco's military victories and the fear they inspired do not fully explain this defeat. Historically, no revolution has ever occurred without civil war, and it was by no means evident that Franco was receiving effective military support from Germany and Italy until well into 1937. Even if external circumstances doomed the revolution to defeat, as Laval (1975, p. 68) and Abad de Santillán (1940) seem to have believed early on, the anarcho-syndicalist movement would seem to have had little to lose at the time if it had permitted the Barcelona uprising of May 1937 to recover the revolution's gains and militarily confront its enemies from within the republic. Why, in fact, did the workers who raised barricades in Barcelona during that fateful week obey their leaders and allow themselves to be disarmed?

These questions point to an underlying issue: the limitations of a movement that privileges any class as "hegemonic" within the capitalist system. Such issues as what stratum, class, or constellation of groups in society constitute the "subject" of historical change today are in the foreground of discussions in nearly all radical movements--with the possible exception of the anarcho-syndicalists I have encountered. In Spain, to be sure, the most fervent anarchists went to the front in the early months of the civil war and suffered an immensely high death toll, which probably contributed to the considerable decline in the "moral tone" of the movement after 1936. But even if these anarchist militants had remained behind, it is questionable whether they could have overcome the largely trade unionist mentality of the syndicalists and inertial forces that shaped the mentality of the working class itself.

Which brings us to what in my view is one of the major sources of error in the notion of proletarian hegemony. The industrial working class, for all the oppression and exploitation to which it is subjected, may certainly engage in class struggles and exhibit considerable social militancy. But rarely does class struggle escalate into class war or social militancy explode into social revolution. The deadening tendency of Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists to mistake struggle for war and militancy for revolution has plagued radical theory and practice for over a century but most especially during the era of "proletarian socialism" par excellence, from 1848 to 1939, that gave rise to the myth of "proletarian hegemony." As Franz Borkenau contends, it is easier to arouse nationalist feeling in the working class than feelings of international class solidarity, especially in periods of warfare, as the two world wars of this century

so vividly reveal (Borkenau, 1962,[8] pp. 57-79). Given the steady diet of "betrayals" to which Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists attribute the failure of the proletariat to establish a new society, one may well ask if these "betrayals" are really evidence of a systemic factor that renders meaningless and obscure the kind of "proletariat" that Marxists and anarcho-syndicalists adduce as the basis for privileging the working class as a whole in the name of "proletarian hegemony."

Often lacking in explications of the notion of "proletarian hegemony" is a historically nuanced account of the workers who did raise barricades in Paris in June 1848, in Petrograd in 1905 and 1917, and in Spain between 1870 and 1936. These "proletarians" were most often craftspeople for whom the factory system was a culturally new phenomenon. Many others had an immediate peasant background and were only a generation or two removed from a rural way of life. Among these "proletarians," industrial discipline as well as confinement in factory buildings produced very unsettling cultural and psychological tensions. They lived in a force-field between a preindustrial, seasonally determined, largely relaxed craft or agrarian way of life on the one hand, and the factory or workshop system that stressed the maximum, highly rationalized exploitation, the inhuman rhythms of machinery, the barracks-like world of congested cities, and exceptionally brutal working conditions, on the other. Hence it is not at all surprising that this kind of working class was extremely incendiary, and that its riots could easily explode into near-insurrections.

Marx saw the proletariat as "a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very



mechanisms of the process of capitalist production itself." As for the class struggle: "Centralisation of the means of production and socialization of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated" (Marx, 1906, vol. 1, pp. 836-37). Allowing for their varying alternatives in managing the industrial system, anarcho-syndicalists share this theoretical construct about the fate of capitalism and the role of the proletariat no less than Marxists. In Spain, this largely economic approach, with its high regard for the unity that the factory system imposes on workers, proved fatal. In areas influenced by the CNT, the workers did indeed "expropriate" the economy, albeit in a variety in ways and forms that ranged from "neo-capitalist" to highly "socialized" (or centralized) forms. But "workers' control," whatever its form, did not produce a "new society." The underlying idea that by controlling much of the economy the anarcho-syndicalist movement would essentially control the society (a rather simplistic version of Marx's historical materialism) proved a myth. The Catalan state in particular, before it finally turned to violence to completely eviscerate "socialized" workers' control, exercised its leverage over the Catalan financial and marketing system and simply inserted its own representatives into the workers' committees and confederal bodies, eventually reshaping the industrial collectives into de facto nationalized enterprises (see Laval, 1975, p. 279).

To the extent that wage-labor and capital do confront each other economically, their struggle--a very real one indeed--normally occurs within a thoroughly bourgeois

framework, as Malatesta foresaw generations ago. The struggle of workers with capitalists is essentially a conflict between two interlocking interests that is nourished by the very capitalist nexus of contractual relationships in which both classes participate. It normally counterposes higher wages to higher profits, less exploitation to greater exploitation, and better working conditions to poorer working conditions. These patently negotiable conflicts turn around differences in degree, not in kind. They are fundamentally contractual differences, not social differences.

Precisely because the industrial proletariat is "disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of capitalist production itself," as Marx put it, it is also more amenable to rationalized systems of control and hierarchical systems of organization than were the precapitalist strata that historically became the proletariat. Before this proletariat became integrated into the factory system, it mounted uprisings in France, Spain, Russia, Italy, and other relatively unindustrialized countries that are now so legendary in radical history books. Factory hierarchies, with their elaborate structures of managerial supervision, were often carried over into trade unions, even professedly anarcho-syndicalist ones, where workers were unusually vulnerable to "labor bosses" of all kinds--a problem that still plagues the labor movement of our own day.

Inasmuch as anarcho-syndicalists and doctrinaire Marxists alike often characterize the views advanced in this article as "anti-proletarian" or "anti-working class," let me once again emphasize very strongly that I am not denying the importance of gaining working-class support for anarchist ideals. Nor am I deprecating the

extraordinary achievements of the Spanish workers and peasants in the revolution of 1936, many of which were unmatched by any previous revolution. But it would be the height of self-deception, victimizing anarchists no less than concerned readers of other radical viewpoints, to ignore major limitations that also marked the Spanish revolution--limitations that, seen in retrospect, must now inform anarchist theory and practice. Indeed, many Spanish anarchists in various ways seriously questioned the involvement of their movement with syndicalism, even after they succumbed quite understandably to a syndicalist version of "political correctness" that seemed meaningful a half-century ago.

To its credit, Spanish anarchism--like anarchist movements elsewhere--never completely focused on the factory as the locus classicus of libertarian practice. Quite often throughout the last century and well into the civil war period, villages, towns, and the neighborhoods of large cities, as well as popular cultural centers, were major loci of anarchist activities. In these essentially civic arenas, women no less than men, peasants no less than workers, the elderly no less than the young, intellectuals no less than workers, *déclassé* elements no less than definable members of oppressed classes--in short, a wide range of people concerned not only with their own oppressions but with various ideals of social justice and communal freedom--attracted anarchist propagandists and proved to be highly receptive to libertarian ideas. The social concerns of these people often transcended strictly proletarian ones and were not necessarily focused on syndicalist forms of organization. Their organizations, in fact, were rooted in the very communities in which they lived.

We are only now beginning to understand, as I have emphasized in my writings over the years and as Manuel Castells (1983) has empirically shown, how much many radical workers' movements were largely civic phenomena, grounded in specific neighborhoods in Paris, Petrograd, and Barcelona, and in small towns and villages that formed the arenas not only of class unrest but civic or communal unrest. In such milieux, oppressed and discontented people acted in response to the problems they faced not only as economic beings but as communal beings. Their neighborhoods, towns, and villages, in turn, constituted vital sources of support for their struggles against a wide range of oppressions that were more easily generalized into broad social movements whose scope was wider than the problem of their shops and factories. It was not in the factory or workshop alone that radical values and broad social ideals were usually nourished but also in community centers of one kind or another, even in town halls, as history of the Paris Commune of 1871 so clearly demonstrates. It was not only in Petrograd's factories that mass mobilization against czarist oppression emerged but in the city's Vyborg district as a whole.

Similarly, the Spanish revolution was born not only in Barcelona's textile plants but in the city's neighborhoods, where workers and nonworkers alike set up barricades, acquired what arms they could, alerted their fellow residents to the dangers that the military uprising posed, functioned communally in terms of supply and surveillance of possible counterrevolutionaries, and tried to satisfy the needs of the infirm and the elderly within the larger framework of a modern city and seaport. Gaston Laval devotes a substantial section of his book,

called "Towns and Isolated Achievements," to a civic form of "socialization" that, in his words,

we shall call municipalist, which we could also call communalist, and which has its roots in Spanish traditions that have remained living. . . . It is characterized by the leading role of the town, the commune, the municipality, that is, to the predominance of the local organisation which embraces the city as a whole. (Laval, 1975, p. 279)

This kind of anarchist organization is by no means unique to Spain. Rather, it is part of the larger anarchist tradition that I described earlier and that has received, I must emphasize, comparatively little recognition since the emergence of syndicalism. Anarchism, in fact, has not been well-served by the forms of syndicalism that have shifted its focus from the commune to the factory and from moral values to economic ones. In the past, what gave anarchism its "moral tone"--and what "practical" activists in unions and on shop floors so often resisted--was precisely its concern for a communism structured around civic confederations and demands for freedom as such, not simply for economic democracy in the form of workers' control. Presyndicalist forms of anarchism were occupied with human liberation, in which the interests of the proletariat were not neglected, to be sure, but were fused in a generalized social interest that spanned a broad horizon of needs, concerns, and problems. Ultimately the satisfaction and resolution of these needs, concerns, and problems could be met only in the commune, not in a part of it, such as the factory, workshop, or farm.

To the degree that anarchists regarded a free society as nonhierarchical as well as classless, they hoped that specific interests would give way to communal and regional interests, indeed, to the abolition of interest as such by placing all the problems of the community and the confederated region onto a shared agenda. This agenda was to be the concern of the people at large in a direct face-to-face democracy. Workers, food cultivators, professionals, and technicians, indeed, people in general, were to no longer think of themselves as members of specific classes, professional groups, and status groups; they were to become citizens of a community, occupied with resolving not separate particularistic conflicting interests but a shared general human body of concerns.

It is this kind of moral vision of a new society that gives to present-day anarchism a relevance that no other form of communistic or socialistic movement has advanced in recent memory. Its concept of emancipation and community speaks to the transclass problems of gender, age, ethnic, and hierarchical oppression--problems whose scope reaches beyond the dissolution of a class-ridden economy and that are resolved by a truly ethical society in which the harmonization of human with human leads also to the harmonization of humanity with the natural world. Anything less than this vision, I submit, would fall short of the potentialities of humanity to function as a rational, creative, and liberatory agent in both social and natural history. Over many books and essays, I have articulated this broad conception of humanity's self-realization in what I consider to be a constructive vision of anarchy: a directly democratic, humanly scaled, confederal, ecologically oriented, and communistic society.

To perpetuate the historical shift of anarchism from a largely ethical form of socialism (in its most generic sense) to anarcho-syndicalism--a largely economistic form of socialism most often premised on the factory structure--would be, in my view, highly regressive. Many of the largely syndicalist tendencies in Spain and elsewhere that professed to believe in a libertarian communist society did not hesitate to borrow methods and immoral forms of behavior from the capitalist economy itself. The economistic mentality of the so-called "practicals" and "realists" who presumably knew how to manipulate workers and express their pragmatic interests brought an increasingly amoral, even immoral tone into the CNT's leadership. This tone still seems to linger on in the dwindling anarcho-syndicalism of the 1990s. A disregard for nuanced ideas, a simplistic vision of social change, and a sometimes absolutist claim to the anarchist legacy surfaces, in my experience, with a frequency that tends to make anarcho-syndicalism a very intolerant, if not an unsavory movement.

No one, least of all myself, would want to prevent anarchists from entering factories, sharing the problems of workers, and hopefully winning them to libertarian ideals. It would be helpful, in fact, if many of them followed through on their own pragmatically oriented ideas by participating in the lives of the proletarians they tend to hypostasize. What I challenge is the specious claim that anarcho-syndicalism constitutes the totality of anarchist thought and practice, that it is the "only" ideology that "can relate anarchistic ideas to working people," that it preaches a doctrine of "proletarian hegemony" despite the repeated failures of sizable, even mass syndicalist movements and the steady distortions of syndicalist history. Helmut Rüdiger notwithstanding, the

proletariat is not "the larger part of the population." Indeed, as a result of changes in the productive and organizational forms of modern capitalism, the factory proletariat is drastically diminishing in numbers today, and the future of factories with large workforces is very much up in the air. Certainly Spain today, like the rest of the Western world, bears very little resemblance to what it was early in the twentieth century--even to what I personally saw in Spain a quarter-century ago. Sweeping technological revolutions and major cultural changes, as a result of which formerly class-conscious workers now identify with the "middle class," have turned anarcho-syndicalism into a ghost of its former self. To the extent that this ghost claims to constitute the totality of anarchism, it is utterly incapable of dealing with social issues that were latent even in times past, when a commitment to "proletarian socialism" was the outstanding feature of radical movements.

Actually, workers have always been more than mere proletarians. Much as they have been concerned about factory issues, workers are also parents who are concerned about the future of their children, men and women who are concerned about their dignity, autonomy, and growth as human beings, neighbors who are concerned about their community, and empathetic people who were concerned with social justice, civic rights, and freedom. Today, in addition to these very noneconomic issues, they have every reason to be concerned about ecological problems, the rights of minorities and women, their own loss of political and social power, and the growth of the centralized state--problems that are not specific to a particular class and that cannot be resolved within the walls of factories. Indeed, it should, I think, be a matter of particular



concern to anarchists to help workers become fully conscious not only of their concerns an economic class but of the broadly human concerns of the potential citizens of a free and ecological society. The "humanization" of the working class, like any other section of the population, crucially depends upon the ability of workers to undo their "workerness" and advance themselves beyond class consciousness and class interest to a community consciousness--as free citizens who alone can establish a future ethical, rational, and ecological society.

As "practical" and "realistic" as anarcho-syndicalism may seem, it represents in my view an archaic ideology rooted in a narrowly economistic notion of bourgeois interest, indeed of a sectorial interest as such. It relies on the persistence of social forces like the factory system and the traditional class consciousness of the industrial proletariat that are waning radically in the Euro-American world in an era of indefinable social relations and ever-broadening social concerns. Broader movements and issues are now on the horizon of modern society that, while they must necessarily involve workers, require a perspective that is larger than the factory, trade union, and a proletarian orientation.

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## NOTES

1. The editor, Sam Dolgoff, interpolated into this passage his own interpretations, which I have omitted here. Dolgoff's own preference for syndicalism often seems to have colored his interpretation of Bakunin's writings.

2. "Since in the fully-formed proletariat the abstraction of all humanity, even of the semblance of humanity, is practically complete; since the conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in their most inhuman form; since man has lost himself in the proletariat, yet at the same time has not only gained theoretical consciousness of the loss, but through urgent, no longer removable, no longer disguisable, absolutely imperative need--practical expression of necessity--is driven directly to revolt against this inhumanity, it follows that the proletariat can and must emancipate itself. But it cannot emancipate itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1956), p. 47. A volume could be written on the bases, nature, and prognoses of Marx and Engels in this passage. It essentially underpins the anarcho-syndicalist positions on the hegemony of the proletariat but with greater sophistication.

3. It is worth noting that a present-day anarcho-syndicalist journalist, Ulrike Heider, dismisses Malatesta as a mere "utopian" and derogates Vernon Richards merely for engaging in a dispute with Sam Dolgoff, to whom she rather fervently applies the sobriquet "the last anarchist." This arrogant fatuity, I suppose, should finally settle the future of anarchism for good, now that Dolgoff is no longer with us, which gives us some insight into the dogmatism of at least one anarcho-syndicalist. Despite Dolgoff's mutations from anarcho-syndicalism to "free socialism" in the mid-1960s and then back to anarcho-syndicalism after the CNT reemerged in the 1970s, he seems to have been Heider's guru. See her *Die Narren der Freiheit* (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1992).

4. Eduardo Pons Prado, it may be noted, also figures prominently in the excellent Granada Films series *The Spanish Civil War*, which contains original interviews with both leading figures and ordinary participants in the conflict.

5. I speak of Brennan's "Andalusian approach," because he had a strong tendency to overstate the "primitiveness" of Spanish anarchism as an agrarian movement. In fact, Spanish anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism were predominantly urban by the 1930s and were more strongly rooted, at least in membership, in the northeastern part of Spain than in the south.

6. The appalling thrust of the CNT's syndicalist leadership in the direction of a virtually authoritarian organization--or what Abad de Santillán called "the Communist line" (as cited by Peirats) in policy as well as in structure--dramatizes more forcefully than I can describe Malatesta's prescience and the fragility of the organization's commitment to "libertarian communism."

7. See Fraser's interview with Pons Prado in *Blood of Spain*, p. 223. I also rely here on my own interviews with Peirats in Toulouse and with Laval in Paris in September 1967.

8. In other respects, Borkenau's book is of much less value, especially where he contends that Spanish anarchism was the substitute for a Spanish Reformation and that the movement was entirely millennarian in nature.

## **PEACE MOVEMENT:**

### **FROM SPECTACLE TO EMPOWERMENT: GRASS ROOTS DEMOCRACY AND THE PEACE PROCESS**

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

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Will the present-day peace movement repeat the errors of the 1960s anti-war movement by placing its primary focus on carefully orchestrated and highly centralized national actions in cities like Washington or New York? Or will it try to percolate into the localities and neighborhoods of the country -- into the body politic itself -- and become a genuinely popular movement that reaches deeply into America as a force for education as well as action, for a broad view of the causes of war as well as the dangers of war, for a vision of a harmonized society as well as a demilitarized society?

These questions, I think, are crucial and our response to them may well determine the quality of the movement as well as the "quantity" of people it can influence and "mobilize."

The Vermont town meeting process of initiating the freeze was as important as the result it achieved. People meeting in a face to face democratic arena were using a richly libertarian way of empowering themselves...

Great demonstrations and rallies in the urban centers of the United States make for splendid theater. Expressions of our fears and the problems that concern us have the attraction of simplicity, of clear-cut visceral responses, of sudden if episodic "successes" and "quick results." This, presumably, is the "American Way," like fast food and searing stimuli. We can then go home and view ourselves in huge numbers on television while movement celebrities receive wide media exposure to our utter delight as spectators. But there is a grave danger that such well-orchestrated spectacles like iridescent bubbles will burst in our eyes as soon as a limited issue is exhausted. Initiated by movement celebrities, it is quickly taken over by establishment celebrities -- and we are likely to see the nuclear freeze issue, for example, defused by the current Congress's cooptation of the entire demand, just as mere opposition to the Viet-Nam war was easily taken over by the very establishment figures who so readily approved of the war in the opening years of the Johnson Administration. Although the war has ended, after a fashion, southeast Asia is still an area of terrifying afflictions -- and missiles or the neutron bomb is the next "single issue" that hangs over us, not to speak of space-war technologies and potential horrors we could never have foreseen two decades ago.

I think it is crucial that the peace movement of the eighties view itself as more than a "campaign" and its



supporters as more than a "constituency" devoted merely to opposing a problem such as the arms buildup. Nor should it focus merely on mere "mobilizations" and episodic theatrical actions. For one thing, the peace movement of the eighties must root itself deeply in the communities of America rather than a few offices in Washington and New York. The Vermont town-meeting process of initiating the freeze was as important as the result it achieved. People, meeting in a face-to-face democratic arena were using a richly libertarian way of empowering themselves, not merely trying to disempower the hawks and warmakers in the United States. Process, in effect, became part of program. Today, when authoritarians in the Pentagon, White House, Capitol, and the state houses of America are trying to strengthen executive authority with proposals for six-year presidencies and, in Vermont, with four-year governorships, the opposition to war, colonialism, and armaments programs is organically tied to the attempt to preserve our democratic institutions and practices.

Secondly, I think we must recognize that the peace movement is intimately linked with the environmental movement, feminist movement, ethnic minority movements, and the stirrings by the aged, poor, and unemployed who are the most direct victims of the "defense" budget and the vast reductions in expenditures for social budgets. Working patiently and unrelentingly on a grass roots, decentralized, local basis, we must reveal all the connections between these movements and the insane commitment of wealth to military ends, the authoritarian controls that threaten to destroy our very means for preventing this commitment, and the gross undermining of our environment that may destroy us as surely as war itself.

If we retain this broad vision of our goals and give it coherence, we will find many allies out there -- allies who are more meaningful, more lasting, and ultimately more effective than the celebrities from all quarters who are quite ready to turn the fundamental problem of a harmonized and free society into a mere spotlight for their own interests and careers.

Murray Bookchin is a social ecologist and author of books such as *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, *Toward an Ecological Society* and *The Ecology of Freedom*. He lives in Burlington and currently acts as chairperson of the Vermont Council for Democracy.

THE VERMONT PEACE READER 1983

## **ANSWERS TO CRITICS:**

COMMUNITY CONTROL OR STATUS POLITICS:  
A REPLY TO DAVID LEWIS

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

"Community Control or Status Politics: A Reply to David Lewis," GREEN MULTILOGUE [Toronto] (May 13, 1991)

In his Green Multilogue hatchet job "The Thought of Director Bookchin" (May 13), David Lewis apparently sets out to undo any obstacle that my antihierarchical views -- libertarian municipalism and social ecology -- might present to his efforts to build a Green party. This does not exclude using blatant lies and gross distortions of my ideas.

At his crudest (and he can be very crude indeed), he describes people who agree with my work as my "followers" and in the same vein demagogically makes an analogy between me and Chairman Mao ("Director Bookchin"). He asserts that I "claim" to be Director Emeritus of "all eco-anarchists" -- rather than the bearer of a purely honorific title that the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont generously gave me. Recently, in the Pacific Tribune of May 20, Lewis went so far as to describe me as an "unabashedly" self-serving prima donna who "advertises his thought on the cover of his late book [Remaking Society] as 'the most important contribution to ecological thought in our generation.'" What Lewis crudely omitted to mention was that the passage he quoted was written not by me nor even by my

publisher but by Theodore Roszak, in an appraisal of my work in the San Francisco Chronicle several years ago. In short, Lewis has no compunction about stooping to outright falsehoods and demagoguery in criticizing an opponent -- forms of behavior that should be of serious concern to his political associates as well as to those who disagree with him.

Some time ago, when his attack first found its way into my mailbox, its sophomoric and malicious aspersions simply induced me to deposit it in my waste basket. More recently, however, friends have told me that Lewis is getting his piece around. I therefore feel obliged to correct the false conceptions about social ecology and libertarian municipalism that he may have planted in the minds of well-meaning people.

## LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM

It should be clearly understood from the outset that Lewis's beliefs in the State, in the party system, and in conventional "politics." He is upset by "libertarians" who "put down the Green Party mercilessly for its 'hierarchical' structure," indeed who engage in what he calls "ritual flagellation" of the Green party. Seen from his statist perspective, I can understand Lewis's objections to social ecology and the animus he feels toward me. He wants a party, as do many like him, who view the House of Commons (or the House of Representatives) as an arena for their "brilliant careers," to use an old expression. I would like to think the Greens prefer a movement that is inspired by a new politics -- one rooted in the people and based on their empowerment in participatory democratic institutions.

Libertarian municipalism seeks to foster popular control over political life by locating the arena of politics in the immediate surroundings of the average citizen. It seeks to create a new politics, in which politics is a transparent part of the daily life of the citizenry, not a once-a-year affair in which one steps into the voting booth and pulls a lever. It seeks to recreate a public political culture in which citizens debate and have the power to make decisions about all important matters that affect their community life. This local political activity should involve direct action and single-issue organizing but the focus that gives it coherence is the local electoral campaign.

Libertarian municipalism is literally structured around the institutions of the community itself, which people encounter in everyday life the moment they step beyond the threshold of their homes or apartments. It advances an appeal for civic power, not state power; neighborhood control, not parliamentary control; local power, not centralized power. And it calls for new forms of civic association -- networking of communities into free confederations in which confederal councils link communities and their public assemblies together, without denying the people of a city, town, or village their autonomy. The practical visions involved in creating such a society and their rich ecological implications have been elaborated in considerable detail and are available for anyone who is interested.

Libertarian municipalists thus argue that Greens should engage in elections at the local level -- at the level of the ward, town, village, borough, or city--not at the national or provincial level. "You'd think it could be valuable to

articulate the Green vision in elections at all levels," objects Lewis. But libertarian municipalism excludes electoral campaigns at the state, provincial, and national or federal levels, for a very clear set of reasons. For one, even the most radical state-oriented parties are easily subject to cooptation by the prevailing political system. As I wrote in *Remaking Society*:

Ecology movements that enter into parliamentary activities not only legitimate State power at the expense of popular power, but they are obliged to function within the State, ultimately to become blood of its blood and bone of its bone. They must play the game, which means that they must shape their priorities according to predetermined rules over which they have no control. This not only involves a given constellation of relationships that emerge with participation in State power, it becomes an ongoing process of degeneration, a steady devolution of ideas, practices and party structure. Each demand for the effective exercise of parliamentary power raises the need for a further retreat from presumably cherished standards of belief and conduct. ( p. 161)

In local politics, by contrast, people who run for office are unavoidably close to the people to whom they are accountable. They are neighbors and friends, coworkers and colleagues under easy public scrutiny. Libertarian municipalist campaigns are calls for an even greater democratization of local political life that exists today, as distinguished from centralized executive decision-making powers of large-scale and geographically remote governmental centers.

To this, Lewis objects that my "definition of 'parliamentary activities' actually extends right into city and town councils." But there is a real qualitative difference between elections at local levels and elections at other levels. Obviously, one can't hope to establish popular assemblies at the provincial or national level. Such levels, by definition, require representative policy-making institutions, not directly democratic ones. By contrast, at the local level, politics can become completely transparent. It need not be a mysterious, technical, professional function of a provincial or state "representative" who occupies a seat in a distant legislative body, or worse, a member of an executive branch of government -- who is remote, has very little contact, if any, with his or her "constituents," and is buffered from the public by an elaborate, unelected bureaucracy.

Lewis seems to think that councillors, elected on a local basis in a libertarian municipalist campaign, would function no differently from representatives who are elected to provincial and national legislative bodies. That is to say, they would blandly accept the existing political structure. Nothing could be further from the truth. Libertarian municipalism avowedly challenges the very structure of local government as it is currently constituted. It seeks to radically democratize city government so that what we now call representative government becomes self-government by the citizenry itself. The goal of libertarian municipalism is to change city charters drastically, and to profoundly alter the very means by which local policies are formulated--namely, through community assemblies -- and that are coordinated by nonfederal delegates who are bound by the imperative mandates of their communities. It seeks to



bring the people directly into the administration of public affairs by means of community assemblies and to completely control any delegates (not "representatives") who are assigned the function of coordinating intercity and intertown policies in confederal councils.

Put bluntly: Libertarian municipalism attempts to raise the issue of a radically new politics based on local and confederal forms of participatory democracy, not modify or put band-aids on existing statist structures, be they national, provincial, or local, its new politics is a militant, indeed dynamic politics, not an acquiescent one in which political parties duel with each other for power over existing civil and state institutions.

Lewis, who prefers top-down solutions, absurdly suggests that it might be a good idea to elect "a philosopher-king type in Canada who would then impose from the top a system of participatory democracy [1] to create the Green society." People getting together have never successfully democratized anything, objects Lewis: "small groups agitating from the bottom trying to inspire a vision for the ideal society in enough people for a confederation to jell which will grow while the existing State withers away," he says, is "unprecedented." Even ancient Athenian democracy, he notes, citing my book, was brought about by certain individuals--Solon, Kleisthenes, and Pericles.

Let me emphasize that these figures did not dominate the popular movements in ancient Athens. At best, they were leaders of popular movements who helped to mobilize the masses in their locality. But in no sense did they try to supplant them, such as we might reasonably expect Lewis's "philosopher king" to do. Democracy could not

have been achieved in Athens without the support of the people, nor did any of these figures "grant" democracy to the people. They simply organized the local struggles that gave rise to the democratic polis. Indeed, Perikles, to cite the most famous of the Athenians democrats, was actually removed from office for a time by the people during a difficult period in the Pelponnesian war.

But I need hardly review the lessons of history to respond to Lewis's arguments. In our own time, the German Green party, the "flagship" of the international Green movement, with its recently intensified emphasis on top-down politics and statecraft, has shown us that a movement divested of its community base becomes a mere replica of the very state it once pledged to challenge. The fact that the German Greens immediately leaped into the German Bundestag--the equivalent of the Canadian House of Commons -- separated them from the popular movement and turned them into a largely bureaucratic and conventional political party. And it was precisely "realists" like Lewis who destroyed the German Greens, a once-idealistic movement, turning their organization into a centralized, increasingly bureaucratized, top-down conventional party.

This party now has no reason to exist except to keep several thousand functionaries in a wide variety of state-subsidized jobs. To quote the acknowledge "strong man" of the new German Greens, Joschka Fischer, the party has become stinknormal, or "stinkingly normal." It no longer challenges Germany's social system and has dropped into the dead center of the German political spectrum--an increasingly lifeless bureaucratic apparatus that feeds on state funds to fatten the bellies of its cadre.

We cannot ignore this most recent of many examples, in which parties, even high-minded parties, became completely corrupted by gaining power and the financial emoluments of power in national legislatures. "Constituents" have no way of deciding the policies of these parties or their structure when their "representatives" and leaders are so far removed structurally and geographically from the purview of the people. Divested of all living roots in their communities and guided by statecraft rather than a popular politics, the German Greens have now become a pathetic shell of the vibrant movement they were some twelve years ago.

Which raises the question: Why don't Canadian "realists" like Lewis join the Liberal party, whose structure they apparently admire unless, like certain German Greens I know, it takes too much time to climb the bureaucratic ladders of these parties. Is this the kind of structure rank-and-file Greens in North America want? Or do they want to change this world, to make it greener, more rational, and more concerned with the human and nonhuman condition?

## HIERARCHY

Most of Lewis's other assaults on my work flow from this basic political difference between us. Indeed Lewis counters my antihierarchical emphasis with various implicit and some explicit defenses of hierarchy itself. For example, religious hierarchy is acceptable to Lewis if it keeps a society together. We are told that "Earth centered spirituality enabled tribal culture to live in harmony with the biosphere for millennia." So far as Lewis is concerned, my objection to religious hierarchy

suggests that I oppose everything that can be called by the name "spirituality." He cites my statement that if "human beings fall to their knees before anything that is 'higher' than themselves, hierarchy will have made its first triumph over freedom." This statement is as much a claim for human dignity and quality as it is a criticism of human subservience to any deity, state, or leader. Astonishingly, for Lewis it is evidence of my hostility to native culture heroes. Thus, if I am to follow Lewis's argument, I am denigrating Chief Seattle's worship of his god as "sinister, hierarchical, anti-freedom." - Really! The fact is that I urge no one to bend down to the authority of a Supreme Creator, Supreme Deity, a Supreme Lord, a Supreme Master, or a Supreme Leader--whether such a supreme being be dressed in dollar bills, a buffalo skin, or bright green oak leaves.

At least one problem that I face when Lewis refers to the relationship between Chief Seattle and his Creator is that I cannot determine which of the several deities associated with Seattle it is that Lewis has in mind. Does he mean the Roman Catholic god, to which Chief Seattle had been converted in the 1830s? Does he mean the Great Spirit, manifest to "dreams of our old men" and "visions of our sachems"-- that is, the strictly tribal deity who primarily protected but then seemingly deserted his own people, as Chief Seattle lamented in his speech of the 1850s? Or does he perhaps mean the contrived god reflected in a famous "Chief Seattle" speech that was actually written by a white scriptwriter for a movie in the early 1970s?

The last-named speech, with its bountiful ecological metaphors, is often cited in the ecology movement as a way to contrast native Americans' benign relationship

with nonhuman nature to that of the whites. But several years ago this speech was exposed as a notorious hoax. As we now know, it was written for a television movie, *Home*, shown on U.S. television in 1972. (On his part of the continent in 1854, Seattle could hardly have been familiar with the buffalo herds and railroads mentioned in "his" speech.) Amazingly, even "ecological" thinkers such as Joanna Macy and John Seed, who are fully aware of the hoax and admit it, continue to cite the speech for its "usefulness in eliciting a response."

My point, here, is not to impugn native beliefs but to reveal the extent to which Lewis invokes every "argument" he can--even an outright hoax--to impugn my views. If Lewis did not know that the pop-ecology version of Chief Seattle's speech was the product of a modern white scriptwriter and movie producer, he should have taken the pains to find out. The information is easily available in the environmental press. If, like Macy and Seed, he does know that the speech is a hoax but cites it anyway, then he is an outright falsifier as well as a demagogue whose ethical standards should be seriously questioned.

Lewis accuses me of wanting to "forever stamp out the spirituality that was central to all pre-hierarchical culture." We then learn that by disagreeing with his presumably well-informed version of native American spirituality, I am complicitous in (to use his garish language) the "Native culture euthanasia program" (read: the destruction of native cultures). Such statements, again, reflect little more than his own demagogery. Given what we know about the vagaries of myths, religion, and New Age "spirituality," I refuse to defer to the grossly uninformed and dishonest decalogue of an

ignoramus like Lewis. What I would actually like to do is get beyond the romanticization that surrounds native belief-systems and examine how tribal peoples really lived and thought. Had Lewis put his hatchet aside long enough to read the second chapter of my book *The Ecology of Freedom*, he would have found eloquent praise on my part for the communitarian, ethical, and, yes, many of the spiritual practices of aboriginal peoples-albeit not as fodder for the mills of superstition, magic, and New Age mysticism that is so much in vogue today. The abuse of native spirituality by the likes of Lewis, I may add, troubles not only me but many native Americans, who feel that they are being exploited anew by white caricatures of their belief-systems.

Actually, the specific identity of the deity that Chief Seattle, other native Americans, or white New Agers worship seems to matter very little to Lewis. Indeed, he invokes Carl Jung to put nonbelievers on his therapeutic couch and counsel them that a belief in a god is vitally important for their personal tranquility, whereas questioning whether or not a god or gods exist in reality is "dangerous." According to Jung, as Lewis quotes him, "our time is caught in a fatal error: we believe we can criticize religious facts intellectually"--that is, that we can intellectually affirm or deny god. But the truth is, Jung tells us, that if we deny the existence of god, then a state of psychological denial of various forces in the psyche ensues. In such a state, the effects of these forces, "which nevertheless continues, cannot be understood . . . and therefore they cannot be assimilated to consciousness." The reader should carefully note that neither Jung in this passage, nor Lewis himself ever affirms or denies the existence of the Supernatural or divine per se. Rather, what they concentrate on is the

alleged need that people have to believe in deities -- presumably for their own sanity--regardless of whether they exist or not. One can only conclude that for Lewis, people are doomed to irrationality. In fact, by Lewis's logic, it is preferable for human beings to believe in a comforting falsehood than to intellectually recognize that falsehood for what it really is--for otherwise the falsehood "cannot be assimilated to consciousness," a condition that produces a "dangerous situation."

Exactly what this "dangerous situation" might be, Lewis does not tell us. But we do know that many dangerous situations have been produced when people suspend their critical faculties or surround the reality of their pitiful situations with myths and deities. The strategy of mystifying reality with myths and deities has been the technique par excellence of virtually all absolute rulers, despots, and reactionaries from time immemorial as a means of inducing people to acquiesce to their rule.

No, I have no more reason to kowtow to Lewis's invocation of Jung's defense of irrationalism and theism than I have to kowtow to Jung's own insidious defense of Nazism and racism (which Farhad Dalal and Vincent Brome have recently documented). That Jung could be a culture-hero today, particularly among people who have read little of his work and know little of his past, has shocked me for years. Jung's prejudices, so notorious among those who have read his work objectively, have deep roots in the "archetypal" sociobiology, the Platonistic mysticism, and the sinister irrationalism that poisoned so many German minds in the interwar and Nazi periods. For Lewis to fling a confused defense of irrationalism at me as though its lines came from a sacred and unimpeachable text, is as naive as it is fatuous. Am I to

be stunned by this thunderbolt? Should I leap to my feet and cry, "Sieg heil!"? Sorry, I'd rather keep a level head than kowtow to the culture heroes of this decade.

Still, New Age mysticism is flooding the environmental movement as a whole. The reason for this deluge, to be sure, are understandable. Rarely have people felt so powerless as they do today; rarely have they felt that their lives and the very world in which they try to function is so beyond their control. Not surprisingly, they tend to do what people in the distant past did in similar situations: they create a surrogate reality into which they can take refuge. The current explosion of Christian revivalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and bogus Asian religions is matched by New Age spiritualism and various forms of goddess worship that preach messages of a redemptive identity, preferably based on a misty return to Neolithic "spirituality" or a lusty return to a Pleistocene "sensibility" (regardless of what people in the Neolithic or Pleistocene may have really thought. Yet when I criticize ecofeminists who, in my opinion, structure their beliefs around goddess worship, around the self-serving male myth that "woman equals nature," or around the patricentric image of women as mere caretakers or custodians, Lewis virtually accuses me of rejecting the relationship of ecology to feminist issues.

As well-meaning as many acolytes of biocentrism may be, religion is not the only alternative we have to anthropocentrism. In fact, we do not need any kind of "centrism" at all. Why can't we think instead of an alternative such as the wholeness that comes with a rounded life based on a rounded, truly ecological society? If mysticism in its various forms is a refuge from the world -- one with which the present social



order, incidentally, can comfortably accept and even merchandise in its own "green" shopping malls -- the appeal for a healthy naturalism based on wholeness truly merges the political with the personal and challenges the present social order's very foundations.

It is this appeal to wholeness rather than any one-sided "centrism" that social ecology tries to express. It advances the message that in changing the present society, people simultaneously change themselves, that in going out into the real world, they also discover their own powers as creative human beings. Unlike Lewis, who regards people (including his readers, apparently) as so deficient that they need to believe in myths and deities, I affirm that we can and must count on people to develop their powers of reason, even "the probability that normal people have the untapped power to reason on a level that does not differ from that of humanity's most brilliant individuals" Yes, social ecologists do believe in the potential of human beings to be rational, to create a rational, ecological society, and to develop a spirituality based on a respect and sense of wonder for the fecundity of natural evolution -- not a belief in contrived deities that will calm their troubled psyches and defer to authority. Stated in terms of a new politics, this is the message that libertarian municipalism offers to the public.

## ABUNDANCE

Much as Lewis distorts my views on spirituality, he even more crudely distorts my views on abundance and the material preconditions for an ecological society. Ineed, "the clearest reason to question Bookchin," he writes,

"comes over his idea of abundance." He quotes me as saying that "there is not the remotest chance that [an ecological society] can be achieved today unless humanity is free to reject bourgeois notions of abundance precisely because abundance is available to all."

Yes--he is correct, albeit for reasons he barely understands. To Lewis, this means that I am a believer in limitless growth, even to the point of expanding the system "outwards into the universe in all directions at the speed of light"-- no less! "My dear Bookchin and your non-hierarchical non-followers," - he intones, "your ideal system must stabilize the planetary life support systems, and if you can't do it until after a dramatic expansion of what is already going on now, forget it. Absolutely everybody else in politics on the planet is calling for dramatic expansion of industrial civilization even as vital planetary life support systems crumble. Greens are looking for another way."

Lewis seems to think that I favor the limitless production of frivolous commodities and a senseless vision of life that does not extend beyond the confines of a shopping mall, that I demand that the biosphere be torn up so that those who are now poor can have all the middle-class comforts of suburban life. He never apprises his readers that in *Remaking Society*, as in all my work, I level a basic critique against capitalism precisely because, organized around limitless growth and a "grow or die" law of life produced by competition and a lust for profit, it is destroying the biosphere. In fact, I recently inveighed against the destruction produced by growth in a lead article in *The Progressive*, and this kind of critique fills virtually all of my earlier writings.

The statement Lewis quotes from my book hardly means that I favor limitless capitalist growth. It simply means that any decision on the part of society to adopt an economics of austerity must be made from a position of choice--from a vantage point in which everyone has the possibility of choosing an economics of austerity, or abundance, or--what I would prefer--moderation. But the people's right to choose is fundamental to an economic democracy. I find it fascinating that a message of "simple living" is preached by environmentalists who must have access to such costly and sophisticated technologies like word processors, desktop software, modems, and laser printers to use outlets like Green Multilogue; that others do not hesitate to nourish their ecological consciousness with "green" documentaries, films, and tape cassettes over VCRs and tape decks; and that still others watch whales from serene clifftops using costly binoculars -- in the meantime insisting that everyone else, particularly people in the Third World, should all but return to the Pleistocene or live in hovels like serfs in the Middle Ages.

It hardly befits fairly privileged white, middle-class Greens to lecture the people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and, yes, the homeless, poor, and underprivileged in their own countries about the virtues of austerity and the horrors of abundance. In many environmental books and articles, menacing remarks appear that warn people that they must live according to rules provided by the corporately financed Club of Rome or the Rockefeller Foundation. The fact is that the downtrodden of this planet live grotesquely "austere" lives as it is. If the environmental movement were to try to alleviate the material want of the poor in its own

countries, I would say that it would be taking the first step toward showing that it can be human and ethically equipped to deal with growth in a manner that is worthy of respect.

There is already so much fat in the Euro-American world police, military, bureaucratic, managerial, entrepreneurial, commercial, and the lot--that the appalling amount of resources needed to support the unproductive people of the world could easily provide a comfortable way of life for everyone in a rational society without damaging the planet's ecology. In any case, let the poor of this world at least have the right to decide what lifeways they wish to follow. They should not have to bend to the commands of an arrogant elite or a "philosopher-king" who would prescribe for them a "living standard" that denies them access to the "good things" in life. If I am committed to a participatory democracy, I want participation by everyone, especially in matters that concern how people are to live.

After all, would giving the poor a choice inevitably open the floodgates of consumerism and doom the life-support capacity of our biosphere? I strongly believe that with a reasonably decent standard of living, people in the Third World would choose to recover the best traditions of their past, not try to emulate the sick ones that prevail in Europe, Canada, and the United States. Chico Mendes was not looking for air conditioners when he died fighting for the rubber workers of his area in Amazonia; nor were the peasant folk of India's Chipko movement looking for Cadillacs when they fought the lumber companies in Uttar Pradesh. In both cases, they wanted to preserve their traditional lifeways, not "modernize" them.

The crucial point I wish to make here is that even as we work toward an ecological society, we must lighten the burdens of toil that afflict millions of people everywhere--people whose lives are literally wasted in long hours of work in order to provide us with food, shelter, fuels, minerals, and even the pens, paper, and word processors, without which we could not proclaim the virtues of hard work and the joys of a labor-intensive technology. These goals are not, as Lewis thinks, contradictory. Happily, there are technological alternatives to a labor-intensive technology that would not only diminish toil but resolve the ecological problems that modern capitalism has created. I've explored these alternatives in considerable detail in my writings. For the rest, education, not high-handed authoritarian decisions, will encourage people to make rational and ecological decisions.

If my remarks on this score seem to go against the grain of conventional "ecological" thinking, allow me to note that I have seen the inside of foundries and auto plants and have eaten bitterly of the "fruits" of backbreaking work for years. Indeed, Lewis might more appropriately have called his criticism "The Thoughts of a Foundryman," or "An Auto Worker," or "A Union Shop Steward," for I occupied these "roles" far longer in my life than that of "Director."

## POPULATION

When I object to "the resurgence of a new Malthusianism" in the ecology movement as "the most sinister ideological development of all," Lewis calls this

"Bookchin at his most ridiculous." The new Malthusianism to which I refer has regrettably become a doctrinal pillar among many environmentalists -- notably, the claim that "growth rates in population tend to exceed growth rates in food production." Again, I confess, Lewis has nailed me -- I stay pinned to the wall with pride. If there is anything that irritates me, it is the message that our ecological problems stem from "overpopulation." Malthusianism is based on a dubious "numbers game" that treats rates of human population increase as though they were equivalent to rates of increase among fruit flies and rodents.

Human demographic rates, however, are markedly conditioned by factors that have no impact whatever upon nonhuman ones. I refer to human culture, tradition, values, and education. Neo-Malthusianism has been the reason par excellence for covering up the sources of our ecological problems, namely a growth-oriented capitalist economy. It is the height of naivete to abstract "population" from its social matrix and deal with it arithmetically. Divested of social factors, including those specifically characteristic of market economics, any discussion of alleged "overpopulation problems" serves only to obscure the sources of our ecological problems rather than to clarify them. All too often, the population issue is placed in the service of extremely reactionary social movements. All too often, alas, the overpopulation message is also focused on Third World countries. (This, although the number of people who occupy a square mile in the Third World is actually immensely smaller than the numbers for Europe and the United States

It may well be that a time will come when demographic problems will arise that will require consideration -- and

in a democratic manner, not by fiat and coercion. But it is not at all clear that the world's population has exceeded its "carrying capacity." We do know, Lewis to the contrary, that in those parts of the world where capitalism produces the most idiotic commodities and fosters levels of consumption that are wildly extravagant, current rates of population growth, ironically, are the lowest in the so-called "underdeveloped" countries of the world, population growth rates are sizable, although amazingly variable, as the plummeting growth-rates of Brazil attest.

Have the neo-Malthusians of our day ever asked why this should be? Apart from evoking the virtues of AIDS as a means of sending people to an early death in great numbers, as Christopher Manes (aka "Miss Ann Thropy") of Earth First! proposes, or allowing them to starve outright, as Garrett Hardin proposes, or expelling "genetically inferior" races like Latinos, as the late Edward Abbey proposed, I would earnestly like to believe that Greens and environmentalists generally would explore population growth as a social issue-- not as a mere numbers game, such as Lewis seems to play.

Feminists who are fighting for women's right to choose and, more generally, for a form of self-recognition that transcends the image of women as mere reproduction factories may well be doing more to diminish birth rates than all the claptrap one hears from Manes, Hardin, and for all I know, Lewis. Social activists in the Third World who are fighting for higher living standards may well be eroding a widespread tradition among patriarchal communities in which large families with many working sons are seen by their parents as sources of material support in old age. So meager is neo-Malthusian social

perspective -- indeed, so crudely superficial, not to speak of implicitly or explicitly racist, if we are to judge from certain of its spokespersons -- that it is fair to say that it has no place in a Green or environmental movement.

Finally, looking at the "population problem" in another way: Does anyone suppose that if the population of the world were reduced by a half or even by three quarters, corporate tycoons would really cut their production of commodities significantly and thereby lighten the ecological problems produced by growth? One would have to be utterly oblivious to the nature of the marketplace and its competitive imperative of "grow or die" to believe that the output of junk would decline. If the public's consumption of television sets were to diminish, advertising would encourage people -- probably quite effectively, I might add -- to buy three or four or five more per family. The same can be said for automobiles, appliances, furniture, and food. And if the public failed to respond to appeals to consume, there would always be that "sinkhole of death," to use a Chinese expression, -- the military, both at home and abroad. If civilian consumption were reduced for any reason, trade wars to capture new markets in order to increase production would provide a limitless source of armament "consumption," not to speak of armament markets.

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully, all this should serve to answer what Lewis regards as the primary question he poses to myself and other social ecologists: "Do we face the gravest crisis of history or not, and if so, could we lighten upon all this



'deeper' and 'Greener' and 'less hierarchical' than thou games?" Social ecologists and other municipalists, I hope, will not stop protesting the doings Lewis and his kind, even in the light of the well-recognized seriousness of the ecological crisis. They will protest Green parties and running in provincial and national elections. They will protest attempts by Greens to get elected to provincial office or the House of Commons. They will protest the formation of any Green police force that would intimidate the insufficiently "Green" consumer or prescribe the number of children people should have, not to speak of ecclesiastics who affirm the "social necessity" of a Green divinity. They will not agree that Lewis and his supporters enjoy a monopoly of knowledge on what is the best way to save the biosphere.

Instead, they will work to educate the public and to engage in local efforts to democratize local governments. They will do this not because they are my "followers" but because they share a common belief with me that it is ethically as well as politically the right way to function in this utterly immoral world. Yes, in the name of ecology, I do call for "Liberty!" and "Freedom!" and "Reason!" as Lewis observes--concepts that he finds worth mocking. What does he call for, if you please--"God!" and "the State!"? If the day ever comes when this is "Green," no rhetoric will conceal the fact that a straitjacket of superstition and authority has been imposed on the movement.

July 14, 1991

AFTERWORD: Those who are interested in the ideas advanced here may write to the Confederation of Municipal Greens, 51 Lee Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4E 2P1 or the Left Green Network, P.O. BOX 366, Iowa City, Iowa 52244.

Subscriptions to Green Perspectives the, newsletter of the Social Ecology Project, are US\$10 for twelve issues.

Write: P.O. BOX 111, Burlington VT 05402

## A MEDITATION ON ANARCHIST ETHICS

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

Ulrike Heider, *Anarchism: Left, Right, and Green* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1994; 153 pages)

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In the late winter of 1989, one Ulrike Heider appeared at my home in Burlington, Vermont, for an interview, armed with a tape recorder, clothing for a weekend visit-and apparently a butcher's cleaver, looking for as much blood as she could draw from an unsuspecting victim. Citing an old anarchosyndicalist whom I knew as a reference and her plan to write a book on American anarchists as her aim, she was housed, fed, kept warm from the rigors of a Vermont winter, and treated in a comradely way. She was even taken to a small village, Charlotte, to attend a town meeting, to see how a form of face-to-face democracy functions even under the restrictions of the centralized American governmental system.

After three or four days of probing and note-taking, expressing a minimal number of her own opinions, she returned to her home in New York City and proceeded to

write a book in her native German, *Die Narren der Freiheit* (The Fools of Freedom)--possibly one of the most malicious, fatuous, and basically immoral books I have encountered on the left in decades. I say this quite soberly, having experienced some most unsavory distortions of my work on the part of deep ecologists, socialists, self-styled anarchists, and, of course, the liberal bourgeois press. But seldom have I encountered such blatant character assassination and such deliberate distortions of ideas--not to speak of her willingness to read German traditions into the American context. This book, alas, has now been translated--with suitable modifications, additions, and deletions--into English under the title *Anarchism: Left, Right, and Green*, and has been reviewed by *The Guardian* in Britain.

I realize that Ulrike Heider has a book and a literary career to market. She also professes to be an anarchosyndicalist. How then, one may ask, can she effectively advance her career? Simple: Defame a relatively well-known anarchist, even under the pretense of praising him in the opening paragraphs. Distort his views from beginning to end, then ignore all passages in his works that contradict the distortions. Pull his words out of context, even when that context explicitly countervails the views that are imputed to him. When a quoted passage contains a sentence, phrase, or even a single word that fails to conform to the distortion, remove it and replace it with ellipsis points. Make his peripheral remarks seem of central importance to his ideas, and give his overarching themes little serious treatment or even mention. When quoting him, omit the quotation marks that he put around potentially misleading words and phrases, and treat his obvious metaphors as if he intended them literally.

Create specious contradictions where there are none between his various works to make him seem intellectually unstable and opportunistically "contemporary," as though he often bends with the winds of public opinion. Employ guilt by association by claiming to find similarities, no matter how tenuous, between his views and those of Oswald Spengler; the proprietary Murray Rothbard; the late General Bastian of the German Green Party; and of course, the Bolsheviks and the Nazis. Mingle imagined ugly characterizations, often ad hominem in character, with words actually quoted from his writings, so that they all seem to come from his mouth or pen. Confuse his critique of "New Left" Maoism and Stalinism with an embrace of American nationalism, and his rejection of working-class "hegemony" in overthrowing capitalism with "hatred of the proletariat" ["Arbeiterfeindlichkeit" in the German original]. Attribute views similarly distorted to his companion, Janet Biehl, even if her own words must be tortured out of shape in the process.

Frankly, I find it degrading to have to deal with this kind of "polemical" sewage. But where someone has made a terrible stink, it is a civic duty to get to its source and clean it up. This is especially necessary when the sewage has found a place on the pages of the Guardian, a periodical that is doubtless notorious for its love of anarchists. Hence an overview of her distortions, with some detailed examples, is very much in order.

But where to start? Having placed the proprietary disciple of Friedrich Hayek, Murray Rothbard, in an anarchist "pantheon" of her own making--despite Rothbard's furious attacks on any alternative to

capitalism and naked greed--Heider devotes some eighty pages to the libertarian Left: notably seventeen to her mentor, Sam Dolgoff, nine to Noam Chomsky, and forty-two to me. If Heider's attention seems disproportionately directed toward me, its purpose becomes obvious once one enters into the bulk of the polemic, particularly her "method of critique of ideologies" (p. 7) and her ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Method 1: Give descriptive characterizations that have nothing to do with your subject's actual point of view and use them to immediately prejudice the reader. Example: Since I describe the ultraleftist "Third Period" of the Communist International in the early 1930s--of which I was a part as a Young Pioneer and later a member of the Young Communist League (ages 9 to 15)--as "extremely revolutionary," Heider, who apparently doesn't know the First from the Second from the Tenth Period in the history of the Comintern, blanches with shock. "To my surprise," says this breathless voyager into the labyrinth of the Left, "this eco- anarchist [Bookchin] critic of communism painted a remarkably positive picture of the Communist Party of his day" (p. 56). My "picture," in fact, was neither positive nor negative but simply descriptive. Perhaps the better explanation for Heider's "surprise" is her awesome ignorance of Communist history of the 1930s.

Accordingly, anyone who reads Heider with a modicum of knowledge about the Old Left may be "surprised" to learn that "it was not until the Hitler-Stalin Pact" (which, as we know, was concluded in 1939) that the Stalinists "became the reformist party of the Popular Front era" (which actually began in 1935). Her chronology, with this four-year omission, thereby erases

the ideologically vicious rationale for the counterrevolutionary role played by the Communist Parties of the world during the Spanish Revolution of 1936, a role conducted precisely in the name of the Popular Front. Further, she muddies the issue of the Party's tacit support for the Nazis between 1939 and 1941, after which Russia was invaded by the Third Reich (pp. 56-57).

Method 2: Use innuendo. Example: "One wonders . . . and wonders . . . and wonders"--Heider's favorite phrase, by which she sugarcoats her venom as curiosity. Should a victim of Heider's "wondering" fail to have been an anarchist at birth, let him or her beware! If I cite my teenage admiration for Trotsky because he "stood alone against Stalin" in 1937, Heider climbs upon her high horse in the closing years of the twentieth century and maliciously inquires: "One might ask, of course, why that hero stood alone" (p. 58). To those who do not know, be assured that Trotsky did not "stand alone" in 1937 only because he was "the butcher of Kronstadt and murderer of anarchists," as Heider would have the present generation believe. Apart from a small number of anarchists and independent leftists, relatively few American radicals knew about Kronstadt or Bolshevik atrocities against anarchists. Trotsky "stood alone" in the late 1930s because Stalin had corralled nearly the entire liberal establishment into collusion with him in the name of his allegedly "anti-fascist" Popular Front strategy. The smugness with which Heider looks down from her lofty perch of more than a half-century later on a time when the intersecting forces of liberalism and Stalinism assumed a highly complex form bespeaks an ahistorical arrogance of dazzling nerviness. Her "curiosity" and snippy remarks would make me steam with fury, had I

not immunized myself from this kind of trash during my experiences in the Stalinist movement of the thirties.

Presumably, one must be born an "anarchist": indeed, "What it was exactly [!] that converted [!] Bookchin to anarchism in the early 1960s"--actually, in the late 1950s--"is not entirely clear to me," Heider observes with a sniff (p. 59). May I suggest that she could have received an answer in detail (my "conversion" was not a flighty affair) if she had asked me personally, when we met, instead of making it into a cryptic and possibly sinister mystery in her book.

Method 3: There is always a way of establishing that your subject is a "nationalist"--if he is American, possibly by overhearing him or her whistle "Yankee Doodle." Example: This is one of Heider's most treasured methods of slander. "Bookchin did not at that time [during the late 1960s] expound Americanism," writes Heider in an insidiously tantalizing manner, as though I ever "expounded Americanism" at any time (p. 59, emphasis added). What Heider is referring to is my opposition within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to its largely pro-Maoist leadership. Having planted this toxic little seed in the mind of the reader, Heider later drops to all fours and howls "nationalism" at me because I suggest that in the United States it is important for the Left to build on American, specifically Vermont, face-to-face democratic traditions (in contrast to the centralist and statist Maoist notions of the 1960s) in order to establish some meaningful contact with the general public, even the proletariat. No one would have accused Friedrich Engels of being a "nationalist" for invoking the radical traditions of the German people in his famous *The Peasant War* or Bakunin for invoking the



radical implications of the collectivist mir, which he associated with traditional forms of Russian peasant landownership. But Bookchin? Heaven forbid!

Method 4: Play the race and the "Third World" cards! They seldom fail. Example: "Unlike Dolgoff and Chomsky," Heider writes, ". . . Bookchin never seems to have been interested in the issues of race or the Third World" (p. 59, emphasis added). How the hell does she know? Did she query me about my activities in the Congress of Racial Equality during the early 1960s? Or my work as a shop steward in a predominantly African-American iron foundry? Or my work in the Puerto Rican community in New York's Lower East Side? Did she share my jail cells when I was arrested for civil rights' activities during the 1960s? As for the "Third World," perhaps I should have demonstrated my concern for it by supporting Fidel Castro, as so many of Sam Dolgoff's confreres in the anarchist Libertarian League did. Or perhaps I should have cheered for Ho Chi Minh, as so many anarchists of Heider's generation did. Or perhaps I should have sagaciously quoted from Mao's infamous Little Red Book, as so many anarchosyndicalists were then doing.

Method 5: Consider every change in theory to be evidence of fickleness and instability, rather than the development of ideas over the course of time, and overtly or implicitly accuse your subject of trying to court popularity under new social conditions. Example: At the end of the 1960s, "[b]urned out by the big city," Heider writes, Bookchin "moved into his yellow house in Burlington" (p. 60). Sinister!--a retreat to the rural world of Vermont! In fact, I was not "burned out by the big city," and I departed for Vermont very reluctantly,

mainly because much of the New York Left, including key members of my Anarchos affinity group, had debarked variously for Vermont, California, and all points of the compass after the collapse of the New Left in the city.

Moreover, because I tentatively supported a self-styled "socialist," Bernard Sanders, during his first term as mayor of Burlington, and tried unsuccessfully to win him over to a libertarian municipalist position, Heider now snidely writes that I now "prefer to overlook" this terrifying error. How would she have known about this "oversight" if I hadn't told her about it, with self-critical amusement? That I subsequently became Sanders's most vigorous left-wing opponent for a decade, writing sharply critical articles on him, remains unmentioned in her book, despite the fact that I discussed it with her in detail. Heider, needless to emphasize, regards all of this as evidence that I "turned [my] back on urban activism" and that "At each juncture [which?]" Bookchin "attacks former colleagues and friends [who?], espouses new theories . . . [with a] kind of flexibility [that] makes him seem the exact opposite of such anarchists as Dolgoff and Chomsky, whose political positions have remained consistently rock solid" (p. 61). Really! I never knew that anarchism was a "rock solid" dogma or that the development of ideas in the face of changing conditions was apostasy! If development is to be dismissed as "flexibility," then I gladly plead guilty.

Method 6: When all else fails, blatantly misrepresent your subject's work and viewpoint, tossing in a few more innuendoes for extras. Example: Heider says, without mentioning names, that I have declared the "classic authors of the anarchist workers movement to be

representatives of the 'libertarian municipal tradition' of [my] own historical construct" (p. 64). I have never declared such a thing, although I have pointed out that Bakunin supported the participation of anarchists in municipal elections, and that Bakunin and Kropotkin saw the commune or municipality as the locus of a libertarian society.

But here Heider cannot resist the opportunity to compound a blatant falsehood with one of her innuendoes: "the theoretical proximity of [libertarian municipalism] to the ideology of the [prefascist and quasi-fascist, as she puts it in a footnote] Volksgemeinschaft cannot be overlooked" (p. 64). Such an innuendo could apply quite lavishly to the communal orientation of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin--indeed, to exponents of every form of social anarchism that is not fervently committed to the factory-oriented libertarian theories of anarchosyndicalism. With ignorance infused by venom, Heider must add that I suffer from "nostalgia, nationalism [!], and disavowal [!] of the labor movement"-this last a flippant misreading of my disavowal of the theory of proletarian hegemony, a largely Marxist notion to which Heider seems to adhere.

Thereafter, Heider lets another person, Howard Hawkins, speak for me as though his words were my own--despite the fact that I expressed strong public differences with Hawkins years before the English translation of her book appeared. What she cannot impute to me directly, she imputes to me through someone whose views, unknown to her readers, I have been obliged to criticize. In fact, it is Hawkins who has changed his views by supporting participation in state

and national elections--but it is I whom Heider considers politically fickle.

Method 7: Caricature the person you are attacking, and then mock him for being the caricature you have created. Example: Heider was taken to visit the annual town meeting in rural Charlotte, Vermont, which is composed of ordinary working people, farmers, and a scattering of professionals, all neatly dressed for a special occasion. Heider, with incredible arrogance, apparently cast her Olympian eyes over the "lily-white" meeting and with unerring instinct knew to be "the most conservative . . . I have ever attended in the US." No one there, she assures her readers, would have responded positively to a proposal to end "capitalism" or to fight for "equal rights for African-Americans" (p. 67).

After the meeting, when Heider returned to my home and asked me why no people of color had been there, I informed her of the simple statistical fact that Vermont is the "whitest" state in the United States (over 99 percent)-a simple bit of factual information that Heider wilfully decided I approve of, making my remark incontrovertibly racist (pp. 67, 68). Responding to such an allegation is beneath contempt. In fact, Vermont is not only one of the "whitest" states in the United States, it is also one of the poorest. Nor are Vermonters in the habit of raising black and red flags, generating insurrections against capitalism, or any more than most young leftists I encounter today, singing the "Internationale." But its town meetings have done a good deal more than meetings in many places in the world to belie Heider's comparison (in the German edition of her book) of Charlotte citizens with supporters of the Christian Democratic Union.

For example: in 1982, the Charlotte town meeting, together with scores of other Vermont town meetings, voted for a freeze on the production of nuclear weapons in the United States. This step led directly to the American nuclear freeze movement. Like other Vermont town meetings, Charlotte's has vigorously supported the rights of gays, women, and people of color. It voted overwhelmingly for a Jewish woman of Swiss birth to be governor of Vermont, and for the self-styled "socialist" Sanders to be the state's lone congressman. It generally supports the most decent and humanitarian measures that are raised in Vermont town meetings. Nor is Charlotte plagued by skinheads who beat up immigrants and celebrate the birthday of Hitler in its taverns. Christian Democrats? Please, madam, learn the facts or else desist from commenting.

Yes, I celebrate the remaining revolutionary traditions of Vermont, fragmentary as they may be, and I do not hesitate to tell residents of the United States that they are worth retaining and developing. Nor do I take it amiss that Bakunin and Kropotkin celebrated what they took to be Russia's democratic town traditions, nor that the Spanish anarchists took great pride in the radical traditions of the Iberian peninsula. May I add that I also celebrate Greek rationalism, philosophy, art, mathematics, and certain political achievements, which hardly makes me a Greek nationalist, and many aspects of the German philosophical and cultural tradition, which hardly makes me a German nationalist.

Method 8: When your subject uses words that might contradict the image you are trying to create of him, a bit of creative editing of his words can be helpful. Example:

Two illustrations from the original German edition of Heider's book are striking cases in point here. First: In *Die Narren der Freiheit*, during her discussion of my essay "Listen, Marxist!" Heider remarks, "From his critique of neo-Bolshevik caricatures of the worker and from his lament for the reformist integration of the class struggle, Bookchin made a confusing leap of thought to a critique of workers and class struggle as such."<sup>2</sup> This "leap" would be confusing only to those who demagogically insert such a "leap" into my work. Let me emphasize that the "leap" appears only in Heider's mind, not in that or any other essay I ever wrote.

Yet Heider goes on to quote from "Listen, Marxist!" a passage in which I called it reactionary "to reinforce the traditional class struggle by imputing a 'revolutionary' content to it"<sup>3</sup>--but she coolly removes the words I have italicized here and leaves the reader to believe that I am opposed to class struggle as such. In the present English translation of her book, Heider has corrected these quotations. (Probably not coincidentally--these were points that I specifically objected to in a criticism I wrote of her German book in 1992, published in the German anarchist periodical *Schwarzer Faden*.) Nevertheless, even in the present English version, she asserts to the English reader that I think "class struggle" is "the root of all evil" (p. 73).

Second: In the German edition Heider quotes a passage from my book *Urbanization Without Cities* in which I included trade unions as among the types of organizations that anarchists believe to constitute the "social." Apparently leaving the word union in the quoted sentence would have contradicted her image of me as bearing a deep enmity toward the working class.

To rectify this situation, she tells her German readers that "Bookchin describes the concept of the social as encompassing 'the family, workplace, fraternal and sororal groups, religious congregations . . . and professional societies.'"4 Although her ellipsis points may have ecologically saved a millimeter or two of space on the page, it must have required a sturdy willfulness on her part to use them to replace only one word--union! Again, on page 85 of the English edition she restores the word union to this quotation, but it is likely not coincidental that this was another point to which I specifically objected in my criticism of the German edition.

Moreover, I have long argued that capitalism has greatly developed, perhaps overdeveloped, the vast technological bases for abundance or a "post-scarcity society"--and I have also clearly emphasized that capitalism itself stands in the way of using its technology for human good. Heider confuses the necessary conditions for a post-scarcity society with its sufficient conditions. In her own inimitable words: Bookchin "says that economic need is no longer a problem" (p. 73). But that this were so! That we could have a sufficiency in the means of life if capitalism were removed is cynically transformed into the notion that we do presently have a sufficiency in the means of life even under capitalism. Need I emphasize that capitalism is based precisely on enforced scarcity, without which a profit system would be impossible? That Heider does not seem to understand this fact unfortunately reveals her ignorance not only of radical theory but of the very "historical materialism" that she invokes against me, as we shall see.

So who is it, in Heider's view, that I hold "really to blame for capitalism" (p. 73, emphasis added)? It is "the working class," says Heider, since I wrote in "Listen, Marxist!" that "a precondition for the existence of the bourgeoisie is the development of the proletariat. Capitalism as a social system presupposes the existence of both classes" (p. 73).<sup>5</sup> The truism that wage-labor cannot exist without capital any more than capital can exist without wage labor is transformed, in Heider's ever-puzzled mind, into a potentially reactionary assertion: "Is [Bookchin] saying that it may have been a mistake to try to unseat the bourgeoisie?"

That the interrelationship between wage labor and capital is a concept that was developed in the socialist and anarchist movements of the last century seems to totally elude her. But (Heider tells her readers) "for Bookchin, class struggle becomes the root of all [!] evil"-which is Heider's unique interpretation of the basic radical concept that class society as such is one-sided and the class struggle that it generates is symptomatic of its diseased condition. This is a view that is traditional to all radical theories that wish to abolish class society and thereby the class struggle itself. One might think that Heider would have understood this basic idea before she undertook to write about social theory-- or would that be asking too much?

Apparently it would, since my reminder to Marxists that "the history of the class struggle is the history of a disease, of the wounds opened by the famous 'social question,'" becomes in Heider's contorted mind a condemnation of the struggle by oppressed classes as such. Precisely because I regard class society as a disease, indeed, as evidence of humanity's one-sided



development, Heider, who reads with her fist rather than her brain, suggests that I want to retain the bourgeoisie (again: "Is he saying it might have been a mistake to unseat the bourgeoisie?") and suggests that I think "the proletariat [should] have been booted out first." Let the reader not think that I have made up a word of this! These coarse formulations appear in all their splendor on page 73 of Heider's warped and sick book.

Method 9: Try throwing everything up for grabs and run wild in whatever direction you can. If you pile up enough distortions, some of them are bound to be accepted. Examples: Like many Marxists and anarchist alike, I admire much of work of Charles Fourier. If you are Ulrike Heider, however, you will trot out only the absurdities that this remarkable but wildly imaginative utopian presented and impute them to me (p. 69). Do I advance the principle of "unity in diversity" in my ecological writings? Splendid! Heider simply denigrates "diversity and variety" as an "old liberal [pluralistic] postulate" (p. 70). Do I cite "prey and predators" as means of stabilizing animal populations? "Dangerous ground, this," Heider exclaims, that could lead to "social-Darwinist" conclusions about population control (p. 70)-as though I were not a militant opponent of attempts to deal with population as a mere numbers game. Indeed, living as I apparently do in a "fog of utopian promise" for my advocacy of decentralized communities and ecologically sound practices, I am guilty of advancing a "daring blueprint for techno-utopia" in my 1965 essay "Towards a Liberatory Technology," when "only a few months earlier [I] had been so opposed to technology"--a contradiction for which she adduces not a single line of support from my writings (p. 71). Because I draw on aspects of the past to offer alternatives for the future, my

"vacillation between past and future is more extreme than Kropotkin's"--whose "vacillation," presumably, is pretty bad (p. 72).

Method 10: If all else fails--lie. Example: In the introduction to my book, *The Spanish Anarchists* (written in 1972 or thereabouts and published in 1977), roughly three paragraphs allude to certain cultural similarities between the Spanish movement and the 1960s counterculture. On page 59 I described the efforts of the Spanish movement to combat alcoholism and sexual promiscuity among its members in order to prevent the degradation that had historically occurred among working people in all periods of industrialization as traditional social relations were eroded-- and as was occurring in Spain itself. This is a fairly standard observation that appears in all accounts of Spanish syndicalism in the last century. But Heider smells "countercultural" heresy here, and all her alarm bells go off. I am, it appears, "most [!] impressed by the Spanish anarchists who took up vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, nudism, and ecological gardening," she declaims. My "heart warms to the communalist-localist village anarchists and their clan- consciousness" and to the Iberian Anarchist Federation's (FAI) "grupos afinidad [sic]," rather than to those who were "organized in unions or workers' councils [sic]" (p. 90).

That most of the 325 pages of *The Spanish Anarchists* are devoted to detailed descriptions of various peasant and working-class sindicatos, their organizational forms, their strikes, their insurrections, and their daily struggles totally evaporates from Heider's description of the book. Indeed, her readers learn that Bookchin "sees the entire FAI (Federaci'n Anarchista [sic!] Iberia [sic!] as a

consolidation of affinity groups," all of which was structured around affinity groups, and that I see the "climax [!] of the Spanish Revolution [!]" as "the CNT congress in Zaragossa, at which the utopian faction [!] of the anarcho-syndicalists won the day," as Heider writes with a minimal knowledge of Spanish spelling or of the Spanish movement. In fact, the Zaragoza Congress of the National Confederation of Labor (CNT), of early May 1936, occurred some two months before the outbreak of the civil war, and its work is hardly exhausted by the word utopian. The congress, in fact, readmitted the reformist Treintistas, many of whom were to reinforce the conciliatory policies of the CNT leadership toward the State and the bourgeoisie as the war went on.

Worse still: "Here Bookchin is in agreement with the utopian Malatesta, for whom the unionist version of anarcho-syndicalism is a defection from 'pure' anarchism. Following the argument of the historian Vernon Richards, which was bitterly challenged by Sam Dolgoff, Bookchin interprets the CNT's wavering between revolution and compromise with historical reality [!] as reformist Realpolitik" (p. 90). As it turned out, in the years following the civil war, the majority of the CNT itself finally decided that its greatest blunder had been exactly this reformist Realpolitik. Put bluntly, Heider has literally described anarchism as a "utopian" fantasy if it is not rooted in a crude economic syndicalism, and gallingly dismisses any anarchist theorist or vision of a libertarian society that is not oriented overwhelmingly toward factories and trade unions!

I have cited these "methods" and "examples" primarily to show the ethical level on which Heider functions.

There are more, and still more, and more after that. There is her claim that I have discarded social revolution for cultural revolution, as though the two were radically incompatible with each other (pp. 73-74). There is her accusation that I think that "the capitalist bourgeoisie [sic] has the ability to deal with crises and class struggle and that classes within capitalist society will disappear"--a nonsequitur if there ever was one (p. 74, emphasis added). There is her complete failure to comprehend the difference between the potentiality for an ethics in natural evolution and the absurd notion that nature itself is ethical, a view that she tries to attribute to me (pp. 76-77). There is her imputation that I regard human beings as "passive" in relation "nature," which is precisely the view of many deep ecologists, who I have been challenging for more than a decade on precisely this point (p. 77). There is her caricature of my view that maternal love gives a child a rational sense of otherness. In Heider's tunnel vision this is evidence that I consider the "mother-child symbiosis" to be "an ideal and a permanent condition" of "inequality, helplessness, and power," marked by the "passive-exploitative greed of the infant and the omnipotence of the mother over her helpless offspring as an eternal, unalterable condition!" (p. 77). Heider's exclamation mark does not help me understand who is dominating whom here-- whether the "omnipotent" mother or the "exploitive" infant. In any case, both are pitted in eternal mutual combat.

Dare I invoke the simple anthropological datum that the kinship tie and what Heider calls "Stone Age women" played "a pivotal role" in prehistory, and Heider, chilled to the bone, declares that such formulations "in their German translation have a frighteningly familiar [read: Nazi--M.B] ring" (p. 79).

Dare I suggest that band or tribal elders formed the earliest type of hierarchy, ages ago, because of their physical vulnerability, and Heider worries that this--yes, you guessed it--"could lead the naive reader to believe that euthanasia might be useful" (p. 80)! Be warned that Heider is deeply concerned that my emphasis on usufruct in organic society--a word whose meaning she appears not to understand--deplorably suggests that I "reject Engel's [sic!] version of original communism because it allegedly [!] includes the ideas [sic!] of collective property"--not only a dazzling nonsequitur but a grotesque miscomprehension of my views (emphasis added, p. 81).

Apparently, our "anarchosyndicalist" has quite a vulgar, economistic Marxist dimension. As though we were all sitting adoringly at the feet of Ernest Mandel, Heider cries that I distort Marx when I suggest that (in her paraphrase) he "proposed to subject nature to man in the manner of a patriarch, thus despiritualizing not only labor, but also the product of labor, the commodity" (p. 81). The word patriarch here, I may add, was spun out of Heider's head, not out of mine, as is the crude formulation she imputes to Marx. Dare I suggest that work or labor would be "playful" in a free society--that is, an aesthetic activity--and I am immediately characterized as steeped in a "utopian imagination"- -a notion that seems to cause Heider to retch. We are even treated to a largely incoherent defense of Marx that reveals a bumbling level of economic understanding. Thus, Heider declares that I "ontologize the commodity and its 'essence,' that is, its utility [read: use] value" (p. 82), which, of course, would turn it from a commodity into a functionally useful object! Put in simple English, this means that I want to fight for a society that produces

goods to meet human needs ("utility value"), not commodities that yield profits. Exactly what the rest of the verbiage in Heider's "critique" is supposed to mean, I am obliged to leave to her and to Sam Dolgoff, her mentor on anarchism, who is now, alas, beyond our mortal reach.

Having suggested that I believe that elderly people (presumably including myself) should commit suicide, I am also a strong advocate of inequality because I write that the notion of "justice" is based on the false "equality of unequals." This is an inequality that is physically and socially created, let me emphasize, and that either unavoidably exists from person to person because of physical infirmities from one stage of life to another and/or is imposed by hierarchical and class rule. This condition, I go on to emphasize, must be remedied by the realm of Freedom, creating a substantive "equality of unequals." Alas, Heider never cites this contrast: It is enough for her that I dared acknowledge the existence of inequality of any kind, irrespective of the need to rectify it in a rational society. "Any theory [!] of 'inequality,'" she declaims, "whether in the name of liberation or feminism, whether justified by notions of 'diversity' or 'complementarity,' is intrinsically undemocratic and beats a path straight to the political right" (p. 91).

I am not at all sure I know what Heider is talking about. Does she really think we are all really "equally" strong, healthy, wealthy, and powerful, as legal fiction would have it, in this presumably "just" but eminently unfree society? Are we to impose upon ill, elderly, and weak persons the same social responsibilities that we impose on healthy, young, and strong persons? Anyone today who defended such a notion of "justice"--whether

they called themselves socialist, anarchist or liberal reformist--would indeed be on the political right. In a society based on the ideology of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, with their indifference to human suffering precisely in the name of juridical "equality," no attempt would be made to equalize the differences that burden the very young, the very old, the disabled, the ill, and so on.

Still further: In my book, *The Ecology of Freedom*, Heider writes, "capitalism is neither mentioned nor criticized" and anarchism "is discussed only as a negative example of what we don't want"--a pair of blatant fabrications whose inclusion in Heider's book must surely rest on her hope that her readers will never examine my book. Indeed, from an espouser of utopias, I turn into a committed advocate of negative liberty. Heider, it would seem, is totally indifferent to the fact that I discuss the nature of a future society in considerable detail in the last two chapters of the book.

As to my writings on the city, the farrago of distortions, misstatements, and whole fabrications that mark her discussion are too dizzying to examine in detail. Heider says I "banish . . . the city from the history of ideas" (p. 85)--even though I have written several books on cities, including *Urbanization Without Cities*, a massively historical as well as interpretive defense of the city against urbanization. Thus it would appear that I am a ruralist pure and simple. That I examine in detail in *Urbanization Without Cities* the historical development of various liberatory traditions in cities gives her occasion to mockingly paraphrase its message as "Long live the past!" (p. 83). The reader learns that my view of history is "idealistic" largely because I challenge Marx's

"historical materialism" (p. 84). Moreover, I make little more than a "half-hearted attempt" to criticize Athenian "misogyny, xenophobia, and slavery" (p. 85); and I allude to the "noble ancestry" of Greek democrats--an allusion that Heider turns into a "stress" and that obviously means that I favor aristocracy (p. 85). I "seem . . . to identify [!] with Aristotle's horror of the 'rule of the many over the few' or even of 'the poor over the wealthy'" (p. 85) simply because I mention those notions--hence I am against democracy and favor oligarchy, the rich, and presumably patriarchy. Indeed, I need only mention a thinker and discuss his or her ideas--and Heider feels free to attribute them to me.

The quagmire of Heider's dishonesty seems almost too limitless to plumb. Having unburdened herself of these totally contrived falsehoods; having suggested that I think the elderly should be put to death; that I consider the working class to be the real source of present-day social problems; that I abandon Marx's "historical materialism" (God forgive me!); that I favor the rich over the poor--Heider then goes on to apprise her readers that my "urban ideal" is the village (p. 87); that I "despise industry more than industrial exploitation" (p. 87); and that my model is "the tribe, village, handicrafts, small trade [!], small capitalism [!]" (p. 87). Once again we hear Heider repeat the refrain whenever she comes across views of mine that diverge from Marx's: "One cannot help but be reminded of the caste particularism of the fascists, their differentiation between working capital and greedy capital, their glorification of the past, and their moralistic vision." (Emphasis added, p. 88)

Let us, then, reverse Heider's distortions and opine in Heiderian fashion: "One cannot help but be reminded



that Heider is an economic determinist, that she regards the loving relationship between mother and child as exploitative, that she believes in the 'domination of nature,' that she wants to ignore the lessons of the past, and that she has no moral vision at all." I will leave it to the reader to tally up the vulgarity and viciousness of her "criticism"--and her unspeakable demagoguery.

In fact, Ulrike Heider's political ideas, as I have already suggested, seem to be guided by a vulgar Marxism, which she tries to defend in the name of anarchosyndicalism. Indeed: "I am influenced by the method of critique of ideologies as it was first developed Marx's *The German Ideology*," she writes in her English introduction, "in which he revealed the false consciousness of his contemporaries and explained it out of the objective historical situation"--which "situation," for Marx--and Engels (who also had a big hand in the book) was largely economistic. To drag in virtually all the leading figures of the Frankfurt School as further influences on herself, plus Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Karl Korsch is to make a mockery of a brilliant albeit disparate body of thinkers. Considering the low level of Heider's criticism, I would regard her invocation of their names as a pure pretention.

Heider essentially disposes of Noam Chomsky in some nine perfunctory pages, largely filled with biographical and, more warily, with a few theoretical synopses. Poor chap: he is, in Heider's eyes, a "fellow traveler" of anarcho-syndicalism. (p. 37) Which disposes of Chomsky. Her enormously overwritten account of the proprietarians or "anarcho-capitalists," on the other hand, seems like nothing more than filler material. Her tract would seem like little more than a diatribe against me if

she did not add on nearly sixty pages to give it book length. Having known Murray Rothbard, the centerpiece of her account, for a time, I find that I agree with Sam Dolgoff, who Heider quotes, that he and his ideas are "repulsive." Although Rothbard eschews any anarchist orientation whatever (he even attacked me as an anarchist with vigor because, as he put it, I am opposed to private property), Heider tells us that he "is viewed in anarcho-capitalist circles [which?] as the latest addition to their hall of fame"--which includes, I suppose, such "anarchists" as the Austrian School of laissez-faire economics and that avowed paragon of "selfishness," Ayn Rand. Thereafter, Heider fills page after page with clumsy disquisitions on Max Stirner, Benjamin Tucker, Carl Menger, F. A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and greater and lesser heirs of Adam Smith. Thus the "book," having filled enough pages to qualify as more than a mere pamphlet, can now be unleashed on the public with a fetching and basically misleading title.

One may reasonably wonder which tried, fast, and unswerving anarchists Heider actually does admire. After all, she disposes of Malatesta as a "utopian" (p. 90); of Fourier as a quack, "often comically naive" (p. 91); and of Kropotkin as a queasy "vacillator." Let it not be said, however, that Heider is without heroes. The looming figure in Heider's book is really Sam Dolgoff, a man I knew well from 1965 to 1976. I helped him prepare his book on Bakunin after he despaired that he would never be able to publish it, and I personally presented it with a strong recommendation to my editor, Angus Cameron, of Alfred A. Knopf, which did publish it.<sup>6</sup> I should add that it was I who suggested that Dolgoff edit a book on the Spanish collectives (he initially wanted to write an account of Bakunin's relationship

with Nechayev), and I wrote the preface for it, which he then censored because I expressed my disagreement with the CNT's entry into the Madrid government.<sup>7</sup>

In Heider's book, many of Dolgoff's more ungracious attitudes resurface in her treatment of the Spanish anarchists, as well as Malatesta, and Vernon Richards (whom Dolgoff detested for his criticism of the Bakunin book and of the CNT-FAI's entry into the Madrid and Catalan governments in 1936). Inasmuch as Dolgoff is no longer with us, it would be unfair to criticize him for views that he cannot personally defend. In fact, despite her admiration for him, Heider essentially reduces Dolgoff to a crusty schoolteacher who "grades" anarchists from Bakunin to Isaac Puente (a man largely unknown outside of Spain) on the degree to which they were "realistic" syndicalists rather than "utopian" anarchists. In Heider's eyes, Dolgoff suffered from only one major failing: he shared "the counterculture's romance with Native American tribalism" (p. 36), which she coolly extrapolates from the fact that Dolgoff hoped that "Third World" peoples would not abandon the more cooperative features of tribal life. In all fairness to Dolgoff, I believe this to be either a typical Heider distortion or else an example of her fatuousness.

More disquieting is the favorable account she gives to Dolgoff's political pragmatism--which, if accurate, would be very disturbing. She glows as she observes that Dolgoff "prefers [!] antifascism to principled adherence to dogma" (p. 29)--that is, to revolution--as though conducting a revolution in Spain in 1936-39 were in contradiction to the struggle against the Francoists, as the Stalinists were to claim. He regarded it as a "malicious defamation," she observes approvingly, to accuse the

CNT leadership of discarding its anarchosyndicalist principles when it entered the Madrid and Catalan governments and the FAI of turning into an expressly electoral party machine (p. 29). She invokes the old canard, which she imputes to him, that the takeover of Barcelona and much of Catalonia by the CNT's rank-and-file militants could be equated to "establishing an anarchist dictatorship" (p. 29), presumably comparable to the top-down party dictatorship established by the Bolsheviks--as if the CNT-FAI had not relinquished power won by its rank-and-file in Catalonia to the thoroughly discredited State, increasingly infiltrated by the Stalinist minority in the country (p. 29). Dolgoff, Heider proudly tells us, supported American participation in the Second World War "as a necessary evil for destroying Nazi rule" and was "puzzled how liberal academics like George Woodcock or anarchists purists like Marcus Graham . . . could be so relentless in their opposition to the war" (p. 28). If all of these compromises with the State are necessary, then why bother to be an anarchist at all? Throughout the twentieth century, nearly all the "lesser evils" that Heider says Dolgoff adopted were palmed off by Social Democrats as excuses for reformist practices.

In fact, Dolgoff, we learn from Heider, was "the last anarchist." She finds him to be a man who "never wavers as he sails between the Scylla of anarchist nostalgia and the Charybdis of anarcho- futuristic daydreams, always arriving back into safe harbor" (p. 37). Perhaps--but I doubt if Dolgoff would have chosen to be shipwrecked on the rocks of Heider's extremely crude pragmatism, which is no different from the most opportunistic practices of the German Greens--all her professions of anarchosyndicalism to the contrary notwithstanding.

But now that "the last anarchist" is no longer alive, "one wonders" (to use a Heider literary stylism) how anarchism can possibly survive. Indeed, how qualified is Heider to judge who is an anarchist--past, present, or future? An overall view of Heider's book indicates clearly that it combines a crude economistic Marxism with an extremely narrow-minded syndicalism, in which a future, presumably rational society would be structured around mere trade unions and factory operations. There is every reason to believe that the word anarchism, with its historic commitment to the confederation of municipalities--the famous "Commune of communes"--is in her eyes completely "utopian" and that she merely hijacks the word to add color and pedigree to her simplistic trade-unionism--a world that, by her own admission to me, she personally knows little about.

Finally, and by no means unimportantly, "one wonders" as well what happened to ethics along the way--especially among radicals who profess to be antiauthoritarian, ethical socialists. Herein lies a question that is worth meditating upon today, especially when so many self-styled anarchists lie, distort, and edit ideas with moral standards comparable to those of junk bond dealers and corporate raiders.

September 27, 1994

#### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all page numbers cited at the end of quotations herein refer to the English translation of Heider's book.

2. "Von der Kritik an der neobolschewistischen Karrikatur des Arbeiters und der Klage ueber die reformistische Integration des Klassenkampfes macht Bookchin einen verwirrenden Gedankensprung hin zur Kritik des Arbeiters und des Klassenkampfes schlechthin." Ulrike Heider, *Die Narren der Freiheit* (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1992), p. 90. All references to the German edition are henceforth indicated by NDF, followed by the page number.
3. For the original passage in "Listen, Marxist!", see Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1971; republished by Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986). It appears on page 186 of this book--and not on page 208, contrary to Heider's footnote, one of several erroneous page citations.
4. "Bookchins Beschreibung des Sozialen bezieht sich auf 'Familie, Arbeitsplatz, bruederliche und schwesterliche Gruppen, Religionsvereinigung . . . und Berufsorganisationen'", in NDF, p. 105. The passage she quotes is from my *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, republished in Canada as *Urbanization Without Cities* (Montreal: Black Rose Books), p. 32.
5. Although Heider tells us this quote comes from page 242 of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, it is actually found on page 220.
6. Sam Dolgoff, ed., *Bakunin on Anarchy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).
7. Sam Dolgoff, ed., *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self- management in the Spanish Revolution, 1936-39* (New York: Free Life Editions, 1974; republished by Montreal: Black Rose Books). I should add that all this publishing activity happened after the old Libertarian League, to which we had both belonged in the mid- 1960s, dissolved and Dolgoff found himself

in a political limbo, even offering to turn over the correspondence of the defunct League to my Anarchos group. Still, we had political differences from the very day I joined the Libertarian League (in 1965), to its self-dissolution and long afterward. Thus it was not because of our political disagreements that Dolgoff and I "parted company," as I believe he says in his memoirs. Quite to the contrary, we retained a very close relationship well into the 1970s. His account of our relationship in his memoirs is simply false.

WHITHER ANARCHISM?  
A REPLY TO RECENT ANARCHIST CRITICS

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

Publication of the following article is forthcoming in Murray Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left* (San Francisco and Edinburgh: [A.K. Press](http://www.akpress.org/), ("http://www.akpress.org/") 1998). The article appears in [Anarchy Archives](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archive_home.html) (http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\_Archives/archive\_home.html) with the permission of the author and publisher.

**Liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice.  
Socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality.  
-- Mikhail Bakunin**

What form will anarchism take as it enters the twenty-first century? What basic ideas will it advance? What kind of movement, if any, will it try to create? How will it try to change the human sensibilities and social institutions that it has inherited from the past?

In a fundamental sense these were the issues that I tried to raise in my 1995 polemic *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*.<sup>[1]</sup> The title and especially the subtitle were deliberately provocative. In part, I intended them to highlight a profound and longstanding contradiction within



anarchism, an ideology that encompasses views that are basically hostile to each other. At one extreme of anarchism is a liberal ideology that focuses overwhelmingly on the abstract individual (often drawing on bourgeois ideologies), supports personal autonomy, and advances a negative rather than a substantive concept of liberty. This anarchism celebrates the notion of liberty from rather than a fleshed-out concept of freedom for. At the other end of the anarchist spectrum is a revolutionary libertarian socialism that seeks to create a free society, in which humanity as a whole--and hence the individual as well--enjoys the advantages of free political and economic institutions.

Between these two extremes lie a host of anarchistic tendencies that differ considerably in their theoretical aspects and hence in the kind of practice by which they hope to achieve anarchism's realization. Some of the more common ones today, in fact, make systematic thinking into something of a bugaboo, with the result that their activities tend to consist not of clearly focused attacks upon the prevailing social order but of adventurous episodes that may be little more than street brawls and eccentric "happenings." The social problems we face--in politics, economics, gender and ethnic relations, and ecology--are not simply unrelated "single issues" that should be dealt with separately. Like so many socialists and social anarchists in the past, I contend that an anarchist theory and practice that addresses them must be coherent, anchoring seemingly disparate social problems in an analysis of the underlying social relations: capitalism and hierarchical society.

It should not be surprising that in a period of social reaction and apparent capitalist stabilization, the two extremes within anarchism--the individualistic liberal tendency and the socialistic revolutionary one--would fly apart in opposing directions. At best, they have previously existed only in uneasy tension with each other, submerging their differences to their common traditions and ideological premises. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the liberal tendency, with its strong emphasis on individual rights and sensibilities, gave greater emphasis to individual self-expression, ranging from personal eccentricities to scandalous or even violent behavior. By contrast, the socialistic tendency placed its greatest emphasis on popular mobilizations, especially in syndicalist organizations, working-class strikes, and the everyday demands of opposition to capitalism in the public sphere.

Supporters of the socialistic tendencies in anarchism, which I have called social anarchism, never denied the importance of gaining individual freedom and personal autonomy. What they consistently argued, however, was that individual freedom will remain chimerical unless sweeping revolutionary changes are made that provide the social foundations for rounded and ethically committed individuals. As social anarchism has argued, the truly free individual is at once an active agent in and the embodiment of a truly free society. This view often clashed with the notion, very commonly held by individualistic or, as I have called them, lifestyle anarchists, that liberty and autonomy can be achieved by making changes in personal sensibilities and lifeways, giving less attention to changing material and cultural conditions.

It is not my intention to repeat my exposition of the differences between social and lifestyle anarchism. Nor do I deny that the two tendencies--the liberal and the social--have often overlapped with each other. Many lifestyle anarchists eagerly plunge into direct actions that are ostensibly intended to achieve socialistic goals. Many social anarchists, in turn, sympathize with the rebellious impulses celebrated by lifestyle anarchists, although they tend to resist purely personal expressions.

Not surprisingly, the ability of social anarchism to make itself heard in the public sphere has generally fluctuated with the economic times. In periods of capitalist stability, social anarchism is often eclipsed on the Left by reform-oriented social-democratic and liberal ideologies, while lifestyle anarchism emerges as the embodiment of anarchism par excellence. During these periods anarchism's cranks, often more rebellious than revolutionary, with their exaggerated hostility to conventional lifeways, come to the foreground, constituting a cultural more than a revolutionary threat to the status quo. By contrast, in times of deep social unrest, it is social anarchism that, within anarchism, has usually held center stage. Indeed, during revolutionary situations in the past, social anarchism has enjoyed a great deal of popularity among the oppressed and in some cases was responsible for organizing the masses in such a way as to pose a serious threat to the social order.

The varying fortunes of social and lifestyle anarchism belong to a long history of revolutions and counterrevolutions, of rebellion and conformity, of social unrest and social peace. When the rebellious 1960s bubbled up after a decade of social quiescence and numbing mediocrity, lifestyle anarchism enjoyed great

popularity among the countercultural elements, while social anarchism exercised a measure of influence with some New Leftists. During the political apathy and social conformity of the 1970s and 1980s, as the counterculture was absorbed into New Age narcissism, lifestyle anarchists moved increasingly to the fore as the predominant expression of anarchism.

The America of the mid-1960s that had seemed to be weighing new, indeed utopistic possibilities opened by ferment among people of color, students, women, gays, and community activists, has been replaced, in the 1990s, by an America that is narcissistic and self-absorbed, moved by mystical, antirational, often otherworldly, and decidedly personal concerns. The visionary pursuit of social change that was so widespread a mere quarter-century ago has yielded, as the German social theorist Joachim Hirsch observes, to a "fatalistic and radically anti-utopian consciousness." Social activity, such as it is, focuses overwhelmingly on single issues and seeks to reform the existing social order rather than challenge its basic institutions and economic relationships. Not only is today's consciousness fatalistic and radically anti-utopian; it is derisively antirevolutionary and even antiradical. The enormous change in social and moral temper is reflected by the conventional ideology of the present time, with its emphasis on trivial concerns, financial markets, consumerist escapes, and personal psychology. It has all but eliminated, for the present, any principle of hope, to use Ernst Bloch's phrase. Where social criticism does exist, it tends to focus on the abuses of specific corporations or on the defects of specific governmental actions (all valuable work, to be sure) rather than on the capitalist and state system that produces them. Cynicism

about the possibility of social change now prevails, as well as an appalling narcissism in everyday life.

Despite Hirsch's verdict, even this jaded public temper--a temper that prevails no less among young people than among their parents--needs compensatory escapisms to soften a life without inspiration or meaning. It is not easy to accept a gray world in which acquisition, self-absorption, and preoccupation with trivia are the main attributes of everyday life. To improve the "comfort level" of middle-class life, Euro-American society has witnessed an explosion of mystical, antirational, and religious doctrines, not to speak of innumerable techniques for personal self-improvement. The personalistic form of these anodynes makes self-expression into a surrogate for a politics of genuine empowerment. Far from impelling people to social activism, these nostrums are infected with an ancient Christian virus: namely, that personal salvation precedes political change--indeed, that in every sense the political is reduced to the personal, and the social to the individual.

Not only have lifestyle anarchism and social anarchism diverged very sharply, but their divergence reflects an unprecedented development in capitalism itself: its historic stabilization and its penetration into ever more aspects of everyday life. This development, not surprisingly, engulfs even the ideologies that profess to oppose it, so that in the end they actually work to justify those changes. More than any society that preceded it, capitalism (to use Marx and Engels's phrase in *The Communist Manifesto*) "turns everything solid into air"--and polluted air at that. Rock 'n' roll, the music of countercultural rebellion, has long entered the liturgical

ceremonies of modern churches, while radical folksinger Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" appears in television commercials for a giant airline. The "culture war" that created so many professorial jobs in major universities is rapidly drawing to a close. As Thomas Frank, editor of a recent anthology, *Commodify Your Dissent*, has observed, "The countercultural idea has become capitalist orthodoxy. . . . However the basic impulses of the countercultural idea may have disturbed a nation lost in Cold War darkness, they are today in fundamental agreement with the basic tenets of Information Age business theory." [2]

In *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism (SALA)*, I tried to show that lifestyle anarchism is well on its way to becoming just this kind of rebellious chic, in which jaded Americans rakishly adorn themselves with the symbols and idioms of personal resistance, all the more to accommodate themselves to the status quo. Anarchism's lifestyle tendencies orient young people toward a kind of rebellion that expresses itself in terms of narcissism, self-expression, intuition, and personalism--an orientation that stands sharply at odds with the socialistic core of anarchism that was celebrated by Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, among so many others.

Lifestyle anarchism thus recasts the spirit of revolt itself--however residual it may be today--and subverts the very basis for building the radical social opposition that will be needed in times more propitious for a rational social development. Lifestyle anarchism, in effect, eats away at the traditions, ideas, and visions upon which anarchism as a socialist movement rests and that form its point of departure for the development of future revolutionary

libertarian movements. In effect, its growing influence threatens to derail anarchism, with its rich implications for society as a whole, and redirect it toward the self as the locus of rebellion and reconstruction. In this respect, lifestyle anarchism is truly regressive. If a space is to be preserved on the political spectrum for serious left-libertarian discussion and activity--for use in the future, if not always in the present--then the growing influence of lifestyle anarchism must be earnestly resisted.

It is not only anarchism that is plagued by the advent of an anti-Enlightenment culture with psychologistic, mystical, antirational, and quasi-religious overtones. Some of the ostensibly new reinterpretations of Marxism are patently psychologistic and even mystical in nature, while the ecology movement risks the prospect of becoming a haven for primitivism and nature mysticism. Goddess worship has invaded feminism, while postmodernism reigns in the formerly radical portions of the Academy. Indeed, the attempt to displace Enlightenment values of reason, secularism, and social activism with an emphasis on intuition, spiritualism, and an asocial psychologism pervades society as a whole. In this respect SALA may be seen as an appendix to my larger book, *Re-Enchanting Humanity*, which critiques the more general cultural manifestations of these tendencies.

### SORTING OUT THE ISSUES

Nothing more strikingly supports my contention that lifestyle anarchism reflects present trends in bourgeois culture--its psychologism, antirationalism, primitivism, and mysticism--than the replies that lifestyle anarchists

themselves have written to SALA since its publication. As of this writing (February 1998), two books, one pamphlet, and several articles have been published, all decrying my essay, yet all serving overwhelmingly as evidence to bolster my case against this tendency.

Consider, for example, a review of my essay in the journal *Social Anarchism*, written by Kingsley Widmer, an anarchist who harbors strong sympathies for primitivism and technophobia.[3] The critical thrust of his piece is that I insist on standing "in lonely splendor" on the "ghostly shoulders of Bakunin, Kropotkin, and their descendants in such as the Spanish anarchists of more than two generations ago," which makes me a proponent of an "antique left-socialism," a "narrow and thin libertarianism of a different time and place and conditions."

I collapse to the floor in shame. Never did I expect that the day would come when an anarchist--in fact, a member of *Social Anarchism's* advisory board--would regard this lineage as "ghostly" and "thin"! Perhaps it would be more relevant to our time, in Widmer's view, if I ended my "lonely isolation" and adopted today's fashionable technophobia? Perhaps he believes I should join those who mystify the preindustrial age (which was already going into eclipse several generations ago)? Or those who mystify the Neolithic era of four hundred generations ago? or the Paleolithic of some 1,200 generations ago? If being up to date is the standard for social relevance, then the mere two generations that have passed since the Spanish Revolution undoubtedly give me the edge over the primitivists whom Widmer defends (although in all fairness to him, he appears to be not quite certain where he stands on primitivism anymore).



Despite its brevity, Widmer's review touches on substantive issues concerning primitivism and technology that other critics have argued at greater length and which I will address later in this essay. Suffice it to note here that Widmer also makes use of a polemical technique that my longer-winded critics also use--namely, to demonize me as a "dogmatic" Leninist or even Stalinist. Widmer, however, makes this insinuation in a rather convoluted way: he reproves me for using the words "infantile" and "fascistic" in describing certain aspects of lifestyle anarchism--his objection being that "'political infantilism' was a favorite epithet of Leninists," while "'social fascism' of Stalinist and fellow-traveling 'progressives' in the Thirties."

This would be a damning criticism indeed if I had used these words in any sense that is relevant to Lenin, still less Stalin's characterizations. Nowhere did I suggest that my opponents are infantile leftists, as Lenin did, or designate any of my opponents "social fascists," as the Third Period Stalinists did. Am I to understand from Widmer that the words "infantile" and "fascistic" must be excised from the vocabulary of critical discourse today simply because Lenin and Stalin's Communist International used them nearly seventy years ago? If my ideas really do constitute an "antique left-socialism" that belongs to "dogmatically exclusionary political movement," then it is remarkable that Widmer can find a place on the anarchist spectrum at all for this "old socialist anarchist."

What troubles me about this polemical strategy, as many of my current critics use it, is that by its own terms, commitment to principle comes to be chastised as

"dogma"; support for revolution over reform is condemned as "sectarian"; fervent objections to opponents' arguments are castigated as "authoritarian"; and polemical argumentation is designated as "Marxist" or "Leninist." In my own case, even my authorship of more than a dozen books becomes evidence of my agenda to "dominate" or "master" anarchism. At the very least, such methods reflect the ugly personalism that pervades this highly individualistic and trivialized culture.

This polemical techniques and many others are also put to use in Robert C. Black's *Anarchy After Leftism*, another response to SALA that is pervaded with a far more intense and personalistic vilification.[4] Black, the reader should be warned, is no mere author; he is a psychic who apparently can read my demonic mind, divine all my self-serving intentions, and unearth the Machiavellian meanings hidden in all of my writings, which are part of my devilish master plan to gain power and prestige, enrich my own wealth, and imperialistically colonize the entire anarchist scene as my own private fiefdom. Did I say that Black is a psychic? Actually, he is also an exorcist, and a cabalistic study of his book will surely free *Anarchy* (as distinguished from that lowly ideology "anarchism") from the Great Bookchin Conspiracy to take over that flourishing galactic realm.

To be serious about Black's endeavor--which his publisher, Jason McQuinn (aka Lev Chernyi) called "brilliant" in a recent issue of *Anarchy*--this ugly book is transparently motivated by a white-hot animosity toward me. So cynical, so manipulative, and so malicious are its invectives, even by the lowest standards of gutter journalism, that I will not dignify them with a reply. As I

indicated in the subtitle to SALA, the chasm between people like this author and myself is unbridgeable.

Indeed, so numerous are the falsehoods in Black's book that to correct even a small number of them would be a waste of the reader's time. One sample must suffice to demonstrate the overall dishonesty of the tract. Black seems to establish early on that I am a "dean" at Goddard College (AAL, p. 18), a position that, he would have his readers believe, endows me with the very substantial income that I need in order to advance my nefarious ambitions. Consummate scholar that Black is, he sedulously documents this claim by citing Goddard College's 1995 Off-Campus Catalog. Thereafter, throughout the book, I am referred to as "Dean Bookchin" or "the Dean," presumably on the assumption that mere repetition will make my title a reality.[5]

Goddard's 1995 Off-Campus Catalog is a rare document, one that even I had difficulty acquiring--a fact upon which Black is apparently relying. Those few individuals who are able to find it, however, will learn that Black's claim is an outright fabrication. My name appears nowhere in that catalog nor in any other recent edition, for the very good reason that I ended my professional connections with Goddard College (as well as Ramapo College, which he also mentions) in 1981. Anyone who cares to find out my status as an employee of Goddard is invited to telephone the college and ask them.

Far from enjoying the material wealth that Black attributes to me, I live on a pension and Social Security, both of them paltry, supplemented by a occasional lecture fees and book advances. I shall conclude this obligatory sketch of my economic status by noting that

my supplemental income has diminished considerably in recent years because the physical infirmities caused by advanced age prevent me from traveling or writing easily any longer. Some of Black's followers will no doubt prefer to believe his statement that I am a well-to-do dean at Goddard, irrespective of the facts. I have neither the time nor the disposition to disenchant people who want to believe in his book.[6]

### THE LONG, DARK ROAD BACK

The second full-size book that contains a response to SALA is *Beyond Bookchin: Preface to a Future Social Ecology* (BB) written by David Watson (more widely known by his pseudonym George Bradford).[7] The leading writer for the Detroit anarchist periodical *Fifth Estate*, Watson is an individual whose writings I criticized in SALA for technophobia, anticivilizationism, primitivism, and irrationalism. In BB Watson, in turn, not only defends his positions, as he doubtless ought to do, but radically confirms my claim that the chasm between his ideas and mine is unbridgeable. Indeed, what puzzles me about his work is that he ever found my writings interesting at all, especially given our incommensurable views on technology, or that they even influenced him, as he says they did.

The fact is that BB is not merely a reply to my criticisms--it is also a sweeping critique of almost everything I have ever written. "It is the intent of this essay," Watson declares early on, "to reveal how seriously limited Bookchin's work was from the very beginning" (BB, p. 10, emphasis added). Nor is BB simply a sweeping critique of my work "from the very

beginning"; it is a scandalous hatchet job on my thirty years of writing to create a body of ideas called social ecology. By the end of the book we learn that Watson true purpose is to "abandon [Bookchin's] idea of social ecology" altogether (BB, p. 245). Or as Steve Welzer advises in his laudatory introduction to the book, "social ecology itself must be liberated from Bookchin" (BB, p. 4).

In this 250-page indictment, Watson pokes into the smallest crevices in my writings while omitting the aspects of my writings that, on his own admission, allowed him to set himself up as an libertarian thinker. Divesting all my writings of their contexts--spanning some forty years in social movements--he wantonly tosses together my casual observations and polemical exaggerations with my more considered writings on social theory, ecology, urban development, politics, and philosophy.

Running through almost every paragraph of Watson's book are vituperative attacks, manic denunciations, ad hominem characterizations, and even gossip rumors. In time, the reader becomes so drenched in Watson's downpour of trivia, distortion, and personal venom that he or she may well lose sight of the basic differences between Watson and myself--the very issues that motivated my critique of his views in SALA.

What, after all, are the views that Watson is really trying to advance as the "future social ecology" that he advertises as an advance over my own? What precisely does it consist of? Amid the thickets, thorns, and weeds of personal invective that proliferate in Watson's book, I find four basic tenets that he is promoting--each of

which, if adopted by anarchists, would radically remove anarchism from the liberating realm of Enlightenment thought and entomb it in the mystical realm of anticivilizationism, technophobia, primitivism, and irrationalism.

## CIVILIZATION AND PROGRESS

For many years, in many different essays, as I pointed out in SALA, Watson has sharply rejected civilization, presumably in its Western form (although he devotes little space to denunciations of Oriental despotisms, with their megamechanical armies of serflike gang laborers). Thus, he told us in 1991: "Civilization is coming to be regarded . . . as a maladaptation of the species, a false turn or a kind of fever threatening the planetary web of life" (CIB, p. 10). It has been little more than "a labor camp from its origins" (CIB, p. 12); it is "a machine, an organization," "a rigid pyramid of crushing hierarchies," "a grid expanding the territory of the inorganic" (CIB, p. 12). Its "railroad leads not only to ecocide, but to evolutionary suicide" (CIB, p. 13).

Nor is it merely one or several aspects of civilization that exhibits these qualities: it is civilization as such. In 1988 he wrote that civilization is "destructive in its essence to nature and humanity" (HDDE, p. 3). In 1984 he wrote that we must be "willing to confront the entirety of this civilization and reclaim our humanity" (SDT, p. 11). While considering the mystical pap of Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor (in their book *The Great Mother Goddess*) to be "fascinating," he nonetheless reproaches them for placing quotation marks around the word civilization because it suggests "a reverse or alternative perspective

on civilization rather than . . . challenge its terms altogether" (CIB, p. 14, n. 23).

Metaphors for civilization as a unitary, monolithic grid or railroad, whose nature is necessarily destructive, are shallow, unmediated, and in fact reactionary. By putting quotation marks around "civilization," a writer can at least acknowledge civilization's advances without accepting its abuses.[8] If Watson will not allow even this concession to civilization's role, then it becomes clear that for him, redemption can be achieved only by regression. The rise of civilization becomes humanity's great lapse, its Fall from Eden, and "our humanity" can be "reclaimed" only through a prelapsarian return to the lost Eden, through recovery rather than discovery--in short, through a denial of humanity's advance beyond the horizon of prehistory.

This sort of rubbish may have been good coin in medieval monasteries. But in the late Middle Ages, few ideas in Christian theology did more to hold back advances in science and experimental research than the notion that with the Fall, humanity lost its innocence. One of the Enlightenment's great achievements was to provide a critical perspective on the past, denouncing the taboos and shamanistic trickery that made tribal peoples the victims of unthinking custom as well as the irrationalities that kept them in bondage to hierarchy and class rule, despite its denunciations of Western cant and artificialities.

Nor does Watson have the least use for the idea of progress; indeed, he even denigrates the development of writing, disparaging the "dogma of the inherent superiority of the written tradition" over nonliteracy as

"embarrassingly simplistic" (BB, p. 24) and "an imperial tale" (BB, p. 100), and praises the oral tradition. Before the written word, it should be noted, chiefs, shamans, priests, aristocrats, and monarchs possessed a free-wheeling liberty to improvise ways to require the oppressed to serve them. It was the written word, eventually, that subjected them to the restrictions of clearly worded and publicly accessible laws to which their rule, in some sense, was accountable. Writing rendered it possible for humanity to record its culture, and inscribing laws or *nomoi* were where all could see them remains one of the great advances of civilization. That the call for written laws as against arbitrary decisions by rulers was a age-old demand of the oppressed is easily forgotten today, when they are so readily taken for granted. When Watson argues that the earliest uses of writing were for authoritarian or instrumental purposes, he confuses the ability to write with what was actually written--and betrays an appalling lack of historical knowledge.

On the subject of modern medicine, our poet--as he styles himself--delivers himself of the sublime view that "it could conceivably [!] turn out to be medicine which extinguishes humanity rather than ecological disaster or human conflagration" (BB, p. 115). Not nuclear war? Not a terrifying and rampant epidemic? Not even "ecological disaster"--but medicine?[9]

Watson's rejection of "civilization in bulk" and his denial of even the most obvious advances of progress leaves us with the conclusion that, for him, civilization as such must either be accepted or rejected in its entirety. Such mental rigidity, such unitary determinism, gives us no choice but to define civilization exclusively by its evils.



Accordingly, while Watson concedes that my defense of civilization's achievements "might represent in some sense what is 'best' in Western culture," ideas of civilization and progress "have also typically served as core mystifications concealing what is worst" (BB, p. 9). For Watson, then, the idea of progress is merely a cover-up for the sins of civilization.

That the "official story" of progress contains both good and evil, indeed that civilization is "Janus-faced" (RS, p. 180) and constitutes a subtle dialectic between a "legacy of freedom" and a "legacy of domination" (which I elaborated for nearly fifty pages in *The Ecology of Freedom*) is conveniently ignored in Watson's discussion of this subject. Instead, he debases my account of civilization's substance and form, divests my discussion of history's interacting dialectic of all its development, flesh, bone, and blood, leaving only a straw man: a blind champion of all aspects of civilization, the unmediated reverse of his own radically simplistic rejection.

Which is not to say that Watson is unaware of his butchery of ideas; much later in his book, and in an entirely different context, he lets slip the fact that I see the "city" as "Janus faced . . . in its look toward the prospect of a common humanity as well as in its look toward barbarities in the name of progress" (BB, p. 171; quoting RS, p. 180). Unfortunately, in the original passage from which he draws this quote, I wrote that "civilization," not the "city," is Janus-faced--a distortion should warn Watson's readers about the need to refer back to my writings whenever he undertakes to quote from me.

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Having inserted this misquotation at the book's end, Watson feels free to describe me as the "lone defender of civilization" (BB, p. 7), at the very beginning the book. This honor, however, is too great for me to bear alone. I must share my laurels with Lewis Mumford, who (even more than Langdon Winner, Lao-Tzu, and Fredy Perlman) seems to be the supreme guru of Watson's "future social ecology." As it turns out, Mumford also posited a dual legacy for civilization--and, like Mor and Sjoog, put quotation marks around "civilization" to cite one of them.[10]

In fact, Mumford explicitly condemned anticivilizationist positions like the one Watson espouses, describing them as a "nihilist reaction." "The threatened annihilation of man by his favored technological and institutional automatisms," he once lamented, ". . . has in turn brought about an equally devastating counter-attack--an attack against civilization itself." [11] Mumford bluntly repudiated "the notion that in order to avoid the predictable calamities that the power complex is bringing about, one must destroy the

whole fabric of historic civilization and begin all over again on an entirely fresh foundation." [12] He objected to "a revolt against all historic culture--not merely against an over-powered technology and an over-specialized, misapplied intelligence, but against any higher manifestations of the mind." [13]

The only person here who would seem to have difficulty accepting the existence of ambiguities in civilization appears to be Watson himself, the unwavering denouncer "civilization in bulk."

### TECHNOPHOBIA

If Watson claims that the good that civilization offers is merely a veil for its evils, it is not likely that he and I will ever agree on so provocative an issue as technology. My conviction is that productive and communications technologies will be needed by a rational society in order to free humanity from the toil and the material uncertainties (as well as natural ones) that have in the past shackled the human spirit to a nearly exclusive concern for subsistence. Watson, by contrast, is an outright technophobe.

What makes this disagreement particularly abrasive, however, is his persistent tendency to misrepresent my views. Consider, for example, his assertion that because my "notion of social evolution is clearly linked [!] to technological development and an expansion of production" (BB, p. 96), I am an icy technocrat who rhapsodizes about the technics of the "megamachine," especially the chemical and nuclear industries. [14] Watson, who seems to have difficulty acknowledging the

existence even of a mere "link," as he puts it, between technological and social development, performs the kind of fabrication at which he excels and turns a "link" into sufficient cause:

Only [!] technological development, [Bookchin] says, would bring "a balance . . . between a sufficiency of the means of life, a relative freedom of time to fulfill one's abilities in the most advanced levels of human achievement, a degree of self-consciousness, complementarity, and reciprocity that can be called truly human in full recognition of humanity's potentialities" [EF: 67-68]. (BB, p. 96)

In fact, the reader who consults the whole passage from which Watson has cynically clipped this quotation will find that I made no statement that "technological development" alone creates these marvels. Quite to the contrary, by inserting the word "only" and clipping the words after "balance," Watson distorts my claim. What I actually wrote was not that technology will bring such a "balance" but that a "balance must be struck between a sufficiency of the means of life" and self-consciousness, complementarity, reciprocity, and so on. That is, technological development, far from "bringing" these features, must "strike a balance" with them!

The same misquoted passage from *The Ecology of Freedom* leads into discussion of the fact that material scarcity is not only the result of physically limiting conditions but is also "socially induced" and "may occur even when technical development seems to render material scarcity completely unwarranted. . . . A society that has enlarged the cultural goals of human life may generate material scarcity even when the technical

conditions exist for achieving outright superfluity in the means of life" (EF, p. 68, emphases added). Expressed in more general terms: technics is a necessary condition for progress, but it is not a sufficient one. Let emphasize quite strongly, as I have repeatedly argued, that without moral, intellectual, cultural, and, yes, spiritual progress, a rational society will be impossible to achieve.

In the same passage, I then went on to discuss the "fetishization of needs" that capitalism creates, and which a rational society would eliminate. That is, capitalism creates artificial needs by making people feel they must buy the most status-elevating motor vehicle or the fastest computer in the market.

Watson's distortion of my views cannot be written off as accidental; indeed, it is hard to believe that it is not cynically deliberate, leading me to conclude that he is a demagogue who regards his readers as gullible fools.

What is basic to my views is that the ecological crisis is more the result of the capitalist economy, with its grow-or-die imperatives, than of technology or "mass technics." Capitalist enterprise employs technologies to produce on a wide scale for the market, but in the end these technologies remain the instruments of capitalism, not its motor, amplifying the effects of a grow-or-die economy that is ruinous to the natural world. Yet as devastating as the effects of technology can be when driven to maximum use by capitalist imperatives, technologies on their own could not have provided the imperatives that produced the ecological damage we are now witnessing.

Nor do the technologies that capitalism drives to the point of wreaking ecological destruction need always be sophisticated industrial ones. The romantic heaths of Yorkshire that excite such wonder in travelers today were once covered by stately forests that were subsequently cut down to produce the charcoal that fueled the making of metals even before capitalist development in Britain got under way. European entrepreneurs in North America used mere axes, adzes, and hammers to clear forested land. A nearly Neolithic technology deforested much of Europe in the late Middle Ages, well in advance of the "megamachine" and the impacts Watson assigns to it.

To distinguish his own view of the relationship between technology, capitalism, and the rest of society from mine, Watson turns philosophical. He disparages my ostensibly simplistic ways of thinking in favor of his supposedly more dialectical mental processes. I am not at all sure what Watson thinks dialectics is; instead of standing on his own philosophical ground, he turns to John Clark for a quick philosophy lesson. Clark, whose philosophical insights I have always found to be less than trenchant, advises Watson that mere causal notions, presumably of the kind I advance concerning capitalism, are "uni-directional." Dialectics, he advises us, must instead be understood in the following terms: "If the [social] totality is taken as the whole of society, rather than the superstructure, and if reciprocity is extended to encompass all relations, including the economic ones, then this represents a model for a dialectical social theory in the full sense" (quoted in BB, p. 157; emphasis added). Put in less pompous language: We can identify no single cause as more compelling than others; rather, all possible factors are mutually determining.

This morass of "reciprocity," in which everything in the world is in a reciprocal relationship with everything else, is precisely what dialectical causality is not, unless we want to equate dialectics with chaos. Dialectics is a philosophy of development, not of mutually determining factors in some kind of static equilibrium. Although on some remote level, everything does affect everything else, some things are in fact very significantly more determining than others. Particularly in social and historical phenomena, some causes are major, while others are secondary and adventitious. Dialectical causality focuses on what is essential in producing change, on the underlying motivating factors, as distinguished from the incidental and auxiliary. In a forest ecocommunity, for example, all species may affect all others, however trivially, but some--the most numerous trees, for example--are far more prominent than the ferns at their base in determining the nature of that forest.

In Clark's befuddled understanding of dialectic, however, a potpourri of causes are so "interrelated" (a magic word in modern ecobabble) with one another that major and secondary causes are impossible to distinguish. Watson nonetheless accepts Clark's wild mix of "reciprocity" not only as serious thinking but as true dialectics and blandly incorporates it into his own position on technics. "It makes no sense," he sagaciously muses, "to layer the various elements of this process in a mechanistic [!] hierarchy of first [!] cause and secondary effects"--that is, to assign greater potency to either capitalism or even technology as generating the ecological crisis. "There is no simple or single etiology to this plague, but a synergy of vectors" (BB, p. 128).

Watson then goes on to offer us his version of a "synergy of vectors": the megamachine. This is a concept he borrows from Mumford, in which technics, economics, politics, the military, bureaucracy, ideology, and the like are all one giant monolithic "machine," all of them so closely interrelated as to be causally indistinguishable. In this universe etiology is indeed meaningless; everything is the "synergy of vectors" known as the megamachine.

Still, in some passages of BB, etiology sneaks back into Watson's rarefied dialectical cogitations: "Technology also forms a matrix," (BB, p. 125), he tells us, "by way of a synergistic tendency to reshape the pattern within which it emerged" (BB, p. 125). Not only do "technological relations" (whatever they may be) "shape human action"(BB, p. 120), but in some societies "technology has thoroughly shaped and redefined the social imaginary" (BB, p. 124).

Far from advancing a "synergy of vectors," in fact, Watson advances a very clear "etiology," with one very clear determining cause: technology. A decade and a half of Watson's writings show that he has been consistent (might one even say dogmatic?) on this score:

"The technological apparatus has transformed human relations entirely, recreating us in its image." (ATM, p.5)

"Technology is not a tool but an environment, a totality of means enclosing us in its automatism of need and production and the geometric runaway of its own development." (SDT, p. 11)



Our "form of social organization, an interconnection and stratification of tasks and authoritarian command" is "necessitated by the enormity and complexity of the modern technological system in all of its activities. (SDT, p. 11)

"The direction of governance flows from the technical conditions to people and their social arrangements, not the other way around. What we find, then, is not a tool waiting passively to be used but a technical ensemble that demands routinized behavior." (Winner quoted in SDT, p. 11)

MASS TECHNICS IS "A ONE-WAY BARRAGE OF  
MYSTIFICATION AND CONTROL." (SDT, P. 11)

"Mass technics have become . . . 'structures whose conditions of operation demand the restructuring of their environments.'" (Winner quoted in SIH, p. 10)

These quotations give "uni-directional" determinism a bad name. So habituated is Watson to making such all-encompassing statements that, even while he was writing BB, he sometimes forgot about Clarkean "dialectics." Technology, he writes, "bring[s] . . . about imperatives unanticipated by their creators, which is to say: technological means come with their own repertoire of ends" (BB, p. 120; the emphases here and in the next paragraphs are mine). "Technicization" is "now extinguishing vast skeins in the fabric of life" (BB, p. 126). The technological system "requires" people to operate within it (BB, p. 143). Technics makes "hierarchy, specialization, and stratified,

compartmentalized organizational structures . . . inescapable" (BB, p. 144).

A similar intellectually paralyzing reductionism is also reflected in passages Watson quotes from other authors. Jacques Ellul is trotted in to say that technology is establishing "a new totality" (BB, p. 144). Ivan Illich remarks on "the industrially determined shape of our expectations" (BB, p. 142). Langdon Winner observes that all tools "evoke a necessary reaction from the person using them" (BB, p. 126) and that "the technical ensemble demands routinized behavior" (144). And:

"Ultimately," [Winner] explains, "the steering is inherent in the functioning of socially organized technology itself," which is to say that the owners and bosses must steer at the controls their technology provides. As the monster says to Doctor Frankenstein, "You are my creator, but I am your master." (BB, p. 143)[15]

Not only does Watson single out technology as a determining cause, he explicitly regards capitalism as secondary, a mere expression of a supposed technological imperative. "Market capitalism," he writes, "has been everywhere the vehicle for a mass megatechnic civilization" (BB, p. 126). Accordingly, it is not simply "capitalist greed" that produces oil spills; "not only capitalist grow-or-die economic choices, but the very nature of the complex petrochemical grid itself makes disasters inevitable" (BB, p. 120).

I have often written that, because capitalism is still developing so rapidly, we cannot be sure what actually constitutes mature capitalism. Watson puts his own spin on my formulation and offers a redefinition of capitalism

that is so broad as it strip it of its specific features and submerge it to the megamachine altogether:

We need a larger definition of capitalism that encompasses not only market relations and the power of bourgeois and bureaucratic elites [!] but the very structure and content of mass technics, reductive rationality and the universe they establish; the social imaginaries of progress, growth, and efficiency; the growing power of the state; and the materialization, objectifications and quantification of nature, culture and human personality. (BB, p. 126)

So much is included within this "larger" definition of capitalism that capitalism in its specificity and in all its phases is completely lost. Elsewhere, in a quintessential example of his obscurantism, Watson tells us with finality: "Technology is capital" (ATM, p. 5).

Farewell to two centuries of political economy and debates over the nature of capitalism: over whether it is a social relation (Marx), machines and labor (Smith and Ricardo), a mere factor of production (neo-capitalist economists) or, most brilliantly, the teeth of a tiger (H. G. Wells)! Farewell to the class struggle! Farewell to an economics of social and class relations! When Watson slows down his dervishlike whirl and gives us a chance to examine his ecstatic spinning, we find that it leads to the elimination of the social question itself, as a century of socialist thought called it. Watson is now here to apprise us that the great conflict that has beleaguered history is not really workers and bosses, or between subjects and elites. Fools that we have been--it is between human beings and their machines! Machines are not the embodiment of alienated labor but in fact the

"social imaginary" that looms over them and control their lives! And all this time, Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin, et al. foolishly labored under the illusion that the social question stems from exploitation and domination, scarcity and toil.

If my conclusion seems overstated, then I would suggest that readers follow Watson himself down into his dark valley of technological absurdity. Approvingly quoting Langdon Winner, Watson enjoins us to practice "epistemological luddism" as a "method of inquiry" (BB, p. 132). To those who notice that these phrases are empty, Watson concedes that they are "inchoate and embryonic" (BB, p. 132)--so why present them? But only three paragraphs later, we learn that Watson's luddism is not merely "epistemological" or a "method of inquiry." Rather, it is a concrete agenda. We will require, he enjoins, "a careful negotiation with technics" and (approvingly quoting the mystic Theodore Roszak) "the selective reduction of industrialism" (BB, p. 133).

Roszak, at least, was sensible enough to speak of a selective reduction of industrialism. For Watson, however, selectivity all but disappears, and his "negotiated" dismantling of industry becomes nothing less than spectacular. "Let's begin dismantling the noxious structures," he has enjoined; "let's deconstruct the technological world" (BPA, p. 26). We have to "dismantle mass technics" (SIH, p. 11)--that is to say, all those "vectors" that make up the "megamachine" and civilization.

What is Watson's opening "negotiating" position? For the most part, in his other writings, he has long avoided naming which technologies he would keep and which he

would dispose of, even airily disparaging the question. But for one who wishes to "negotiate," the necessity for him to identify technologies he favors and disfavors should be self-evident. These other writings give us some idea of Watson's alternative to the cage of megamechanical civilization.

"Let's reforest and refarm the cities," he counsels; "no more building projects, giant hospitals, no more road repair" (BPA, p. 26). I may be simple-minded, but this seems to be a call to pull down cities and reduce them to forests and farmland. In the absence of cities and roads, Watson seems to want us to return to small-scale farming, "a clear context where small scale, the 'softness' of technics, labor-intensiveness, and technical limits all crucially matter" (BB, p. 138). Clearly tractors and the like will be excluded--they are clearly products of the megamachine. But I would hope Watson's brave new world will not be so extreme as to exclude the plow and horses--or are we being domineering if we put horses into harnesses?

"Stop the exponential growth of information, pull the plug on the communications system" (BPA, p. 26). We would thus have to eliminate computers and telecommunications; farewell, too, to telegraphs, radios, and telephones! It is just as well we do so, since Watson doesn't understand telephones: the work of telephone line workers, he says, is "a mystery" to him (BB, p. 146). So good riddance! He has also written that "the wheel is not an extension of the foot, but a simulation which destroys the original" (MCGV, p. 11, emphasis added). So away with the wheel! Away with everything that "simulates" feet! And who knows--away with the potter's wheel, which is a "simulation" of the hand!

As to energy sources, Watson really puts us in a pickle. He disapproves of "the elaborate energy system required to run" household appliances and other machines, since it renders people "dependent" (Christopher Lasch quoted in BB, p. 141). So--away with the mass generation of electricity, and every machine that runs on it! Needless to say, all fossil as well as nuclear fuels will have to go. Perhaps we could turn to renewable energy as an alternative--but no, Watson has also voiced his sovereign disapproval of "solar, wind and water technologies" as products of "an authoritarian and hierarchical division of labor" (NST, p. 4). All of this leaves us with little more than our own muscles to power our existence. Yes, "revolution will be a kind of return" (BB, p. 140), indeed!

To be sure, we will eliminate such noxious products of the megamachine as weapons, but if we also dispense with roads (clearly if we do not repair them, they will disappear), typewriters and computers (except the computer owned by Fifth Estate, presumably, for otherwise how will Watson's golden words reach the public?), any form of mechanical agriculture (which Watson seems to confuse with agribusiness), et cetera ad nauseam. The reader has only to walk through his or her home, look into each room, and peer into closets and medicine chests and kitchen cabinets, to see what would be surrendered in the kind of technological world that Watson would "negotiate" with industrialism.

Let it be noted, however, that a return to the economic conditions of twelfth-century Europe would hardly create a paradise. Somehow, even in the absence of advanced technology to generate them, oppressive social

relations still existed in this technological idyll. Somehow feudal hierarchies of the most oppressive kind (in no way modeled on ecclesiastical hierarchies, let alone "shaped" by technology) superimposed themselves. Somehow the peasant-serfs who were ruled and coerced by barons, counts, kings, and their bureaucratic and military minions failed to realize that they were free of the megamachine's oppressive impact. Yet they were so unecological as to drain Europe's mosquito-infested swamps and burn its forests to create meadows and open farmland. Happily spared the lethal effects of modern medicine, they usually died very early in life of famine, epidemic disease, and other lethal agents.

Given the demands of highly labor-intensive farming, what kind of free time, in the twelfth century, did small-scale farmers have? If history is any guide, it was a luxury they rarely enjoyed, even during the agriculturally dormant winters. During the months when farmers were not tilling the land and harvesting its produce, they struggled endlessly to make repairs, tend animals, perform domestic labor, and the like. And they had the wheel! It is doubtful that, under such circumstances, much time would have been left over for community meetings, let alone the creation of art and poetry.

Doubtless they sowed, reaped, and did their work joyously, as I pointed out in *The Ecology of Freedom*. The workman's song--proletarian, peasant, and artisan--expresses the joy of self-expression through work. But this does not mean that work, bereft of machinery, is an unadulterated blessing or that it is not exhausting or monotonous. There is a compelling word for arduous labor: toil! Without an electric grid to turn night into day,

active life is confined to daylight hours, apart from what little illumination can be provided by candles. (Dare I introduce such petroleum derivatives as kerosene?) It is one of the great advances of the modern world that the most arduous and monotonous labor can often be performed entirely by machines, potentially leaving human beings free to engage in many different tasks and artistic activities, such as those Charles Fourier described for his utopian phalansteries.

But as soon as I assign to technology the role of producing a society free of want and toil, Watson takes up the old dogmatic saw and condemns it to perdition as "the familiar marxist version" (BB, p. 129). Watson may enjoy appealing to unthinking political reflexes that date back to the Marx-Bakunin battles of the First International, but the merit of an idea interests me more than its author. Instead of directly addressing the problem of scarcity and toil in any way, however, Watson settles the issue, at least in his own mind, by quoting his guru, Lewis Mumford: "The notion that automation gives any guarantee of human liberation is a piece of wishful thinking" (quoted in BB, p. 130)--as though a technological advance in itself were a "guarantee" of anything under capitalism, apart from more exploitation and destruction. (It is astonishing that one has to explain this concept to a former Trotskyite like Watson, who should have some knowledge of Marx's ideas.)

Alas, Mumford does not serve him well. In *The Pentagon of Power* (the same work from which Watson quotes), Mumford himself actually gives what Watson would be obliged to dismiss as "the familiar marxist



version." Mumford notes, first quoting from an unattributed source:

"The negative institutions . . . would never have endured so long but for the fact that their positive goods, even though they were arrogated to the use of the dominant minority, were ultimately at the service of the whole community, and tended to produce a universal society of far higher potentialities, by reason of its size and diversity." If that observation held true at the beginning, it remains even more true today, now that this remarkable technology has spread over the whole planet. The only way effectively to overcome the power system is to transfer its more helpful agents to an organic complex.[16]

Elsewhere in the same book, speaking of "the decrepit institutional complex one can trace back at least to the Pyramid age," Mumford says that "what modern technology has done is . . . rehabilitate it, perfect it, and give it a global distribution." Then, more significantly: "The potential benefits of this system, under more humane direction" are "immense." Indeed, elsewhere he speaks of "our genuine technological advances." [17] Now what does Watson have to say about that?

How should the technological level of a free society be determined? Watson's thoughts on this question are such as to render his libertarian views on technics and human needs more authoritarian than is immediately evident. Suppose, for example, that nonindustrialized and even tribal people actually want not only wheels, roads, and electric grids, but even the material goods, such as computers and effective medications, that people in industrialized countries enjoy--not least of all, Watson

himself and the Fifth Estate collective. I have argued in *The Ecology of Freedom* that no one, particularly in a consumption-oriented country such as the United States, has any right to bar nonindustrialized societies from choosing the way of life they wish. I would hope that they would make their choices with full awareness of the ecological and even psychological consequences of consumption as an end in itself, which have been amply demonstrated for them by the course of developed nations; and I would engage in a concerted effort to persuade all peoples of the world to live according to sound ecological standards. But it would be their indubitable right to acquire what they believe they need, without anyone else dictating what they should or should not acquire.

Not only is my proposal intolerable in Watson's eyes, he cannot even paraphrase it correctly. He must distort it in order to make it seem ridiculous: "What are we to make of the proposal to develop mass technics and a combination consumer-producer utopia [!] in order to reject them?" (BB, p. 107). The implication of this distortion is, I believe, that poor societies must develop capitalism and technology in order to know the consequences of doing so, irrespective of the fact that the consequences of doing so are quite clear and the information is widely available, not least of all because of communications technology.

For Watson, however, the ecological crisis to be too urgent to wait for a policy as slow as mine. "Neither ecological wisdom nor the health of the planet can wait for this grotesque overindulgence [that I supposedly advocate] to have its curative effect," he firmly declares (BB, p. 108). How, then, would our lifestyle anarchist

handle this very real problem himself? He doesn't tell us, but he does call on people in the industrialized countries to seek "a new relationship to the phenomenal world--something akin to what [Marshall] Sahlins calls 'a Zen road to affluence, departing from premises somewhat different from our own'" (BB, p. 108). May I suggest that this is dodging the issue? If the urgency of resolving the ecological crisis is the paramount factor, Watson's own solution would seem rather inadequate as well, requiring as it does an ethereal spiritual revolution on the basis of one-by-one conversion. Nor is such an approach likely to succeed, any more than Christianity succeeded in creating a loving, self-sacrificing, and all-forgiving world in two thousand years of one-by-one conversions--and the Church, at least, promised pie in the sky (as the old IWW song has it) in the next world if not in this one.

As for people in the industrial-capitalist world, Watson, who has tried to prejudice his readers against my views as "marxist," "authoritarian," and "dogmatic," suddenly mutates into an ideological despot in his own right. He finds it inconceivable that people could actually make conscious decisions about the use of technology, still less place moral constraints upon it. Quite to contrary, inasmuch as, in his view, technology governs people rather than the other way around, we can scarcely hope to spring the trap and decide for ourselves. Watson ridicules the notion that "a moral society . . . could sit down and decide how to 'use'" a technology (bioengineering is cited here) "without catastrophic results" (BB, p. 125). He arrogantly forecloses democratic decision-making by ordinary people on the proper use of advanced technologies, because open civic discussions would "inevitably" result in "compliance with the opinion of experts" and "would of necessity

bebased on persuasion and faith" (BB, pp. 146-47, emphasis added). Lest we have any doubt that Watson means what he says, he reiterates the same disdainful view: "It's ludicrous [!] to think that citizen assemblies could make informed decisions about chemical engineering strategies, communications grids, and complicated technical apparatus" (BB, p. 180).

One may modestly ask: why should this be "ludicrous"? Expert knowledge is by no means necessary to make general decisions about the uses of technology: a reasonable level of ordinary competence on the part of citizens is usually quite adequate. In fact, today legislators at the local, state, and national levels make such decisions every day, and ordinary people can clearly do the same. Watson's argument that such decisions are beyond the ken of ordinary people is (possibly unknown to him) precisely the argument that Lenin advanced in 1918 against workers' control of factories (which, of course, Watson would abandon wholesale) and in favor of one-man management (to use Bolshevik terminology). Does our poetic lifestyler really have so little faith in the competence of ordinary people? Doubtless workers, technicians, and farmers need someone with higher wisdom--perhaps Watson himself--to specify their appropriate level of technology for them?

Actually, Watson seems to be suffering from a memory lapse. Somewhat later in his book he gives us the very opposite message, notably that "people have the capacity, in fact the duty to make rational and ethical choices about technics" (BB, p. 203). How, then, will they avoid all the "inevitable" and "necessary" obstacles that Watson himself earlier raised? One gets the distinct impression that, no matter what specific issue us under

discussion, if I say yea, Watson is certain to say nay--even if it means he must reverse himself on a later occasion.

## PRIMITIVISM

There is nothing new about the romanticization of tribal peoples. Two centuries ago, denizens of Paris, from Enlighteners such as Denis Diderot to reactionaries like Marie Antoinette, created a cult of "primitivism" that saw tribal people as morally superior to members of European society, who presumably were corrupted by the vices of civilization. This romanticization later infected not only the early nineteenth-century Romantics but thinkers so disparate as Marx and Engels, Jacob Bachofen and Lewis Morgan. These and others who wistfully thought that humanity had exiled itself from a benign, "matriarchal," caring, and cooperative world to a civilization filled with immoral and egoistic horrors.

The more urbanized and suburbanized bourgeois culture of the 1960s was far from immune to this trend. During the 1960s anthropologists celebrated the "noble savage" in his or her pristine paradise, which more than ever seemed like a refuge, however imaginary, for jaded urban (and suburban) dwellers of the industrial capitalist world. Inhabitants of American cities and suburbs, from San Francisco to New York, were completely enchanted by myths of primal naiveté, particularly members of the youth culture, which stressed the virtues of innocence and passivity and harbored a basic sympathy for "noble savage" anthropology.

This anthropology, contrary to less sanguine views of primitive lifeways, argued that foraging peoples were compelled to work at hunting and food-gathering for only a few hours each day. Wrote anthropologists Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore:

Even some of the "marginal" hunters studied by ethnographers actually work short hours and exploit abundant food sources. Several hunting peoples lived well on two to four hours of subsistence effort per day and were not observed to undergo the periodic crises that have been commonly attributed to hunters in general. . . . [Some ethnographers] speculate whether lack of "future orientation" brought happiness to the members of hunting societies, an idyllic attitude that faded when changing subsistence patterns forced men to amass food surpluses to bank against future shortages.[18]

It was most notably Marshall Sahlins who argued that aborigines lived in an "affluent society."

By common understanding an affluent society is one in which all the people's wants are easily satisfied; and though we are pleased to consider this happy condition the unique achievement of industrial civilization, a better case can be made for hunters and gatherers. . . . For wants are "easily satisfied," either by producing much or desiring little. . . . A fair case can be made, that hunters often work much less than we do, and rather than a grind the food quest is intermittent, leisure is abundant, and there is more sleep in the daytime per capita than in any other conditions of society.[19]

During the late 1960s and 1970s I myself shared an excessive enthusiasm for certain aspects of aboriginal

and organic societies, and in *The Ecology of Freedom* and other writings of those years I gave an overly rosy discussion of them and speculated optimistically about aboriginal subjectivity. I never accepted the preposterous theory of an "original affluent society," but I waxed far too enthusiastic about primitive attitudes toward the natural world and their compassionate outlook. I even maintained that the animistic qualities of aboriginal subjectivity were something that Westerners could benefit from emulating.

I later came to realize that I was wrong in many of these respects. Aboriginal peoples could have no attitude toward the natural world because, being immersed in it, they had no concept of its uniqueness. It is true that individual tribes had considerable compassion for their own members, but their attitudes toward nontribal members were often indifferent or hostile. As to animism, in retrospect, I regard any belief in the supernatural as regressive. As I discussed in detail in *Re-Enchanting Humanity* (pp. 120-47), much that passes for pristine "primitivism" is based on fictions, and what can be authenticated from the paleontological record is not as benign as some 1960s-oriented anthropologists would have us believe. Aboriginal societies were hardly free from such material insecurities as shortages of game animals, diseases, drudgery, chronic warfare, and even genocidal acts against communities that occupied coveted land and resources. Such a prevalence of premature death, given their level of social and technological development, bears comparison with some of Western civilization's worst features.

Having been too gullible about "organic society" in *The Ecology of Freedom*, I was at pains to criticize my own

work on this score when the book was republished in 1992. At that time I wrote a lengthy new introduction in which I distanced myself from many of the views expressed in the first edition of the book.[20] It was not my intention, however, nor is it now, to disparage aboriginal societies. Quite to the contrary, I still stand by the core issues in these societies that I identified in *The Ecology of Freedom* as sources of valuable lessons for our own time. In the best of cases organic societies organized their economic and cultural lives according to a principle of usufruct, with a system of distribution based on an "irreducible minimum" (a phrase I borrowed from Paul Radin), as well as an ethic of complementarity, for all members of the community, regardless of their productive contribution.

Not only does Watson ignore my criticism of my own earlier position, he himself advances a primitive romanticism whose rosy scenarios by far surpass anything I wrote in my book. He serves up all the 1960s myths, indeed, all the puerile rubbish, about aboriginal lifeways of that time--not only Sahlins's "original affluence" economics but the most absurd elements of animistic spirituality. Primitivity, for this man, is essentially a world of dancing, singing, celebrating, and dreaming. The subjectivity that I came to reject is precisely what Watson still extols: primitive people, in his version, seem to be all mystics at some countercultural "be-in." In fact, they seem to be free of most human features, as if they were festive "imaginaries" that stepped out of a psychedelic mural. That they also do such mundane human things as acquire food, produce garments, make tools, build shelters, defend themselves, attack other communities, and the like, falls completely outside the vision of our Detroit



poet. In fact, although tribal society is extremely custom-bound, straitjacketed by taboos and imperative rules of behavior, Watson nonetheless decides, gushingly, that even when aborigines are "living under some of the harshest, most commanding conditions on earth"--no less!--they "can nevertheless do what they like when the notion occurs to them" (BB, p. 240).[21] One can only gasp: Really!

In SALA, while I was arguing against the primitivism of lifestyle anarchists like Watson, I summarized my criticisms of aboriginal society, calling into question the theory of an "original affluence" as well as the idea of a "noble savage." Yet even as I criticized the romanticization of primitive lifeways, I was careful to qualify my remarks: "There is very much we can learn from preliterate cultures . . . their practices of usufruct and the inequality of equals are of great relevance to an ecological society" (SALA, p. 41).

This reservation is entirely lost on our arch-romanticizer, for just as Watson glorifies aboriginals beyond recognition, he now portrays me, beyond recognition, as hostile to aboriginal peoples altogether. Bookchin "no longer seems to have anything good to say about early societies" (BB, p. 204), he declares with finality. He even pulls off the old Maoist and Trotskyist stunt of asking, not whether my observations are true or not, but whose interests they serve. In my case, since I fail to romanticize primitive peoples according to Watson's prescription, I clearly aid and abet the bourgeois-imperialist destroyers of primal cultures: "Bookchin's social ecology," he huffs, shares "the assumptions of bourgeois political economy itself" (BB, p. 215). I encountered this level of argumentation some fifty years

ago, and whoever can be persuaded by these contemptible methods is welcome to share Watson's polemical world.

Like other primitivists in the lifestyle zoo, Watson argues for the sustainability of primitive lifeways by maintaining that in the history of humanity, hunting-gathering societies existed far longer than the societies that followed the rise of written history. He recycles Lee and DeVore's claim that "for ninety-nine percent of human existence [by which Lee and DeVore meant two million years] people have lived in the 'fairly loose systems of bonding' of bands and tribes" (BB, p. 30). It is worth noting that two million years ago, modern-type humans--*Homo sapiens sapiens*--with their enlarged mental capacities and hunting-gathering lifeways, had not yet emerged on the evolutionary tree. The hominids that populated the African savannahs were *Australopithecines* and *Homo habilis*, who most likely were not hunter-gatherers at all but scavengers who lived on game killed by larger carnivores. Like all hominids and members of the genus *Homo* (including Neanderthals), they probably lacked the anatomical equipment for syllabic speech (a feature that some primitivists, to be sure, would see more as an advantage than as a deprivation).

The earliest proto-*Homo sapiens sapiens* did not appear in Africa until only 200,000 to 150,000 years ago. And even then they did not forage in an organized fashion such as Watson envisions: as Robert Lewin has noted, "recent archeological analysis indicates that true hunting and gathering--as characterized by division of labor, food sharing, and central placeforaging--is a rather recently emerged behavior," dating from the retreat of

the last Ice Age, beginning only some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.[22] The origins of civilization in the Near East date back to approximately 10,000 to 8,000 years ago. If we calculate using the earliest date that Lewin suggests for the rise of hunting and gathering--15,000 years ago--we must conclude that civilization has occupied at least half--or perhaps a third--of our species's cultural history.

In any case, what difference does it make if human beings lived as hunter-gatherers for one percent of their existence or fifty? Such a level of discussion is juvenile. The fact remains that, although it took a long time for our species to advance beyond the level of Australopithecine scavengers on the veldt, they evolved culturally with dazzling rapidity over the past 20,000 years.

Almost invariably, discussions of an "original affluence" enjoyed by hunting and foraging peoples focus on the San people of the Kalahari desert, especially the !Kung "Bushmen," who, until very recently, it was frequently assumed, were living in a pristine state that reflected the lifeways of prehistoric foragers. The studies that are most commonly invoked to support the "affluence" thesis are those generated by anthropologist Richard B. Lee. Writing in the 1960s, Lee noted that it took the !Kung only a few days in a week to acquire all the food they needed for their well-being, ostensibly proving that affluence or, more precisely, free time is one of the great rewards of primitivity. (I may add that by this standard, anyone who chooses to live in a shack, bereft of a sophisticated culture, could be said to be affluent. If this is affluence, then the Unabomber Ted Kaczynski was a wealthy man indeed.)

In recent years, however, strong doubts have arisen that the !Kung were quite as affluent as 1960s anthropologists made them out to be. As anthropologist Thomas Headland summarizes the current research, "The lives of the !Kung are far from idyllic. An average lifespan of thirty years, high infant mortality, marked loss of body weight during the lean season--these are not the hallmarks of an edenic existence." Moreover:

Data testifying to the harsher side of !Kung life have steadily accumulated. Lee himself has acknowledged shortcomings of his 1964 input-output study. For one thing, his calculations of the amount of work the !Kung devoted to subsistence ignored the time spent in preparing food, which turned out to be substantial. Other researchers established that even though the Dobe !Kung may have appeared well nourished when Lee encountered them, at other times they suffered from hunger and disease. Meanwhile, the theoretical underpinnings of the original-affluence model collapsed. It became clear that while many tribal groups were adapted to their environment at the population level, existence was often harsh for individuals in those groups.[23]

Even in Elizabeth Marshall Thomas's narrative of their culture, *The Harmless People*, the !Kung encounter very harsh situations; her own descriptions of them contradict her enthusiasm for their way of life. In *SALA*, drawing on the work of Edwin Wilmsen, I noted that the lives of the San were actually quite short, that they do go hungry at times, especially during lean seasons, and that they lived in the Kalahari not because it was their habitat of choice from time immemorial but because they had been

driven into the desert from their erstwhile agricultural lands by more powerful invaders who coveted their original territory.

Moreover, I wrote, "Richard Lee's own data on the caloric intake of 'affluent' foragers have been significantly challenged by Wilmsen and his associates. . . . Lee himself has revised his views on this score since the 1960s" (SALA, pp. 45-46). Watson's reply to these observations is worth noting: he telephoned Lee himself to query him on this point.

He replied that he modified his findings on caloric intake very slightly in the late 1970s--"no more than five percent either way"--but that Bookchin's claim was otherwise spurious. "I stand by my figures," he said. (BB, p. 209).

Note well that the change in Lee's work took place between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s, not since the late 1970s. (Watson might have understood this had he read the page in Wilmsen that I cited in my note 32 in SALA.) In fact, in his 1979 book *The !Kung San*, Lee dispelled the excessively rosy image he gave of the San in the 1960s by giving evidence of malnutrition among the "affluent" Zhu (a San-speaking people). Adult Zhu, he wrote, "are small by world standards and . . . this smallness probably indicates some degree of undernutrition in childhood and adolescence." When Zhu individuals are raised "on cattle posts on an essentially Bantu diet of milk and grains," he acknowledged, they "grow significantly taller" than foraging Zhu.[24]

Moreover, in the same book, Lee provided us with evidence that these foragers experience severe hardship:

"We admire the !Kung from afar, but when we are brought into closer contact with their daily concerns, we are alternately moved to pity by their tales of hardship and repelled by their nagging demands for gifts, demands that grow more insistent the more we give." [25]

In fact, even during the 1960s, Lee's image of the "affluence" enjoyed by the San was already marred by significant indications of hunger. During the lean months of the year, he noted in 1965, the Zhu "must resort to increasingly arduous tactics in order to maintain a good diet. . . . it is during the three lean months of the year that Bushman life approaches the precarious conditions that have come to be associated with the hunting and gathering way of life." [26] Finally, Lee has greatly revised the length of the workweek he formerly attributed to the Zhu; the average workweek for both sexes, he wrote in 1979, is not eighteen but 42.3 hours. [27] Irven DeVore, the Harvard anthropologist who shared Lee's conclusions on the Bushmen in the 1960s and 1970s, has observed: "We were being a bit romantic. . . . Our assumptions and interpretations were much too simple." [28]

Not even Watson can deny that foraging societies experienced hunger, although it contradicts his own image of "original affluence": he acknowledges that hunter-gatherer societies "periodically suffered" (BB, p. 110). [29] But his justification for their suffering is astonishingly callous. In societies such as our own, he points out, only some sectors of the population starve during times of hunger. But "during tough times in most aboriginal societies," he writes with amazing sang-froid, "generally, everyone starves or no one does" (BB, p. 94). Indeed, "even when primal people starve, 'the whole

group as a positive cohesive unit is involved. In consequence, there is generally no disorganization or disintegration either of individual or of the group as such, in stark contrast with the civilized" (BB, p. 95). They all starve to death--and that is that! Are we expected to admire a situation where "everyone starves" because they do so in an organized fashion? Allow me to suggest that this anything but a consolation. Scarcity conditions--conditions of generalized want and hunger--that could result in famine are precisely those that, historically speaking, have led to competition for scarce goods and eventually the formation of class and hierarchical societies. Far more desirable to develop the productive technologies sufficiently to avoid famine altogether! If such technologies were sufficiently developed, then put to use ethically and rationally in a libertarian communist society, everyone could be freed from material uncertainty. This condition of postscarcity would give us the preconditions for one day achieving a truly egalitarian, free, and culturally fulfilling social order. It might be supposed that, in weighing these two alternatives--scarcity, with the possibility of a community's entire extinction, against postscarcity, with the potentiality to satisfy all basic human needs--Watson might choose the latter prospect over the former. But far be it from Watson to agree with anything Bookchin has to say! Watson, it seems, would prefer that "everyone starve" together rather than that they have sufficient means to enjoy well-being together. So cavalier is his attitude about human life, that when I object to it, he reproaches me for being "utterly affronted by affirmative references to death as part of the ecological cycle" (BB, p. 114). As a humanist, allow me to state categorically that I am indeed "utterly affronted" by such references, and by Watson's blatant callousness.

It is this kind of stuff that brings him precariously close to the thesis of his erstwhile antihero, Thomas Malthus (in HDDE), namely that mass death would result from population growth, whose geometric increase would far outstrip a merely arithmetically increasing food supply. Indeed, it was precisely the productivity of machines that showed thinking people that the Malthusian cycle was a fallacy. Yes--better machines than death, in my view, and Watson is welcome to criticize me for it all he likes! If Watson is callous toward the objective aspects of primitivism, his attitude toward its subjective aspects, as I have noted, resembles the vagaries of a flower child. An essential feature is his belief that the mental outlooks of aboriginal peoples can override the material factors that might otherwise alter their lifeways. "Most, if not all, aboriginal peoples practiced careful limits on their subsistence activities," he tells us, "deliberately underproducing, expressing gratitude and consideration in their relations with plants and prey" (BB, p. 52).[30] Moreover, "Primal society . . . refused power, refused property" (CIB, p. 11). In effect, for Watson, social development was a matter of conscious selection, choice, and even lifestyle, as though objective realities played no role in shaping of social relations. In SALA I tried to correct this romantic, idealist, and frankly naive view by pointing out that among most tribal peoples--indeed, among most peoples generally--not only economic life but even much of spirituality is oriented toward obtaining the means of life. "With due regard for their own material interests--their survival and well-being," I wrote, "prehistoric peoples seem to have hunted down as much game as they could, and if they imaginatively peopled the animal world with anthropomorphic attributes, . . . it would have been to communicate with it with an end toward manipulating it, not simply toward



revering it" (SALA, p. 41). Not only does Watson take issue with this statement as economic, he rejects any economic motivations in aboriginal society: "Economic motivation," he declares, "is the motive within class societies, not aboriginal communities" (BB, p. 63). Presumably people whose societies are structured around dancing, singing, and dreaming are immune to the problems--social as well as material--of acquiring and preparing food, fending off predators, building shelter, and the like. Where I present contradictory evidence--such as the many cases of foragers "stampeding game animals over cliffs or into natural enclosures where they could be easily slaughtered," or "sites that suggest mass killings and 'assembly-line' butchering in a number of American arroyos," or the Native American use of fire to clear land, or the likelihood of Paleoindian overkills of large mammals (SALA, p. 42)--he maintains a prudent silence. In fact, the demanding endeavor to gather the means for supporting everyday life may well be the major preoccupation of aboriginal peoples, as many of their myths and cosmic dramas reveal to anyone who examines them without romantic awe. At some point, clearly, primal peoples in prehistoric Europe and the Near East stopped "refusing" power and property, and from their "loosely knit" band and tribal societies, systems of domination developed--hierarchies, classes, and states--as part of civilization itself. Why this happened is by no means an academic question; nor is the approach we take to understanding the processes of social change a matter of trivial concern. Social changes, both major and minor, do not come about solely as a result of choice or volition. Even in inspired moments, when people believe they are creating an entirely new world, their course of action, indeed their thinking, is profoundly influenced by the very history from which

they think they are breaking away. To understand the processes by which the new develops from the old, we must closely examine the conditions under which human beings are constrained to work and the various problems with which they must contend with at particular moments in history--in short, the inner dialectic of social development. We must look at the factors that cause apparently stable societies to slowly decompose, giving rise to the new ones that were "chosen" within the limitations of material and cultural conditions. I followed this approach in *The Ecology of Freedom*, for example, when I examined the nature and causes of the rise of hierarchy. There I tried to show that hierarchy emerged from within the limitations and problems faced by primal societies. I made no pretense that my presentation constituted the last word on this problem; indeed, my most important goal was to highlight the importance of trying to understanding hierarchical development, to show its dialectic and the problems it posed. Watson not only dismisses this vitally important issue but arrogantly rejects any endeavor to look into "the primordial community to find the early embryonic structure that transformed organic society into class society" (BB, p. 97). Needless to say, he claims that I fail to understand power in aboriginal societies, "where the so-called chief is usually a spokesman and a go-between" (BB, p. 98). This was probably true at one time in the early development of chiefdoms, but it is evidence of Watson's static, absolutist mentality that he fails to see that many chiefdoms gradually and sometimes even precipitously transformed themselves, so that chiefs became petty despots and even monarchs long before there were "megamachines" and major technological advances. Watson's reckless farrago of obfuscation merely beclouds his own ignorance. The fact is that he himself

simply cannot answer the question of how social development occurs. Although the pages of BB are bereft of an explanation for the origin of domination, in an earlier work he once brightly suggested: "Somehow [!] . . . the primal world unravel[ed] as the institutions of kingship and class society emerged. How it happened remains unclear to us today" (CIB, p. 10). I hate to think how desiccated social theory would become if all its thinkers exhibited the same paucity of curiosity and speculative verve that this off-handed remark reveals. Instead of making any attempt to account for social evolution, Watson merely times the passage of millennia of hominid and human evolution with his stopwatch ("ninety-nine percent"), as though timing were more important than examining the causes ("which remain unclear for us today") that impelled hominids and humans to make those major decisions that eventually removed them from their simple lifeways and landed them in the complex coils of the "megamachine." If we ever do arrive at the "revolution [that] will be a kind of return" (BB, p. 154), then with Watson to guide us, and lacking any understanding of the processes of change, then we will have little or nothing to prevent our new society from once again, during the next historical cycle, recapitulating the rise of hierarchical and class society. If there is one thing on which everyone--Watson, the anthropologists, and myself--agrees, it is that among foraging peoples today, their subjectivity has failed to prevent either the invasion of commodities from the industrialized world or its colonization of material life. But it is worth asking how much deliberate resistance tribal societies have put up against this invasion. For their part, the !Kung, the flagship culture of "original affluence" theorists, seen to be greatly attracted to modern "goodies." As John E. Yellen, to cite only one of

several accounts, found when he visited Dobe in the mid-1970s, !Kung were planting fields and wearing mass-produced clothing; indeed, they had given up their traditional grass huts for "more substantial mud-walled structures." Significantly, their hearths, which had formerly been located in the front of their huts--where they were "central to much social interaction"--were now located away from the community center, and the huts themselves, once spaced close together, were now farther apart.[31] Moreover, the acquisition of commodities has now become of major importance. Where once, as Lee put it, the charge of "stinginess" was one of "the most serious accusations one !Kung [could] level against another,"[32] commodities are now shamelessly hoarded: With their newfound cash [the !Kung] had also purchased such goods as glass beads, clothing and extra blankets, which they hoarded in metal trunks (often locked) in their huts. Many times the items far exceeded the needs of an individual family and could best be viewed as a form of savings or investment. In other words, the !Kung were behaving in ways that were clearly antithetical to the traditional sharing system. Yet the people still spoke of the need to share and were embarrassed to open their trunks for [the anthropologist]. Clearly, their stated values no longer directed their activity.[33] It must be supposed that the !Kung think so little of their "original affluence" that, even in the decades since the 1960s, many of them have discarded primitive lifeways for the amenities of the "megamachine" and exhibit an eagerness to obtain more than they already have. It may also be that the bourgeois commodity has an enormous capacity to invade primitive economies and undermine them disastrously--Watson's certainties to the contrary notwithstanding.

Reason and Irrationalism As a man whose vision is turned to the past--whether it be the technology of the Middle Ages, or the sensibility of the Paleolithic or Neolithic--it should come no a surprise that Watson favors the more primal imperatives of intuition over intellectual reflection and has very little to say about rationality that is favorable. In this respect, he is nothing if not trendy: the current explosion of interest in irrational charlatans--psychics, diviners, mystics, shamans, priestesses, astrologers, angelologers, demonologers, extraterrestrials, et cetera ad nauseam--is massive. Humorless though I may be--as Watson tells his readers, on the authority of someone who "knows" me "intimately" (surely not John Clark!) (BB, p. 39)--I would regard this irrationalism as laughable, were it not integral to his anarchism and to his gross misrepresentation of my own views.

I have long been a critic of mythopoesis, spiritualism, and religion. Yet as the author of "Desire and Need" and *The Ecology of Freedom*, I have also fervently celebrated the importance of imagination and the creative role of desire. My writings on reason contain numerous critiques of conventional or analytic (commonly known as instrumental) reason, important as it is in everyday life and experience. I have long maintained that the analytical forms of scientific rationality leave much to be desired for understanding developmental phenomena, such as biological evolution and human social history. These fields are better comprehended, I have argued, by dialectical reason, whose study, practice, and advocacy have been my greater interest. Dialectic is the rationality of developmental processes, of phenomena that self-elaborate into diverse forms and complex interactions--in

short, a secular form of reason that explores how reality, despite its multiplicity, unfolds into articulated, interactive, and shared relationships. It provides a secular and naturalistic basis for bold speculation, for looking beyond the given reality to what "should be," based on the actualization of rationally unfolding potentialities--and, if you please, for formulating utopian visions of a society informed by art, ecology, cooperation, and solidarity. I have devoted a volume of essays, *The Philosophy of Social Ecology*, to elucidations of the limits of analytic reason and the importance of dialectic. Thus, in reading BB, I was shocked to find that Watson, descending to the depths of demagoguery, writes not only that I am a promoter of "reified hyper-rationality and scientism" (BB, p. 45) but that I "adhere to repressive reason" (BB, p. 68)--no less! Coming from a philosophical naif such as Watson, this distortion could well be attributed to the kind of arrogance that often accompanies fatuity. But Watson does not restrict his attack to me; rather, he proceeds to mount an attack upon the validity of reason itself by attacking its very foundations. "Discursive reason and rational analyses," we learn, are merely "dependent on intuition" (BB, p. 59), while an underlying kind of knowing is somehow more profound: "the 'sage-knowledge' or 'no-knowledge' of Zen and Taoism, for example, which passes beyond the 'distinction between things' to the 'silence that remains in the undifferentiated whole'" (R.G.H. Siu quoted in BB, p. 60). It is possible to dismiss this ineffable wordplay as nonsense; an assertion of the significance of insignificance, for instance, would make more sense than this passage, leaving the reader no wiser about the nature of reality. What is more important, however, is the sheer arbitrariness and reductionism of Watson's nonmethodology. Having brought us into a

black hole of "no-knowledge," Watson is free to say anything he wants without ever exposing it to the challenge of reason or experience. As Paul Feyerabend once wrote: "Anything goes!" With this approach, Watson is at liberty to freight his readers with nonhistorical histories, nontheoretical theories, and irrational rationalities.[34] Indeed, the lifelines provided by rationality and science that anchor us to reality and the natural world itself come unmoored as Watson proceeds with his exposition. Complaining that "social ecology demands explanation," he argues that "nothing, not even science or social ecology, explains anything definitively. All explanations are matters of credibility and persuasion, just as all thinking is fundamentally metaphorical" (BB, p. 50). Neither Nietzsche nor the postmodernists who currently follow in his wake can have formulated a more disastrous notion, fulfilling precisely my analysis in SALA. Even science, we learn, has not given us knowledge: to my colleague Janet Biehl's observation that "we [knowledgeable human beings] do know more about the workings of nature than was the case with earlier societies," Watson brightly responds, "Even scientists don't seem to agree on . . . the definition of what is alive"(BB, p. 58), which is supposed to indicate that science can't tell us much of anything at all. Yet eight pages earlier Watson noted with sparkling originality, "This doesn't mean that scientific reasoning can't help us to know or explain anything, only that there are other ways of knowing" (BB, p. 50)--a point I emphasized years ago in *The Ecology of Freedom* (pp. 283-86). As to science (more properly, the sciences, since the notion of a Science that has only one method and approach is fallacious): it (or they) do not claim to "explain anything definitively," merely to offer the best and most rational explanations

(dare I use this word?) for phenomena based on the best available objective data--explanations that are subject, happily, to change, when better data come to light, rather than to Watsonian "no-knowledge." If Biehl and I object to the "extrarational and irrational facets of the human personality" (BB, p. 22) and "judg[e] extrarational modes of thought worthless" (Biehl quoted in BB, p. 49), it is not these faculties in themselves that we criticize but the employment of them in arenas for which they are not suited. For gaining an understanding of the natural and social worlds, emotions and intuitions (they are by no means the same thing) are both worse than useless, while for general communal endeavors like politics, they can even be positively harmful, as the irrationalistic messages of fascism indicate. But neither Biehl or I ever condemned them as inappropriate for the emotional dimensions of human life, such as friendships and families, aesthetics and play. In fact, I defy my irrationalist critics to show me a single quotation from my work in which I disdain the use of metaphor or mythopoesis for creating poetry and works of art. By trundling out my objections to their misuse in political and social matters, Watson cannily creates the illusion that I am hostile to them altogether, in all arenas of life. The subject-matter of my own work--indeed, the subject-matter that Watson seems to be debating with me--is neither psychology nor the processes of artistic creation but politics, an endeavor to understand the social world and, in community, to exert conscious choice over forms of social relations. This endeavor demands an entirely different category of subjective processes from those demanded by artistic creation. In common with science, rationality (as it is commonly understood) emphatically seeks explanations whose truth is confirmed by observation and logical consistency, including



speculation. That this requirement is not always enough to arrive at truth does not mean that rationality should be abandoned in favor of the metaphors, psychobabble, and "no-knowledge" precepts that spew from Watson's heated imagination. Few things have greater potential for authoritarianism, in my view, than the guru whose vagaries stake out a claim to truth that is beyond logical and experiential scrutiny.[35] The nightmarish consequences of irrationalism, from Cossack pogroms to the killing fields of Cambodia, from endless religious wars to the genocides of Hitler and Stalin, from Klan lynchings to the Jonestown mass suicide, are the fruits of mythopoesis at their demonic worst when it is adopted as a guide to political and social affairs, just as the works of Shelley and Joyce are among the fruits of mythopoesis at its best in artistic affairs. In the arts mythopoesis is a way to sharpen and deepen human sensibility; but in politics--a realm where people and classes struggle with each other for power and the realization of their most important communal hopes, and the force field of tension between the dominated and their dominators--mythopoesis, as a substitute for rational inquiry, often becomes demonic, appealing to the lowest common denominator of impulse and instinct in the individuals in a community. Impulses and instincts, while very commonplace, cannot guide us to the achievement of a better and more humane world; indeed, the use of myth in politics is an invitation to disaster. Watson's rejoinder is to argue that reason, too, has contributed to the slaughterbench of history: "Plenty of blood has flowed, incited by . . . 'hallowed' dialectical reason . . . as Comrade Bookchin knows" (BB, p. 46), further contending, "It's hard to say whether fascist irrationality or marxist rationality killed more people. If [Bookchin is] going to hold any and all mythic thinking responsible

for its excesses, shouldn't he do the same for rationality and dialectics?" (BB, p. 72-73) Even if I were a comrade of David Watson--a prospect I find distasteful--I would find this identification of "dialectical reason" and "marxist rationality" with Stalinism or even Leninism to be odious. As a former Trotskyist, Watson should know--better than many of his young anarchist readers--that Marx would have been the first to condemn Stalinist totalitarianism. Instead, Watson panders to filthy prejudice. As for the supposed link between dialectical reason and the Stalinist system, a much stronger case could be made that mythopoesis fostered the Stalinist cult of personality, the well-orchestrated "May Day" parades, the rewriting of Bolshevik history, and the endless myths about the Great Father of the People who stood atop Lenin's mausoleum--in short, all the trappings that Russian fascism borrowed from the warehouse of mythopoesis. To call Stalin a dialectician, let alone a philosopher, would be like calling Hitler a biologist or a geneticist. But nothing fazes Watson. If "myth and metaphor" are "needed" and "probably inevitable" in politics (BB, p. 50), as Watson contends, then whatever politics he has to offer is deeply troubled. Certainly, peasant revolutionaries like John Ball and Wat Tyler, in the fourteenth century, genuinely believed in and thus invoked "the idea of a renewed Golden Age," while abolitionists and civil rights clerics took up "the biblical metaphor of exodus" (BB, p. 50). Within the context of those very religious times, these uses of myth by religious people are understandable. Yet it remains troubling that, no matter how much the rebellious peasants believed in the Garden of Eden, their belief was still illusory; Ball could never have created a Garden of Eden on earth, least of all with fourteenth-century knowledge and technology. And no matter how much the

abolitionists and civil rights clerics may have believed in the reality of the biblical exodus, they would have been unable to take American blacks to any such promised land. Even after the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, as one former Confederate put it, "All the blacks got was 'freedom' and nothing else." With greater or lesser degrees of faith, these movements held out myths whose realization was nevertheless impossible to achieve. In modern times we know better than to accept the reality of superstitions, and today the job of a revolutionary is not to cynically propagate myths for the consumption of the supposedly gullible masses, but to show that domination and exploitation are irrational and unjust. It is to offer precisely those dreaded "explanations," to form a worldly movement that can struggle to achieve a rational, ecological society in reality. One of the great dangers of myth in politics is its fictional nature; because myth is contrived, its use is therefore instrumental and manipulative, and its application demagogic. Worse, as a betrayal of the highest ideal of social anarchism--namely, that people can manage their social affairs through rational discourse--the advocacy of myth in politics is implicitly undemocratic and authoritarian. When a myth is based on mystery, it provides a justification for demanding obedience to the inexplicable. Thus, medieval chiliasts claimed that they were instruments of god or his earthly embodiment, only to manipulate their supporters in their own interest, demoralize them, and lead them to terrible defeats. Watson's own case for mythopoesis rests squarely on the lure of mystery rather than reason; on animalistic adaptation rather than on activity; on acceptance rather than on innovation; and on recovery rather than discovery--the long-hallowed theses of priests, despots, and authoritarians of all sorts.

Astonishingly, the myths that Watson himself chooses to propagate can in no way be construed as liberatory, even by those who favor myth in politics, but rather inculcate irrationalism and passivity. Favorably quoting Joseph Epes Brown, he enjoins his readers to "humble themselves before the entire creation, before the smallest ant, realizing their own nothingness" (BB, p. 56). At a time when political and social passivity have sunk to appalling depths, does Watson really feel that such an injunction, applied to politics, would not be laden with extraordinary dangers?[36] The subjectivity of aboriginal peoples, as I argued in *Re-Enchanting Humanity*, understandably makes it difficult for them to account for dreams, in which people fly, the dead reappear as living, and game animals acquire fantastic anthropomorphic powers, such as speech and the formation of institutions. It was a historic contribution of secular philosophy and science to dissolve the seeming objectivity of dreams and reveal them as pure subjectivity--an enlightenment that is by no means complete in the present era of reaction. For Watson, however, such an enlightenment is problematic at best and obfuscatory at worst. Complaining that I "opt for the reductionism of modern science and economic rationality" (BB, p. 59), he celebrates instead the most limiting features of primal subjectivity--shamanism, dreams, and ritual--thereby pandering to the trendy mysticism abroad today. He commends what he sees as the aboriginal way of perceiving reality, inasmuch as "everything that is perceived by the sense, thought of, felt, and dreamt of, exists" (BB, p. 59). Here he is quoting the anthropologist Paul Radin, who was describing the way American Indian perceptions of reality include everything sensed, felt, and dreamed. Watson, however, turns this description into a prescription, indeed into a desirable

epistemology in which dream and reality are essentially indistinguishable. In order to provide "a larger idea of reality," Watson thereupon transports us not only through this dream world but into ineffable shamanistic knowledge; he aims to convince us that shamanism is a calling, that shamans are seers, poets, sages--and, by implication, that they have access to the special knowledge of reality that is denied to reason and science.[37] Let me emphasize that Paul Radin (who I used as a source in *The Ecology of Freedom*) held a very skeptical attitude toward shamans, regarding them as the earliest politicians of aboriginal societies, shysters who manipulated clients for self-serving purposes (which is not to say that a number of them may not have had good intentions). He showed that the shamanic life, far from being a calling, was often well-organized and based on trickery handed down from father to son over generations. Shamans in consolidated tribes commonly formed a social elite, based on fear and reinforced by alliances with other elites, such as chiefs. Here the reason Watson favors the absence of literacy among aborigines becomes somewhat less murky: precisely the use of spoken words by shamans made it all the easier for them to manipulate the community, claim exclusive access to knowledge, use the unrecorded word to instill fear in the community, and thereby manipulate it. Radin's "pragmatic" judgements of their impact were more than justified. "The dread of the practical consequences of the shaman's activities hangs over the ordinary individual," Radin wrote of such situations, referring to alliances between shamans and chiefs as "clearly a form of gangsterism." [38] To discredit Radin, Watson accuses him of "excessive pragmatism" (BB, p. 60) and, to undermine his account of shamanism, warns that "Radin's own examples of manipulative shamans

come mostly from communities influenced by encroaching money economies or from Africa" (BB, p. 62). The reader is then referred to pages 139-41 of Radin's *The World of Primitive Man*--which Watson should actually hope they will not do, since these pages contain a discussion, not of an African people, but of the Yakuts, a California people, and no "encroaching money economy" is mentioned there at all.

Even when he gets his citations and page numbers straight, Watson's views are nothing if not preposterous. His own mythic view of aboriginals and especially shamans is nearly bereft of social and institutional awareness. He prefers to defend the vagaries of their subjectivity as though, like Athena, it sprang from the head of Zeus. Without telling us how, he merely asserts that shamanism is "a complex process, bound to be of great interest to an organic, holistic outlook" (BB, p. 64).[39] Nothing arrests him in his leaps to defend the mystical--and even the religious. Thus while calling for "an abiding spirituality," he declaims that "we cannot reduce the experience of life, and of the fundamental, inescapable question of why we live, and how we live, to secular terms" (BB, p. 66). The reader may reasonably ask, Why not? The answer: because "an attempt to do so brings its revenge--if not in nihilism or alienation, then in a literalistic fundamentalist reaction" (BB, p. 66). It's not clear what a "literalistic fundamentalist reaction" would be--somehow the clear prose style on which Watson prides himself fails him on this crucial point--but what he seems to mean is that secularism breeds a backlash of religious fundamentalism. This is a compelling homeopathic argument: to avoid religion, get religion!

If any doubts remain that my own views and Watson's are unbridgeable, the chasm that separates us on the issue of aboriginal subjectivity should resolve them. At the close of his chapter on this subject in BB, he recounts a 1994 telephone conversation between us in which I queried him on his notion that wolves have a "point of view." (Watson charges that I "grilled" him, "aggressively" challenged him, "jabbed" him, "chortled," and "snorted," whereas, in fact, he himself was so hostile that I quietly suggested, more than once, that we just hang up and that he should merely send me the issue of Fifth Estate that I had called to request--which he never did.)

During the course of this conversation, I said that Watson's remarks on the "wolf's point of view" reminded me of Bill Devall's contention that redwood trees have consciousness. "Do you think the same is true of wolves?" I asked. In response, he simply reversed my question: "How do you know they don't?" The burden of proof, of course, belongs squarely with the person who claims that trees and wolves do have consciousness, especially if by consciousness we mean anything that resembles that of humans. In fact, neither trees nor wolves are constituted to have consciousness in any such sense, just as humans are not constituted to "navigate" like birds, as Robin Eckersley brightly pointed out. To assume that they do or even that they might is an example of "thinking" that is neither holistic, dialectical, nor even conventional, but is bereft of the least ability to place wolves in a graded evolutionary development or ecological context.

Actually, Watson gives his full answer to my query at the end of Chapter 3 of BB, where he trots out an entire

team of experts, presumably of impeccable qualifications, to testify on behalf of the notion that wolves have a "point of view" and that trees have consciousness. The reader is first exposed to the testimony of Hans Peter Duerr, a New Age anthropologist of sorts who believes that "it is possible to communicate with snowy owls, provided . . . we dissolve the boundaries to our own 'animal nature,' separating us from snowy owls" (quoted in BB, p. 55). Duerr testifies that scientific evidence is illegitimate, but he is hardly qualified to speak on the subject, since his own flaky work could benefit from more attention to scientific evidence; he apprises us that "the spirits leave the island when the anthropologists arrive" (BB, p. 68)--a compelling argument for those who believe in spirits.

Duerr is followed by Herakleitos, who remarks that "wisdom is whole," thereby telling us nothing whatever about the question at hand. For reasons even less clear, we are then given Vandana Shiva, who celebrates the fact that the women in the Chipko movement in India gained spiritual strength by "embracing mountains and living waters"--a bold challenge to anyone's dexterity. She is followed by Robert Bly, who waxes poetic about a violet color inside badgers' heads and informs us that when humans see trees, they emit "tree consciousness" to the trees, which gives them (the trees) consciousness.

Following this overwhelmingly persuasive argument, we are exposed-- inevitably!--to a poem by the Taoist sage Chuang Tzu, whose conclusion is simply sentimental pap: namely, he knows the joy of fishes through his own joy as he walks along the river! Finally, the whole exercise comes to merciful end with comments from Tatanga Mani, a Stoney Indian, who declares: "Do you



know that trees talk? Well they do. They talk to each other and they'll talk to you if you'll listen" (BB, pp. 68-2). The "explanation," I take it, is: a Native American says it, hence it must be true. Is that the inference we are to draw here? Perhaps the snapping and crackling of burning branches in pre-Columbian North America was a conversation between Indian horticulturists and the trees they were obliged to burn away in order to cultivate food and protect their communities from enemies.

Watson's team of experts, despite all their splendor and glory, fail to convince me that trees have consciousness; on the contrary, they succeed mainly in causing me\and perhaps other readers--to wonder about their grip on reality. Watson's own inclinations to accept "nothingness," to listen to trees ("a future social ecology, if it is to endure as a meaningful philosophical current, must learn to listen" to trees [BB, p. 72]), and to mistake dreams for reality are likely to leave the thoughtful reader in doubt about his own reality principle, perhaps even his sanity. If this ecobabble is what will pass for eco-anarchism, then eco-anarchism is suffering from a profound crisis indeed.

#### THE "DIALECTICS" OF DISTORTION

Confusions between truth and reality have consequences, and one of them becomes painfully obvious in the way Watson handles the matter of Francisco Goya's *Capricho* no. 43.

In *SALA* I took issue with Fifth Estate's use of this etching, their translation of the caption, and the interpretation they gave to it on the cover of their

Fall/Winter 1993 issue. The original capricho shows the artist asleep, his arm and head resting on his desk, while around him, as in a dream, hover monstrous figures of bats, owls, and lynxes. On one side of the desk, Goya inscribed the caption: "El sueño de la razón produce monstruos."

Now *sueño* has two meanings in Spanish: it may mean either "dream" or "sleep." Depending upon which translation one chooses, the caption has diametrically opposite meanings--and diametrically opposite evaluations of reason. If *sueño* is translated as "dream," then the caption means that reason produces monsters (when reason dreams), and therefore it is a pejorative statement about reason. But if *sueño* is translated as "sleep," then the caption means that monsters appear when reason is absent (asleep); the caption is therefore favorable to reason.

Fortunately, we have it from Goya's own commentary that he meant that the "sleep" of reason produces monsters. As he explained in another context, he meant: "La fantasía abandonada de la razón, produce monstruos imposibles; unida con ella, es madre de las artes y origen de sus maravillas" ("Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with reason, she is the mother of the arts and the source of their marvels").[40] Far from anathematizing reason, Goya intended the capricho to affirm its crucial importance.

Fifth Estate, however, translated *sueño* to mean "dream"- hereby giving the caption an antirational interpretation. To emphasize their point, the collective's artist drew in a computer atop the artist's desk, enlisting the capricho in support of periodical's anti-Enlightenment technophobia.

This choice might have been forgiven as an understandable error (I've seen the same misunderstanding occur elsewhere), and once I pointed it out in SALA--providing them with the Goya quotation as evidence of their misinterpretation--they might have admitted to it and let the matter drop with a decent self-correction.

But no! Fifth Estate and Watson can do no wrong! Instead, raising his hackles, Watson duly informs us that they knew it all along--but the mistranslation was deliberate! "The Fifth Estate cooperative, aware of the original meaning," he declares, chose to "bring this notion into a contemporary context, with the dream of reason no longer the victim of monsters but a full-fledged confectioner of them" (BB, p. 198, emphasis added). That is to say, the collective made a conscious decision to change Goya's meaning into the very opposite of what he intended. Put in straightforward language: they chose to distort and lie.

In most arenas of responsible discourse, such behavior would be called immoral-- ut presumably not in the offices of Fifth Estate. Instead, Watson lectures me on the virtues of distortion: "An authentically [!] dialectical [!] perspective would not cling mechanically to meanings long superseded [!] by the unfolding of actuality itself" (BB, p. 198). Here we learn what "dialectics" really means in Watson's universe: it is a warrant for liars to falsify to their hearts' content, despite an author's patent intention, indeed, despite the truth. In conjunction with the Native American epistemology that mistakes dream for reality, this misuse of the capricho supports the Watsonian imperative that we are to accept lies and distortions as truth. Caught with his own hand in

the cookie jar, this man screams out "thief!" against his captor. (Elsewhere in the book [BB, p. v], he has the nerve to accuse me of having "misused" Goya!)

Watson's handling of the Goya matter throws a glaring spotlight on his *modus operandi* in most of BB. Disdaining to "cling mechanically" to such mundane matters as my actual intentions in my actual writings, he puts his mendacious "dialectics" into practice by cynically and maliciously snipping out phrases and sentences from their context--often to reverse their meaning (as in the case of Goya)--and, employing a creative, indeed imaginative use of ellipses, he fabricates a fictional Bookchin, tailored to his own polemical needs. Thus, I become, as we have seen, a "technocrat," a promoter of "reified hyper-rationality and scientism," and one who "no longer seems to have anything good to say about early societies." My recreated texts, like his recreation of Goya's *capricho*, correspond to the new "actuality" generated by the monsters in Watson's fevered imagination. This procedure can be taken as yet another lesson in shamanism à la Watson: Watson's interpretations of reality are to be accepted as more real than the phenomena we witness and experience, including phenomena that contradict him. What Watson doth say, so be it!

Accordingly, BB becomes a work of fiction--an "artistic" calumny posing as political critique. Certainly, I would be the last to accuse Watson of failing to put theory into practice; indeed, using his methodology, one could easily make Lenin into a fiery anarchist, Stalin into a bland pacifist, Bakunin into a crypto-capitalist and perhaps even Fifth Estate into an organ for technocracy.

Thus, in this work of fiction, Watson "artistically" and "dialectically" writes that in my view "Nature . . . is normally 'stingy'" (BB, p. 91), even though this view of "Nature's stinginess" is one that I have emphatically and repeatedly challenged in many of my works. Indeed, Watson is able to create the illusion that I regard first nature as "stingy" only because he replaces with ellipses the words where I actually imputed this view to "social theorists of the past century" (EF, p. 64).

Nor should the reader be surprised to learn from Watson that I regard humanity as "a curse on natural evolution" and a "parasite." He is, once again, apparently counting on the probability that his readers will not refer back to my original text.

Bookchin even occasionally sounds like the deep ecology misanthropes he attacks, for example suggesting that humanity is "still a curse on natural evolution, not its fulfillment. Until we become what we should be in be in the constellation of life, we would do well to live with a fear of what we can be." (EF: 238) Humanity is a "highly destructive parasite who threatens to destroy his host--the natural world\and eventually himself," he comments [PSA: 61]. Truer deep ecological words were never spoken. (BB, p. 18)

The distortion here is scandalous. The sentence that begins "Until we become . . ." actually explains that this "curse on natural evolution" is not a matter of some inherent "human nature" but is socially conditioned far different from the potentiality that a libertarian socialist society would actualize. Obviously, the aim of the book from which he quotes subtitled *The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*--is to show that humanity is

trapped in hierarchical society, not inherently doomed to be a "curse on natural evolution."

To conjoin this quotation with the second one--about the "parasite"--is an outright manipulation of the trusting reader. The "parasite" quotation is taken from my 1964 essay "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," in which, after a long account of the pollution of the planet, the passage Watson quotes appears:

Obviously, man could be described as a highly destructive parasite who threatens to destroy his host--the natural world--and eventually himself. In ecology, however, the word "parasite" is not an answer to a question, but raises a question itself. . . . What is the disruption that has turned man into a destructive parasite? What produces a form of parasitism that results not only in vast natural imbalances but also threatens the existence of humanity itself? . . . The imbalances man has produced in the natural world are caused by the imbalances he has produced in the social world. (PSA, pp. 61-62; italics added to indicate deleted words)

Certainly, neither parasite nor curse is a word I would use today, as I did in 1964 and 1982. But in both cases the context shows that I used these words as metaphors for a phenomenon that is socially conditioned. Knowing full well that I did not mean what he is saying I meant, Watson cynically pulled these phrases completely out of their context.[41]

The number of egregious falsifications that Watson makes over hundreds of pages in BB is prohibitively large to point out, let alone reply to individually. What these examples demonstrate is that Watson places no

limits on the degree of calumny he is repared to use. Most important, however, by using these tricks, he demonstrates his utter contempt for his readers: he lies to them, plays his shamanistic tricks on them, and violates their trust in him, which will ultimately vitiate their own desire for knowledge, understanding--and explanations.

If Watson distorts my writing, he distorts my political behavior even more grossly. Indeed, almost every paragraph of BB is either an insult or a lie. To accept Watson, one must believe that I do not hold a point of view: I invariably hold a "dogma" (BB, p. 9). I do not assert the validity of my ideas: I suffer from "megalomania" (BB, p. 19) or egomania (BB, p. 15). I am designated variously as "General Secretary" (Stalin?) and "Chairman" (Mao?) (BB, pp. 16, 40). If I use the word must, I obviously am an authoritarian, although Watson employs this word freely when he cares to.[42] If Janet Biehl defends my views, she is my "hagiographer" (BB, p. 37), while someone who objects to Watson's hatchet job, Daniel Coleman (who I do not even know), must be my "sycophant." [43]

My work, it seems, must be deprecated in its entirety, including my widely acknowledged pioneering efforts in the development of a social ecology; so must my contributions to anarchist theory, including writings that, Watson admits, "introduced" him "to anarchist ideas and a radical critique of leninism" (BB, p. 10), as well as writings that he once praised as "poetic" (in a telephone conversation). All must now be deprecated, and my role in the rise of political ecology must be minimized (in the bizarre account in BB, pp. 15-16). Social ecology, a label that had fallen into disuse by the early 1960s and that I spent many years giving substantive meaning, fighting

for it so that it gained the international reputation that it now has, is now somehow a concept that I usurped. Actually, in the late 1960s I visited Detroit and importuned members of the Fifth Estate crowd to concern themselves with ecological issues--but to no avail. In those days the Situationists who greatly influenced Fifth Estate's erstwhile sage, Fredy Perlman, were mocking me as "Smokey the Bear" for my advocacy of ecological politics. Watson now tells me that my contributions to ecological politics are negligible at best and warped at worst--this from a man whose recognition of the importance of ecological politics apparently did not come until the mid- to late 1970s.[44]

Above all I have tried to create an ecological politics that is activist in its political and social outlook, one that could underpin a revolutionary, libertarian, anticapitalist movement that could take up the struggle to form a rational ecological society in which people may fulfill their potential for freedom and self-consciousness. As recently as 1990 Watson even appeared to share this militancy to a considerable extent when he wrote, "We must begin to talk openly and defiantly of . . . mass strike and revolutionary uprising" (SIH, p. 11).

But in BB, which appeared in 1996, Watson strikes a radically different tone. Although he wishes us to take up the prodigious task of all but eliminating technology and "civilization in bulk," he leaves the question of precisely how we are to do so enshrouded in dark mystery. His book contains no appeals to his readers to create the movement organizations necessary to build a new society, let alone hint at the social institutions that would constitute it. Rather, he tells them that what is needed is medieval technology, "epistemological luddism,"



irrationalism, and a subjectivity that omits distinctions between dream and reality. They should celebrate the fantasies of shamans, quasi-religious poets, and mystics, no matter how far they lead us from reality.

Pervading it all, he prescribes that they should "humble themselves before the entire creation, before the smallest ant, realizing their own nothingness" (BB, p. 56)--a prescription that echoes the self-obliterating apathy inculcated by religions and political despotisms everywhere. The book's frontispiece, quoting Dogen, quintessentially expresses this passivity to the point of self-effacement. "To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion," declares the thirteenth-century Zen master piously. "But myriad things coming forth and experiencing themselves is awakening." Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth! This recipe for quietism has well served the ruling classes of the world: together with Watson's injunctions that we should "listen" to things that are not actually speaking and that are indeed incapable of speaking, the content of Dogen's quote vitiates the rebelliousness necessary for a movement to radically change society and amounts and replaces it with complete resignation.[45]

If Watson's anti-Enlightenment outlook were ever to prevail among a sizable number of anarchists, then anarchism would become a self-centered, fatuous, and regressive body of nonideas that deserves contempt, if not derision, for its lack of substance and social value. If this noble ideal were ever to be so degraded, then anarchism would indeed have to be rescued from the anarchists, who would be among its most insufferable opponents.

## DAVID WATSON, ONE YEAR LATER

Amusingly, scarcely a year after BB was published, Watson erupted with an article in Fifth Estate, subtitled "Farewell to All That," in which he significantly backtracked on many of the cherished positions that he so adamantly advanced in his book.[46]

On progress: Watson, who flatly refused to consider any alternative notion of progress when I advanced one, now writes: "Our alternative [!] notion of 'progress' might be that we've inevitably learned some things along history's way, things we didn't necessarily need to know before, but which are probably indispensable to us now" (SF, p. 19). Really! But hasn't the very idea of progress served as a "core mystification concealing what is worst" in civilization (BB, p. 9)? And what could we learn from the history of a "civilization" that is nothing but a forced labor camp?

On civilization: The author of "Civilization in Bulk" who once scolded people for being so wishy-washy as to put quotation marks around the word "civilization," now writes: "I believe the claim to oppose 'the totality' of civilization is empty theoretical bravado" (SF, p. 18). And: "Vernacular, communal and liberatory visions and practices persist, scattered throughout [!] civilization. . . . Such visions and practices are also, quite problematically, woven into the sinews of civilization itself. To 'oppose' civilization as a totality"--writes Watson, for whom the very word was recently abhorrent--". . . could only imply somehow 'opposing' not only the repressive and dehumanizing aspect of civilization but

also the valuable and painful historical experience that has nurtured new insight" (SF, p.18). Really! Perhaps Watson, who once called civilization "a maladaptation of the species, a false turn or a kind of fever threatening the planetary web of life" (CIB, p. 10), has come to accept my idea that civilization has a legacy of freedom after all. Perhaps he will even admit it in the next issue of Fifth Estate.

On a related matter, I should note that in BB Watson denounced me for my suggestions that the nation-state may have been a historically necessary development (a view held by no less a personage than Bakunin!) and that the concept of "socially necessary evil" may have merit. My point, I should explain, was that "the groundwork for making a civilizatory process possible . . . may have required what we would regard today as unacceptable institutions of social control but that at an earlier time may have been important in launching a rational social development" [PSE: xvi-xvii]" (BB, p. 90). Coming from me, Watson found this idea intolerable, fuming that it "capitulates to bourgeois and marxist notions of progress. . . . Bookchin never escapes his Marxism" (BB, p. 91).

I still hold to the belief, as I wrote in *The Ecology of Freedom*, that "to be expelled from the Garden of Eden can be regarded, as Hegel was to say, as an important condition for its return--but on a level that is informed with a sophistication that can resolve the paradoxes of paradise" (EF, p. 141; another quotation that Watson truncates, BB, p. 91, in order to make it sound more brutal). And I certainly think that many evils were socially unavoidable--a view that Watson, of

course, flatly rejected, together with "civilization in bulk."

thus it was with some hilarity that I read, in "Farewell to All That," that Watson now actually accepts a crude version even of this view: "However atrocious the process," he writes, "conquest and domination have always [!] been syncretic, dialectically unfolding into resistance" (SF, p. 18)--nebbich! Indeed, he goes much further than I do: I would hardly have used the word always in this connection. The inevitability it implies would have been anathema for the earlier Watson. I look forward to reading in future issues of Fifth Estate about the inevitable ("always") transformation of the "megamachine" into resistance and civilization into progress.

On primitivism: The Watson who, in BB, furiously denounced me for objecting to primitivism in politics, now acknowledges that some people at Fifth Estate--obviously including himself--"have growing doubts about pretenses to an anarcho-primitive perspective or movement" (SF, p. 18). He even tries to withdraw primitivism from the political realm altogether: "to speak of primitivism does not require a political primitiv-ism" (SF, p. 18). This man who as been trying to create a "political primitivism" for over a decade now--and excoriating critics like me renounces the whole endeavor?

Our twisting and writhing "neoprimitivist" who, in BB, wanted a "future social ecology" to recognize that "firm ground, if any, must [!] be found" in a reorientation of life "around perennial, classic and aboriginal manifestations of wisdom" (BB, p. 154), now advises us

that primitivism is "more and more a fool's paradise, the dogma of a gang, . . . however irrelevant and however sincere\potentially even a racket," and he wants "less and less to do with it" (SF, p. 19)! Having done more than just about anyone to promote primitivism for more than a decade, he now declares: "Self-proclaimed primitivists are . . . deluded in thinking they have a simple answer to the riddle of prehistory and history" (SF, p. 20).

This is truly uproarious! The ink on the pages of BB has scarcely had time to dry before Watson makes a complete reversal! Only one thing could possibly surpass this about-face for sheer nerve--and sure enough, he does actually go on to blather: "my opinions have not really changed" (SF, p. 23). Ah! The closer he comes to my views, it would seem, the more he must deny it--anything to avoid confessing that he was utterly wrong as well as vicious in BB.

I have no doubt that Watson will reply to the present essay in Fifth Estate. Given his track record of malicious lies, massive distortions, and ad hominem deprecations, compounded with these recent extreme shifts in his own basic positions, I see no reason why I should waste any more time on this man. Finis--Watson! I await further "farewells" with minimal anticipation.

#### THE WORLD ACCORDING TO CLARK/CAFARD

The back cover of BB is prominently adorned with a euphoric blurb by one John Clark, a philosophy professor at Loyola University. "Beyond Bookchin," he gushes, "is a brilliant, carefully argued critique. . . . Watson's thoughts on technology, culture, and

spirituality make a major contribution to social theory." Clark's esteem for Watson's meanderings is apparently more than reciprocated, as Watson has opened the pages of Fifth Estate to Clark, who chooses to hide behind his pseudonym, Max Cafard, when he writes there. The summer 1997 issue thus contains, under the Max Cafard byline, what purports to be a review of my book *Re-Enchanting Humanity* (RH), titled "Bookchin Agonistes," but is actually a savage attack on me and my work.

So savage is the attack, in fact, that it is difficult to believe that from the mid-1970s until early 1993, the author was a close associate of mine. As recently as 1984, Clark wrote the following passage in his essay collection *The Anarchist Moment*:

I want to express my deep gratitude to Murray Bookchin for his invaluable contribution to the development of the ideas presented in these essays. His synthesis of critical and dialectical theory, teleological [!] philosophy, social ecology, and libertarian and utopian thought has carried on the great tradition of philosophy in this anti-philosophical age. It has been a great privilege to know him and his work.[47]

In 1984, it was widely assumed among my readers, opponents, and libertarian radicals generally that John Clark was my spokesman, a status he had apparently adopted with alacrity. Thus, it seemed perfectly natural in 1986, on my sixty-fifth birthday, that he would present me with a *Festschrift* that he edited in my honor.[48] As recently as 1992 he was selected to write the entry on my political contributions for *The Encyclopedia of the*

American Left, in which he described me as "the foremost contemporary anarchist theorist." [49]

Now, only a few years later, Clark explodes with "Bookchin Agonistes," in which he pillories me as, among other things, "a theoretical bum," "an enraged autodidact" (as if anarchists typically disdained autodidacts!), a practitioner of "brain-dead dogmatism" and "ineptitude in philosophical analysis," an "amateur philosopher" (Socrates, who detested the Sophists for professionalizing philosophy, would have expressed some sharp words about this one!), "an energetic undergraduate," and an all-around liar. After reading this torrent of abuse, one can only wonder: How could Clark have so completely misjudged me for almost two decades? [50]

Not only does Clark wholly repudiate me, but he even minimizes the portion of his own biography that he spent in association with me, writing that it was only his "misguided youth" that he spent "on the fringes of the Bookchin cult" (BA, p. 23). Now, I am mindful that for many baby boomers the pursuit of eternal youth exceeds in intensity even Ponce de Leon's pursuit of the Fountain of Youth in the wilds of Florida several centuries ago. But such fancies have their limits. After all, is one really only a mere "misguided youth" at the age of 30, as Clark more or less was when he first sought me out? Was he really only a youth at 41, when he prepared the embarrassing Festschrift? Was he not an adult, at the age of 48, when he wrote the laudatory entry for The Encyclopedia of the American Left?

For reasons that I shall explain shortly, I am glad that Clark and I are finally publicly disassociated from each

other; our ideas, indeed, our ways of thinking, are basically incompatible. I would have hoped that our disassociation could have occurred without the personal hostility, indeed vilification that Clark/Cafard exhibits in "Bookchin Agonistes." But since he has decided to infuse his criticism of me with personal insults, I see no reason why he should enjoy immunity to a discussion of his own work from my point of view. Throughout the many years of our association, after all, I restrained myself from publicly criticizing him in the areas in which we seriously differed, and it comes as a great relief to me that I am no longer obliged to place that limitation on myself.

Although Clark and I had a personal friendship that lasted almost two decades, he told me remarkably little about his own activities in social and political movements before I met him. Judging from the little he did leak about his past, however, I gather that he was never a socialist. He once told me that during the 1960s he had been a disciple of Barry Goldwater--that is, the reactionary senator from Arizona who, running for the U.S. presidency in 1964, frightened the wits out of most Americans by calling for an escalation of the war in Southeast Asia. That the incumbent, Lyndon B. Johnson, later did precisely what Goldwater had wanted does not alter the nature of the ideological clash of the 1964 campaign. Most intellectual Goldwaterites sat at the feet of Ayn Rand, William F. Buckley, and other right-wing notables, advocating a reduction of the state in favor of laissez-faire capitalism, and individualism as an alternative to collectivism in social management. If Clark was a supporter of Goldwater, he would have been such a right-wing antistatist well into the 1960s.



It would seem that he came to anarchism from the Right rather than from the Left. Causes such as the workers' movement, collectivism, socialist insurrection, and class struggle, not to speak of the revolutionary socialist and anarchist traditions, would have been completely alien to him as a youth; they were certainly repugnant to the right-wing ideologues of the mid-1960s, who afflicted leftists with conservatism, cultural conventionality, and even red-baiting.

How deeply Clark participated in the ideological world of the Goldwater Right, I cannot say. But it requires no psychological wizardry to suggest that the awe of academic degrees and "scientific training" that he displays in "Bookchin Agonistes"-- indeed, his disparagement of the validity of nonspecialists' criticisms of their work\is evidence of a conventional elitism that has nothing in common with the radical dimension of anarchism.

In any case, 1964, the year Goldwater ran for president, was also a year when the best and brightest Americans of Clark's generation were journeying to Mississippi (in the famous Mississippi Summer), often risking their lives to register the state's poorest and most subjugated blacks for the franchise. Although Mississippi is separated from Louisiana, Clark's home state, by only a river, nothing Clark ever told me remotely suggests that he was part of this important civil rights movement. What did Clark, at the robust age of nineteen, do to help these young people? Unless he tells us otherwise, I can only guess that he did very little and instead was busy acquiring his college degree. So far as I can judge, he seems to have been potted in the academy quite early in life and thus

experienced reality primarily from the shelter of undergraduate and graduate campuses.

This brief excursion into Clark's background is not gratuitous; it helps to explain how unlikely our association was, and with what forbearance I allowed it to continue for as long as it did. For the present, let me note that, far from inhabiting the fringes of the "Bookchin cult" (whatever that might be) or at least my circle of friends and comrades, Clark barged eagerly into my life in the mid-1970s and positioned himself as close to the center as he could. So fawning was his adoration of me that I sometimes found it fairly unsavory.

Still, he did make contributions to social ecology by regularly assigning *The Ecology of Freedom* to his students at Loyola, and by writing a well-meaning but inept review of that book for *Telos*. In turn, I brought him into the Institute for Social Ecology as a visiting lecturer; urged (sometimes reluctant) students to attend his classes; gave him access to my unpublished manuscripts; and introduced him to an appreciable number of people whom he might never have known had I not said kind words about him. In effect, he gained some distinction for himself in great part through his acquaintance with me.

As I have said, despite the repugnance I felt for some of his ideas, I never wrote a line against Clark in public. But in our personal conversations I was quite vociferous in my objections to his Taoism--indeed, most of my arguments with him, dating almost from the beginning of our relationship, concerned the *Tao Te Ching*. I consistently claimed that the book itself is inherently mystical, antihumanistic, and irrational--and therefore

incompatible with social ecology. It was because of this disagreement that, as much as I wanted to, I was never able to quote from him in my own writings.

Like many professors of philosophy, Clark, I found, tends to reify ideas into mental constructs, bereft of roots in the time, place, or society in which they are developed. Academic philosophy, in its detached aeries, divests even ideas that have a direct bearing on social life of the social context that makes them relevant to the public sphere. Instead of preserving that relevance, it transforms them into abstractions, relegates them to a transcendental world of their own, not unlike that of the Platonic domain of forms. Ideas are traced not in terms of the society in which they develop but from classroom to classroom, so to speak, and from journal to journal.

As a result of its social myopia, academic philosophy tends to be blind to the social and political implications of ideas. Even an avowed "dialectician" such as Clark (perhaps because of his skewed understanding of dialectics) appears to be incapable of seeing the logic of an idea: where it will lead in social terms, how it will unfold, its likely consequences for the real world outside the campus.

By his own description in the following passage, for example, Clark's interpretation of Taoist is divorced from its context in Chinese history, and from the implications of its ideas for present-day societies:

When each follows his or her own Tao, and recognizes and respects the Tao in all other beings, a harmonious system of self-realization will exist in nature. There is a kind of natural justice that prevails, so that the needs of

each are fulfilled. . . . Order and justice are assured when each being follows its appropriate path of development.[51]

Here the mystically autonomous Tao, preoccupied with "self-realization," an ahistorical "natural justice," and an assurance that the "needs of each are fulfilled," could easily be seen as an affirmation of laissez-faire economics and their transposition into ordinary human behavior. "I engage in no activity and the people themselves become prosperous," says the governing Taoist ruler-sage [Tao Te Ching, chap. 57)][52] When Clark moved away from Goldwaterism and into social ecology, did he bring with him the residual ideas of Adam Smith?

To my criticisms of Taoism, Clark long responded that I "confuse ancient Taoist philosophy (the Tao Chia) with the often superstitious and hierarchical Taoist religious sect (the Tao Chiao)" (BA, p. 21). That is, the philosophy attached to the book itself must be separated from the Taoist religion that later developed. Certainly, as in the case of so many religions--not to speak of philosophical schools (the Church's codification of Aristotle's works, for example)--clerical Taoism represented a degeneration of philosophical Taoism. Taoism did become a theology, indeed a church, complete with a pantheon of deities and a complex hierarchy of priests. An entire array of superstitious practices, including alchemy, fortune-telling, astrology, communication with the dead, and quests for immortality, clustered around it. During certain periods of Chinese history, Taoism even became a state religion, teaching Chinese people the virtues, among other things, of loyalty to the emperor and making offerings to the

gods.

As different as this highly organized religion may be from Clark's philosophical Taoism, it nonetheless takes the Tao Te Ching as a canonical document. Various elements of "the Way" clearly lend themselves to the creation of religion, to mystery and magic, particularly its vague mysticism, its pantheism (which is still a theism), and its focus on the Tao as "oneness." By Clark's account, however, we are to suppose that the Tao Te Ching can be understood apart from the religion that was built upon it. One might, with equal obtuseness, argue that Christianity can be understood as consisting of the Christian scriptures, apart from the oppressive institutions that were built upon them. Actually the Tao Te Ching can no more be separated from the Taoist religion than the Sermon on the Mount can be removed from Christianity. Only an ivory tower academic could abstract either the Tao Te Ching or the Bible from its social roots, its institutional consequences--and the present conditions that favor its development into an "eco-anarchist" ideology.

All religions by definition rest on faith rather than reason--that is, they appeal to the least critical faculties of their disciples and commonly reduce them to acquiescence to the ruling classes. Hence any religion may have reactionary social consequences. By no means did Lao-Tzu provide his followers with a theory that could be remotely called explanatory, still less rational. Instead, the Tao Te Ching is a deliberately cryptic, mystical behavioral guide that could readily be used as a tool for fostering passivity in a supine peasantry. Its message of quietism served the interests of Chinese

ruling classes for thousands of years, while its allusions to ecological themes are incidental, except as part of the overall message that individual human beings should submit to the world at large.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as social and political disempowerment are rendering most of the public apathetic, and when quasi-religious and personalistic beliefs, among other things, are paralyzing the development of movements for social action, any doctrine of quietism--even one dressed in ecological garb--serves only to instill further dimensions of acquiescence. Coupled with egotism, it becomes a debilitating rationale for social withdrawal and self-absorption. It was for these reasons that I could never accept Clark's Taoism as part of social ecology.

That my association with Clark lasted as long as it did is testimony to my silent endurance of his Taoist claptrap and my distinctly nondogmatic tolerance of views not in accordance with my own. But in the late 1980s, as this type of mystical quietism gained more and more influence into the ecology movement, I could no longer remain silent. In late 1986 David Foreman (a self-described deep ecologist and a cofounder of Earth First!), in an interview with Bill Devall (one of the high chieftains of deep ecology), had declared that hungry Ethiopian children should not be given any food relief and that nature should "be permitted to take its course." The "course" he advocated struck me as a brutal one, and anything but "natural." I objected with considerable heat to the cruel Malthusian demographics that Foreman's views expressed and to the mystical notion of a "course

of nature"--ideas that, thanks to Devall's praise for Foreman, were associated with deep ecology.

In June 1987, for this and other reasons, I sharply criticized deepecology at the national conference of the Greens at Amherst, Massachusetts, and in my article "Social Ecology versus 'Deep Ecology.'" My criticism visibly disturbed Clark for a variety reasons, some of which make me wonder why he had ever adopted me as his mentor in the first place. Most notably, my criticism seems to have placed him in a difficult professional position. He was still strongly identified publicly with me: but now, not only had I opened a critique of eco-mysticism that threatened to bring our disagreement over Taoism into the open, but I was distinguishing social ecology from deep ecology in a way that emphasized the fact that social ecology calls for nothing less than a social revolution. On the other hand, deep ecologists were growing in number; their ideas were consistent with Taoism; and many of them were already his friends and professional contacts, including the poetic doyen of deep ecology, Gary Snyder (who broke off all relations with me after my criticism). In time, Clark saw that many environmental professors in American universities--his home ground--were beginning to adopt deep ecology as their ecological religion of choice.

Clark found the occasion to break with me in 1992, when the Institute for Social Ecology failed to invite him to return as a lecturer for its summer session of 1993. For reasons that had nothing whatever to do with my growing disagreements with him, the Institute's curriculum committee had decided, in late 1992 or early 1993, to drop him as a visiting lecturer. As Dan Chodorkoff, the Institute's executive director, later

recounted the events for me: The school was no longer in a position to provide Clark with \$500 for his travel expenses, because its budget was limited; moreover, it wished to correct a gender imbalance in its lecturers. Instead of funding Clark's visit, it chose to use its funds to bring a well-qualified woman lecturer from California. As Chodorkoff emphasized:

there was a concern on the curriculum committee that the lecture series was dominated by male speakers, and given our concerns with diversity, the decision was made to try to bring more women into the program. The funds that we would have expended on John's visit were committed to bring in women lecturers.[53]

The curriculum committee also had another reason for not inviting Clark to return, one that Chodorkoff did not tell him at the time, in order to spare his feelings. As Chodorkoff later wrote to me:

It was also true that John's lectures had not been well received by students the previous year. Student evaluations registered complaints about his presentations, and by his final lecture enrollment had dropped precipitously.

Given these circumstances, despite the fact that John was a personal friend of mine, I accepted the curriculum committee's recommendation that John not be invited back to lecture.[54]

Clark's dis-invitation from the Institute in 1993 seems to have provided him with the occasion he needed in order to break with me. Judging from what others have told me since then, he held me responsible for his dis- nvitation.



Yet I never raised any obstacles to Clark's participation in the Institute's program. Indeed, although I have had serious differences with a number of other Institute instructors in the past, including an outright Wiccan, I never made any effort to remove them from the program. In fact, at an Institute faculty meeting in late 1992 that did touch on issues of curriculum, I urged the Institute that "John Clark should be teaching a course on the history of anarchism," as the minutes of the meeting put it.[55] But I do not sit on the curriculum committee, and therefore I am not involved in its decision-making processes.

After Clark's dis-invitation a few months later, however, his attitude toward me turned hostile, culminating in the vituperation evident in "Bookchin Agonistes."

My purpose in writing *Re-Enchanting Humanity* (the book that "Bookchin Agonistes" ostensibly reviews) was to identify and condemn the rising tide of irrationalism, antihumanism, and anti-Enlightenment sentiment that is threatening to engulf contemporary Euro-American culture. More specifically, the book criticizes the theism, postmodernism, antiscientism, sociobiology, misanthropy, and mysticism that are currently so influential, both within the academy and without.

Early on in the book, I clearly define what I mean by antihumanism: namely, "a common deprecation of the remarkable features that make our species unique in the biosphere. Whether explicitly or implicitly, [the tendencies in question] deride humanity's ability for innovation, its technological prowess, its potentiality for progress, and, above all, its capacity for rationality. I

have thus found it appropriate to call this ensemble of deprecatory attitudes antihumanism" (RH, p. 4).

The tendencies I discuss do not always embody all the traits of antihumanism that I identify, but as an ensemble they do, and they all share the most important feature of antihumanism: that it "places little or no emphasis on social concerns" but instead offers a message that is "primarily one of spiritual hygiene, personal withdrawal, and a general disdain for humanistic attributes such as reason and innovation" (RH, p. 4). Where humanism places its emphasis on the power of reason and its ability to confront and solve many of the problems human beings face, antihumanism places its emphasis on powers other than human abilities: notably, "the powers of God," "supernatural forces," indefinable "cosmic forces," "intuition," and "Nature" (RH, p. 13).

Although these tendencies and the problems they pose are the central subject of my book, in his "book review" Clark/Cafard deftly ignores them. Nowhere does he inform the reader of the purpose of the book, or explain what I mean by humanism and antihumanism; nor does he address even the "dumbing down" of the culture at large\,a related theme that he, as a professor, might be expected to be concerned with. On the contrary, my considerable discussions of primitivism and civilization; of the emergence of deep ecology over the past two decades and its contradictions; the genetic determinism of E. O. Wilson's sociobiology; the crude atomism of Richard Dawkins's social "mimes"; the explicit misanthropy of James Lovelock's "Gaia hypothesis," which arrogantly derogates social problems as trivial beside the splendors of "Gaia"; the railing impotence of technophobia as a social critique; postmodernism as an

ideological reaction to 1968; and the antirationalism of Paul Feyerabend's fashionable antiscientism--all of this and more is totally ignored.

Instead of making even a remote attempt to explain my contentions to the reader, Clark/Cafard actually comes to the defense of some of the antihumanists whom I criticized. He denounces me for taking on the sociobiologists E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, saying derisively that I criticized them for "failing to recognize differences between homo sapiens and other species." If that had actually been my critique, it would certainly have been laughable and wrong, but that was not my critique at all. I criticized the two sociobiologists for their arrant reductionism, which is antihumanistic by any definition. Wilson and Dawkins, I wrote, display "little appreciation of any evolutionary tendency that imparts value to subjectivity, intelligence, creativity and ethics, apart from the service they perform to the well-being of genes." Instead, for them, species "are primarily the media for genetic evolution" (RH, p. 37). Would Clark deny that this reductionism is the essence of sociobiology--or, as it is more commonly called today, evolutionary psychology?

Having defended sociobiologists, Clark/Cafard then rides to the aid of various prominent mystics--E. F. Schumacher, William Irwin Thompson, Thomas Berry, and Matthew Fox--to rescue them from my charge of antihumanism, still not telling his readers what I mean by antihumanism. Nor does he explore the very real prospect that antihumanism can easily lead to misanthropy. The Reverend Berry, he reproaches me, is after all an "amiable" man. But as my colleague Chaia Heller recently pointed out in a conversation with Clark,

what is at issue here is not whether people are "amiable" or "nice," but whether their ideas are right or wrong.[56]

The good reverend is anything but "amiable" in *The Dream of the Earth*, when he writes like a sociobiologist, enjoining us to look "beyond our cultural coding to our genetic coding, to ask for guidance"; like an antirationalist when he intones that the "very rational process that we exalt as the only true way to understanding is . . . itself a mythic imaginative dream experience. The difficulty of our times is our inability to awaken out of this cultural pathology"; like an intuitionist mystic, when he urges us to undertake a "a descent into our prerational, our instinctive resources"; and like an outright misanthrope when he denounces human beings as "the most pernicious mode of earthly being. . . the termination, not the fulfillment, of the Earth process. If there were a parliament of creatures, its first decision might well be to vote the humans out of the community, too deadly a presence to tolerate any further. We are an affliction of the world, its demonic presence. We are the violation of earth's most sacred aspects." [57]

The eco-mysticism that abounds among deep ecologists who accept biocentrism and seek "ecological consciousness" and mystical experiences of "self-in-Self"--is of a piece with the deep ecology literature that generally deprecates human activity in the biosphere, as though its ill-effects had no social basis. Although Clark may gently criticize misanthropic views in their most limited and specific forms, he typically--indeed, very typically refuses to generalize from them or ferret out their sources in deep ecology's most fundamental tenet: biocentrism, or the idea that "all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are

equal in intrinsic worth," as George Sessions and Bill Devall defined the concept.[58]

Instead, Clark excoriates me for supposedly misunderstanding biocentrism in at least two ways. In his first objection, he says:

If one contends that a human being and a river, for instance, are both part of a larger "self," this in no way implies that the river possesses any capacity for "empathy," any more than it implies that the human being thereby possesses the capacity to be a home for fish. Rather, it only implies that the larger whole of which they are both a part (called the "larger self" in this view) has both these capacities in some sense (BA, p. 22).

Of course, the notion that the natural world is a "larger self" that is capable of "empathy" is a patently anthropomorphic form of pantheism that abounds in nature mysticism. But this is not what I was getting at in the relevant passage in *Re-nchanting Humanity*:

If the self must merge--or dissolve, as I claim--according to deep ecologists, into rain forests, ecosystems, mountains, rivers "and so on," these phenomena must share in the intellectuality, imagination, foresight, communicative abilities, and empathy that human beings possess, that is, if "biocentric equality" is to have any meaning (RH, p. 100).

Contrary to Clark, I was decidedly not arguing that deep ecologists say rivers have a "capacity for empathy." I was arguing that if "biocentric equality" is to have any internal consistency as an ethical concept, then it must

view all other life-forms and other entities as equipped with the same capacities for moral action with which human beings are equipped--which they patently are not! If this point seems too trite to expend energy on making, then the fault lies with the deep ecologists for overlooking such a basic and obvious point in their own thinking, necessitating that their critics undertake the tiresome task of making it.

Clark's second objection is equally absurd:

Secondly, the concept of "biocentric equality" has no implication of "equality of qualities" among those beings to whom (or to which) the equality is attributed. Indeed, this concept, like most concepts of moral equality, are significant precisely because they attribute such equality to beings that are in other important ways unequal. Deep ecologists and other ecophilosophers who employ concepts such as "equal intrinsic value" or "equal inherent worth" clearly [!] mean that certain beings [!] deserve equal consideration or equal treatment [!], not that they possess certain characteristics to an equal degree (BA, p. 22).

As readers of *Re-Enchanting Humanity* know, I emphasized the qualitative differences between human and animals there precisely because deep ecologists such as Bill Devall, George Sessions, and Warwick Fox, among others, have argued that "there is no bifurcation in reality between the human and the nonhuman realms" (quoted in RH, p. 101). It was the biocentrist Robyn Eckersley, after all, who wrote that "our special capabilities (e.g., a highly developed consciousness, language and tool-making capability) are simply one [!] form of excellence alongside the myriad others (e.g., the

navigational skills of birds, the sonar capability and playfulness of dolphins, and the intense sociality of ants) rather than the form of excellence thrown up by evolution" (quoted in RH, p. 100). Guided by this "egalitarian" precept of shared qualitative "excellence" (which are not moral but largely anatomical), we might well lose our ability to distinguish birds from people in terms of their qualities and capabilities.

If there are other deep ecologists do not share Eckersley's enthusiasm for the "navigational skills of birds" and, like me, do see qualitative differences between human beings and nonhuman life-forms, I for one have not heard them criticize Eckersley. Yet I emphatically reject the biocentric notion that all life-forms "deserve equal consideration or equal treatment," as Clark puts it[59]--primarily because only one of those life-forms is capable of doing the "considering" and "treating." The natural world is intrinsically neither moral nor immoral, valuable nor valueless; inasmuch as it does not know anything, it can make no attributions of worth.

If I criticize a concept of "equality of qualities" in *Re-Enchanting Humanity* and many other places, I do so to support my critique of the ethical concept of "equal intrinsic worth." Only human beings can attribute worth to other creatures and entities; no animal can be regarded as an ethical agent without attributing to it the most outrageous anthropomorphic attributes. Where I cite differences in qualities between humans and nonhuman animals, it is precisely to correct this patent absurdity and to substantiate my case that animals are by no means of "equal intrinsic value" to humans. It is only human beings who are in a position to remedy their societies' relations with the rest of the natural world and

consciously address the ecological crisis, or, for that matter, even be aware that such a crisis exists.

I submit that at least one reason Clark/Cafard neglects to inform his readers of the purpose and message of my book is the fact that his own muddled ideas are very much part of the antihumanist and mystical trends that the book denounces. Indeed, had I chosen to, I could easily have used his own writings as a case study of those same regressive trends.

For one thing, irrationalism significantly pervades Clark's Taoist beliefs. Lao-Tzu, Clark has written approvingly, launched "an attack on knowledge and wisdom in the name of simplicity" and counseled people to "'abandon sageliness and discard wisdom'" (AM, p. 178) Clark's rationalization for this prescription--that it was artificial knowledge, not wisdom, that Lao-Tzu despised--hardly passes muster, since from its very first line the Tao Te Ching is anti-intellectual: "The Tao (Way) that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; The name that can be named is not the eternal name."[60]

Now, something that cannot be named is something that is ineffable and cannot be discussed. And something that cannot be discussed is something that cannot be thought about rationally. Thus it is not a rational but is an emotional or creative process--or a private mystical experience. In the case of the Tao Te Ching, it is a private mystical experience that is in question. "Tao is eternal and has no name" (chap. 32), we read; and: "The thing that is called Tao is eluding and vague" (chap. 21). Knowledge and wisdom\rationality--are, in the Tao, only sources of problems: "When knowledge and wisdom appeared, there emerged great hypocrisy" (chap. 18).



Consequently, Lao-Tzu advises, "discard wisdom" (chap. 19); "Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow" (chap. 20). If this is not irrationalism, a form of antihumanism that deprecates what is unique about human beings--their ability to generalize, foresee, and create--I don't know what is.

Moreover, the Tao Te Ching is patently a mystical work. As Max Weber put it, "With Lao-Tzu, Tao was brought into relationship with the typical god-seeking of the mystic. Tao . . . is the divine All-One of which we can partake-- s in all contemplative mysticism--by rendering one's self absolutely void of worldly interests and passionate desires, until release from all activity is attained." For Lao-Tzu, Weber observed, "the supreme good was a psychic state, a *unio mystica*." [61]

How sound is Weber's interpretation? Clark, for one, might reject it, since in his review he objects to my statement that mysticism "generally celebrates its very imperviousness to rational analysis. Explicitly antirational, it makes its strongest appeal to the authority of belief over thought" (BA, p. 21). As against my interpretation, Clark claims that the mystical outlook "often clashes with systems of belief" and "typically privileges direct experience over any sort of authority" (BA, p. 21). But does "experience" here mean empirical observation, personal "experience," or\most likely--mystical "experience"? In *Re-Enchanting Humanity* I was definitely not discussing the relationship of mystics to the hierarchs of orthodox belief systems. To the contrary, I was addressing the social consequences of mysticism and its relationship with reason. If mysticism privileges "direct experience," that phrase means something very different in mysticism from what it

means in science. By Clark's account, however, one might almost think that mystics are rational empiricists--even that they are not concerned with mystical experiences.

What is the relationship between faith and reason in the mystical outlook? To cite The Encyclopedia of Philosophy's unequivocal summary: There is none. The mystical vision, Ronald W. Hepburn writes, "must be a unifying vision, a sense that somehow all things are one and share a holy, divine, and single life, or that one's individual being merges into a 'Universal Self,' to be identified with God or the mystical One. Mystical experience then typically involves the intense and joyous realization of oneness with, or in, the divine, the sense that the divine One is comprehensive, all- embracing, in its being." Since all is "one," reason can play no role whatever; "oneness" is ineffable, and "no logically coherent account of [the] mystical vision seems attainable." [62] Not even Clark's pedantry can successfully separate mysticism from irrationalism. Moreover, as a deprecation of reason, mysticism is antihumanistic, for all the reasons I have give above.

Clark's Taoism is antihumanistic, in fact, not only by my definition but by his own admission. Says Lao-Tzu, "The sage is not humane. He regards all people as straw dogs"--that is, as worthless. Clark, who objects to my calling other mystics antihumanists, has no problem with antihumanism when it comes from Lao-Tzu; to the contrary, he says, "the Lao Tzu is predicated on anti-humanism (in fact, this is one of its great strengths)." Indeed, "it is only with a rejection of humanism that the greatest possible compassion can arise," since "to act 'humanely'. . . implies, at best, remaining within the

biased perspective of our own species." What is the alternative to that humanistic bias? "To transcend this 'humane' outlook means . . . to be 'impartial, to have no favorites' [i.e., no favorite species] . . . to respect all beings and value their various goods" (AM, p. 175, emphasis added). If this is not an affirmation of biocentrism--and its attendant antihumanism\I fail to understand what is. Little wonder that Clark is blind to the arguments I raised in *Re-Enchanting Humanity*. He displays all the classic symptoms of the very pathology I denounced.

Even though the *Tao Te Ching* patently presupposes the existence of government, some writers have tried to present Taoism as a proto-anarchist philosophy. Clark too has tried to represent Taoism as anarchist, in his case by using clerical casuistry. We are advised, for example, that unlike most rulers, Lao-Tzu's ruler-sage "exercises . . . non-dominating authority" and "imposes nothing on others, and refuses to legitimate his or her authority through the external supports of either law or tradition" (AM, p. 185). Only a few lines later, however, we learn that the ruler-sage commands a veritable apparatus, inasmuch as "he can apply his understanding of the Tao to government" (AM, p. 186). The meaning of this statement would be clear enough if it appeared in Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Politics*, not to speak of Machiavelli's *Prince*, but for Clark, Lao-Tzu is garbed in a golden robe that renders him immune to criticism--including the charge of statism.

Indeed, the reader who takes Lao-Tzu at his word is condemned by Clark as guilty of "a rather extreme literal-mindedness" (AM, p. 186), indeed as petty-minded for believing that "'ruling' must always mean

holding political office." Now this is really cute! Despite all appearances, what Lao-Tzu means seems to be what Clark tells us he means. Clark's outrageous claim to have the true

understanding of a basically metaphorical text replicates the ages-old priestly manipulation of holy books generally, while the notion of the "ruler who does not rule" is an ineffable paradox typical of mysticism but not of any worldly institutional arrangement.

If we were to apply this ineffable mystical paradox--that rulers do not necessarily rule--to present-day politics, we could easily justify every kind of political hypocrisy. We could make a case, for example, that anarchists could support certain kinds of candidates for state office and still remain anarchists in good standing. If to rule is really not to rule, after all, then why should anarchists abstain from statist politics? Why be so "literal-minded" even about a presidential candidate? Actually, Clark himself (who declined to support the Left Greens in their early-1990s effort to create a left-libertarian Green movement) is now placidly marching in step with the highly parliamentary U.S. Greens: in 1996 his Delta Greens, rather than criticize Ralph Nader's candidacy for the U.S. presidency on the Green ticket and advance a libertarian alternative, waxed effusively over Nader's virtues.[63] In Taoist politics, to be sure, only the literal-minded would find something to reproach about an anarchist celebrating Nader. Insofar as Taoism smuggles statism into anarchism, however, it constitutes a superlative justification for this increasingly common development: It allows us to be on-again, off-again anarchists and suggest that the presidency is not an executive office in a centralized bourgeois state but

merely a metaphor or--who knows?--perhaps even a worldly illusion.

Like Plato's Republic, the Tao Te Ching can easily be read as a guide for the enlightened ruler-sage, who sits at the pinnacle of a vast administrative machine, at least in Chinese history, where rulers were often based on vast, far-flung bureaucracies. What does the Tao Te Ching instruct the ruler to actually do? Not much--a point that has presumably given Taoism its anarchist flavor. But alas, it is only a flavor. Not only does the book have authoritarian underpinnings, but some of "Master Lao's" positive instructions to the ruler-sage are anything but benign. Indeed, they smack of crass, cynical manipulation: "Discard wisdom; then the people will benefit a hundredfold. Abandon humanity and discard righteousness; then the people will return to filial piety and deep love" (chap. 19). The true ruler-sage is one who keeps the people's "hearts vacuous, fills their bellies, weakens their ambitions, and strengthens their bones. He always causes his people to be without knowledge or desire" (chap. 3). He "treats them all as infants" (chap. 49); he should not "seek to enlighten the people but to make them ignorant" (chap. 65). If this is anarchism, then I am obliged to ask, what is tyranny?

Least of all does the Tao Te Ching advise the people to stand up and overthrow the tyranny of an unjust ruler. On the contrary, it urges them to surrender to situations that they apparently cannot change. In this regard, Clark's celebration of Taoist quietism--notably, its rejection of "forms of self-assertive and aggressive action"--is as disturbing as it is revealing. He marvels at the concept of "'non-action' (wu-wei), activity which is in accord with one's own Tao and with those of all

others" (AM, p. 179). Wu-wei is, among other things, a rejection of the very assertiveness and militancy that any revolutionary movement direly needs.

Historically, whether they follow wu-wei or some other precept, mystics have seldom exhibited any active participation in worldly affairs. Generally they tend, as a matter of doctrine, to intervene as little as possible in affairs of the mundane world, the better to preserve and retain the purity of their mystical state of being. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, to be sure, many subversives presented their doctrines in mystical form, as did Thomas Münzer did during the German Reformation. But that occurred in an era when nearly all political and intellectual discourse was conducted within a religious framework. Münzer was in fact a furious activist and a decidedly strong believer in armed struggle. Not so with our Taoists, whose concept of wu-wei instructs them, in general, not to rock the boat, not to struggle, or in good American mystical jargon: to go with the flow (although in the absence of rational analysis, it is difficult indeed to determine what the flow is, still less where it is flowing).

Indeed, in Clark's Taoism struggle is by its very nature futile: "Even if we 'win,'" he warns, paraphrasing Lao-Tzu, "we are defeated, since we have conformed to the alien values of those whom we have vanquished" (AM, p. 179). An extraordinary statement, coming from an alleged anarchist! Make no effort to change the social order, lest you yourself replicate its worst features! But without resistance and struggle, a social revolutionary movement would subside into quiescence. No wonder, in "Bookchin Agonistes," that Clark portrays me as "pugilistic." By the standards of Taoism, anyone with

any spirit of resistance to the social order would be pugilistic, or worse.

That mysticism in a political movement tends to have a depoliticizing effect is illustrated very clearly by Clark's own recent statement: "We need a spiritual revolution more than a political platform." [64] This remark's unmistakable disdain for an active, programmatic politics, in favor of an inward focus, can be regarded as a sure recipe for the triumph of the present social order over any potential resistance.

The same can be said of Clark's recommendations that art should become a substitute for politics. "Let the next Gathering of the Greens conduct all its business in poetry," he has declaimed. [65] What a lovely thought! Perhaps when a meeting nears the point where it might actually decide to do something political, the participants should pause to contemplate the Tao and read poems to one another (as, I am told, Clark did at a social ecology conference in Scotland several years ago). The myth of artistic vanguardism, I should note, died with Dada and surrealism some two generations ago and with the cultural "insurrections" of the 1960s, when oppositional art was adopted by advertising agencies and fashion designers to satisfy the "naughty" tastes of the middle classes.

Clark's advice against struggle ("Even if we 'win,' we are defeated") is in full accord with Taoist philosophy generally, which holds, as Arthur C. Danto points out in his critique of Asian philosophies, that "if we struggle we are lost already. . . .

We ought not to try to impose our will upon the world; this is going against the grain, hence a formula for frustration, disharmony, and unhappiness. . . . The absence of struggle emerges as the sign of being rightly in the world. . . . What the Tao Te Ching is urging, finally, is the loss of the self. If there is an injunction, it is to find the way the world wants to go and then to take that way oneself.[66]

In political terms, this avoidance of "going against the grain" essentially means accepting the existing social and political order, indeed accommodating oneself to it; in short, "The Way" that the Tao promises is a path to social and political surrender.

In tandem with his penchant for capitulation, the Lao-Tzu of New Orleans places a high premium on the cultivation of childlike personal qualities: "just as in nature the softest and weakest thing, water, can overcome the hardest obstacle, so softness and weakness are the most effective qualities in personal development" (AM, p. 181). Clark's Taoism thus catapults us back to the regressive belief that truth lies not in rational discovery but in divine recovery of a lost infantile stage when all was innocence--and ignorance.

Clark's arguments, like those of many anarcho-Taoists, advise us to return to the wisdom of the mythic (which, I submit, is really the fearfully superstitious) and to the chthonic world of the mysteries (which is really where men and women live on the lotus plant, in blissful ignorance of the world around them). The Tao Te Ching casts this ignorance as a secret knowledge that produces peace of mind, when in fact it is a case of mindlessness



yielding passivity--a state of mindlessness that plays directly into the hands of the ruling classes.

The Taoist maxim of "non-action" is also very useful to those who would pursue a professional career as, let's say, a philosophy professor. It provides a superb rationale for bringing one's self into blissful conformity with the very real "larger self" composed of one's academic peers and a state of mind that, by accepting the prevailing Selfhood, is conducive to academic advancement. Let us be frank about the fact that deep ecology is not a dissident ecological outlook; it is becoming widely accepted by the academic environmental studies establishment. Not surprisingly, in "Bookchin Agonistes," Clark falls in with the notion that I would be buried in the oblivion of obscurity if I had not assailed deep ecology--a particularly odious way of circumventing criticism, and one that contradicts the history of the ecology movement.[67] And this criticism, let it be emphasized, comes from an "anarchist," who should be celebrating his marginality in an era of cultural counterrevolution, where success is a great indicator of capitulation to the status quo.

One aspect of Clark that becomes evident, from the nature of his insults, is his pedestrian, indeed solid bourgeois reverence for academic credentials. This vacuous pedant accuses me of being an "autodidact," "an amateur," and an "undergraduate"--aving his Ph.D. in my face!--as though, with qualifications invented by the bourgeoisie, his elitist peers have bestowed a superior status upon him. By the same token, he defends Dawkins and Wilson against me, who have, among other things, a "scientific background" (BA, pp. 20-21)--no less! That settles everything. In Re- nchanting Humanity I was

criticizing the regressive social consequences of their scientific ideas, not casting aspersions on their scientific methodology. But for Clark, apparently, even on such grounds, one must have a "scientific background" in order to "reply coherently" to scientists, who are apparently immune to criticism from all but their fellow scientists.

This little professor is a blooming elitist! Indeed, in the spring of 1994, when Paula Emery, a member of the curriculum committee of the Institute for Social Ecology, visited Clark in New Orleans, she raised the troubling subject of his dis-invitation and tried to explain the decision to him. He flew into a rage--and called her a "peon"! As Emery later wrote to me: in Clark's eyes, "because I am young, because I am female, because I am not Murray Bookchin or Dan Chodorkoff, or some Man with a Name in the Ecology Movement, I am a peon." [68]

I must now assume that social thinkers must be equipped with Ph.D.'s before their ideas may gain credence with Clark. By this criterion, however, a wide range of social thinkers, including Lewis Mumford, [69] would be sent to perdition, not to speak of Darwin, Faraday, and many others who laid the basis for modern science. And if "peons" too are to be excluded from the realm of social action, then we must discard the Zapatistas--both of the Mexican Revolution and of the recent Chiapas uprising.

The remainder of Clark/Cafard's criticisms of me in "Bookchin Agonistes" are too mean-spirited and trivial to be dignified with a reply. Mainly calculated to produce chortles among the deep ecology crowd and validate, by sheer malice, Clark's return to the fold of his

peers, they reveal the extreme pettiness of Doctor Professor Clark and demonstrate that not even a Ph.D. can make a philosopher out of a pedestrian thinker.[70]

There is one issue, however, that I find so offensive and so outrageously false that I feel obliged to examine it in some detail. On other occasions I have noted that I witnessed street struggles in Paris between the French police (the CRS) and radical protesters in mid-July 1968. The facts are that I flew into the French capital on July 13--the general strike during May and June had paralyzed Air France, making earlier travel to Paris impossible. When, at length, I managed to get a reservation, it was for a July 13 flight. Accompanying me on this trip were my two children and my ex-ife, Beatrice.

Now Clark/Cafard worms his way into the matter, sneering:

If we read carefully, we . . . discover that [Bookchin's] first-hand experience of May '68 came, unfortunately, in the month of July. He reveals that he made a "lengthy" visit to Paris "in mid-July [sic] 1968, when street-fighting occurred throughout the capital on the evening before Bastille day" (p. 202). Bookchin is obviously trying to convey the impression that he was in the midst of things during the historic "events" of 1968. But as one history summarizes the events after the June 23 elections, "France closes down for the summer holidays" (BA, p. 23).

By no means does one have to look "carefully." as Clark puts it, at anything I wrote about my experiences on July 13; I dated them very explicitly. Had I been guided by

less moral standards, I could have lied quite brazenly and dated my Parisian trip to, say, May 12--and no one would have been aware of the falsehood.

In fact, when my family and I arrived in Paris on July 13, the situation on the Left Bank was so volatile that we had difficulty getting through the CRS cordons to reach our pension: the major streets were filled with zigzagging buses of mobile CRS, dressed in full riot gear. Knots of protesters clustered almost everywhere, scowling and hurling ironic gibes at the CRS men and the Parisian flics.

Exhausted by my transatlantic journey, I was resting in the pension that afternoon when Bea and my daughter, Debbie, rushed in and told me that furious fighting was taking place along the Boulevard St.-Michel. The CRS, they said, had been wildly shooting off tear gas canisters at all and sundry; in fact, Bea, Debbie, and my son Joe had had to turn to solicitous demonstrators for protection. I quickly accompanied Bea back to the Boulevard, but the fighting had essentially subsided. A few scattered CRS forays dispersed the remaining demonstrators, and at times we were obliged to take refuge in shops along the Boulevard.

Later, in the evening, I attended a neighborhood party that continued until midnight. After the festivities ended, Bea and I followed a group of young men--probably students who had decided not to go on their summer vacation (it does happen, you know) as Clark's "history" prescribes--carrying a red flag and singing the "Internationale" and marching to the Boulevard St.-Michel. No sooner did we reach the Boulevard than we saw large numbers of CRS men raging up and down the

avenue, alternately attacking and withdrawing from the crowds that filled the Boulevard. Caught up among a group of Africans, who seemed to be special targets of the racist CRS men, Bea and I were attacked with especial fury and had to scatter up toward the Pantheon, where we finally escaped our pursuers.

Alas for Clark/Cafard, I have more than an oral tradition to verify these events. Quite to the contrary of his unnamed "friends" who depict a placid Paris: not only was there street fighting in Paris on July 13, but it was featured on the front page of The New York Times the next morning. I had thought that the Times would bury its story on the back pages of the paper, but the fact that the story is prominently featured on the front page under the disconcerting headline "De Gaulle Insists on Public Order." The May-June revolt was not dead, even in mid-July. John L. Hess, who reported on the fighting he saw at the Place de la Bastille, noted:

As if to underscore [De Gaulle's] warning, riot policemen clashed tonight with several hundred youths carrying black and red flags and snake-dancing through the Place de la Bastille during celebrations on the eve of Bastille Day. Several youths were slightly injured. Using tear gas, the police cleared the square of thousands of intermingled celebrators and demonstrators, some of whom threw paving stones.[71]

Since Clark observed so very little in Paris during his own visit to that charming city in "late July," I am obliged to wonder what his own motives were in traveling to the French capital. Was it to stroll through the Louvre? Or to dine along the Champs Elysées? To improve his French?

## THE FUTURE OF ANARCHISM

Will anarchism be a revolutionary tendency within the broad realm of socialism--the most revolutionary tendency, as Kropotkin hoped--or will it be devitalized by technophobic primitivism and Taoist quietism? Will it be a coherent theory capable of providing a future social upsurge with a viable direction? Or will it consist of a pastiche of unfinished, reactionary ideas, of the kind that the Watsons and Clarks serve up? Will it become a well-organized movement, composed of responsible and committed supporters? Or will it dissolve into personalistic, gossipy encounter groups and a juvenile clutter of "personal insurrections" that consist of offensive behavior, fruitless riots, and outré styles of dress and demeanor--as well as, in some cases, sociopathic "actions" and barefaced criminality, masked with claims that one is an anarchist and is therefore free to do whatever one chooses?

It was these questions that impelled me to write *Social Anarchism* or *Lifestyle Anarchism*. The response I received from the anarchist press in the United States--otably, *Anarchy* (which published Bob Black's diatribe) and *Fifth Estate* (which produced Watson's *Beyond Bookchin* and Clark's "Bookchin Agonistes"), as well as lesser periodicals and publishers (including the eco-Marxist journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, which published Joel Kovel's "Negating Bookchin," a psychologistic attempt to explain my disagreements with Marxism primarily as a competition with the Master for personal recognition)--are remarkably lacking in social

perspective and thereby bear out the validity of the argument I made in SALA.[72]

At the peril of becoming mundane, allow me to point out that capitalism is a system of incredible dynamism that is not only becoming global but is penetrating every pore of society. Its commodity relationships are percolating from the economic realm ever farther into the private domains of the kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom--as well as into the community domains of neighborhood, city, and region. Capitalism is coming closer to being an all-embracing social system than ever before in its history. It is doing so not because of some abstract technological imperative or domineering sensibility (although both surely facilitate the process) but above all because the deep-seated imperatives of capital accumulation that are generated by marketplace competition drive it unrelentingly to extend and maximize its worldwide outreach for resources and profits.

This system cannot be ended without conflict: indeed, the bourgeoisie will categorically not give up its privileges and control over social life without a ruthless struggle. What can be said with certainty is that it will not be overthrown by adopting a quietistic mysticism, or by mindless denunciations of "civilization in bulk" and technology. Nor will it be overthrown by the creation of Temporary Autonomous Zones, or by "closing" down a government or commercial center for a few hours or even a day, or by routine tussles with the police, or by having a street festival with black flags draped from lampposts. It will not be overthrown by Hakim Bey-esque "happenings," or by poetic effusions on "surregionalism."

Those who wish to overthrow this vast system will require the most careful strategic judgment, the most profound theoretical understanding, and the most dedicated and persistent organized revolutionary groups to even shake the deeply entrenched bourgeois social order. They will need nothing less than a revolutionary libertarian socialist movement, a well-organized and institutionalized endeavor led by knowledgeable and resolute people who will foment mass resistance and revolution, advance a coherent program, and unite their groups in a visible and identifiable confederation.

In 1919, amid the collapse of the German Reich at the end of the First World War and the establishment of a Social Democratic government, various German leftists in Berlin and elsewhere attempted to drive German politics, which were then still in disarray, further to the left and complete the November 1918 Revolution in order to create a communist social order. It was a time when history held its breath\when, indeed, the future of the entire century hung in the balance. The German Revolution of 1918-19 was a disastrous failure. But its lessons are in many respects more instructive for anarchists and revolutionary socialists than even those of the Spanish Revolution, which was probably doomed once major European powers began to participate in its civil war in the autumn of 1936 and the international working class pathetically failed to come to its aid.

The events that characterize the German Revolution are an often-confusing welter, but in January 1919 serious revolutionaries faced a brief but decisive period. The counter-revolutionary Social Democratic government under Ebert, Scheidemann, and Noske tried to remove the radical Independent Social Democratic police chief,



Emil Eichhorn, from his post. In response, the city's leftist organizations--the Independents Social Democrats, the pre-Leninist Communists around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards--distributed leaflets denouncing the move and calling for a protest rally. On Sunday, January 5, 1919, to everyone's astonishment, 200,000 workers came into the streets and squares of Berlin, from "the statue of Roland to the statue of Victory . . . right into the Tiergarten," as *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag), the Communist Party's organ, reported in a retrospective account a year later. They were armed with rifles, and with light and heavy machine guns, ready to fight for the retention of Eichhorn and, very probably, to replace the counterrevolutionary Social Democrats with a "Workers' and Soldiers' Council Republic."

They are correctly described as potentially the greatest proletarian army history had ever seen, and they were in a belligerent, indeed revolutionary mood. They waited expectantly in the squares and streets for their leaders--who had called the mobilization--to give them the signal to move. None was forthcoming. Throughout the entire day, while this huge proletarian army waited for tactical guidance, the indecisive leaders debated among themselves. Finally evening approached, and the masses of armed proletarians drifted home, hungry and disappointed.

The next day, a Monday, another appeal to take to the streets was distributed among the workers, and the same numerically huge mass of armed workers reappeared, once again ready for an uprising. Their demonstration was comparable in its potential revolutionary force to the one that had assembled on the previous day--but the

leaders still behaved indecisively, still debating their course of action without coming to any definitive decision. By nightfall, after waiting throughout the day in a cold fog and steady rain, the crowd dispersed again, never to return.

At the time of these two mass mobilizations, in early January, the counterrevolution still lacked the effective military force it needed to suppress an uprising. With these few days of grace, however, it managed to muster sufficient forces to gain control of Berlin and put down the so-called Spartakus (Communist) uprising that later led to the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

Had the leaders been unified and decisive; had they given the signal to unseat the government, the workers might well have succeeded in taking over Berlin. Would the capital have remained isolated from Germany as a whole, or would successful uprisings have followed in key cities throughout Germany as well? We will never know: with the failure of the Independents, Spartakus, and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards to unseat the Social Democratic government, the validity of these various speculations were never tested. What is clear, however, is that a revolutionary possibility of historic proportions was squandered for lack of organization and decisiveness. In the estimation of many historians, the German Revolution came to an end on January 6, 1919, when the last of the two working-class mobilizations melted away--and for the rest of the century, the world as well as Germany had to live with the grim consequences of this failure.

The events of January 1919 in Germany, remote as they are, haunt me because I cannot help but wonder what today's anarchists would have done in a similar situation. Would they have had an organization ready and able to play a significant role in moving great masses of workers in a revolution against the Majority Social Democratic government? Would they have been able to mobilize forces strong enough to defeat the Free Corps, the paramilitary units that the Majority Social Democrats, especially Noske, were organizing against them, while the disorganized and indecisive revolutionary leaders bickered, delayed, and acted late and irresolutely?

In the great revolutions of history, the first demand that the masses made of their leaders was responsibility--not least the potentially insurrectionary Germans, who demanded order and purposiveness as evidence of seriousness. Had today's lifestyle anarchists been on the scene in 1919, I can only suppose that their position--or lack of one--would have helped to seal the doom of the German Revolution by excluding decisive organized action. As I wrote in SALA, many of them expressly shun organization of any type as authoritarian--or ipso facto as a Bolshevik-Leninist- Stalinist party. In the absence of a program, a politics, and a responsible organization--not to speak of a theory or even a sense of purpose beyond the "self-realization" of their writers--lifestylers, it can be stated as a matter of certainty, would have impeded rather than facilitated the unseating of a basically bourgeois state machine.

Indeed, for all I know, they might even have opposed the CNT and the FAI in Spain in 1936. Given their mysticism and irrationalism, they would turn either to introspection of one kind or another, or to reckless acts

of personal rebellion and mindless adventurism. As for Clark, when he is not trying to replace left-libertarian politics with poetry and mysticism, he approaches, in practice, a social-democratic gradualist. To ordinary people, however dissatisfied they may be, no protest is more frivolous than the sight of a spindly kid throwing a stone at a cop (as in the cover art on Black's *Anarchy Without Leftism*)--the image, par excellence, of irresponsible, juvenile bravado.

What makes the limited outlooks of lifestylers so damaging, especially in a time of reaction, is that they indirectly make the prevailing disempowerment into a virtue. Whether it is the quietism of some or the adventuristic episodes of others, their ineffectuality promotes disempowerment. Perhaps most important at a time when the lessons of the revolutionary tradition must be preserved and carefully analyzed, they undermine the socialist core of anarchism and offer essentially fragmentary impressions and actions as substitutes for serious reflection and responsible discussion. They lower the level of theoretical reflection: Watson's denunciations of civilization are no substitute for an analysis of capitalist social relations, any more than Clark's use of poetry and pop Asian theology is a substitute for rational insight and revolutionary social action.

For the present, the most precious arenas we have in which to cultivate an effective opposition are the precious minds of libertarian social revolutionaries who are eager to find alternatives to the prevailing social order and ways to change it. Either an anarchist is committed to a social war against class rule and hierarchy, offering a message based on revolutionary

socialism or libertarian communism; or anarchism has been reduced to another of the many chic fads that constitute so much of the culture of modern capitalism.

As we enter the twenty-first century, anarchists should ask themselves whether a serious revolutionary opposition ought really to discard critical reason and knowledge in favor of mystical intuition, a cosmic reductionism, self-realization in the form of personal riots, the creation of Temporary Autonomous Zones, and the joys of throwing bricks at cops. Unfortunately, at least among American anarchists, a refusal to reason out a libertarian socialistic standpoint is becoming widespread, and the thinking of those who might best form such a movement is being fogged by mysticism, antirationalism, primitivism, and technophobia. Far from being agents to advance society's insight into its grave plight, these anarchists are symptomatic of the social regression that marks the present period.

At the end of my life, it is my firm commitment to convey the revolutionary tradition and its lessons to young people. Unless they study its events and learn from its advances and its errors, they will float mindlessly into the barbarism that capitalism is bringing to the world. The danger of social amnesia is very real: indeed, the idea of revolution itself is waning from the collective mind of radicals today, and if it disappears, then the capitulation of the Left to capitalism will finally be complete--for it is only revolution that will ultimately change this society, not aesthetics, technophobia, antirationalism, and the like.

Those who advocate making changes in lifestyle at the expense of a revolutionary movement are no less part of

that definitive capitulation than the depoliticizing tendencies that are abroad today. Years ago it could be validly argued that lifestyle and politics go together; that changes in lifestyle do not necessarily entail the surrender of revolutionism. In the 1960s I myself made the need for a convergence between the counterculture and the New Left the focus of most of my activities. But today\and especially today!--lifestyle anarchism is growing at the expense of rational theory and serious organization, not in tandem with it.

Revolution must be cultivated by means of systematic propaganda, step-by-step measures, careful planning, and rationally formulated programs that are flexible enough to meet changing social needs: in short, it must be cultivated by a responsible, dedicated, and accountable movement that is serious and organized along libertarian lines. It is the height of self-deception to suppose we can substitute personal "militancy" for organization, or personal "insurrection" for a consistent revolutionary practice. If anarchism loses the nerve and resoluteness, not to speak of the theory, intelligence, and flexibility, necessary to fulfill this responsibility, then left libertarians in the coming century will be obliged to turn for solace once again to the famous statement of William Morris:

Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it turns to be not what they meant, other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.

--March, 2 1998

## NOTES

1. Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (San Francisco and Edinburgh: A.K. Press, 1995); hereinafter SALA.
2. Thomas Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," in Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, eds., *Commodify Your Dissent* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997), pp. 34-35.
3. Kingsley Widmer, "How Broad and Deep Is Anarchism?" *Social Anarchism*, no. 24 (1997), pp. 77-83; emphases added. The name of this journal should not be confused with the title of my booklet.
4. Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press, 1997); hereinafter AAL.
5. The use of the epithet acquired an international reach when the Oxford Green Anarchists wrote an unsavory letter to the anarchist-communist periodical *Organise!*, lacing into its editors for printing a cordial review of SALA and denouncing me as "Dean Bookchin." See "Letters," *Organise!* issue 45 (Spring 1997), p. 17.
6. For more on Black's activities, the reader may care to consult Chaz Bufe's "Listen, Anarchist!" (Tucson, AZ: Match, 1987; still available from A.K. Press and Freedom Press); Fred Woodworth's "I Go Time Traveling," *Match*, no. 91 (Winter 1996-97), esp. pp. 18-21; and Michael Pollan's "Opium, Made Easy: One Gardener's Encounter with the War on Drugs," *Harper's* (April 1997), especially pp. 42-45.
7. David Watson, *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1996); hereinafter BB. Other works in this section are cited according to the following key:  
By Murray Bookchin:

EF = The Ecology of Freedom

SALA = Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism

TMC = The Modern Crisis

(For publication information about these volumes, please see the bibliographical listing at the end of this book.)

By David Watson:

(under the pseudonym "George Bradford" unless otherwise indicated)

ATM = "Against the Megamachine," Fifth Estate, vol. 15, no. 5 (July 1981); pseudonym "P. Solis."

BPA = "Bhopal and the Prospects for Anarchy," Fifth Estate, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 1985).

CIB = "Civilization in Bulk," Fifth Estate, vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 1991).

HDDE = How Deep Is Deep Ecology? (Ojai, CA: Times Change Press, 1989).

MCGV = "Media: Capital's Global Village," Fifth Estate, vol. 19, no. 3 (Fall 1984).

NST = "Notes on Soft Tech," Fifth Estate, vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 1983); unsigned.

SDT = "A System of Domination: Technology," Fifth Estate, vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1984).

SIH = "Stopping the Industrial Hydra: Revolution Against the Megamachine," Fifth Estate, vol. 24, no. 3 (Winter 1990).

TOC = "The Triumph of Capital," Fifth Estate, vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 1992).

8. As I did in The Ecology of Freedom.

9. If my views on medicine are "quite conventional" (BB, p. 114), they could stem from the fact that modern medicine is what is keeping me alive. To be sure, many alternative therapies are also very helpful. But I wonder if Watson makes the same kind of antimedical argument to his elderly family members and friends who, in all



likelihood, depend as I do on antihypertensives and other medications for their continued existence.

10. Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 186-87.

11. Lewis Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power* (New ork: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), p. 356.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 404, emphasis added.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 373.

14. I do not advocate the use of all technologies--I would exclude, for example, clearly malignant ones like nuclear power. Perhaps the most outrageous piece of fraud Watson commits is to claim that I make a "fervent advocacy of pesticides" (BB, p. 139). This insinuation is scandalous\I pioneered criticism, from a left perspective, precisely of petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides. My 1952 article "The Problem of Chemicals in Food" (not to speak of my 1962 book *Our Synthetic Environment*) objected strenuously to the chemicalization of the environment, and my position has not changed since then.

15. A nervous Watson tells us that "the word ultimately must be stressed here" (BB, p. 163); presumably this caveat is intended to mitigate the sentence's determinism by bringing it into the short term, but how this makes a difference escapes me.

16. Mumford, *Pentagon*, p. 404, emphasis added.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 349, 362. Just after speaking of modern technology's "potential benefits," Mumford refers to its "inherent defects." How something "inherently defective" can also have "potential benefits" is a paradox whose resolution escapes me; the fact remains that Mumford did see potential benefits in modern technology.

18. Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, "Problems in the Study of Hunters and Gatherers," in Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1968), p. 6.

19. Marshall Sahlins, "Notes on the Original Affluent Society," in Lee and DeVore, *Man the Hunter*, pp. 85-86.

20. In BB Watson ignores this introduction completely and gleefully quotes me against myself, juxtaposing writings from my excessively primitivistic works with my current writings on aboriginal society, as if he were revealing a highly compromising contradiction.

It is no secret that the ideas of politically engaged writers change and develop. In fact, any theorist who is politically engaged will necessarily undergo such shifts. Had I written about social theory from the ivory tower of academia, my ideas might have remained entirely consistent over forty years--and entirely irrelevant. Certainly my core ideas have not changed, but even as I retained my adherence to them, I continually had to respond to changing political circumstances, to new issues that arose in movements, and to new movements for that matter.

Watson shows that he understands this phenomenon when it comes to Lewis Mumford's ideas on technology, which evolved over several decades. He even brims over with understanding for Mumford's shifts (BB, pp. 198-203) and, when his ideas stray too far from his own, grants him all sorts of extenuating circumstances. ("Though he many not have completely thought through the processes and period he long studied, he evolved along with them" [BB, p. 202].) But with typical malice, no such latitude is given to me: Watson treats the multitude of books and articles I wrote over a span of thirty-one years, from 1964 to 1995, as if they were a single book written at one time. (Indeed, on page 161 [n.

164], Watson specifically rules out making allowances for my intellectual evolution. The reason? I once objected, in a way he dislikes, to someone taking my ideas out of the context of their time. Thus, when he finds discrepancies, he takes me to task for contradicting myself. Using this technique, one could set about making Mumford or any other politically engaged theorist look entirely ridiculous.

21. Mumford, let it be noted, would have regarded Watson's claim that aboriginal society was this kind of libertarian paradise as nonsense. "Wherever we find archaic man," he wrote, "we find no lawless creature, free to do what he pleases, when he pleases, how he pleases: we find rather one who at every moment of his life must walk warily and circumspectly, guided by the custom of his own kind, doing reverence to superhuman powers." See *Myth of the Machine*, p. 68.

22. Roger Lewin, "Past Perspectives," *Science*, vol. 240 (May 27, 1988), p. 1147.

23. Thomas N. Headland, "Paradise Revised," *Sciences* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), pp. 46, 48.

24. Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 308.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 308.

26. Richard Lee, *Subsistence Ecology of !Kung Bushmen*, Ph.D. Diss. (University of California, Berkeley, 1965), p. 94; quoted in Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 304.

27. Richard Lee, "!"Kung Bushmen Subsistence: An Input- utput Analysis," in A. Vayda, ed., *Environment and Cultural Behavior* (Garden City, NY: Natural

History Press, 1969), pp. 47-79; and Lee, !Kung San, p. 278, table 9.12.

28. Quoted in Roger Lewin, "New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers," *Science*, vol. 240 (May 27, 1988), p. 1146. This article describes the changes in the study of the !Kung; its thesis is that "a very simple but persuasive model of hunter-gatherer life dominated anthropological thought for two decades, but is now being replaced as challenges come from several directions."

29. It is worth noting that Mumford, who Watson likes to suggest was something of a primitivist, observed:

The fragility of [a paleolithic foraging] economy is obvious: the gifts of nature are too uncertain, the margin is too narrow, the balance too delicate. Hence primitive cultures, in order to be sure of continuity, tend to be restrictive and parsimonious, unready to welcome innovations or take risks, even reluctant to profit by the existence of their neighbors. . . . In so far as the power complex has overcome that species of fossilization, we owe it a debt. Plenitude on such a solitary, meager, unadventurous basis too easily sinks into torpid penury and stupefaction. . . . It is not to go back toward such a primitive plenitude, but forward to a more generous regimen, far more generous than the most affluent society now affords, that the coming generations must lay their plans. (Mumford, *Pentagon of Power*, pp. 401-402, emphasis added)

30. To my contention in SALA that most tribal spirituality as we know it today has been influenced by Christianity, Watson raises no objection; instead, he dismisses its significance. "That the Ghost Dance was influenced by Christianity doesn't mean it wasn't authentically native" (BB, pp. 235), he counters. True, many Indian people today follow these religious

admixtures and even Christianity itself. But that's not the point: presumably the effects of Christianity\the religion par excellence of European colonialism and imperialism-have vitiated the force of "ancient perennial wisdom" in resisting oppression. If the "ancient wisdom" of the primitive is necessary for a "future social ecology," I am obliged to wonder if it will also contain the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist?

31. John E. Yellen, "The Transformation of the Kalahari !Kung," *Scientific American* (April 1990), pp. 102B-102D.

32. Lee, !Kung San, p. 458.

33. Yellen, "Transformation," p. 102D.

34. It is worth noting that Mumford would have been shocked by this hypostasization of irrationality and impulse. "So dangerously infantile are man's untutored and undisciplined impulses that even the most stable cultures have not been able to prevent life-threatening explosions of irrationality--'going berserk,' 'running amok,' practicing systematic torture and human sacrifice or, with pseudo- ational religious support, embarking on the insensate slaughter and destruction of war" (*Pentagon of Power*, p. 369). I would add that "ordinary men" made up the German police battalions that slaughtered Jews in Poland during World War II, while ordinary Japanese conscripts engaged in the rape of Nanking during the occupation of China in the 1930s.

35. Not surprisingly, Watson rejects the idea that reason or other learned behavior is to be valued more highly than instinct, intuition, and the extrarational. He suggests that we do not "benefit intellectually, ethically, socially, or practically by privileging the learned behavior of human society over innate behavior" (BB, p. 31) and agrees that between "learned behavior" and "instinct," "one kind of behavior is not really higher and another

lower" (quoting the mystic Paul Shepard, BB, p. 31). It is worth noting, again, that Mumford would have disagreed with him profoundly, indeed furiously. "While most of the 'emotional' responses to color, sound, odor, form, tactile values, predate man's rich cortical development," he noted, "they underlie and enrich his higher modes of thought" (*Myth of the Machine*, p. 39). The later chapters of *The Pentagon of Power* are pervaded with contempt for the mysticism of the 1960s youth culture and the atavistic behavior, as he also told me, of the Living Theater.

36. Even the qualification Watson gives--"it is possible to be both unimportant and uniquely important" (BB, p. 56)--is reminiscent of the doublethink promoted by National Socialist ideology, in which the will of individual Germans came to be identified with the will of the Führer. See J. P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), chaps. 7 and 8.

37. Anyone who doubts Watson's extrasensory ability to penetrate unknown realms should consider his account of my meeting with Mumford at the University of Pennsylvania, which I mentioned in *SALA*. Although Watson was not there, he somehow knows that I spent a only "few minutes chatting with Mumford" (BB, p. 198). Since he would have no other way of knowing this, I am convinced he must have used shamanic dreaming. In fact, Mumford and I had a very fruitful discussion, in which I challenged him on many things. (Although he certainly had my admiration, he was not my guru.) We spoke probably for an hour or so--I didn't clock the conversation. Nor was my relationship with Mumford limited to this encounter. Sadly, Watson's shamanic wisdom failed to guide him to the acknowledgements section of my book *Our Synthetic Environment*

(published in 1962), where I thanked Mumford "for reading my discussion of urban life," the book's chapter on cities. Back in the mid-1950s, in fact, Mumford sent me an encouraging response to my leaflet "Stop the Bomb," and in the early 1970s, when I applied for a grant from the Rabinowitz Foundation, he, Marcuse, and René Dubos provided me with letters of commendation. But it is not my association with Mumford that is at issue here.

38. Paul Radin, *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), p. 140.

39. Watson's guru, Mumford, was more dubious about shamans and aboriginal subjectivity. He warned that "the taboo-ridden savage . . . is often childishly overconfident about the powers of his shaman or magicians to control formidable natural forces." See *Pentagon of Power*, p. 359.

40. Quoted in Jose Lopez-Rey, *Goya's Caprichos: Beauty, Reason and Caricature*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 80-81. See also F. D. Klingender, *Goya in the Democratic Tradition* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 92. It is worth noting that by "arts," it is not at all clear that Goya was referring only to the visual and performing arts to painting, poetry, and music; in its eighteenth-century usage, the word arts would also have encompassed the mechanical arts and technics which makes Fifth Estate's inclusion of the computer an even more arrant distortion.

41. Oddly, in another recent discussion of social ecology, Michael Zimmerman uses the very same two quotations to cast me in a negative light. Although he is a philosophy professor and therefore presumably a more scrupulous scholar than Watson, Zimmerman, like Watson, removes both phrases from their context, even

truncating the "parasite" quotation in exactly the same way that Watson did.

While rightly condemning such remarks, Bookchin himself recently restated a view he advanced years ago, that "man could be described as a highly destructive parasite who threatens to destroy his host--the natural world and eventually himself." . . . Bookchin himself has described humans as "a curse on natural evolution."

Michael Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), p. 171. That both Zimmerman and Watson juxtapose the identical quotations causes me to wonder whether they were both influenced by their mutual friend, John Clark.

42. By Watson's account, I demand that my readers "must" agree with everything I write, "must accept the whole program as a unitary whole," and so on--indeed, in one such extended paraphrase he uses the word "must" no fewer than six times on a single page (BB, p. 15), as though whenever I assert a point of view, I place my readers under a stringent requirement to agree with me--or else!

Yet Watson himself insists that "social ecology must discover a post- nlightenment politics" (BB, p. 51), and that "A future social ecology, if it is to endure as a meaningful philosophical current, must learn to listen" to trees (BB, p. 72). And: "A future social ecology . . . would recognize that . . . firm ground, if any, must be found" in a reorientation of life "around perennial, classic and aboriginal manifestations of wisdom" (BB, p. 154).

43. Daniel A. Coleman wrote a review of *Beyond Bookchin* that was published in *Z* magazine, April 1997, pp. 55-57. He was called my "sycophant" in an unsigned note in *Fifth Estate* (Fall 1997), p. 34.



44. "To sense and comprehend after action is not worthy of being called comprehension. Deep knowledge is to be aware of disturbance before disturbance, to be aware of danger before danger, to be aware of destruction before destruction, to be aware of calamity before calamity." Watson quotes this passage from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* against me, at a point when he thinks my foresight has failed (BB, p. 162). It could well be applied to his own very late recognition of the importance of ecological politics.
45. What makes Watson's book interesting is that he follows the logic of lifestyle anarchism to its preposterous end--and for this reason alone, it is well that serious revolutionaries should read it.
46. David Watson, "Swamp Fever, Primitivism, and the 'Ideological Vortex': Farewell to All That," *Fifth Estate* (Fall 1997); hereinafter SF.
47. John Clark, *The Anarchist Moment* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1984), p. 11. The title for this book was suggested by me and effusively accepted by the author, with warm expressions of gratitude.
48. John Clark, ed., *Renewing the Earth: The Promise of Social Ecology: A Celebration of the Work of Murray Bookchin* (London: Green Print, 1990). This book includes many misbegotten essays that I do not hold in high regard and whose inclusion I vigorously protested to Clark.
49. Mary Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 102.
50. Max Cafard (pseud. for John Clark): "Bookchin Agonistes: How Murray Bookchin's Attempts to Re-Enchant Humanity' Become a Pugilistic Bacchanal," *Fifth Estate*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Summer 1997), pp. 20-23; hereinafter BA.

51. Clark, *Anarchist Moment*, pp. 173, 175; hereinafter AM.

52. Whether Clark ever understood what I was writing for years about postscarcity and its implications for freedom, his Taoism explicitly advises a community to reject even labor-saving technologies: "though there should be among the people contrivances requiring ten times, a hundred times less labour, he would not use them" (quoted in AM, p. 178).

53. Daniel Chodorkoff, executive director of the Institute for Social Ecology, letter to Murray Bookchin, Feb. 12, 1997.

54. Ibid.

55. "1992 Annual Meeting/Summer Program Evaluation," Institute for Social Ecology, Oct. 3, 1992, p. 9; minutes taken by Paula Emery; Janet Biehl files.

56. Chaia Heller, ISE faculty member, personal conversation with Murray Bookchin, 1997.

57. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 194, 205, 207, 209.

58. Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Layton, UT: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), p. 67.

59. In the quoted passage, to be sure, he says "certain beings," not "all life-forms," but he is not consistent with biocentrism here. Once again, the definition by Sessions and Devall: "all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic worth," *ibid.*, emphasis added.

60. Wing-Tsit Chan, trans. and comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 139. All quotations from the *Tao Te Ching* herein are taken from this source.

61. Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1951), pp. 181-82.
62. "Mysticism, Nature and Assessment of," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), pp. 429, 430.
63. "Nader Campaign Targets Corporate Abuse of Power and the One-Party State," *Delta Greens Quarterly*, no. 43 (Summer 1996), pp. 1- .
64. John Clark, "The Spirit of Hope," *Delta Greens Quarterly*, no. 39 (Summer 1995), p. 2.
65. Max Cafard (pseud. for John Clark), "The Surre(gion)alist Manifesto," *Fifth Estate*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 1993), p. 18.
66. Arthur C. Danto, *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral hilosophy* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 107, 110.
67. It is particularly obnoxious that this pompous academic now derides me for not being au courant about academic theories of justice\specifically Rawls's contractarian notions. As Clark should know, my views on the subject of justice are drawn from sources that long antedate Rawls's work. Indeed, I was at pains in *The Ecology of Freedom*, to emphasize that they were guided by Marx and Engels (EF, pp. 87, 149), both of whom elucidated their ideas about a century before Rawls's tedious *Theory of Justice* appeared on the shelves of college bookshops.
68. Paula Emery, former ISE administrator (1987-93) and assistant director (1989-93), letter to Murray Bookchin, Feb. 11, 1997.
69. According to his biographer, Mumford took occasional courses at various New York academic institutions on subjects that interested him. But "although he eventually accumulated enough credits to graduate, he

never took a degree, and he saw no need for it." Donald L. Miller, *Lewis Mumford: A Life* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), p. 73.

70. Although Clark/Cafard laments his space limitations, he devotes much of "Bookchin Agonistes" to mere grammatical errors.

71. John L. Hess, "De Gaulle Insists on Public Order," *New York Times*, July 14, 1968, p. 1.

72. In a recent interview of Arne Naess by Andrew Light, Light says that I "wrote up a denouncement of [John] Clark and personally mailed it to social ecologists all over the world." Naess rejoins, "Yes, John Clark was criticized by Bookchin and that's the first social ecologist I've seen really criticized openly on this account. I disagree very much with Bookchin but I would never criticize him in that way." See Andrew Light, "Deep Socialism: An Interview with Arne Naess," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* (March 1997), p. 76.

There was nothing sinister or even mildly underhanded about my reply to Clark. At a 1995 social ecology conference in Scotland, Clark had distributed copies of a lengthy document he had written attacking the libertarian municipalist politics of social ecology. I wrote a reply defending libertarian municipalism against these criticisms and sent it to a handful of people who I knew had already received Clark's article. Afterward Clark revised his article in the light of my reply, and it was circulated over the Internet. I sent my reply to people who told me they had received Clark's article; it made its way from there around the Internet too. Both documents are now posted on various Web sites.

My reply to Clark was subsequently published in *Democracy and Nature* (issue 9, 1997), under the title "Comments on the International Social Ecology Network Gathering and the 'Deep Social Ecology' of John Clark."

The editors were eager to publish Clark's original critique as well and asked him for permission to do so; he refused to grant permission. (As the editors indicate on page 154: "Unfortunately, we are unable to also publish John Clark's talk since the author has not allowed it to be reprinted.") It is for this reason that my article appears alone.

As I understand it, Clark's article will be published in yet another book denouncing my work, a joint endeavor of Marxists, neo-Marxists, and deep ecologists--as well, perhaps, as some others who may evaluate my views with a measure of objectivity. It quite frankly astonishes me that Clark would place his paper in the service of a book whose purpose is to diminish the anarchist tendency in the ecology movement.

Oddly, in the CNS interview, Light and Naess seem to have some shared knowledge of Clark's afflictions (whatever they may be) at my hands. Light says ominously: "It is interesting to note that after this 'exchange' between Bookchin and Clark, Clark was dropped without comment from the International Advisory Board of the social ecology journal *Society and Nature* (now *Democracy and Nature*), edited by Takis Fotopoulos" (p. 76, fn. 6). Light seems to assume, quite blandly, that because I disliked Clark's paper, I had him removed from the editorial advisory board. Let me state quite bluntly that this assumption is false.

In the first place, *Democracy and Nature*, as it is now called, is categorically not a "social ecology journal." Indeed, its "Our Aims" statement reads quite clearly: "the journal will function as a forum for the interchange of ideas between libertarian socialists, supporters of the autonomy project, social ecologists, eco-socialists and other green Left movements, together with feminist and activists in the land-based, indigenous and third world

movements." (Each issue contains some variation on this basic tatement.)

Second, Democracy and Nature's managing editor, Takis Fotopoulos, dropped John Clark from the journal's International Advisory Board because of the bitter disagreement between Fotopoulos and Clark at the Scotland conference (which I described in my Democracy and Nature article on Clark in issue 9). Although my own disagreements with Clark were well known to Fotopoulos, I had nothing to do with the decision or action to drop him.

Third, Clark was not the only adviser who was dropped from the board in that issue of Democracy and Nature. So was Dimitri Roussopoulos of Black Rose Books, one of my principal publishers, for reasons that had nothing whatever to do with either Clark or the Scotland conference. In 1996 I myself resigned from the editorial advisory board because I felt that too many ideas that I disagreed with were dominating the magazine's presentation.

## **PROPOSITIONS**

## RADICALIZING DEMOCRACY

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

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*Where Do We Come From? What Are We?*

*Where Are We Going? K.I.O. Interviews Murray Bookchin*

Murray Bookchin is the author of numerous books and pamphlets . His most famous include Post-Scarcity Anarchism and The Ecology of Freedom. His ideas have deeply influenced some members of the Kick It Over collective This interview was conducted at a conference on community economic development in Waterloo



Ontario in early 1985. Thanks to Steve H. for his generous assistance. and to Murray B. for giving so unstintingly of his time. The interview was conducted by Ron Hayley and edited by Alexandra Devon.

K.I.O.:

You've said in your writings that we are undergoing a change as far-reaching as the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture or from agriculture to industry. Could you elaborate on this and talk a bit about why this is occurring now?

*Murray Bookchin:*

The transformation I have in mind is cybernation, genetic engineering, nucleonics, and the sophistication of electronic technology in vast numbers of fields and the development of means of surveillance of a highly sophisticated form. The extent of the transformation is absolutely astonishing. What we find today is a totally immoral economy and society which has managed to unearth the secrets of matter and the secrets of life at the most fundamental level. This is a society that, in no sense, is capable of utilizing this knowledge in any way that will produce a social good. Obviously there are leavings from a banquet that fall from the table but my knowledge and my whole experience with capitalism and with hierarchical society generally is that almost every advance is as best a promise and at worst utterly devastating for the world.

So when one speaks of this combination which has occurred. only within my own lifetime, of plumbing the

deepest secrets of matter, notably nuclear energy, and transforming matter into energy and bioengineering, I feel that we are confronted with a revolution of monumental importance and while this revolution is in the hands of capital and the state, its impacts upon society could very well be devastating. I cannot foresee that it will benefit human society or the ecology of our planet as much as is will be utilized for domination and hierarchy, which is what all technological innovation, to one extent or another, has always been utilized for.

The scope of the revolution can be delineated in many ways; first of all, cybernetics threatens to undermine the status of almost every kind of nonprofessional working-class, white or blue collar. I have every expectation that if cybernation is introduced, and it is only a matter of time until it is, it will displace tens of millions of people. The industrial working class will be reduced at least in the major Euro-American centers, in all probability, to a stratum that is no larger numerically than that of the farmers today who number some four million in the U.S.

Already we are witnessing a decline of the American labor movement, the organized trade union movement from 1 out of 3 workers (and this is a diminishing labour force as well) to 1 out of 5. This also reflects the diminution of class consciousness even on the elementary level of trade unionism. I'm not speaking of syndicalism. I'm speaking of ordinary bread and butter trade unionism. I can also foresee perhaps a labour force that does not number more than say 17 million, after numbering very close to nearly 27 million, which will eventually go down to 10 million. will eventually go down to 7 million, will eventually go down to 5 million. Not to be able to foresee this is extremely myopic.

I still lived in a time when there were close to 30 million farmers and now we have only 4 million. This is a tremendous revolution, first of all in the way production occurs. It's a tremendous revolution in the class structure of this society.

Please remember very well that whether one was a Marxist or an anarchist, particularly a syndicalist, it was generally supposed that the population would become more proletarianized and that its power lay in the capacity to control the means of production. One of the primary concepts of anarcho-syndicalism, not to speak of Marxism, was the idea that the working class was the all-powerful force whose going on general strike would paralyze the system. But if so much of the working class is diminished numerically and so much of industry has become robotized, then concepts like the general strike become utterly meaningless.

That would be the first consequence—namely the diminution of labour as a powerful force. Another consequence would be the political problem this is going to raise. With so many "irrelevant" people, so to speak, what kind of political structure is going to deal with them? What are we going to do with tens of millions of people that have no place in this society? How are they going to be used? How are they going to be employed?

In the U.S. we still have a largely agrarian constitution built around republican principles that even the bourgeoisie did not want to accept. It benefitted from them but it didn't want to accept them. These were the principles formulated by Virginian aristocrats, based on land, who still had an agrarian perspective however

much they were locked into capitalism. These are principles emerging from small farmers, compromises with the commercial bourgeoisie, not even the industrial bourgeoisie. This is the revered picture of American republicanism and American democracy. I could just as well include aspects of Canadian federalism. Such structures which we designate as "bourgeois revolutionary structures" are utterly incompatible with the future development of capitalism.

The checks and balances that exist in the American constitution and which we, as radicals, once regarded as very reactionary because they didn't give power to the people, are actually serving to check the executive power, and inhibiting the totalitarianization of American political life. Reagan was obliged to pull the Marines from Beirut. He cannot easily invade Nicaragua because of checks and balances that were once regarded as undemocratic but which now actually inhibit a highly authoritarian president from doing whatever he wants in the world.

By the same token, we still have a republican system with democratic features to it that make protest possible, that make a public opinion possible and which stand in the way of manipulating the population and controlling it, particularly a population that has faced a form of economic extinction. So I can see a tremendous tension building up, a crisis between the so-called "bourgeois" past and the capitalist future. I don't think we can overlook this enormous tension. That bourgeois past has libertarian features about it: the town meetings of New England, municipal and local control, the American mythology that the less government the better, the American belief in independence and individualism. All

these things are antithetical to a cybernetic economy, a highly centralized corporative economy and a highly centralized political system that is necessary to manage that economy on a domestic and world scale, not to speak of a bureaucracy of enormous proportions which has an interest of its own in the consolidation of power. These contradictions have to be faced; they have an extremely radical potential and somehow or other we have to deal with them.

K.I.O.:

In some of your writings, you, and some of your colleagues talked about how each mode of production, to borrow the Marxist terminology, tends to create a certain epistemology or way of looking at the world. Are there any other ideological trends commensurate with this economic change that are worth commenting on briefly?

*Murray Bookchin:*

Well, the most important one is the invasion of the commodity as an epistemological outlook into ways of thinking. This expresses itself in expressions such as "I'll buy that idea," "What is the bottom line?" or "I'd like some feedback." These expressions are not to be viewed light-mindedly. They're not just idiomatic attempts to conform with systems theory and cybernetics. They really reflect a business mentality and a cybernetic mentality that is very significant from an epistemological point of view.

The modern corporation is a system and the way it's diagrammed on flowcharts is in terms of feedback and it's not accidental that systems theory has now become

almost imperialistically pervasive in our thinking. We use its language: feedback, input, output. We don't have dialogue any more from the Greek word dialogos, logos meaning mind as well as speech. We use information in terms of data, not in terms of giving form to something. We think now in terms of typologies (according to the dictionary definition, the doctrine or study of types or symbols - ed.) instead of processes. So we develop flow diagrams and we lay out patterns which are philosophically at odds with the idea of a changing society. We think more in terms of a dynamic equilibrium of a given society than the dialectical concept of a changing, self-transforming and self destructive economy in which the seeds of self destruction are built into the society.

This type of logical and cybernetic mentality reveals an accommodation with the status quo. It's considered a given that we're going to have corporations -- how are we going to make them more efficient or effective? And where they are destructive, how to make them more destructive; where they are pernicious, how to make them more pernicious. And that has profoundly affected not only our language but inasmuch as so many thoughts are formed by language, our very ability to think. We need a real cleansing of the language or else our revolutionary thinking is bound to be perverted by this mentality. Already, we have writers like Jürgen Habermas who uses typologies and flow diagrams. This man professes to be a Marxist, but he's totally broken in my opinion with even the dialectical mentality of Marxism which is built around the idea of an immanent development in which decay is latent in any social order. The typological approach sees no decay, sees merely layout and here information is really the form, not only

the data that is supplied in laying out a social structure. You assume the social structure to be static and, from that, the main thing is to examine the internal workings as though society were an engine. And all you have to do is talk about whether the parts are working efficiently or whether you can improve the parts, technologically, so that you live within the status quo as a matter of habit without ever knowing that you are doing so.

K.I.O.:

What you're talking about seems connected with the whole trend towards an information-centred economy. It's something that puzzles me. It was always assumed, in the past, that the bottom line in economics is the production of real goods and services, real wealth. Now it seems that so much of what goes on economically is the purchasing, sale, and processing of information. I wonder if you could comment briefly on what this means economically, why it's happening now and how it relates to more traditional economic processes.

*Murray Bookchin:*

It's interesting to me that you said the "bottom line." I'm not being critical. I'm just showing how much we say these things without being conscious of the extent to which we operate within the "paradigms" and the typologies of capitalism.

We are going to produce commodities. What we're merely saying is that what we call "information" is also a commodity, and it's assumed exaggerated importance. But information is not merely merchandisable, it's used to produce. So, I do not see that we've entered an

information age as much as I think we are learning how to accumulate information for all kinds of manipulatory purposes, be they economic, political, or psychological.

I resist the use of the word "information" as I resist the use of the word "deindustrialization". I think what they're doing is cybernating the economy and the economy will produce goods, a very substantial proportion of which will be military. In the United States, you're not deindustrializing as much as reindustrializing in a new way. The Americans are turning the economy into a war economy. Its greatest product consists of missiles, rockets, satellites, space technologies, weaponry, and everything else is being geared around that. They're ready to let the Japanese, the Asians, generally, produce the textiles and let the Mexicans and Third World peoples produce the blue collar type industrial goods of traditional capitalism. They'll always maintain enough of that in America, by the way, in order to support the arms industry or at least to meet their minimal needs.

#### K.I.O.:

There's a lot of economic polarization going on with the trend towards cybernation but, to tell you the truth, I would have thought it would have gone further, in the sense that a lot of people still have a lot of money in North America. Does that come from exploitation of the third world, as in the trend away from the pauperization of the working class towards affluent consumerism? What's going to happen now that a lot of people are becoming economically redundant? Will they be maintained artificially as consumers or will they be pauperized?



*Murray Bookchin:*

I can't foresee what they will do. It's beyond my life span, beyond my time, beyond my era. I can only offer various possibilities. They can militarize the whole society in which every stratum of society will be, essentially, whether in uniform or not, working for the military. They may have to initiate some systems of birth control. I'm not suggesting genocide, but some way of diminishing the population.

They may create a two-tiered society and economy in which there will be the very affluent and the others will fend for themselves.

There's a futurama called Blade Runner, which is the most realistic futurama I've ever seen, at least in terms of what the future may look like. You have a split-level economy in society, the privileged living in staggering high-rise buildings while down in the streets you have squalor and catch as catch can, a lumpen proletariat. Bioengineering plays a very important role. One way or another they'll have to have a highly controlled society; that much I'm convinced of. How totalitarian or authoritarian it will be is hard to foresee.

K.I.O.:

One of the most disturbing things for me is that, both in terms of liberatory forces as well as some of the things you've described, it has never felt it harder to predict what's happening or what the different tendencies are. The situation is so contradictory.

*Murray Bookchin:*

Yes. I know. because capitalism is restructuring its entire class base. Capitalism was never a pure system. We still don't know what mature capitalism is, assuming it will be capitalism if it becomes mature. The capitalist societies of the 19th century had a vast number of preindustrial features. Admittedly, in industry you had capitalism but once you left the immediate industrial sector you went back into the neighborhoods which were really pre-capitalist and pre-industrial. You went into family farms and extended families. You didn't have shopping malls or supermarkets but small family retail establishments.

Now, and especially since the 1950's-and remember that I regard the second World War as a tremendous turning point in the history of humanity, not just the history of capitalism-when you go back to your home you go back to immediate media control in the form of television. You're wired up to Betamaxes and VCR's. You have telephones. You have nuclear families or singles living in high rises. You have shopping malls. You have automobiles. And capitalism invades your life in the language that you use. in the relationships you establish. Capitalism has, more or less, come into its own and we're beginning to see something of what mature capitalism is like, or, at least we are seeing the beginnings of a mature form of capitalism in contradistinction to the earlier capitalist system which was still very mixed with pre-industrial, semi-feudal-type patriarchal forms.

I'm not saying that the earlier society was better, but I'm saying that at least the spirit of rebellion could be

nourished by community networks, by discourse in which you were relatively free of the mass media and the educational system to an extent that many young people today cannot even imagine. The revolts against capitalism that occurred memorably, whether you look to Russia in 1917 or Spain in the 1930's - and there were other revolts all along the way - were really the work of peasants in overalls. The revolutionary workers' movement was really a peasant movement in overalls. These people were people who existed in the tension between two cultures. Even in the 1930's it was conceivable because people lived in the tension of two cultures, one pre-capitalist and pre-industrial and the other one industrial and capitalist.

So the pure working class is a fiction. The hereditary working class is a fiction. In fact wherever the working class became hereditary it fed into the system. This was most noticeable in Germany where there was never a chance for a workers' revolution anyways. Rosa Luxemburg notwithstanding. And Rosa Luxemburg understood that there wasn't a chance of a successful workers' revolution in central Europe.

And to this day when one talks of revolutions, one talks of national revolutions of peasant populations. So the revolt against capitalism usually occurred among classes that were alien to capitalism to begin with. We named them workers because they happened to be in the factories, but we forgot that they were only one step away from the village. This was the case in Russia. This was the case in Spain. This was the case, to a great extent, in France during the Paris Commune of craftsmen and artisans. It was not the industrial workers who guided the Commune but the old sans culottes (literally

breechless, republicans of Parisian lower classes in French revolution. according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary) of 1789-1794.

Even the miners today in Britain still live in villages: they're not the London proletariat, which has been remarkably unsympathetic to their strike. That working class is disappearing completely. It's becoming extinct, and it's a real question of whether or not the workers - industrial proletarians, organized in the mass production industries that Marx so admired - were ever revolutionary, if they ever were capable of being revolutionary as a class, not as working people. Working people may become radicalized. What I'm talking about is the view that the proletariat, compactly unified as a class, within the womb of capitalism, will destroy the capitalist social order through the very extension of capitalism. In fact the very extension of capitalism is destroying exactly that class which exhibits the only good promise of any kind of revolutionary, or at least insurrectionary, opposition to capital.

#### K.I.O.:

There are some interesting developments going on in science and philosophy (specifically in biology), new ways of analysing cooperation in nature. There's talk of a paradigmatic shift and new ways of analysing things in philosophy. For example, David Bohm has written a book on the theory of "implicate order". It almost seems as if all these little pieces are trying to pull together and create something new, but what are the prospects of that happening?

*Murray Bookchin:*

Well, I believe that it is essential, first of all, to develop a grounding in something more than public opinion, notably the idea that capital punishment is good on Tuesday because 51% of the people are for it or it's bad on Wednesday because 51% of the people are against it. This relativistic ethics is totally lacking in any substance or meaning. So I think ethics has to be grounded in something that's objective. The Greeks tried to do it by basing it in nature and what they thought was some concept of natural law or nature philosophy.

Ecology is beginning that project again - looking for something in which to objectively base a concept or the good, of the virtuous - some criteria of what constitutes right and wrong that is not merely subject to the vicissitudes of "What's good for me is good for me and what's good for you is good for you (a purely functional and privatistic morality)."

I have developed in my own writings an approach to ethics which is the very opposite of the Victorian conception of nature. The Victorian conception of nature was that nature is a realm of cruelty - as though nature had any morality - that nature is stingy, that nature is blind-mute and necessitarian-and that society is the realm of reason, and of freedom. The necessitarian concept of nature is that technology is the realm of emancipation, in contrast to the scarce resources or stinginess of nature. The ecological approach, on the other hand, says that nature is neither moral, nor cruel, nor any of these things. On the contrary, nature is fecund (prolific, fertile, fertilizing - ed.), ever innovative, a realm of chance and complexity, of ecosystems that

succeed one upon the other. And you can grade, so to speak, society out of nature and you can develop an ethics that is continuous with nature.

I can go into that in very great detail, and it would require a whole separate discussion to indicate how one can overcome the dualisms that exist between mind and body between society and nature, in which the two are placed in opposition to each other. What markedly distinguishes a human society from an animal and plant community is that you don't have institutions that make it possible for Nicholas the II to become Czar of Russia, even though intellectually and psychologically he wasn't equipped to run a post office, or for Louis the XVII to become anything more than an ordinary locksmith and have control over the destinies of millions of people.

So the distinction between society and animal and plant communities must be made, but I can see how, through the mediation of a mother-child relationship (why only mother-child?-ed.), society begins to take root in the protracted infancy of the young. Here you develop sociation. This is a distinctively human attribute which leads ultimately to the consolidation of family relationships, initially around the mother, and after extending to society at large. So the origins of society are not each against all as Hobbes would have contended or as many "rugged individualists" do. The origins of society are above all in cooperation, in participation and in sharing and caring.

So I think these dualisms can be overcome through historical perspective. Mind cannot be separated from body because mind emerges from body. In fact, there's a natural history of development of mind from simple,

reactive cells to nerve networks and the development of complex nerve systems, and finally to different forms of brains and their integration.

So I don't find it necessary to deal with a chasm between mind and nature because I see mind emerging from nature. There's no need to work with a dualistic conception. My image of nature is not one of stingy, cruel, blind nature that has to be conquered but, on the contrary, a fecund nature that forever gives rise to greater complexity and, in giving rise to ever greater complexity, opens up new evolutionary pathways in which animals and plants, however germinally (and I don't want to impute anthropomorphically will and choice-but something like will and choice) participate in evolutionary development. So that you don't have merely natural selection. What you have is the participation of species in their own evolution. Evolution is an active process that comes as much from the species themselves as from genetic chance or mutations.

All of which leads us to the idea that germinal freedom emerges from nature. Not freedom as we know it, where we exercise choice, will, and conscious decision, but a germinal freedom in that opportunities are created in which animals participate in their own selection and in some sense select themselves for survival. It's not only a question of survival in nature, it's a question of development and growth and complexity. Well, from that standpoint, I can already begin to see that freedom is a theme in evolution no less significant than complexity; that the development of a nervous system is a theme in evolution; that consciousness or the movement toward consciousness is a theme in evolution, and that animal and plant evolution grades into social evolution. So it is

out of that that I very strongly feel a ground is created for ethics. I'm not saying nature is ethical. We are ethical. But the grounding for an ethics can be explored: freedom is a theme in the evolution of life. It's not just an idealistic goal.

What disturbs me about many of the eco-philosophies that are emerging now is that they are structured around systems theory. I regard systems theory as very valuable, but it's largely reductionist and I've already stated some of my criticisms of systems theory - it's really a corporate theory in some respects. Which is not to say that systems theory is erroneous, provided it simply colonizes a terrain which lends itself to systems analysis. But to imperialize it and say that it is the totality of everything is as unsettling to me and disturbing as to claim that passive-receptive epistemology or Taoism is the alpha and omega of eco-philosophy.

What I'm beginning to see is many well-meaning ecologists making use of systems theory as their methodology and their paradigm, using the passive receptive mentality of: "Don't interfere - lay back. Let nature go on its own. Any type of technology is interfering with nature." I believe that human beings can self-consciously intervene in nature without trying to dominate it. They can act as products of nature, as self-conscious nature, able to facilitate the evolutionary process of complexity and spontaneous development going along with the grain, so to speak, of natural evolution.

So my eco-philosophy, if I may use that word, is somewhat different from many of the other eco-philosophies that are around. What's important is that



people feel the need for an eco-philosophy, and it's not coming from the philosophers, it's coming from the scientists - oddly enough. They need it, and it's ironic that philosophy, which denigrates nature and regards it as archaic, is now confronting a scientific community that is increasingly turning to philosophy or making up its own philosophy. And if we can't make up a radical philosophy, then you might get very reactionary ones, including fantastic ones - like "blood and soil" and the "selfish gene", and like the views expressed in E O. Wilson's *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*.

K.I.O:

One of the interesting things that a friend was telling me is that many of the "new age" and feminist spiritual communities of the 20's in Germany went along with the Nazi's mysticism.

*Murray Bookchin:*

That troubles me immensely since I have a great deal to do with Germany and I've done a lot of reading into their past. The attempt has been also to impute that tendency to the Greens in Germany and I regard that as grotesque simplification of what happened in Germany. For one thing the Vandervogel divided completely. Some elements went to the fascists and others went to the socialists. Some became reactionaries and some became revolutionaries.

KIO:

What was the Vandervogel?

*MB:*

The Vandervogel was "wandering birds". It was a youth movement that developed earlier on in the 20th century which was suffused with the romantic love of nature, collective living, living close to the natural world, trying to discover within oneself intuitive sentiments and an aversion to capitalism. It's very one-sided to see in these movements nothing more than a drift towards an organicism - a people's community mentality that must lead to fascism with its blood and soil mythos. By no means did such a movement have to go in that direction and by no means did the movement consistently go in that direction. Many people in the Vandervogel movement were later to feed into the nature philosophies of Marxists like Ernst Bloch or into essentially anarchists like Gustave Landauer. They didn't all become Nazis.

In fact, Nazism grew out more of the 1st World War French comradeship of soldiers in battle. That's what Hitler really regarded as community, a community of warriors in the trenches. Most tried to avail themselves of the organic drift in German thought and in German poetry and in the German romantic tradition, even going back as far as Holderlin and Hegel and Schelling, but Hitler himself was a brute and he used anything he could find including, and may I say this very markedly, socialist ideas. The Nazi flag was a red flag with a swastika on it, just as Mussolini adopted the black shirt because of the popularity of anarchism in Italy. They were called "blackshirts" The choice of the black shirt was an attempt to identify with the syndicalist tendencies of Italian workers and anarchist sentiments, so what does that mean, that anarchism leads to fascism? I can give a better case of the fact that socialism and social

democracy leads to fascism than the fact that the German romantic tradition led into fascism.

Hitler called his party the National Socialist German Workers Party. They used the expression of the social democracy, 'un camerade'. They used the mass mobilization techniques of social democracy. In fact Hitler was boggled when he first came to Vienna by the great serried ranks of workers marching with red flags in Vienna and was inspired by that to finally create the whole theatre for the Nuremburg rallies. His program was anti-capitalist. He adopted the language of the socialist movement. Shall I now say that Marxism and fascism are equivalent?

KIO:

One could.

*MB:*

I don't believe that Marx was a fascist. I don't think he was trying to lay the groundwork for fascism. By the same token I don't believe that Schelling was a fascist or that the Vandervogel movement was laying the groundwork for fascism. This is utter nonsense. Besides Hitler was cynical about all of this. He used every idea he could find and patched it together into an eclectic hodge-podge and within the Nazi Party, this produced a split led by Gregor Strasser. He split the Nazi Party and attacked it for accommodating itself to Prussian Junkers and the capitalists, and demanded that the party follow through on a social program. Of course Hitler purged the stormtroopers because the bourgeoisie and the Junkers

were afraid of this strong trip or movement which was committed more to the socialism than the racism and blood and soil mythology of fascism.

So this is pure rubbish. Why don't they remember the extent to which you can suck Hitler out of socialism and even Mussolini out of anarchism? Mussolini regarded Proudhon as a teacher. I'm not saying that anarchism or socialism led into Nazism. But I also insist where do people get off claiming that the German romantic movement or the German Vandervogel movement and the love of nature movements in Germany fed into Nazism? Why are they so selective? Why don't they look at their own ideologies and find the extent to which these feed into fascism, and how much more compelling a case can be made for that? It infuriates me because the German Greens are being guilted all over the place because of their ecological perspective. And I think that this is the crudest kind of, not only reductionism, but vulgarization of the extremely complex history of Germany and of the extremely complex role that communitarian and ecological outlooks have played in the politics of the 20th century.

KIO:

In North America the Green movement seems to be a mixed bag. I know that in Canada, and this is true elsewhere, there are a hell of a lot of careerists who get attracted to Green politics like flies to a corpse. And there are a lot of technocratic drifts within it too. What do you see emerging in North American - or more broadly in the world - around the Green movement? What accounts for its complexity and its divergencies?

*MB:*

Let me first of all explain what I mean by Green politics because I don't mean parliamentary politics and I don't believe in capitulating to the state or trying to operate within it. That is a great mistake. I believe in a libertarian politics. What I'm saying basically is that anarcho-syndicalism can no longer suffice to explain and to mobilize the forces today that will change capitalism and in my opinion hopefully rid us of this system entirely.

What do I mean by politics? I go back first of all to the Greek meaning of politics. I'm not talking of statecraft; statecraft is operating as a party within the state with the view toward having control of the state. When I use the word politics, I go back to the original Hellenic meaning of the word polis, the Athenian polis.

I beg people not to remind me of what I already know; it was patriarchal; it was militaristic; it included a slave society and it was also often very parochial. When I talk of politics in the Athenian sense, I talk of the best features, the fact that citizens participated in a face to face democracy in Athens, made decisions, had a militia system, insofar as they were involved in anything military, brought their own arms and had a system of rotation. These are all libertarian notions. So when I talk of politics, I talk of politics in the sense of polis and community, decentralized, confederal, built around rotation, built around sortition and hopefully approximating consensus as much as possible -- in which you have an active citizen body managing its own affairs. That is what politics means to me. When I talk of a libertarian politics, I mean literally that, a politics that is not only democratic but libertarian and structured

around a decentralized society without private ownership, in which you have the collectivization and, above all, the municipalization of the economy.

I also believe that there has been a very marked failure to separate politics from statecraft and that, unfortunately, many very well meaning comrades have gotten the two confused; I think it is very important for us to separate the two. I would never have entered into the Peoples Front government as the CNT did in 1936. But, by the same token, I believe that on a local level, one should try and create again, restore and recover community structures, neighborhood structures - citizens' councils and citizens' assemblies-and try to form a real underpinnings for managing the community. So, I would vote on the local but not on the national level.

I have a disagreement with the German Greens in that they take their activities in the German Bundestag seriously. I find that when they perform theatre out there it's amusing; I can be delighted by it but, if they are out to take over the German Bundestag I think that it is naive and I think at the same time it leads to the politics of collaboration with the social democrats and the liberals. That's not my politics at all. There are tendencies in the Greens that are very aware of that danger and really oppose it. Many of them are the more radical and libertarian tendencies among the fundamentalists in the Greens: I have great respect for them.

Today we cannot form a syndicalist movement in the factories for the fact the factories are disappearing, if not entirely, at least diminishing to a great extent and the workforce is being replaced enormously by machines; this is the locus classicus of socialist and anarchist

revolutions. I have to ask myself what is the other sphere in which libertarians participate, and it has always been the communal sphere. Long before syndicalism emerged in the anarchist tradition, there was a communalist tradition which dates back to Proudhon and which appears in Kropotkin and I don't know why that's been so completely neglected. So if I'm to take that seriously and update it up into our own time and explore its logic completely, then I have to ask myself: what can I do to recover the neighborhood and the community"? How can I empower the citizens to take control of their community at the base grassroots level, not enter into the houses of Parliament, the Bundestag or the American Congress (as though you have a fat chance of doing it anyway and thank God we don't) [and] not to develop the bad habits of parliamentarism, but to try to create neighborhood assemblies such as we have in Burlington - town meeting type forms - councils in neighborhoods - confederate them, and confederate the communities into a dual power against the centralized state on the basis of libertarian tradition?

The democratic revolutions have been misnamed bourgeois revolutions. The French Revolution was not fought to establish capitalism, capitalism fed on the French Revolution; it used it; it opposed the French Revolution like sin. It was for a constitutional monarchy. Their model was England, not America. In the U. S., there was a tremendous conflict between the farmers on the one side and the commercial interests and aristocrats on the Atlantic seaboard, on the other side. Dan Shay's rebellion in 1787 clinched the new constitution and enabled the Articles or Confederation but the new constitution still retained its libertarian features.

I'm for democratizing the republic and radicalizing the democracy, and doing that on the grass roots level: that will involve establishing libertarian institutions which are totally consistent with the American tradition. We can't go back to the Russian Revolution or the Spanish revolution any more. Those revolutions are alien to people in North America. You can't translate Committees of Correspondence into Bolshevik Parties. You can't translate town meetings into Soviets. You can't translate a republican or democratic system or a republican system permeated by democracy into a centralized state or a constitutional monarchy or a proletarian dictatorship. You can't translate this republican system into a proletarian dictatorship, if you're a Marxist, on the one side, or into a syndicalist society, if you're on the other, especially at a time when the trade unions in America are dying out on just the bread and butter issues. I believe we have to start speaking in the vocabulary of the democratic revolutions. We have to unearth and enlarge their libertarian content. I see no other answer- strategically, tactically, politically, economically to the problems that we face today. We can't live in the past and simply repeat the traditional slogans of the great workers' movements that are gone, and will not reappear again, in spite of Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. They're not products of the enlightenment in the way the socialist and anarchist movements were in the 19th century. The latter came out of the French Revolution and out of the American Revolution.

Now we live under the shadow of the Bolshevik Revolution. The 20th century is simply living in the darkness of that Bolshevik success which was our greatest failure. It's given us the cold wars, paralyzed all



radical movements. You take sides: one side of the cold war or the other. We have to spring that trap and we have to break out of it. Looking largely at where we were wrong, I might venture the opinion that capitalism is not a system that follows the old dialectical cyclical forms of emergence, then growth and then decay. Capitalism is a cancer. It has always been a cancer. It's the greatest disease society ever suffered.

The Luddites were really right, that doesn't mean that I want to go back to the stone age, but they were right all the time when they tried to stop modern machinery because modern machinery, in the hands of capitalism, meant the enslavement of society in the long run. In their day the [Luddites] showed more insight than we have ever given them credit for. The attempts on the part of the English squirearchy to keep the British farmers on the land and to keep them out of the hands of the capitalists -- however self-serving they were -- was at least something to put a brake on capitalism.

Capitalism has been permitted to run rampant; it was originally designated as progressive and, in its progressive phase, it was going to build up technology. It was going to create the proletariat which would make the revolution. In contrast to that, a rebellious peasantry is really staging all the revolutions we have today in the third world. Irony of ironies! Bakunin should be alive today to mock the Marxist paradigm.

Capitalism is a social cancer. It has always been a social cancer. It is the disease of society. It is the malignancy of society. And I do not hesitate to say that anything that could have stopped its development -- short of something even worse than capitalism -- would have

been a desideratum. I have reflected upon many positions I have held in the past as a Marxist, and to some extent even as an anarchist, and I have recognized that two centuries of radicals have been misreading the history of the modern world. Just as the women's movement has had to go back thousands of years to recover where we went wrong with the emergence of patriarchy, so I realize where we went wrong with the emergence of capitalism. We went wrong hundreds of years ago. But we have been working with Victorian ideologies about the progressive role of capitalism, about the progressive role of technology, and the progressive role of the proletariat. All of these notions have been wrong, which is not to say, again, that I want to go back to the stone age. It is not to say that I am opposed to technology. What I am opposed to is the capitalist market society which I believe is vicious - a cancer in society from the very word go - that has always broken through where other societies, traditional societies which always cried to stop it, have decayed. It's a saprophytic organism - like a fungus which has only been able to grow and break through where traditional forms have been decaying, which has lived off the root of traditional societies. It has never been a wholesome illuminating light in the world today. This has caused me to reflect upon a hundred and fifty years of revolutionary thinking and to ask myself some very far-reaching questions.

[Now] I regard capitalism as destructive only in the sense that it will tear everything down (which is not what we [Marxists] mean by self-destructing; we thought that it would create forces in opposition to it and would hold back technological growth). On the contrary, capitalism has gone mad technologically and it is promoting a technological growth that the world has never seen

before; it's going out into outer space. But in addition, I see that the so-called bourgeois revolutions were not bourgeois revolutions. The French Revolution was *sin* to the bourgeoisie; it was a constitutional monarchist bourgeoisie which opposed the *sans coulottes*. In America the American Revolution horrified Hamilton, who cried to establish (and he was the dissenting voice of the American bourgeoisie) a monarchy and warned Washington to become the first King George. Washington refused, being the Virginian aristocrat he was, and insisted upon a republican system of virtue, and thus attested this development towards royalism in America. The constitution that was framed was framed, not by a rapacious bourgeoisie, but in great part by agrarian classes. Even if many of them were involved with capitalism, they were still agrarian classes, a yeomanry, as well as Virginia aristocrats who had non-capitalist values, however much they cried to contain the lower classes.

So now I realize that we have to elicit the libertarian dimension out of these revolutions, because I do not believe that the bourgeoisie existing now could ever make a Spanish revolution possible again. It wouldn't last six hours. Forget about four days. They'll come out with bazookas and missiles; they'll come out with their Green Berets, their radar and their bombers and wipe out everything in just a matter of days, just as they did in Chile, with not even that sophisticated an army. They could have settled the Vietnam war with hydrogen bombs if they had wanted to, if they were not concerned with public opinion or domestic opinion. But what are we saying when we say that? We say that their own republican institutions paralyze their operations, and their own democracy and republican institutions inhibit

them from acting freely. Then they'll have to get rid of these republican institutions and democratic institutions; our job is to stop that, and to enlarge them and bring out their libertarian dimension on a municipal level and finally create a counter-force of an empowered citizenry on a local level and a confederal system of relationships. I'm not talking of parochial isolated cities, but of a confederal dual power that will oppose the centralized power in the name of the highest ideals of the revolutionary era, which spans from the English Revolution up to the Spanish Revolution. Are people prepared to think that far ahead and to re-evaluate this whole experience? Or am I going to be ten years behind or ten years ahead so that nobody can accept that? That is a dilemma I'm personally faced with when I voice these opinions.

The Greens in Germany represent a promising development not in terms of their intent to take power or function as a party. What is amazing about the German Greens is the factionalization going on over the various issues I'm discussing implicitly. They're not as conscious, I suspect, of these issues as I am. Rather they're not as conscious of these issues as I think they should be. But they intuitively feel that these are the issues they are debating, and the various factions inside the Greens have turned the Greens into the most radical movement imaginable; I mean, that I have seen in Europe or any place. When one talks of Greens in Canada or the U.S., remember that the Greens in Germany came out of an extraparliamentary movement and had probably reached its limits. How far can an extraparliamentary movement go? It either has to go into some kind of syndicalist movement and stabilize itself as the CNT did in Spain; or it has to go into insurrection

and imagine a Germany in insurrection! So, they have to move somewhere, or else their extraparliamentary movement would dissolve back into social democracy or become demoralized, as so many extraparliamentary movements have in North America. So, if it has to move towards a political sphere, the question is what kind of political sphere will it move toward? Was it going to be authoritarian, liberal or libertarian? They chose a libertarian direction, by and large, and now they're finding out whether or not that libertarian direction is going to be preserved with its rotation of representatives, and with its very close ties to the extraparliamentary movement. Or are they going to move into a strict statecraft parliamentary form? Those are the fights that are being fought out there.

In the U.S. and Canada, all this is coming from the top down. Six people get together and say, "Look, the German Greens are so successful." They don't know why. They don't understand that hundreds and thousands of people were brought into motion fighting nuclear reactors, fighting missiles, fighting citizens' initiative movements, involving many people who are closer to the Christian Democrats than the Social Democrats, and that the Greens came out of that movement. Here, without any social movement, they organize a party and they make it as authoritarian as possible, and they start dictating to the people what kind of parliamentary movement they're going to create. I think it's terribly important that libertarians initiate such developments on the local level or else this whole thrust will be taken over by authoritarians, or by Marxists who shrewdly take over quite frequently what we often initially start. So, I think it's very important for us to think these things out, and to talk them out, and to weigh them carefully, or else we'll

be dreaming the old daydreams of Spain, and the Paris commune of 1848, or Bakunin on the barricades, or Kropotkin in Petrograd and, in the meantime, history will just pass us by.

KIO:

I was just wondering briefly what kinds of libertarian trends you have seen in Germany?

*MB:*

Well the most amazing things that I have seen in Germany are some of the people in the Greens and the people that I've encountered or spoken to, and the kinds of discussions that have taken place regarding the attempt to develop a libertarian political movement. I've seen this most notably among the Remer Greens and the city council of Frankfurt. They are fundis (as the more radical Greens are called) with a very strong libertarian proclivity who want to remain independent of the Social Democrats, and who are eager to develop their own libertarian form of organization with close connections with the extraparlimentary movement. A wonderful development has been the transformation of a Leninist/Maoist like Ebermann of the Communist League in Northern Germany and his colleagues who have undergone great transformations. And I've had discussions with them. One of them told me, "Two years ago, what you said would have been anathema, but now I agree with 90% of what you say," and they've largely abandoned all their Leninist principles, and have moved in a highly libertarian direction. These are, by the way, hardline Maoists who were in the workers' movement in Hamburg where you have shipyard workers, you know,

real heavy proletarian Red Hamburg -- which Hitler only visited once and said, "Damn Hamburg, if I could only get it out of Deutschland, I would be delighted." He would have wanted to surgically excise it. These were strongholds of the socialist and communist parties of the 1930's.

That has been terribly encouraging. There has been an elaborate network established in Germany through this extraparliamentary movement which is very encouraging, which I hope will act as a correction of the Greens. Let me emphasize that if the Greens go with the Social Democrats, they will follow a logic that is very tragic. They will lose their identity. A very important thing that I also learned is that politics is an education; it's not just power. The attempt to develop a libertarian politics means to educate people not to take power but to educate people to empower themselves. That's why I emphasize the local level not the national level. My concern is with the communalist, community oriented feel and I'm simply trying to follow out the logic of that as it applies to the 1980's.

KIO:

Hasn't city government become really stratified in the last ten years.

*MB:*

Yes, the state has appeared everywhere. The question now is to try to disengage cities and towns from the state by mutually confederating with each other and developing some sort of network where resources can be moved back and forth. I'm not looking for a stable

situation where you have municipal government co-existing with the state government. I'm concerned with developing local institutions - neighborhood assemblies, neighborhood councils that will be thrown into dynamic opposition to the centralized state. My most important concern is to stop the centralization of economic and political power, just like the Luddites tried to stop industrialization, not because they were against machines, but because they were against wage labour and the factory system, and realized that it was threatening their way of life. By the same token, my concern is not to establish a municipal confederation which exists side by side with the powerful state. My concern is to see that the municipal level act as a brake upon the centralization of the state and ultimately lead to the abolition of the centralized state in a free municipal confederation of towns and cities and villages structured in a libertarian form.

You know this is an ideal that is ages old. It belonged to the early Swiss confederacy, not the present one. It was an ideal that existed in New England. Farmers in New Hampshire and Vermont and the upper valley tried to establish a republic of towns and cities during the American Revolution, and in the aftermath of the American Revolution against the federal centralized state. These are notions that Americans can understand and that have meaning in contrast with the old socialist notions of nationalizing the economy. Remember too that there is an economic program of municipalization, not just collectivization. The township should have control over the land; it should have control over the industries. Collectivization itself can lead many different directions. So, in Spain, the coordinating role of the trade unions was not without its centralistic features. Please



let's not kid ourselves about the Spanish industrial collectives during the revolution in Spain. You can also have competition between collectivized industries in a market economy. Municipalization means the municipality controls it through neighborhood organizations or through town meetings.

So remember that I'm not only talking about a certain kind of libertarian politics. I'm also talking about municipalist economics. Many people think these ideas are new to me, but they're not. In the last issue of *Anarchos*, published in 1971, I wrote a piece called *Spring Offensives and Summer Vacations*. Those were the days in the 60's when you had spring offensives. And I mocked the idea that they went on offensives in the spring, then vacated for the summer and everything died. But what I advanced in that editorial - and I'm talking of ideas advanced almost 15 years ago - was the commune of communes based upon the American libertarian tradition that emerged out of the revolution. There I wrote that it's necessary for anarchists to intervene in local politics and create new kinds of local Structures - municipal structures such as neighborhood assemblies, town meetings, neighborhood councils - to take control of municipal governments and confederate them nationally and counterpose them to the centralized state. That all appeared in 1971 and someone wrote a reply to me stating that anarchists should never participate in any elections of any kind and criticized me for holding that view.

KIO:

So, Murray, are you saving that anarchists should run for city government?

*MB:*

No. I'm saying that city government as you call it, has to be restructured at the grassroots level. These governments will not really be governments in the traditional statist form. Therefore what anarchists should be doing is not hesitating to get involved in local politics to create forms of organization in which they may run once they've established these forms or, alternatively, running on a platform to establish these forms. There are two ways in which you can participate in the electoral process on a grassroots municipalist level. One way is to help create these forms, as we've tried to do in Burlington. We were the ones in Burlington who established the neighborhood planning assemblies and proposed the idea that led to the enabling legislation to establish them in the five wards in Burlington. We now have five neighborhood assemblies. It was not the socialists who proposed them. They took the credit for it, but they didn't propose them. So I'm saying there are two ways in which you can function. One is to work to create these assemblies; the other is to run, or have people run, or support people who will run with a view towards establishing these forms or organizations on a municipal level. But we have to libertarianize our communities to create and institutionalize grassroots democracy that can counteract the centralization of power, cooperatively and politically.

MUNICIPALIZATION  
COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF THE ECONOMY1

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

**GREEN PERSPECTIVES**

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P.O. Box 111  
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In my article, "Toward a Libertarian Municipalism2," I advanced the view that any counterculture to the prevailing culture must be developed together with counterinstitutions to the prevailing institutions -- a decentralized, confederal, popular power that will acquire the control over social and political life that is being claimed by the centralized, bureaucratic nation-state.

Through much of the nineteenth century and nearly half of the twentieth, the classical center of this popular power was located by most radical ideologies in the factory, the arena for the conflict between wage labor and capital. The factory as the locus of the "power question" rested on the belief that the industrial working class was the "hegemonic" agent for radical social change; that it would be "driven" by its own "class interests" (to use the language of radicalism during that era) to "overthrow" capitalism, generally through armed

insurrection and revolutionary general strikes. It would then establish its own system of social administration -- whether in the form of a "workers' state" (Marxism) or confederal shop committees (anarchosyndicalism).

In retrospect we can now see that the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 was the last historic effort by a seemingly revolutionary European working class to follow this model.<sup>3</sup> In the fifty years that have passed (almost to the very month of this writing), it is apparent that the great revolutionary wave of the late thirties was the climax and the end of the era of proletarian socialism and anarchism, an era that dates back to the first workers' insurrection of history: the uprising by the Parisian artisans and workers of June, 1848, when the barricades were raised under red flags in the capital city of France. In the years that have followed, particularly after the 1930s, the limited attempts to repeat the classical model of proletarian revolution (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland) have been failures, indeed, tragic echoes of great causes, ideals, and efforts that have faded into history.

Apart from insurrectionary peasant movements in the Third World, no one, aside from some dogmatic sectarians, takes the "models" of June, 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Spanish Revolution of 1936 seriously -- partly because the type of working class that made those revolutions has been all but demobilized by technological and social change, partly because the weaponry and barricades that gave these revolutions a modicum of power have become merely symbolic in the

face of the immense military armamentarium commanded by the modern nation-state.

There is another tradition, however, that has long been part of European and American radicalism: the development of a libertarian municipal politics, a new politics structured around towns, neighborhoods, cities, and citizens' assemblies, freely confederated into local, regional, and ultimately continental networks. This "model," advanced over a century ago by Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin among others, is more than an ideological tradition: it has surfaced repeatedly as an authentic popular practice by the Comuneros in Spain during the 16th century, the American town meeting movement that swept from New England to Charleston in the 1770s, the Parisian sectional citizens' assemblies of the early 1790s, and repeatedly through the Paris Commune of 1871 to the Madrid Citizens' Movement of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Almost irrepressible whenever the people have gone into motion, libertarian municipalism always reappears as movements from below -- all radical dogmas based on the proletariat notwithstanding to the contrary -- such as the "local socialism" to which people have turned in England today, radical municipal coalitions in the United States, and popular urban movements throughout Western Europe and North America generally. The bases for these movements are no longer the usual strictly class issues that stem from the factory; they consist of broad, indeed challenging issues that range from the environmental, growth, housing, and logistical problems that are besetting all the municipalities of the world. They cut across traditional class lines and have brought people together in councils, assemblies, citizens'

initiative movements, often irrespective of their vocational roots and economic interests. More so than any constellation of issues, they have done something which traditional proletarian socialism and anarchism never achieved: they have brought together into common movements people of middle-class as well as working class backgrounds, rural as well as urban places of residence, professional as well as unskilled individuals, indeed, so vast a diversity of people from conservative as well as liberal and radical traditions that one can truly speak of the potential for a genuine people's movement, not merely a class-oriented movement of which industrial workers have always been a minority of the population.<sup>4</sup> Implicitly, this kind of movement restores once again the reality of "the people" on which the great democratic revolutions rested ideologically until they became fragmented into class and group interests. History, in effect, seems to be rebuilding in the real world what was once a tentative and fleeting ideal of the Enlightenment from which stemmed the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century. For once, it is possible of conceiving of majoritarian forces for major social change, not the minoritarian movements that existed over the past two centuries of proletarian socialism and anarchism.

Radical ideologues tend to view these extraordinary municipal movements with skepticism and try, when they can, to bring them into captivity to traditional class programs and analyses. The Madrid Citizens' Movement of the 1960s was virtually destroyed by radicals of all parts of the political spectrum because they tried to manipulate a truly popular municipal effort which sought to democratize Spain and give a new cooperative and ethical meaning to human urban association. The MCM

became a terrain for strengthening the political aspirations for the Socialists, Communists, and other Marxist-Leninist groups until it was all but subverted for special party interests.

#

That libertarian municipal movements form the only potential challenge to the nation-state, today, and constitute a major realm for the formation of an active citizenry and a new politics -- grassroots, face-to-face, and authentically popular in character -- has been explored in other works written by this writer and do not have to be examined, here.<sup>5</sup> For the present, it is necessary to ask a very important question: is libertarian municipalism merely a political "model," however generously we define the word "politics," or does it include economic life as well?

That a libertarian municipalist perspective is incompatible with the "nationalization of the economy," which simply reinforces the juridicial power of the nation-state with economic power, is too obvious to belabor. Nor can the word "libertarian" be appropriated by proprietarians, the acolytes of Ayn Rand and the like, to justify private property and a "free market" Marx, to his credit, clearly demonstrated that the "free market" inevitably yields the oligarchic and monopolistic corporate market with entrepreneurial manipulations that in every way parallel and ultimately converge with state controls.<sup>6</sup>

But what of the syndicalist ideal of "collectivized" self-managed enterprises that are coordinated by like occupations on a national level and coordinated

geographically by "collectives" on a local level? Here, the traditional socialist criticism of this syndicalist form of economic management is not without its point: the corporate or private capitalist, "worker-controlled" or not -- ironically, a technique in the repertoire of industrial management that is coming very much into vogue today as "workplace democracy" and "employee ownership" and constitutes no threat whatever to private property and capitalism. The Spanish anarchosyndicalist collectives of 1936-37 were actually union-controlled and proved to be highly vulnerable to the centralization and bureaucratization that appears in many well-meaning cooperatives generally after a sufficient lapse of time. By mid-1937, union-management had already replaced workers' management on the shop floor, all claims of CNT apologists to the contrary notwithstanding. Under the pressure of "anarchist" ministers like Abad de Santillan in the Catalan government, they began to approximate the nationalized economy advocated by Marxist elements in the Spanish "Left."

In any case, "economic democracy" has not simply meant "workplace democracy" and "employee ownership." Many workers, in fact, would like to get away from their factories if they could and find more creative artisanal types of work, not simply "participate" in "planning" their own misery. What "economic democracy" meant in its profoundest sense was free, "democratic" access to the means of life, the counterpart of political democracy, that is, the guarantee of freedom from material want. It is a dirty bourgeois trick, in which many radicals unknowingly participate, that "economic democracy" has been re-interpreted as "employee ownership" and "workplace democracy" and has come to mean workers' "participation" in profit sharing and



industrial management rather than freedom from the tyranny of the factory, rationalized labor, and "planned production," which is usually exploitative production with the complicity of the workers.

Libertarian municipalism scores a significant advance over all of these conceptions by calling for the municipalization of the economy -- and its management by the community as part of a politics of public self management. Whereas the syndicalist alternative re-privatizes the economy into "self-managed" collectives and opens the way to their degeneration into traditional forms of private property -- whether "collectively" owned or not - libertarian municipalism politicizes the economy and dissolves it into the civic domain. Neither factory or land appear as separate interests within the communal collective. Nor can workers, farmers, technicians, engineers, professionals, and the like perpetuate their vocational identities as separate interests that exist apart from the citizen body in face-to-face assemblies. "Property" is integrated into the commune as a material constituent of its libertarian institutional framework, indeed as a part of a larger whole that is controlled by the citizen body in assembly as citizens -- not as vocationally oriented interest groups.

What is equally important, the "antithesis" between town and country, so crucial in radical theory and social history, is transcended by the "township," a traditional New England jurisdiction, in which an urban entity is the nucleus of its agricultural and village environs -- not as an urban entity that stands opposed to them.<sup>7</sup> The township, in effect is a small region within still larger ones, such as the county and the "bioregion."

So conceived, the municipalization of the economy must be distinguished from "nationalization" and "collectivization" -- the former leading to bureaucratic and top-down control, the latter to the likely emergence of a privatized economy in a collectivized form and the perpetuation of class or caste identities. Municipalization, in effect, brings the economy from a private or separate sphere into the public sphere where economic policy is formulated by the entire community - notably, its citizens in face-to-face relationships working to achieve a general "interest" that surmounts separate, vocationally defined specific interests. The economy ceases to be merely an economy in the strict sense of the word -- whether as "business," "market," capitalist, "worker-controlled" enterprises. It becomes a truly political economy: the economy of the polis or the commune. In this sense, the economy is genuinely communized as well as politicized. The municipality, more precisely, the citizen body in face-to-face assembly absorbs the economy as an aspect of public business, divesting it of an identity that can become privatized into a self-serving enterprise.

What can prevent the municipality from becoming a parochial city-state of the kind that appeared in the late Middle Ages? Anyone who is looking for "guaranteed" solutions to the problems raised, here, will not find them apart from the guiding role of consciousness and ethics in human affairs. But if we are looking for countertendencies, there is an answer that can be advanced. The most important single factor that gave rise to the late medieval city-state was its stratification from within -- not only as a result of differences in wealth but also in status positions, partly originating in lineage but also in vocational differentials. Indeed, to the extent that the city

lost its sense of collective unity and divided its affairs into private and public business, public life itself became privatized and segmented into the "blue nails" or plebians who dyed cloth in cities like Florence and the more arrogant artisan strata, who produced quality goods. Wealth, too, factored heavily in a privatized economy where material differentials could expand and foster a variety of hierarchical differences.

The municipalization of the economy absorbs not only the vocational distinctions that could militate against a publically controlled economy; it also absorbs the material means of life into communal forms of distribution. From each according to his ability and to each according his needs" is institutionalized as part of the public sphere, not ideologically as a communal credo. It is not only a goal; it is a way of functioning politically -- one that becomes structurally embodied by the municipality through its assemblies and agencies.

Moreover, no community can hope to achieve economic autarchy, nor should it try to do so unless it wishes to become self-enclosed and parochial, not only "self-sufficient." Hence the confederation of communes - the Commune of communes -- is reworked economically as well as politically into a shared universe of publically managed resources. The management of the economy, precisely because it is a public activity, does not degenerate into privatized interactions between enterprises; rather it develops into confederalized interactions between municipalities. That is to say, the very elements of societal interaction are expanded from real or potential privatized components to institutionally real public components. Confederation becomes a public project by definition, not only because of shared needs

and resources. If there is any way to avoid the emergence of the city-state, not to speak of self-serving bourgeois "cooperatives," it is through a municipalization of political life that is so complete that politics embraces not only what we call the public sphere but material means of life as well.

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It is not "utopian" to seek the municipalization of the economy. Quite to the contrary, it is practical and realizable if only we will think as freely in our minds as we try to achieve freedom in our lives. Our locality is not only the arena in which we live out our everyday lives; it is also the authentic economic arena in which we work and its natural environs are the authentic environmental arena that challenges us to live in harmony with nature. Here we can begin to evolve not only the ethical ties that will link us together in a genuine ecocommunity but also the material ties that can make us into competent, empowered, and self-sustaining - if not "self-sufficient" - human beings. To the extent that a municipality or a local confederation of municipalities is politically united, it is still a fairly fragile form of association. To the extent that it has control over its own material life, although not in a parochial sense that turns it into a privatized city-state, it has economic power, a decisive reinforcement of its political power.

## NOTES

1. Portions of this article have been selected from the new and supplemented edition of Murray Bookchin's *The Limits of the City* (Montreal: Black Rose Books,

3981 Ste.-Laurent Blvd., Montreal H2W 1Y5, Quebec, Canada; 1986).

2. Our Generation (Vol. 16, Nos. 3-4, Spring-Summer 1985, pp.9-22), available from Our Generation, 3981 Ste.-Laurent Blvd., Montreal H2W 1Y5, Quebec, Canada

3. For an overview of the Spanish Civil War after fifty years, see my articles "On Spanish Anarchism," Our Generation (1986) and "The Spanish Civil War: After Fifty Years" in New Politics (Vol. 1, No. 1, New Series; Spring, 1986), available from New Politics, 328 Clinton St., Brooklyn NY 11231. For background on the subject, see The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Period by this writer, formerly a Harper & Row book, currently distributed by Comment Publishing Project, P. O. Box 158, Burlington VT 05402.

4. This has always been the greatest defect of revolutionary working-class movements and accounts for the bitter civil wars which they produced in the few cases where they were particularly successful.

5. See "The Greening of Politics: Toward a New Kind of Political Practice," ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/gp/perspectives1.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/gp/perspectives1.html)) Green Perspectives, No. 1, January 1986 and "Popular Politics vs. Party Politics," Green Program Project Discussion Paper No. 2, both available from the Green Program Project, P. O. Box 111, Burlington VT 05402. Also see the new supplemented edition of The Limits of the City cited in note 1 above.

6. The absurdity that we can persuade or reform the large corporations -- to "moralize" greed and profit as it were -- is a typical example of liberal naivete which a thousand years of Catholicism failed to achieve. Movies like "The Formula" tell us more about corporate

"morality" and "efficiency" than the flood of books and articles generated by many reform-minded periodicals.

7. See Lewis Mumford's excellent discussion of the New England township in the *City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World; 1961, pp. 331-33). Mumford, unfortunately, deals with the township form as a thing of the past. My interest in the subject comes from yew of study in my own state, Vermont, where, despite many changes, the integration of town and country is still institutionalized territorially and legally around town meetings. Although this political form is waning in much of New England today, its workability and value is a matter of historical record, not of theoretical speculation.

# THE MEANING OF CONFEDERALISM

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

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Few arguments have been used more effectively to challenge the case for face-to-face participatory democracy than the claim that we live in a "complex society." Modern population centers, we are told, are too large and too concentrated to allow for direct decision-making at a grassroots level. And our economy is too "global," presumably, to unravel the intricacies of production and commerce. In our present transnational, often highly centralized social system, it is better to enhance representation in the state, to increase the efficiency of bureaucratic institutions, we are advised, than to advance utopian "localist" schemes of popular control over political and economic life.

After all, such arguments often run, centralists are all really "localists" in the sense that they believe in "more power to the people" - or at least, to their representatives. And surely a good representative is always eager to know the wishes of his or her "constituents" (to use another of those arrogant substitutes for "citizens").

But face-to-face democracy? Forget the dream that in our "complex" modern world we can have any democratic alternative to the nation-state! Many pragmatic people, including socialists, often dismiss arguments for that kind of "localism" as otherworldly - with good-natured condescension at best and outright derision at worst. Indeed, some years back, in 1972, I was challenged in the periodical *Root and Branch* by Jeremy Brecher, a democratic socialist, to explain how the decentralist views I expressed in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* would prevent, say, Troy, New York, from dumping its untreated wastes into the Hudson River, from which downstream cities like Perth Amboy draw their drinking water.

On the surface of things, arguments like Brecher's for centralized government seem rather compelling. A structure that is "democratic," to be sure, but still largely top-down is assumed as necessary to prevent one locality from afflicting another ecologically. But conventional economic and political arguments against decentralization, ranging from the fate of Perth Amboy's drinking water to our alleged "addiction" to petroleum, rest on a number of very problematical assumptions. Most disturbingly, they rest on an unconscious acceptance of the economic status quo.

#### DECENTRALISM AND SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking (as witness the recent tendency of radicals to espouse "market socialism" rather than deal with the failings of the market economy as well as state



socialism). Doubtless we will have to import coffee for those people who need a morning fix at the breakfast table or exotic metals for people who want their wares to be more lasting than the junk produced by a consciously engineered throwaway economy. But aside from the utter irrationality of crowding tens of millions of people into congested, indeed suffocating urban belts, must the present-day extravagant international division of labor necessarily exist in order to satisfy human needs? Or has it been created to provide extravagant profits for multinational corporations? Are we to ignore the ecological consequences of plundering the Third World of its resources, insanely interlocking modern economic life with petroleum-rich areas whose ultimate products include air pollutants and petroleum-derived carcinogens? To ignore the fact that our "global economy" is the result of burgeoning industrial bureaucracies and a competitive grow-or-die market economy is incredibly myopic.

It is hardly necessary to explore the sound ecological reasons for achieving a certain measure of self-sustainability. Most environmentally oriented people are aware that a massive national and international division of labor is extremely wasteful in the literal sense of that term. Not only does an excessive division of labor make for overorganization in the form of huge bureaucracies and tremendous expenditures of resources in transporting materials over great distances; it reduces the possibilities of effectively recycling wastes, avoiding pollution that may have its source in highly concentrated industrial and population centers, and making sound use of local or regional raw materials.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that relatively self-sustaining communities in which crafts, agriculture, and industries serve definable networks of confederally organized communities enrich the opportunities and stimuli to which individuals are exposed and make for more rounded personalities with a rich sense of selfhood and competence. The Greek ideal of the rounded citizen in a rounded environment - one that reappeared in Charles Fourier's utopian works - was long cherished by the anarchists and socialists of the last century.

The opportunity of the individual to devote his or her productive activity to many different tasks over an attenuated work week (or in Fourier's ideal society, over a given day) was seen as a vital factor in overcoming the division between manual and intellectual activity, in transcending status differences that this major division of work created, and in enhancing the wealth of experiences that came with a free movement from industry through crafts to food cultivation. Hence self-sustainability made for a richer self, one strengthened by variegated experiences, competencies, and assurances. Alas, this vision has been lost by leftists and many environmentalists today, with their shift toward a pragmatic liberalism and the radical movement's tragic ignorance of its own visionary past.

We should not, I believe, lose sight of what it means to live an ecological way of life, not merely follow sound ecological practices. The multitude of handbooks that teach us how to conserve, invest, eat, and buy in an "ecologically responsible" manner are a travesty of the more basic need to reflect on what it means to think - yes, to reason - and to live ecologically in the full

meaning of the term. Thus, I would hold that to garden organically is more than a good form of husbandry and a good source of nutrients; it is above all a way to place oneself directly in the food web by personally cultivating the very substances one consumes to live and by returning to one's environment what one elicits from it.

Food thus becomes more than a form of material nutrient. The soil one tills, the living things one cultivates and consumes, the compost one prepares all unite in an ecological continuum to feed the spirit as well as the body, sharpening one's sensitivity to the nonhuman and human world around us. I am often amused by zealous "spiritualists," many of whom are either passive viewers of seemingly "natural" landscapes or devotees of rituals, magic, and pagan deities (or all of these) who fail to realize that one of the most eminently human activities - namely, food cultivation - can do more to foster an ecological sensibility (and spirituality, if you please) than all the incantations and mantras devised in the name of ecological spiritualism.

Such monumental changes as the dissolution of the nation-state and its substitution by a participatory democracy, then, do not occur in a psychological vacuum where the political structure alone is changed. I argued against Jeremy Brecher that in a society that was radically veering toward decentralistic, participatory democracy, guided by communitarian and ecological principles, it is only reasonable to suppose that people would not choose such an irresponsible social dispensation as would allow the waters of the Hudson to be so polluted. Decentralism, a face-to-face participatory democracy, and a localist emphasis on community values should be viewed as all of one piece - they most

assuredly have been so in the vision I have been advocating for more than thirty years. This "one piece" involves not only a new politics but a new political culture that embraces new ways of thinking and feeling, and new human interrelationships, including the ways we experience the natural world. Words like "politics" and "citizenship" would be redefined by the rich meanings they acquired in the past, and enlarged for the present.

It is not very difficult to show - item by item - how the international division of labor can be greatly attenuated by using local and regional resources, implementing ecotechnologies, resealing human consumption along rational (indeed, healthful) lines, and emphasizing quality production that provides lasting (instead of throwaway) means of life. It is unfortunate that the very considerable inventory of these possibilities, which I partly assembled and evaluated in my 1965 essay "Toward a Liberatory Technology," suffers from the burden of having been written too long ago to be accessible to the present generation of ecologically oriented people. Indeed, in that essay I also argued for regional integration and the need to interlink resources among ecocommunities. For decentralized communities are inevitably interdependent upon one another.

#### PROBLEMS OF DECENTRALISM

If many pragmatic people are blind to the importance of decentralism, many in the ecology movement tend to ignore very real problems with "localism" - problems that are no less troubling than the problems raised by a globalism that fosters a total interlocking of economic

and political life on a worldwide basis. Without such wholistic cultural and political changes as I have advocated, notions of decentralism that emphasize localist isolation and a degree of self-sufficiency may lead to cultural parochialism and chauvinism. Parochialism can lead to problems that are as serious as a "global" mentality that overlooks the uniqueness of cultures, the peculiarities of ecosystems and ecoregions, and the need for a humanly scaled community life that makes a participatory democracy possible. This is no minor issue today, in an ecology movement that tends to swing toward very well-meaning but rather naive extremes. I cannot repeat too emphatically that we must find a way of sharing the world with other humans and with nonhuman forms of life, a view that is often difficult to attain in overly "self-sufficient" communities.

Much as I respect the intentions of those who advocate local self-reliance and self-sustainability, these concepts can be highly misleading. I can certainly agree with David Morris of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, for example, that if a community can produce the things it needs, it should probably do so. But self-sustaining communities cannot produce all the things they need - unless it involves a return to a back-breaking way of village life that historically often prematurely aged its men and women with hard work and allowed them very little time for political life beyond the immediate confines of the community itself.

I regret to say that there are people in the ecology movement who do, in fact, advocate a return to a highly labor-intensive economy, not to speak of Stone Age deities. Clearly, we must give the ideals of localism,

decentralism, and self-sustainability greater and fuller meaning.

Today we can produce the basic means of life - and a good deal more - in an ecological society that is focused on the production of high-quality useful goods. Yet still others in the ecology movement too often end up advocating a kind of "collective" capitalism, in which one community functions like a single entrepreneur, with a sense of proprietorship toward its resources. Such a system of cooperatives once again marks the beginnings of a market system of distribution, as cooperatives become entangled in the web of "bourgeois rights" - that is, in contracts and bookkeeping that focus on the exact amounts a community will receive in "exchange" for what it delivers to others. This deterioration occurred among some of the worker-controlled enterprises that functioned like capitalistic enterprises in Barcelona after the workers expropriated them in July 1936 - a practice that the anarcho-syndicalist CNT fought early in the Spanish Revolution.

It is a troubling fact that neither decentralization nor self-sufficiency in itself is necessarily democratic. Plato's ideal city in the Republic was indeed designed to be self-sufficient, but its self-sufficiency was meant to maintain a warrior as well as a philosophical elite. Indeed, its capacity to preserve its self-sufficiency depended upon its ability, like Sparta, to resist the seemingly "corruptive" influence of outside cultures (a characteristic, I may say, that still appears in many closed societies in the East). Similarly, decentralization in itself provides no assurance that we will have an ecological society. A decentralized society can easily co-exist with extremely rigid hierarchies. A striking

example is European and Oriental feudalism, a social order in which princely, ducal, and baronial hierarchies were based on highly decentralized communities. With all due respect to Fritz Schumacher, small is not necessarily beautiful.

Nor does it follow that humanly scaled communities and "appropriate technologies" in themselves constitute guarantees against domineering societies. In fact, for centuries humanity lived in villages and small towns, often with tightly organized social ties and even communistic forms of property. But these provided the material basis for highly despotic imperial states. Considered on economic and property terms, they might earn a high place in the "no-growth" outlook of economists like Herman Daly, but they were the hard bricks that were used to build the most awesome Oriental despotisms in India and China. What these self-sufficient, decentralized communities feared almost as much as the armies that ravaged them were the imperial tax-gatherers that plundered them.

If we extol such communities because of the extent to which they were decentralized, self-sufficient, or small, or employed "appropriate technologies," we would be obliged to ignore the extent to which they were also culturally stagnant and easily dominated by exogenous elites. Their seemingly organic but tradition-bound division of labor may very well have formed the bases for highly oppressive and degrading caste systems in different parts of the world—caste systems that plague the social life of India to this very day.

At the risk of seeming contrary, I feel obliged to emphasize that decentralization, localism, self-

sufficiency, and even confederation each taken singly - do not constitute a guarantee that we will achieve a rational ecological society. In fact, all of them have at one time or another supported parochial communities, oligarchies, and even despotic regimes. To be sure, without the institutional structures that cluster around our use of these terms and without taking them in combination with each other, we cannot hope to achieve a free ecologically oriented society.

### CONFEDERALISM AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Decentralism and self-sustainability must involve a much broader principle of social organization than mere localism. Together with decentralization, approximations to self-sufficiency, humanly scaled communities, ecotechnologies, and the like, there is a compelling need for democratic and truly communitarian forms of interdependence - in short, for libertarian forms of confederalism.

I have detailed at length in many articles and books (particularly *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*) the history of confederal structures from ancient and medieval to modern confederations such as the Comuneros in Spain during the early sixteenth century through the Parisian sectional movement of 1793 and more recent attempts at confederation, particularly by the Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s. Today, what often leads to serious misunderstandings among decentralists is their failure in all too many cases to see the need for confederation - which at least tends to counteract the tendency of decentralized communities to drift toward exclusivity



and parochialism. If we lack a clear understanding of what confederalism means - indeed, the fact that it forms a key principle and gives fuller meaning to decentralism - the agenda of a libertarian municipalism can easily become vacuous at best or be used for highly parochial ends at worst.

What, then, is confederalism? It is above all a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages, towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. The members of these confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policy making one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government.

A confederalist view involves a clear distinction between policymaking and the coordination and execution of adopted policies. Policymaking is exclusively the right of popular community assemblies based on the practices of participatory democracy. Administration and coordination are the responsibility of confederal councils, which become the means for interlinking villages, towns, neighborhoods, and cities into confederal networks. Power thus flows from the bottom up instead of from the top down, and in confederations, the flow of power from the bottom up diminishes with the scope of the federal council ranging territorially from localities to regions and from regions to ever-broader territorial areas.

A crucial element in giving reality to confederalism is the interdependence of communities for an authentic mutualism based on shared resources, produce, and policymaking. If one community is not obliged to count on another or others generally to satisfy important material needs and realize common political goals in such a way that it is interlinked to a greater whole, exclusivity and parochialism are genuine possibilities. Only insofar as we recognize that confederation must be conceived as an extension of a form of participatory administration - by means of confederal networks - can decentralization and localism prevent the communities that compose larger bodies of association from parochially withdrawing into themselves at the expense of wider areas of human consociation.

Confederalism is thus a way of perpetuating the interdependence that should exist among communities and regions - indeed, it is a way of democratizing that interdependence without surrendering the principle of local control. While a reasonable measure of self-sufficiency is desirable for every locality and region, confederalism is a means for avoiding local parochialism on the one hand and an extravagant national and global division of labor on the other. In short, it is a way in which a community can retain its identity and roundedness while participating in a sharing way with the larger whole that makes up a balanced ecological society.

Confederalism as a principle of social organization reaches its fullest development when the economy itself is confederalized by placing local farms, factories, and other needed enterprises in local municipal hands - that is, when a community, however large or small, begins to

manage its own economic resources in an interlinked network with other communities. To force a choice between either self-sufficiency on the one hand or a market system of exchange on the other is a simplistic and unnecessary dichotomy. I would like to think that a confederal ecological society would be a sharing one, one based on the pleasure that is felt in distributing among communities according to their needs, not one in which "cooperative" capitalistic communities mire themselves in the quid pro quo of exchange relationships.

Impossible? Unless we are to believe that nationalized property (which reinforces the political power of the centralized state with economic power) or a private market economy (whose law of "grow or die" threatens to undermine the ecological stability of the entire planet) is more workable, I fail to see what viable alternative we have to the confederated municipalization of the economy. At any rate, for once it will no longer be privileged state bureaucrats or grasping bourgeois entrepreneurs - or even "collective" capitalists in so-called workers-controlled enterprises - all with their special to promote who are faced with a community's problems, but citizens, irrespective of their occupations or workplaces. For once, it will be necessary to transcend the traditional special interests of work, workplace, status, and property relations, and create a general interest based on shared community problems.

Confederation is thus the ensemble of decentralization, localism, self-sufficiency, interdependence - and more. This more is the indispensable moral education and character building - what the Greeks called *paideia* - that makes for rational

active citizenship in a participatory democracy, unlike the passive constituents and consumers that we have today. In the end, there is no substitute for a conscious reconstruction of our relationship to each other and the natural world.

To argue that the remaking of society and our relationship with the natural world can be achieved only by decentralization or localism or self-sustainability leaves us with an incomplete collection of solutions. Whatever we omit among these presuppositions for a society based on confederated municipalities, to be sure, would leave a yawning hole in the entire social fabric we hope to create. That hole would grow and eventually destroy the fabric itself - just as a market economy, cojoined with "socialism," "anarchism," or whatever concept one has of the good society, would eventually dominate the society as a whole. Nor can we omit the distinction between policy making and administration, for once policy making slips from the hands of the people, it is devoured by its delegates, who quickly become bureaucrats.

Confederalism, in effect, must be conceived as a whole: a consciously formed body of interdependencies that unites participatory democracy in municipalities with a scrupulously supervised system of coordination. It involves the dialectical development of independence and dependence into a more richly articulated form of interdependence, just as the individual in a free society grows from dependence in childhood to independence in youth, only to sublate the two into a conscious form of interdependence between individuals and between the individual and society.

Confederalism is thus a fluid and ever-developing kind of social metabolism in which the identity of an ecological society is preserved through its differences and by virtue of its potential for ever-greater differentiation. Confederalism, in fact, does not mark a closure of social history (as the "end of history" ideologists of recent years would have us believe about liberal capitalism) but rather the point of departure for a new eco-social history marked by a participatory evolution within society and between society and the natural world.

#### CONFEDERATION AS DUAL POWER

Above all, I have tried to show in my previous writings how confederation on a municipal basis has existed in sharp tension with the centralized state generally, and the nation-state of recent times. Confederalism, I have tried to emphasize, is not simply a unique societal, particularly civic or municipal, form of administration. It is a vibrant tradition in the affairs of humanity, one that has a centuries-long history behind it. Confederations for generations tried to countervail a nearly equally long historical tendency toward centralization and the creation of the nation-state.

If the two - confederalism and statism - are not seen as being in tension with each other, a tension in which the nation-state has used a variety of intermediaries like provincial governments in Canada and state governments in the United States to create the illusion of "local control," then the concept of confederation loses all meaning. Provincial autonomy in Canada and states' rights in the United States are no more confederal than

"soviets" or councils were the medium for popular control that existed in tension with Stalin's totalitarian state. The Russian soviets were taken over by the Bolsheviks, who supplanted them with their party within a year or two of the October Revolution. To weaken the role of confederal municipalities as a countervailing power to the nation-state by opportunistically running "confederalist" candidates for state government - or, more nightmarishly, for governorship in seemingly democratic states (as some U.S. Greens have proposed) is to blur the importance of the need for tension between confederations and nation-states - indeed, they obscure the fact that the two cannot co-exist over the long term.

In describing confederalism as a whole - as a structure for decentralization, participatory democracy, and localism - and as a potentiality for an ever- greater differentiation along new lines of development, I would like to emphasize that this same concept of wholeness that applies to the interdependencies between municipalities also applies to the municipality itself. The municipality, as I pointed out in earlier writings, is the most immediate political arena of the individual, the world that is literally a doorstep beyond the privacy of the family and the intimacy of personal friendships. In that primary political arena, where politics should be conceived in the Hellenic sense of literally managing the polls or community, the individual can be transformed from a mere person into an active citizen, from a private being into a public being. Given this crucial arena that literally renders the citizen a functional being who can participate directly in the future of society, we are dealing with a level of human interaction that is more basic (apart from the family itself) than any level that is expressed in representative forms of governance, where

collective power is literally transmuted into power embodied by one or a few individuals. The municipality is thus the most authentic arena of public life, however much it may have been distorted over the course of history.

By contrast, delegated or authoritarian levels of "politics" presuppose the abdication of municipal and citizen power to one degree or another. The municipality must always be understood as this truly authentic public world. To compare even executive positions like a mayor with a governor in representative realms of power is to grossly misunderstand the basic political nature of civic life itself, all its malformations notwithstanding. Thus, for Greens to contend in a purely formal and analytical manner - as modern logic instructs that terms like "executive" make the two positions interchangeable is to totally remove the notion of executive power from its context, to reify it, to make it into a mere lifeless category because of the external trappings we attach to the word. If the city is to be seen as a whole, and its potentialities for creating a participatory democracy are to be fully recognized, so provincial governments and state governments in Canada and the United States must be seen as clearly established small republics organized entirely around representation at best and oligarchical rule at worst. They provide the channels of expression for the nation-state - and constitute obstacles to the development of a genuine public realm.

To run a Green for a mayor on a libertarian municipalist program, in short, is qualitatively different from running a provincial or state governor on a presumably libertarian municipalist program. It amounts to decontextualizing the institutions that exist in a

municipality, in a province or state, and in the nation-state itself, thereby placing all three of these executive positions under a purely formal rubric. One might with equal imprecision say that because human beings and dinosaurs both have spinal cords, that they belong to the same species or even to the same genus. In each such case, an institution - be it a mayoral, councillor, or selectperson - must be seen in a municipal context as a whole, just as a president, prime minister, congressperson, or member of parliament, in turn, must be seen in the state context as a whole. From this standpoint, for Greens to run mayors is fundamentally different from running provincial and state offices. One can go into endless detailed reasons why the powers of a mayor are far more controlled and under closer public purview than those of state and provincial office-holders.

At the risk of repetition, let me say that to ignore this fact is to simply abandon any sense of contextuality and the environment in which issues like policy, administration, participation, and representation must be placed. Simply, a city hall in a town or city is not a capital in a province, state, or nation-state.

Unquestionably, there are now cities that are so large that they verge on being quasi-republics in their own right. One thinks for example of such megalopolitan areas as New York City and Los Angeles. In such cases, the minimal program of a Green movement can demand that confederations be established within the urban area - namely, among neighborhoods or definable districts - not only among the urban areas themselves. In a very real sense, these highly populated, sprawling, and oversized entities must ultimately be broken down institutionally into authentic municipalities that are scaled to human



dimensions and that lend themselves to participatory democracy. These entities are not yet fully formed state powers, either institutionally or in reality, such as we find even in sparsely populated American states. The mayor is not yet a governor, with the enormous coercive powers that a governor has, nor is the city council a parliament or statehouse that can literally legislate the death penalty into existence, such as is occurring in the United States today.

In cities that are transforming themselves into quasi-states, there is still a good deal of leeway in which politics can be conducted along libertarian lines. Already, the executive branches of these urban entities constitute a highly precarious ground - burdened by enormous bureaucracies, police powers, tax powers, and juridical systems that raise serious problems for a libertarian municipal approach. We must always ask ourselves in all frankness what form the concrete situation takes. Where city councils and mayoral offices in large cities provide an arena for battling the concentration of power in an increasingly strong state or provincial executive, and even worse, in regional jurisdictions that may cut across many such cities (Los Angeles is a notable example), to run candidates for the city council may be the only recourse we have, in fact, for arresting the development of increasingly authoritarian state institutions and helping to restore an institutionally decentralized democracy.

It will no doubt take a long time to physically decentralize an urban entity such as New York City into authentic municipalities and ultimately communes. Such an effort is part of the maximum program of a Green movement. But there is no reason why an urban entity of

such a huge magnitude cannot be slowly decentralized institutionally. The distinction between physical decentralization and institutional decentralization must always be kept in mind. Time and again excellent proposals have been advanced by radicals and even city planners to localize democracy in such huge urban entities and literally give greater power to the people, only to be cynically shot down by centralists who invoke physical impediments to such an endeavor.

It confuses the arguments of advocates for decentralization to make institutional decentralization congruent with the physical breakup of such a large entity. There is a certain treachery on the part of centralists in making these two very distinct lines of development identical or entangling them with each other. Libertarian municipalists must always keep the distinction between institutional and physical decentralization clearly in mind, and recognize that the former is entirely achievable even while the latter may take years to attain.

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# LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM: AN OVERVIEW

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## GREEN PERSPECTIVES

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Perhaps the greatest single failing of movements for social reconstruction -- I refer particularly to the Left, to radical ecology groups, and to organizations that profess to speak for the oppressed -- is their lack of a politics that will carry people beyond the limits established by the status quo.

Politics today means duels between top-down bureaucratic parties for electoral office, that offer vacuous programs for "social justice" to attract a nondescript "electorate." Once in office, their programs usually turn into a bouquet of "compromises." In this respect, many Green parties in Europe have been only

marginally different from conventional parliamentary parties. Nor have socialist parties, with all their various labels, exhibited any basic differences from their capitalist counter parts. To be sure, the indifference of the Euro-American public -- its "apoliticism" -- is understandably depressing. Given their low expectations, when people do vote, they normally turn to established parties if only because, as centers of power, they can produce results of sorts in practical matters. If one bothers to vote, most people reason, why waste a vote on a new marginal organization that has all the characteristics of the major ones and that will eventually become corrupted if it succeeds? Witness the German Greens, whose internal and public life increasingly approximates that of other parties in the new Reich.

That this "political process" has lingered on with almost no basic alteration for decades now is due in great part to the inertia of the process itself. Time wears expectations thin, and hopes are often reduced to habits as one disappointment is followed by another. Talk of a "new politics," of upsetting tradition, which is as old as politics itself, is becoming unconvincing. For decades, at least, the changes that have occurred in radical politics are largely changes in rhetoric rather than structure. The German Greens are only the most recent of a succession of "nonparty parties" (to use their original way of describing their organization) that have turned from an attempt to practice grassroots politics -- ironically, in the Bundestag, of all places! -- into a typical parliamentary party. The Social Democratic Party in Germany, the Labor Party in Britain, the New Democratic Party in Canada, the Socialist Party in France, and others, despite their original emancipatory visions, barely qualify today as even liberal parties in which a Franklin D. Roosevelt

or a Harry Truman would have found a comfortable home. Whatever social ideals these parties may have had generations ago have been eclipsed by the pragmatics of gaining, holding, and extending their power in their respective parliamentary and ministerial bodies.

It is precisely such parliamentary and ministerial objectives that we call "politics" today. To the modern political imagination, "politics" is precisely a body of techniques for holding power in representative bodies -- notably the legislative and executive arenas -- not a moral calling based on rationality, community, and freedom.

### A CIVIC ETHICS

Libertarian municipalism represents a serious, indeed a historically fundamental project, to render politics ethical in character and grassroots in organization. It is structurally and morally different from other grassroots efforts, not merely rhetorically different. It seeks to reclaim the public sphere for the exercise of authentic citizenship while breaking away from the bleak cycle of parliamentarism and its mystification of the "party" mechanism as a means for public representation. In these respects, libertarian municipalism is not merely a "political strategy." It is an effort to work from latent or incipient democratic possibilities toward a radically new configuration of society itself-a communitarian society oriented toward meeting human needs, responding to ecological imperatives, and developing a new ethics based on sharing and cooperation. That it involves a consistently independent form of politics is a truism. More important, it involves a redefinition of politics, a

return to the word's original Greek meaning as the management of the community or polis by means of direct face-to-face assemblies of the people in the formulation of public policy and based on an ethics of complementarity and solidarity.

In this respect, libertarian municipalism is not one of many pluralistic techniques that is intended to achieve a vague and undefined social goal. Democratic to its core and nonhierarchical in its structure, it is a kind of human destiny, not merely one of an assortment of political tools or strategies that can be adopted and discarded with the aim of achieving power. Libertarian municipalism, in effect, seeks to define the institutional contours of a new society even as it advances the practical message of a radically new politics for our day.

#### MEANS AND ENDS

Here, means and ends meet in a rational unity. The word politics now expresses direct popular control of society by its citizens through achieving and sustaining a true democracy in municipal assemblies -- this, as distinguished from republican systems of representation that preempt the right of the citizen to formulate community and regional policies. Such politics is radically distinct from statecraft and the state a professional body composed of bureaucrats, police, military, legislators, and the like, that exists as a coercive apparatus, clearly distinct from and above the people. The libertarian municipalist approach distinguishes statecraft -- which we usually characterize as "politics" today -- and politics as it once existed in precapitalist democratic communities.

Moreover, libertarian municipalism also involves a clear delineation of the social realm -- as well as the political realm -- in the strict meaning of the term social: notably, the arena in which we live our private lives and engage in production. As such, the social realm is to be distinguished from both the political and the statist realms. Enormous mischief has been caused by the interchangeable use of these terms -- social, political, and the state. Indeed, the tendency has been to identify them with one another in our thinking and in the reality of everyday life. But the state is a completely alien formation, a thorn in the side of human development, an exogenous entity that has incessantly encroached on the social and political realms. Often, in fact, the state has been an end in itself, as witness the rise of Asian empires, ancient imperial Rome, and the totalitarian state of modern times. More than this, it has steadily invaded the political domain, which, for all its past shortcomings, had empowered communities, social groupings, and individuals.

Such invasions have not gone unchallenged. Indeed, the conflict between the state on the one hand and the political and social realms on the other has been an ongoing subterranean civil war for centuries. It has often broken out into the open -- in modern times in the conflict of the Castilian cities (*comuneros*) against the Spanish monarchy in the 1520s, in the struggle of the Parisian sections against the centralist Jacobin Convention of 1793, and in endless other clashes both before and after these encounters.

Today, with the increasing centralization and concentration of power in the nation-state, a "new

politics" -- one that is genuinely new -- must be structured institutionally around the restoration of power by municipalities. This is not only necessary but possible even in such gigantic urban areas as New York City, Montreal, London, and Paris. Such urban agglomerations are not, strictly speaking, cities or municipalities in the traditional sense of those terms, despite being designated as such by sociologists. It is only if we think that they are cities that we become mystified by problems of size and logistics. Even before we confront the ecological imperative of physical decentralization (a necessity anticipated by Frederick Engels and Peter Kropotkin alike), we need feel no problems about decentralizing them institutionally. When Francois Mitterand tried to decentralize Paris with local city halls a few years ago, his reasons were strictly tactical (he wanted to weaken the authority of the capital's right-wing mayor). Nonetheless, he failed not because restructuring the Large metropolis was impossible but because the majority of the affluent Parisians supported the mayor.

Clearly, institutional changes do not occur in a social vacuum. Nor do they guarantee that a decentralized municipality, even if it is structurally democratic, will necessarily be humane, rational, and ecological in dealing with public affairs. Libertarian municipalism is premised on the struggle to achieve a rational and ecological society, a struggle that depends on education and organization. From the beginning, it presupposes a genuinely democratic desire by people to arrest the growing powers of the nation-state and reclaim them for their community and their region. Unless there is a movement -- hopefully an effective Left Green movement -- to foster these aims, decentralization can



lead to local parochialism as easily as it can lead to ecological humanist communities.

But when have basic social changes ever been without risk? The case that Marx's commitment to a centralized state and planned economy would inevitably yield bureaucratic totalitarianism could have been better made than the case that decentralized libertarian municipalities will inevitably be authoritarian and have exclusionary and parochial traits. Economic interdependence is a fact of life today, and capitalism itself has made parochial autarchies a chimera. While municipalities and regions can seek to attain a considerable measure of self-sufficiency, we have long left the era when self-sufficient communities that can indulge their prejudices are possible.

## CONFEDERALISM

Equally important is the need for confederation -- the interlinking of communities with one another through recallable deputies mandated by municipal citizens' assemblies and whose sole functions are coordinative and administrative. Confederation has a long history of its own that dates back to antiquity and that surfaced as a major alternative to the nation state. From the American Revolution through the French Revolution and the Spanish Revolution of 1936, confederalism constituted a major challenge to state centralism. Nor has it disappeared in our own time, when the breakup of existing twentieth-century empires raises the issue of enforced state centralism or the relatively autonomous nation. Libertarian municipalism adds a radically democratic dimension to the contemporary discussions

of confederation (as, for example, in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) by calling for confederations not of nation-states but of municipalities and of the neighborhoods of giant megalopolitan areas as well as towns and villages.

In the case of libertarian municipalism' parochialism can thus be checked not only by the compelling realities of economic interdependence but by the commitment of municipal minorities to defer to the majority wishes of participating communities. Do these interdependencies and majority decisions guarantee us that a majority decision will be a correct one? Certainly not -- but our chances for a rational and ecological society are much better in this approach than in those that ride on centralized entities and bureaucratic apparatuses. I cannot help but marvel that no municipal network has been emergent among the German Greens, who have hundreds of representatives in city councils around Germany but who carry on a local politics that is completely conventional and self enclosed within particular towns and cities.

Many arguments against libertarian municipalism -- even with its strong confederal emphasis derive from a failure to understand its distinction between policy-making and administration. This distinction is fundamental to libertarian municipalism and must always be kept in mind. Policy is made by a community or neighborhood assembly of free citizens; administration is performed by confederal councils composed of mandated, recallable deputies of wards, towns, and villages. If particular communities or neighborhoods -- or a minority grouping of them choose to go their own way to a point where human rights are violated or where ecological mayhem is

permitted, the majority in a local or regional confederation has every right to prevent such malfeasances through its confederal council. This is not a denial of democracy but the assertion of a shared agreement by all to recognize civil rights and maintain the ecological integrity of a region. These rights and needs are not asserted so much by a confederal council as by the majority of the popular assemblies conceived as one large community that expresses its wishes through its confederal deputies. Thus policy-making still remains local, but its administration is vested in the confederal network as a whole. The confederation in effect is a Community of communities based on distinct human rights and ecological imperatives.

If libertarian municipalism is not to be totally warped of its form and divested of its meaning, it is a desideratum that must be fought for. It speaks to a time -- hopefully, one that will yet come when people feel disempowered and actively seek empowerment. Existing in growing tension with the nation-state, it is a process as well as a destiny, a struggle to be fulfilled, not a bequest granted by the summits of the state. It is a dual power that contests the legitimacy of the existing state power. Such a movement can be expected to begin slowly, perhaps sporadically, in communities here and there that initially may demand only the moral authority to alter the structuring of society before enough interlinked confederations exist to demand the outright institutional power to replace the state. The growing tension created by the emergence of municipal confederations represents a confrontation between the state and the political realms. This confrontation can be resolved only after libertarian municipalism forms the new politics of a

popular movement and ultimately captures the imagination of millions.

Certain points, however, should be obvious. The people who initially enter into the duel between confederalism and statism will not be the same human beings as those who eventually achieve libertarian municipalism. The movement that tries to educate them and the struggles that give libertarian municipalist principles reality will turn them into active citizens, rather than passive 'constituents.' No one who participates in a struggle for social restructuring emerges from that struggle with the prejudices, habits, and sensibilities with which he or she entered it. Hopefully, then, such prejudices -- like parochialism -- will increasingly be replaced by a generous sense of cooperation and a caring sense of interdependence.

#### MUNICIPALIZING THE ECONOMY

It remains to emphasize that libertarian municipalism is not merely an evocation of all traditional antistatist notions of politics. Just as it redefines politics to include face-to-face municipal democracies graduated to confederal levels, so it includes a municipalist and confederal approach to economics. Minimally, a libertarian municipalist economics calls for the municipalization of the economy, not its centralization into state-owned "nationalized" enterprises on the one hand or its reduction to "worker-controlled" forms of collectivistic capitalism on the other. Trade-union control of "worker controlled" enterprises (that is, syndicalism) has had its day. This should be evident to anyone who examines the bureaucracies that even

revolutionary trade unions spawned during the Spanish Civil War of 1936. Today, corporate capitalism too is increasingly eager to bring the worker into complicity with his or her own exploitation by means of "workplace democracy." Nor was the revolution in Spain or in other countries spared the existence of competition among worker-controlled enterprises for raw materials, markets, and profits. Even more recently, many Israeli kibbutzim have been failures as examples of nonexploitative, need-oriented enterprises, despite the high ideals with which they were initially founded.

Libertarian municipalism proposes a radically different form of economy one that is neither nationalized nor collectivized according to syndicalist precepts. It proposes that land and enterprises be placed increasingly in the custody of the community more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their deputies in confederal councils. How work should be planned, what technologies should be used, how goods should be distributed are questions that can only be resolved in practice. The maxim "from each according to his or her ability, to each according to his or her needs" would seem a bedrock guide for an economically rational society, provided to be sure that goods are of the highest durability and quality, that needs are guided by rational and ecological standards, and that the ancient notions of limit and balance replace the bourgeois marketplace imperative of "grow or die."

In such a municipal economy -- confederal, interdependent, and rational by ecological, not simply technological, standards -- we would expect that the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded

into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns. Here, citizenship would come into its own, and rational as well as ecological interpretations of the public good would supplant class and hierarchical interests.

This is the moral basis of a moral economy for moral communities. But of overarching importance is the general social interest that potentially underpins all moral communities, an interest that must ultimately cut across class, gender, ethnic, and status lines if humanity is to continue to exist as a viable species. This interest is the one created in our times by ecological catastrophe. Capitalism's "grow or die" imperative stands radically at odds with ecology's imperative of interdependence and limit. The two imperatives can no longer coexist with each other -- nor can any society founded on the myth that they can be reconciled hope to survive. Either we will establish an ecological society, or society will go under for everyone, irrespective of his or her status.

Will this ecological society be authoritarian, or possibly even totalitarian, a hierarchical dispensation that is implicit in the image of the planet as a "spaceship"? Or will it be democratic? If history is any guide, the development of a democratic ecological society, as distinguished from a commend ecological society, must follow its own logic. One cannot resolve this historical dilemma without getting to its roots. Without a searching analysis of our ecological problems and their social sources, the pernicious institutions that we now have will lead to increased centralization and further ecological catastrophe. In a democratic ecological society, those

roots are literally the grass roots that libertarian municipalism seeks to foster.

For those who rightly call for a new technology, new sources of energy, new means of transportation, and new ecological lifeways, can a new society be anything less than a Community of communities based on confederation rather than statism? We already live in a world in which the economy is "overglobalized," overcentralized, and overbureaucratized. Much that can be done locally and regionally is now being done largely for profit, military needs, and imperial appetites -- on a global scale with a seeming complexity that can actually be easily diminished.

If this seems too "utopian" for our time, then so must the present flood of literature that asks for radically sweeping shifts in energy policies, far-reaching reductions in air and water pollution, and the formulation of worldwide plans to arrest global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer be seen as "utopian." Is it too much, it is fair to ask, to take such demands one step further and call for institutional and economic changes that are no less drastic and that in fact are based on traditions that are deeply sedimented in American -- indeed, the world's -- noblest democratic and political traditions?

Nor are we obliged to expect these changes to occur immediately. The Left long worked with minimum and maximum programs for change, in which immediate steps that can be taken now were linked by transitional advances and intermediate areas that would eventually yield ultimate goals. Minimal steps that can be taken now include initiating Left Green municipalist

movements that propose popular neighborhood and town assemblies -- even if they have only moral functions at first -- and electing town and city councilors that advance the cause of these assemblies and other popular institutions. These minimal steps can lead step-by-step to the formation of confederal bodies and the increasing legitimation of truly democratic bodies. Civic banks to fund municipal enterprises and land purchases; the fostering of new ecologically oriented enterprises that are owned by the community; and the creation of grassroots networks in many fields of endeavor and the public weal -- all these can be developed at a pace appropriate to changes that are being made in political life.

That capital will likely "migrate" from communities and confederations that are moving toward libertarian municipalism is a problem that every community, every nation, whose political life has become radicalized has faced. Capital, in fact, normally "migrates" to areas where it can acquire high profits, irrespective of political considerations. Overwhelmed by fears of capital migration, a good case could be established for not rocking the political boat at any time. Far more to the point are that municipally owned enterprises and farms could provide new ecologically valuable and health-nourishing products to a public that is becoming increasingly aware of the low-quality goods and staples that are being foisted on it now.

Libertarian municipalism is a politics that can excite the public imagination, appropriate for a movement that is direly in need of a sense of direction and purpose. The papers that appear in this collection offer ideas, ways, and means not only to undo the present social order but



to remake it drastically -- expanding its residual democratic traditions into a rational and ecological society.

## ADDENDUM

This addendum seems to be necessary because some of the opponents of libertarian municipalism -- and, regrettably, some of its acolyte -- misunderstand what libertarian municipalism seeks to achieve indeed, misunderstand its very nature.

For some of its instrumental acolytes, libertarian municipalism is becoming a tactical device to gain entry into so called independent movements and new third parties that call for "grassroots politics," such as those proposed by NOW and certain Labor leaders. In the name of "libertarian municipalism," some radical acolytes of the view are prepared to blur the tension that they should cultivate between the civic realm and the state -- presumably to gain greater public attention in electoral campaigns for gubernatorial, congressional, and other state offices. These radicals regrettably warp libertarian municipalism into a mere "tactic" or "strategy" and drain it of its revolutionary content.

But those who propose to use tenets of libertarian municipalism for "tactical" reasons as a means to enter another reformist party or function as its "left wing" have little in common with the idea. Libertarian municipalism is not a product of the formal logic that has such deep roots in left-wing "analyses" and "strategies" today, despite the claims of many radicals that "dialectics" is their "method." The struggle toward creating new civic

institutions out of old ones (or replacing the old ones altogether) and creating civic confederations is a self formative one, a creative dynamic formed from the tension of social conflict. The effort to work along these lines is as much a part of the end as the process of maturing from the child to the adult -- from the relatively undifferentiated to the fully differentiated -- with all its difficulties. The very fight for a municipal confederation, for municipal control of "property," and for the actual achievement of worldwide municipal confederation is directed toward achieving a new ethos of citizenship and community, not simply to gain victories in largely reformist conflicts.

Thus, libertarian municipalism is not merely an effort simply to "take over" city councils to construct a more "environmentally friendly" city government. These adherents or opponents of libertarian municipalism, in effect, look at the civic structures that exist before their eyes now and essentially (all rhetoric to the contrary aside) take them as they exist. Libertarian municipalism, by contrast, is an effort to transform and democratize city governments, to root them in popular assemblies, to knit them together along confederal lines, to appropriate a regional economy along confederal and municipal lines.

In fact, libertarian municipalism gains its life and its integrity precisely from the dialectical tension it proposes between the nation-state and the municipal confederation. Its "law of life," to use an old Marxian term, consists precisely in its struggle with the state. The tension between municipal confederations and the state must be clear and uncompromising. Since these confederations would exist primarily in opposition to

statecraft, they cannot be compromised by state, provincial, or national elections, much less achieved by these means. Libertarian municipalism is formed by its struggle with the state, strengthened by this struggle, indeed defined by this struggle. Divested of this dialectical tension with the state, of this duality of power that must ultimately be actualized in a free "Commune of communes," libertarian municipalism becomes little more than "sewer socialism."

Many heroic comrades who are prepared to do battle (one day) with the cosmic forces of capitalism find that libertarian municipalism is too thorny, irrelevant, or vague to deal with and opt for what is basically a form of political particularism. Our spray-can or "alternative cafe" radicals may choose to brush libertarian municipalism aside as "a ludicrous tactic," but it never ceases to amaze me that well-meaning radicals who are committed to the "overthrow" of capitalism (no less!) find it too difficult to function politically -- and, yes, electorally -- in their own neighborhoods for a new politics based on a genuine democracy. If they cannot provide a transformative politics for their own neighborhood relatively modest task -- or diligently work at doing so with the constancy that used to mark the more mature left movements of the past, I find it very hard to believe that they will ever do much harm to the present social system. Indeed, by creating cultural centers, parks, and good housing, they may well be improving the system by giving capitalism a human face without diminishing its under lying unfreedom as a hierarchical and class society.

A bouquet of struggles for "identity" has often fractured rising radical movements since SDS in the 1960s,

ranging from foreign to domestic nationalisms. Because these identity struggles are so popular today, some of the critics of libertarian municipalism invoke "public opinion" against it. But when has it been the task of revolutionaries to surrender to "public opinion" not even the "public opinion" of the oppressed, whose views can often be very reactionary? Truth has its own life -- regardless of whether the oppressed masses perceive or agree on what is true. Nor is it "elitist" to invoke truth, in contradiction to even radical public opinion, when that opinion essentially seeks a march backward into the politics of particularism and even racism. It is very easy to drop to all fours these days, but as radicals our most important need is to stand on two feet -- that is, to be as fully human as possible -- and to challenge the existing society in behalf of our shared common humanity, not on the basis of gender, race, age, and the like.

Critics of libertarian municipalism even dispute the very possibility of a "general interest." If, for such critics, the face-to-face democracy advocated by libertarian municipalism and the need to extend the premises of democracy beyond mere justice to complete freedom do not suffice as a "general interest," it would seem to me that the need to repair our relationship with the natural world is certainly a "general interest" that is beyond dispute -- and, indeed, it remains the "general interest" advanced by social ecology. It may be possible to coopt many dissatisfied elements in the present society, but nature is not cooptable. Indeed, the only politics that remains for the Left is one based on the premise that there is a "general interest" in democratizing society and preserving the planet. Now that traditional forces such as the workers' movement have ebbed from the historical scene, it can be said with almost complete certainty that

without libertarian municipalism, the left will have no politics whatever.

A dialectical view of the relationship of confederalism to the nation-state, an understanding of the narrowness, introverted character, and parochialism of identity-movements. and a recognition that the workers' movement is essentially dead all illustrate that if a new politics is going to develop today, it must be unflinchingly public, in contrast to the alternative-cafe "politics" advanced by many radicals today. It must be electoral on a municipal basis, confederal in its vision, and revolutionary in its character.

Indeed, in my view, libertarian municipalism, with its emphasis on confederalism, is precisely the "Commune of communes" for which anarchists have fought over the past two centuries. Today, it is the "red button" that must be pushed if a radical movement is to open the door to the public sphere. To leave that red button untouched and slip back into the worst habits of the post-1968 New Left, when the notion of "power" was divested of utopian or imaginative qualities, is to reduce radicalism to yet another subculture that will probably live more on heroic memories than on the hopes of a rational future.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL ECOLOGY?

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

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What literally defines social ecology as "social" is its recognition of the often overlooked fact that nearly all our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Conversely, present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today--apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes.

If this approach seems a bit too "sociological" for those environmentalists who identify ecological problems with the preservation of wildlife, wilderness, or more broadly, with "Gaia" and planetary "Oneness," it might be sobering to consider certain recent facts. The massive oil spill by an Exxon tanker at Prince William Sound, the extensive deforestation of redwood trees by the Maxxam Corporation, and the proposed James Bay hydroelectric project that would flood vast areas of northern Quebec's forests, to cite only a few problems, should remind us that the real battleground on which the ecological future of the planet will be decided is clearly a social one.

Indeed, to separate ecological problems from social problems--or even to play down or give token recognition to this crucial relationship-- would be to grossly misconstrue the sources of the growing environmental crisis. The way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis. Unless we clearly recognize this, we will surely fail to see that the hierarchical mentality and class relationships that so thoroughly permeate society give rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world.

Unless we realize that the present market society, structured around the brutally competitive imperative of "grow or die," is a thoroughly impersonal, self-operating mechanism, we will falsely tend to blame technology as such or population growth as such for environmental problems. We will ignore their root causes, such as trade for profit, industrial expansion, and the identification of "progress" with corporate self-interest. In short, we will tend to focus on the symptoms of a grim social

pathology rather than on the pathology itself, and our efforts will be directed toward limited goals whose attainment is more cosmetic than curative.

While some have questioned whether social ecology has dealt adequately with issues of spirituality, it was, in fact, among the earliest of contemporary ecologies to call for a sweeping change in existing spiritual values. Such a change would mean a far-reaching transformation of our prevailing mentality of domination into one of complementarity, in which we would see our role in the natural world as creative, supportive, and deeply appreciative of the needs of nonhuman life. In social ecology, a truly natural spirituality centers on the ability of an awakened humanity to function as moral agents in diminishing needless suffering, engaging in ecological restoration, and fostering an aesthetic appreciation of natural evolution in all its fecundity and diversity.

Thus social ecology has never eschewed the need for a radically new spirituality or mentality in its call for a collective effort to change society. Indeed, as early as 1965, the first public statement to advance the ideas of social ecology concluded with the injunction: "The cast of mind that today organizes differences among human and other life-forms along hierarchical lines of 'supremacy' or 'inferiority' will give way to an outlook that deals with diversity in an ecological manner--that is, according to an ethics of complementarity."<sup>1</sup> In such an ethics, human beings would complement nonhuman beings with their own capacities to produce a richer, creative, and developmental whole-not as a "dominant" species but as a supportive one. Although this idea, expressed at times as an appeal for the "respiritization of the natural world," recurs throughout the literature of



social ecology, it should not be mistaken for a theology that raises a deity above the natural world or that seeks to discover one within it. The spirituality advanced by social ecology is definitively naturalistic (as one would expect, given its relation to ecology itself, which stems from the biological sciences), rather than supernaturalistic or pantheistic.

To prioritize any form of spirituality over the social factors that actually erode all forms of spirituality, raises serious questions about one's ability to come to grips with reality. At a time when a blind social mechanism, the market, is turning soil into sand, covering fertile land with concrete, poisoning air and water, and producing sweeping climatic and atmospheric changes, we cannot ignore the impact that a hierarchical and class society has on the natural world. We must earnestly deal with the fact that economic growth, gender oppressions, and ethnic domination-not to speak of corporate, state, and bureaucratic interests-are much more capable of shaping the future of the natural world than are privatistic forms of spiritual self-regeneration. These forms of domination must be confronted by collective action and major social movements that challenge the social sources of the ecological crisis, not simply by personalistic forms of consumption and investment that often go under the rubric of "green capitalism." We live in a highly cooptative society that is only too eager to find new areas of commercial aggrandizement and to add ecological verbiage to its advertising and customer relations.

## NATURE AND SOCIETY

Let us begin, then, with basics-namely, by asking what we mean by nature and society. Among the many definitions of nature that have been formulated over time, one is rather elusive and often difficult to grasp because it requires a certain way of thinking-one that stands at odds with what we popularly call "linear thinking." This form of "nonlinear" or organic thinking is developmental rather than analytical, or, in more technical terms, dialectical rather than instrumental. Nature, conceived in terms of developmental thinking, is more than the beautiful vistas we see from a mountaintop or in the images that are fixed on the backs of picture postcards. Such vistas and images of nonhuman nature are basically static and immobile. Our attention, to be sure, may be arrested by the soaring flight of a hawk, or the bolting leap of a deer, or the low-slung shadowy loping of a coyote. But what we are really witnessing in such cases are the mere kinetics of physical motion, caught in the frame of an essentially static image of the scene before our eyes. It deceives us into believing in the "eternality" of a single moment in nature.

If we look with some care into nonhuman nature as more than a scenic view, we begin to sense that it is basically an evolving phenomenon, a richly fecund, even dramatic development that is forever changing. I mean to define nonhuman nature precisely as an evolving process, as the totality, in fact of its evolution. This encompasses the development from the inorganic into the organic, from the less differentiated and relatively limited world of unicellular organisms into that of multicellular ones equipped with simple, later complex, and presently fairly intelligent neural apparatuses that allow them to make

innovative choices. Finally, the acquisition of warm-bloodedness gives to organisms the astonishing flexibility to exist in the most demanding climatic environments.

This vast drama of nonhuman nature is in every respect stunningly wondrous. It is marked by increasing subjectivity and flexibility and by increasing differentiation that makes an organism more adaptable to new environmental challenges and opportunities and renders a living being more equipped to alter its environment to meet its own needs. One may speculate that the potentiality of matter itself-the ceaseless interactivity of atoms in forming new chemical combinations to produce ever more complex molecules, amino acids, proteins, and, under suitable conditions, elementary life-forms-is inherent in inorganic nature. Or one may decide, quite matter-of-factly, that the "struggle for existence" or the "survival of the fittest" (to use popular Darwinian terms) explains why increasingly subjective and more flexible beings are capable of dealing with environmental changes more effectively than are less subjective and flexible beings. But the fact remains that the kind of evolutionary drama I have described did occur, and is carved in stone in the fossil record. That nature is this record, this history, this developmental or evolutionary process, is a very sobering fact.

Conceiving nonhuman nature as its own evolution rather than as a mere vista has profound implications-ethical as well as biological-for ecologically minded people. Human beings embody, at least potentially, attributes of nonhuman development that place them squarely within organic evolution. They are not "natural aliens," to use

Neil Evernden's phrase, strange "exotics," phylogenetic "deformities" that, owing to their tool-making capacities, "cannot evolve with an ecosystem anywhere."<sup>2</sup> Nor are they "intelligent fleas," to use the language of Gaian theorists who believe that the earth ("Gaia") is one living organism. These untenable disjunctions between humanity and the evolutionary process are as superficial as they are potentially misanthropic. Humans are highly intelligent, indeed, very self-conscious primates, which is to say that they have emerged "not diverged" from a long evolution of vertebrate life-forms into mammalian, and finally, primate life-forms. They are a product of a significant evolutionary trend toward intellectuality, self-awareness, will, intentionality, and expressiveness, be it in oral or body language.

Human beings belong to a natural continuum, no less than their primate ancestors and mammals in general. To depict them as "aliens" that have no place or pedigree in natural evolution, or to see them essentially as an infestation that parasitizes a highly anthropomorphic version of the planet (Gaia) the way fleas parasitize dogs and cats, is bad thinking, not only bad ecology. Lacking any sense of process, this kind of thinking-regrettably so commonplace among ethicists-radically bifurcates the nonhuman from the human. Indeed, to the degree that nonhuman nature is romanticized as "wilderness," and seen presumably as more authentically "natural" than the works of humans, the natural world is frozen into a circumscribed domain in which human innovation, foresight, and creativity have no place and offer no possibilities.

The truth is that human beings not only belong in nature, they are products of a long, natural evolutionary process.

Their seemingly "unnatural" activities-like the development of technology and science, the formation of mutable social institutions, of highly symbolic forms of communication, of aesthetic sensibilities, the creation of towns and cities-all would be impossible without the large array of physical attributes that have been eons in the making, be they large brains or the bipedal motion that frees their hands for tool making and carrying food. In many respects, human traits are enlargements of nonhuman traits that have been evolving over the ages. Increasing care for the young, cooperation, the substitution of mentally guided behavior for largely instinctive behavior--all are present more keenly in human behavior. The difference between the development of these traits among nonhuman beings is that among humans they reach a degree of elaboration and integration that yields cultures or, viewed institutionally in terms of families, bands, tribes, hierarchies, economic classes, and the state, highly mutable societies for which there is no precedent in the nonhuman world-unless the genetically programmed behavior of insects is to be regarded as "social." In fact, the emergence and development of human society is a shedding of instinctive behavioral traits, a continuing process of clearing a new terrain for potentially rational behavior.

Human beings always remain rooted in their biological evolutionary history, which we may call "first Nature," but they produce a characteristically human social nature of their own which we may call "second nature." And far from being "unnatural," human second nature is eminently a creation of organic evolution's first nature. To write the second nature created by human beings out of nature as a whole, or indeed, to minimize it, is to

ignore the creativity of natural evolution itself and to view it onesidedly. If "true" evolution embodies itself simply in creatures like grizzly bears, wolves, and whales—generally, animals that people find aesthetically pleasing or relatively intelligent—then human beings are literally de-natured. In such views, whether seen as "aliens" or as "fleas," humans are essentially placed outside the self-organizing thrust of natural evolution toward increasing subjectivity and flexibility. The more enthusiastic proponents of this de-naturing of humanity may see human beings as existing apart from nonhuman evolution, thereby dealing with people as a "freaking," as Paul Shepard puts it, of the evolutionary process. Others simply avoid the problem of humanity's unique place in natural evolution by promiscuously putting human beings on a par with beetles in terms of their "intrinsic worth." In this "either/or" propositional thinking, the social is either separated from the organic, or flippantly reduced to the organic, resulting in an inexplicable dualism at one extreme or a naive reductionism at the other. The dualistic approach, with its quasi-theological premise that the world was "made" for human use is saddled with the name of "anthropocentricity," while the reductionist approach, with its almost meaningless notion of a "biocentric democracy," is saddled with the name of "biocentricity."

The bifurcation of the human from the nonhuman reveals a failure to think organically, and to approach evolutionary phenomena with an evolutionary way of thought. Needless to say, if we are content to regard nature as no more than a scenic vista, mere metaphoric and poetic description of it might suffice to replace systematic thinking about it. But if we regard nature as the history of nature, as an evolutionary process that is

going on to one degree or another under our very eyes, we dishonor this process by thinking of it in anything but a processual way. That is to say, we require a way of thinking that recognizes that "what-is" as it seems to lie before our eyes is always developing into "what-it-is-not," that it is engaged in a continual self-organizing process in which past and present, seen as a richly differentiated but shared continuum, give rise to a new potentiality for a future, ever-richer degree of wholeness. Accordingly, the human and the nonhuman can be seen as aspects of an evolutionary continuum, and the emergence of the human can be located in the evolution of the nonhuman, without advancing naive claims that one is either "superior to" or "made for" the other.

By the same token, in a processual, organic, and dialectical way of thinking, we would have little difficulty in locating and explaining the emergence of the social out of the biological, of second nature out of first nature. It seems more fashionable these days to deal with ecologically significant social issues like a bookkeeper. One simply juxtaposes two columns-labeled "old paradigm" and "new paradigm"-as though one were dealing with debits and credits. Obviously distasteful terms like "centralization" are placed under "old paradigm," while more appealing ones like "decentralization" are regarded as "new paradigm." The result is an inventory of bumper-sticker slogans whose "bottom line" is patently a form of "absolute good versus absolute evil." All of this maybe deliciously synoptic and easy for the eyes, but it is singularly lacking as food for the brain. To truly know and be able to give interpretative meaning to the social issues so arranged, we should want to know how each idea derived from others and is part of an overall development. What, in

fact, do we mean by the notion of "decentralization," and how does it derive from or give rise in the history of human society to "centralization"? Again: processual thinking is needed to deal with processual realities so that we can gain some sense of direction-practical as well as theoretical-in dealing with our ecological problems.

Social ecology seems to stand alone, at present, in calling for the use of organic, developmental, and derivative ways of thinking out problems that are basically organic and developmental in character. The very definition of the natural world as a development indicates the need for an organic way of thinking, as does the derivation of human from nonhuman nature-a derivation that has the most far-reaching consequences for an ecological ethics that can offer serious guidelines for the solution of our ecological problems.

Social ecology calls upon us to see that nature and society are interlinked by evolution into one nature that consists of two differentiations: first or biotic nature, and second or human nature. Human nature and biotic nature share an evolutionary potential for greater subjectivity and flexibility. Second nature is the way in which human beings as flexible, highly intelligent primates inhabit the natural world. That is to say, people create an environment that is most suitable for their mode of existence. In this respect, second nature is no different from the environment that every animal, depending upon its abilities, creates as well as adapts to, the biophysical circumstances-or ecocommunity-in which it must live. On this very simple level, human beings are, in principle, doing nothing that differs from the survival activities of



nonhuman beings-be it building beaver dams or gopher holes.

But the environmental changes that human beings produce are significantly different from those produced by nonhuman beings. Humans act upon their environments with considerable technical foresight, however lacking that foresight may be in ecological respects. Their cultures are rich in knowledge, experience, cooperation, and conceptual intellectuality; however, they may be sharply divided against themselves at certain points of their development, through conflicts between groups, classes, nation states, and even city-states. Nonhuman beings generally live in ecological niches, their behavior guided primarily by instinctive drives and conditioned reflexes. Human societies are "bonded" together by institutions that change radically over centuries. Nonhuman communities are notable for their fixity in general terms or by clearly preset, often genetically imprinted, rhythms. Human communities are guided in part by ideological factors and are subject to changes conditioned by those factors.

Hence human beings, emerging from an organic evolutionary process, initiate, by the sheer force of their biology and survival needs, a social evolutionary development that profoundly involves their organic evolutionary process. Owing to their naturally endowed intelligence, powers of communication, capacity for institutional organization, and relative freedom from instinctive behavior, they refashion their environment-as do nonhuman beings-to the full extent of their biological equipment. This equipment now makes it possible for them to engage in social development. It is not so much that human beings, in principle, behave differently from

animals or are inherently more problematical in a strictly ecological sense, but that the social development by which they grade out of their biological development often becomes more problematical for themselves and non human life. How these problems emerge, the ideologies they produce, the extent to which they contribute to biotic evolution or abort it, and the damage they inflict on the planet as a whole lie at the very heart of the modern ecological crisis. Second nature, far from marking the fulfillment of human potentialities, is riddled by contradictions, antagonisms, and conflicting interests that have distorted humanity's unique capacities for development. It contains both the danger of tearing down the biosphere and, given a further development of humanity toward an ecological society, the capacity to provide an entirely new ecological dispensation.

## SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND DOMINATION

How, then, did the social-eventually structured around status groups, class formations, and cultural phenomena“emerge from the biological? We have reason to speculate that as biological facts such as lineage, gender distribution, and age differences were slowly institutionalized, their uniquely social dimension was initially quite egalitarian. Later it acquired an oppressive hierarchical and then an exploitative class form. The lineage or blood tie in early prehistory obviously formed the organic basis of the family. Indeed, it joined together groups of families into bands, clans, and tribes, through either intermarriage or fictive forms of descent, thereby forming the earliest social horizon of our ancestors. More than in other mammals, the simple biological facts of human reproduction and protracted

maternal care of the infant tended to knit siblings together and produced a strong sense of solidarity and group inwardness. Men, women, and their children were brought into a condition of a fairly stable family life, based on mutual obligation and an expressed sense of affinity that was often sanctified by marital vows of one kind or another.

Outside the family and all its elaborations into bands, clans, tribes and the like, other human beings were regarded as "strangers," who could alternatively be welcomed hospitably or enslaved or put to death. What mores existed were based on an unreflected body of customs that seemed to have been inherited from time immemorial. What we call morality began as the commandments of a deity, in that they required some kind of supernatural or mystical reinforcement to be accepted by the community. Only later, beginning with the ancient Greeks, did ethical behavior emerge, based on rational discourse and reflection. The shift from blind custom to a commanding morality, and finally, to a rational ethics occurred with the rise of cities and urban cosmopolitanism. Humanity, gradually disengaging itself from the biological facts of blood ties, began to admit the "stranger" and increasingly recognize itself as a shared community of human beings rather than an ethnic folk-a community of citizens rather than of kinsmen.

In the primordial and socially formative world that we must still explore, other of humanity's biological traits were to be reworked from the strictly natural to the social. One of these was the fact of age and its distinctions. In the emerging social groups that developed among early humans, the absence of a written language helped to confer on the elderly a high degree of

status, for it was they who possessed the traditional wisdom of the community, the kinship lines that prescribed marital ties in obedience to extensive incest taboos, and techniques for survival that had to be acquired by both the young and the mature members of the group. In addition, the biological fact of gender distinctions were to be slowly reworked along social lines into what were initially complementary sororal and fraternal groups. Women formed their own food-gathering and care taking groups with their own customs, belief systems, and values, while men formed their own hunting and warrior groups with their own behavioral characteristics, mores, and ideologies.

From everything we know about the socialization of the biological facts of kinship, age, and gender groups-their elaboration into early institutions-there is no reason to doubt that people existed in a complementary relationship with one another. Each, in effect, was needed by the other to form a relatively stable whole. No one "dominated" the others or tried to privilege itself in the normal course of things. Yet with the passing of time, even as the biological facts that underpin every human group were further reworked into social institutions, so the social institutions were slowly reworked at various periods and in various degrees, into hierarchical structures based on command and obedience. I speak here of a historical trend, in no way predetermined by any mystical force or deity, a trend that often did not go beyond a very limited development among many preliterate or aboriginal cultures, and even in certain fairly elaborate civilizations. Nor can we foretell how human history might have developed had certain feminine values associated with care and nurture

not been overshadowed by masculine values associated with combative and aggressive behavior.

Hierarchy in its earliest forms was probably not marked by the harsh qualities it has acquired over history. Elders, at the very beginnings of gerontocracy, were not only respected for their wisdom but often beloved of the young, and their affection was often reciprocated in kind. We can probably account for the increasing stridency and harshness of later gerontocracies by supposing that the elderly, burdened by their failing powers and dependent upon the community's goodwill, were more vulnerable to abandonment in periods of material want than any other part of the population. In any case, that gerontocracies were the earliest forms of hierarchy is corroborated by their existence in communities as far removed from each other as the Australian Aborigines, tribal societies in East Africa, and Indian communities in the Americas. "Even in simple food-gathering cultures, individuals above fifty, let us say, apparently arrogated to themselves certain powers and privileges which benefitted themselves specifically," observes anthropologist Paul Radin, "and were not necessarily, if at all, dictated by considerations either of the rights of others or the welfare of the community."<sup>3</sup> Many tribal councils throughout the world were really councils of elders, an institution that never completely disappeared (as the word "alderman" suggests), even though they were overlaid by warrior societies, chiefdoms, and kingships.

Patricentricity, in which male values, institutions, and forms of behavior prevail over female ones, seems to have followed gerontocracy. Initially, this shift may have been fairly harmless, inasmuch as preliterate and early

aboriginal societies were largely domestic communities in which the authentic center of material life was the home, not the "men's house" so widely present in tribal societies. Male rule, if such it can be strictly called, takes on its most severe and coercive form in patriarchy, an institution in which the eldest male of an extended family or clan has a life-and-death command over all members of the group. Women are by no means the exclusive or even the principal target of the patriarch's domination. The sons, like the daughters, may be ordered how to behave and whom to marry and may be killed at the whim of the "old man." So far as patricentricity is concerned, however, the authority and prerogative of the male are the product of a slow, often subtly negotiated development in which the male fraternity tends to edge out the female sorority by virtue of the former's growing "civil" responsibilities. Increasing population, marauding bands of outsiders whose migrations may be induced by drought or other unfavorable conditions, and vendettas of one kind or another, to cite common causes of hostility or war, create a new "civil" sphere side by side with woman's domestic sphere, and the former gradually encroaches upon the latter. With the appearance of cattle-drawn plow agriculture, the male begins to invade the horticultural sphere of woman, who had used the simple digging stick, and her earlier economic predominance in the community's life is thereby diluted. Warrior societies and chiefs carry the momentum of male dominance to the level of a new material and cultural constellation. Male dominance becomes extremely active and ultimately yields a world that is managed by male elites who dominate not only women but also other men.

"Why" hierarchy emerges is transparent enough: the infirmities of age, increasing population, natural disasters, certain technological changes that privilege male activities of hunting and caring for animals over the horticultural functions of females, the growth of civil society, the spread of warfare. All serve to enhance the male's responsibilities at the expense of the female's. Marxist theorists tend to single out technological advances and the presumed material surpluses they produce to explain the emergence of elite strata-indeed, of exploiting ruling classes. However, this does not tell us why many societies whose environments were abundantly rich in food never produced such strata. That surpluses are necessary to support elites and classes is obvious, as Aristotle pointed out more than two millennia ago. But too many communities that had such resources at their disposal remained quite egalitarian and never "advanced" to hierarchical or class societies.

It is worth emphasizing that hierarchical domination, however coercive it may be, is not to be confused with class exploitation. Often the role of high-status individuals is very well-meaning, as in the case of commands given by caring parents to their children, of concerned husbands and wives to each other, or of elderly people to younger ones. In tribal societies, even where a considerable measure of authority accrues to a chief-and most chiefs are advisers rather than rulers-he usually must earn the esteem of the community by interacting with the people, and he can easily be ignored or removed from his position by them. Many chiefs earn their prestige, so essential to their authority, by disposing of gifts, and even by a considerable disaccumulation of their personal goods. The respect accorded to many chiefs is earned, not by hoarding surpluses as a means to

power but by disposing of them as evidence of generosity.

Classes tend to operate along different lines. Power is usually gained by the acquisition of wealth, not by its disposal; rulership is guaranteed by outright physical coercion, not simply by persuasion; and the state is the ultimate guarantor of authority. That hierarchy is more entrenched than class can perhaps be verified by the fact that women have been dominated for millennia, despite sweeping changes in class societies. By the same token, the abolition of class rule and economic exploitation offers no guarantee whatever that elaborate hierarchies and systems of domination will disappear.

In nonhierarchical and even some hierarchical societies, certain customs guide human behavior along basically decent lines. Of primary importance in early customs was the "law of the irreducible minimum" (to use Radin's expression), the shared notion that all members of a community are entitled to the means of life, irrespective of the amount of work they perform. To deny anyone food, shelter, and the basic means of life because of infirmities or even frivolous behavior would have been seen as a heinous denial of the very right to live. Nor were the resources and things needed to sustain the community ever completely privately owned: overriding individualistic control was the broader principle of usufruct—the notion that the means of life that were not being used by one group could be used, as need be, by another. Thus unused land, orchards, and even tools and weapons, if left idle, were at the disposition of anyone in the community who needed them. Lastly, custom fostered the practice of mutual aid, the rather sensible cooperative behavior of sharing things and labor, so that



an individual or family in fairly good circumstances could expect to be helped by others if their fortunes should change for the worse. Taken as a whole, these customs became so sedimented into society that they persisted long after hierarchy became oppressive and class society became predominant.

## THE IDEA OF DOMINATING NATURE

"Nature," in the broad sense of a biotic environment from which humans take the simple things they need for survival, often has no meaning to preliterate peoples. Immersed in nature as the very universe of their lives it has no special meaning, even when they celebrate animistic rituals and view the world around them as a nexus of life, often imputing their own social institutions to the behavior of various species, as in the case of "beaver lodges" and humanlike spirits. Words that express our conventional notions of nature are not easy to find, if they exist at all, in the languages of aboriginal peoples.

With the rise of hierarchy and human domination, however, the seeds are planted for a belief that nature not only exists as a world apart, but that it is hierarchically organized and can be dominated. The study of magic reveals this shift clearly. Early forms of magic did not view nature as a world apart. Its worldview tended to be such that a practitioner essentially pleaded with the "chief spirit" of the game to coax an animal in the direction of an arrow or a spear. Later, magic becomes almost entirely instrumental; the game is coerced by magical techniques to become the hunter's prey. While the earliest forms of magic may be regarded as the

practices of a generally nonhierarchical and egalitarian community, the later forms of animistic beliefs betray a more or less hierarchical view of the natural world and of latent human powers of domination.

We must emphasize, here, that the idea of dominating nature has its primary source in the domination of human by human and the structuring of the natural world into a hierarchical Chain of Being (a static conception, incidentally, that has no relationship to the evolution of life into increasingly advanced forms of subjectivity and flexibility). The biblical injunction that gave to Adam and Noah command of the living world was above all an expression of a social dispensation. Its idea of dominating nature can be overcome only through the creation of a society without those class and hierarchical structures that make for rule and obedience in private as well as public life. That this new dispensation involves changes in attitudes and values should go without saying. But these attitudes and values remain vaporous if they are not given substance through objective institutions, the ways in which humans concretely interact with each other, and in the realities of everyday life from childrearing to work and play. Until human beings cease to live in societies that are structured around hierarchies as well as economic classes, we shall never be free of domination, however much we try to dispel it with rituals, incantations, ecotheologies, and the adoption of seemingly "natural" ways of life.

The idea of dominating nature has a history that is almost as old as that of hierarchy itself. Already in the *Gilgamesh Epic* of Mesopotamia, a drama that dates back some 7,000 years, the hero defies the deities and cuts down their sacred trees in his quest for immortality.

The Odyssey is a vast travelogue of the Greek warrior, albeit a more canny than a heroic one, who essentially dispatches the nature deities that the Hellenic world inherited from its less well-known precursors. That elitist societies devastated much of the Mediterranean basin as well as the hillsides of China provides ample evidence that hierarchical and class societies had begun a sweeping remaking and despoliation of the planet long before the emergence of modern science, "linear" rationality, and "industrial society," to cite causal factors that are invoked so freely in the modern ecology movement. Second nature, to be sure, did not create a Garden of Eden in steadily absorbing and inflicting harm on first nature. More often than not, it despoiled much that was beautiful, creative, and dynamic in the biotic world, just as it ravaged human life itself in murderous wars, genocide, and acts of heartless oppression. Social ecology refuses to ignore the fact that the harm elitist society inflicted on the natural world was more than matched by the harm it inflicted on humanity; nor does it overlook the fact that the destiny of human life goes hand-in-hand with the destiny of the nonhuman world.

But the customs of the irreducible minimum, usufruct, and mutual aid cannot be ignored, however troubling the ills produced by second nature may seem. These customs persisted well into history and surfaced almost explosively in massive popular uprisings, from early revolts in ancient Sumner to the present time. Many of those demanded the recovery of caring and communitarian values when these were under the onslaught of elitist and class oppression. Indeed, despite the armies that roamed the landscape of warring areas, the taxgatherers who plundered ordinary village peoples, and the daily abuses that were inflicted by overseers on

workers, community life still persisted and retained many of the cherished values of a more egalitarian past. Neither ancient despots nor feudal lords could fully obliterate them in peasant villages and in the towns with independent craft guilds. In ancient Greece, religions based on austerity and, more significantly, a rational philosophy that rejected the encumbering of thought and political life by extravagant wants, tended to scale down needs and delimit human appetites for material goods. They served to slow the pace of technological innovation to a point where new means of production could be sensitively integrated into a balanced society. Medieval markets were modest, usually local affairs, in which guilds exercised strict control over prices, competition, and the quality of the goods produced by their members.

### "GROW OR DIE!"

But just as hierarchies and class structures tend to acquire a momentum of their own and permeate much of society, so too the market began to acquire a life of its own and extended its reach beyond limited regions into the depths of vast continents. Exchange ceased to be primarily a means to provide for modest needs, subverting the limits imposed upon it by guilds or by moral and religious restrictions. Not only did it place a high premium on techniques for increasing production; it also became the procreator of needs, many of which are simply useless, and gave an explosive impetus to consumption and technology. First in northern Italy and the European lowlands, later-and most effectively-in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the production of goods exclusively for sale and profit

(the capitalistic commodity) rapidly swept aside all cultural and social barriers to market growth.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the new industrial capitalist class with its factory system and commitment to limitless expansion began to colonize the entire world, and finally, most aspects of personal life. Unlike the feudal nobility, which had its cherished lands and castles, the bourgeoisie had no home but the marketplace and its bank vaults. As a class, they turned more and more of the world into an ever-expanding domain of factories. Entrepreneurs of the ancient and medieval worlds had normally gathered their profits together to invest in land and live like country gentry—given the prejudices of their times against "ill-gotten" gains from trade. On the other hand, the industrial capitalists of the modern world spawned a bitterly competitive marketplace that placed a high premium on industrial expansion and the commercial power it conferred, and functioned as though growth were an end in itself.

It is crucially important, in social ecology, to recognize that industrial growth does not result from a change in a cultural outlook alone—and least of all, from the impact of scientific rationality on society. It stems above all from harshly objective factors churned up by the expansion of the market itself, factors that are largely impervious to moral considerations and efforts at ethical persuasion. Indeed, despite the close association between capitalist development and technological innovation, the most driving imperative of the capitalist market, given the dehumanizing competition that defines it, is the need to grow, and to avoid dying at the hands of savage rivals. Important as greed or the power conferred by wealth

may be, sheer survival requires that an entrepreneur must expand his or her productive apparatus to remain ahead of other entrepreneurs and try, in fact, to devour them. The key to this law of life-to survival-is expansion, and greater profit, to be invested in still further expansion. Indeed, the notion of progress, once identified by our ancestors as a faith in the evolution of greater human cooperation and care, is now identified with economic growth.

The effort by many well-intentioned ecology theorists and their admirers to reduce the ecological crisis to a cultural rather than a social problem can easily become obfuscatory. However ecologically concerned an entrepreneur may be, the harsh fact is that his or her very survival in the marketplace precludes a meaningful ecological orientation. To engage in ecologically sound practices places a morally concerned entrepreneur at a striking, and indeed, fatal disadvantage in a competitive relationship with a rival-notably one who lacks any ecological concerns and thus produces at lower costs and reaps higher profits for further capital expansion.

Indeed, to the extent that environmental movements and ideologies merely moralize about the "wickedness" of our anti-ecological society, and emphasize change in personal life and attitudes, they obscure the need for social action. Corporations are skilled at manipulating this desire to be present as an ecological image. Mercedes-Benz, for example, declaims in a two-page ad, decorated with a bison painting from a Paleolithic cave wall, that "we must work to make more environmentally sustainable progress by including the theme of the environment in the planning of new products."<sup>5</sup> Such deceptive messages are commonplace in Germany, one

of western Europe's worst polluters. Advertising is equally self-serving in the United States, where leading polluters piously declare that for them, "Every day is Earth Day."

The point social ecology emphasizes is not that moral and spiritual change is meaningless or unnecessary, but that modern capitalism is structurally amoral and hence impervious to any moral appeals. The modern marketplace has imperatives of its own, irrespective of who sits in the driver's seat or grabs on to its handlebars. The direction it follows depends not upon ethical factors but rather on the mindless "laws" of supply and demand, grow or die, eat or be eaten. Maxims like "business is business" explicitly tell us that ethical, religious, psychological, and emotional factors have absolutely no place in the impersonal world of production, profit, and growth. It is grossly misleading to think that we can divest this brutally materialistic, indeed, mechanistic, world of its objective character, that we can vaporize its hard facts rather than transform it.

A society based on "grow or die" as its all-pervasive imperative must necessarily have a devastating ecological impact. Given the growth imperative generated by market competition, it would mean little or nothing if the present-day population were reduced to a fraction of what it is today. Insofar as entrepreneurs must always expand if they are to survive, the media that have fostered mindless consumption would be mobilized to increase the purchase of goods, irrespective of the need for them. Hence it would become "indispensable" in the public mind to own two or three of every appliance, motor vehicle, electronic gadget, or the like, where one would more than suffice. In addition, the military would

continue to demand new, more lethal instruments of death, of which new models would be required annually.

Nor would "softer" technologies produced by a grow-or-die market fail to be used for destructive capitalistic ends. Two centuries ago, the forests of England were hacked into fuel for iron forges with axes that had not changed appreciably since the Bronze Age, and ordinary sails guided ships laden with commodities to all parts of the world well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, much of the United States was "cleared" of its forests, wildlife, soil, and aboriginal inhabitants with tools and weapons that would have been easily recognized, however much they were modified, by Renaissance people who had yet to encounter the Industrial Revolution. What modern technics did was to accelerate a process that was well under way at the close of the Middle Ages. It did not devastate the planet on its own; it abetted a phenomenon, the ever-expanding market system that had its roots in one of history's most fundamental social transformations: the elaboration of hierarchy and class into a system of distribution based on exchange rather than complementarity and mutual aid.

## AN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Social ecology is an appeal not only for moral regeneration but also, and above all, for social reconstruction along ecological lines. It emphasizes that an ethical appeal to the powers that be (that embody blind market forces and competitive relationships), taken by itself, is likely to be futile. Indeed, taken by itself, it often obscures the real power relationships that prevail today by making the attainment of an ecological society



seem merely a matter of "attitude," of "spiritual change," or of quasi-religious redemption.

Although always mindful of the need for spiritual change, social ecology seeks to redress the ecological abuses that society has inflicted on the natural world by going to the structural as well as the subjective sources of notions like the "domination of nature." That is, it challenges the entire system of domination itself and seeks to eliminate the hierarchical and class edifice that has imposed itself on humanity and defined the relationship between nonhuman and human nature. It advances an ethics of complementarity in which human beings must play a supportive role in perpetuating the integrity of the biosphere, as potentially, at least, the most conscious products of natural evolution. Indeed humans are seen to have a moral responsibility to function creatively in the unfolding of that evolution. Social ecology thus stresses the need for embodying its ethics of complementarity in palpable social institutions that will give active meaning to its goal of wholeness, and of human involvement as conscious and moral agents in the interplay of species. It seeks the enrichment of the

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legitimation that it so often indicates today. It meant the cultivation of an affiliation with the interests of the community, one in which the communal interest was placed above personal interest, or, more properly, in which the personal interest was congruent with and realized through the common.

Property, in this ethical constellation, would be shared and, in the best of circumstances, belong to the community as a whole, not to producers ("workers") or owners ("capitalists"). In an ecological society composed of a "Commune of communes," property would belong, ultimately, neither to private producers nor to a nation-state. The Soviet Union gave rise to an overbearing bureaucracy; the anarcho-syndicalist vision to competing "worker-controlled" factories that ultimately had to be knitted together by a labor bureaucracy. From the standpoint of social ecology, property "interests" would become generalized, not reconstituted in different conflicting or unmanageable forms. They would be municipalized, rather than nationalized or privatized. Workers, farmers, professionals, and the like would thus deal with municipalized property as citizens, not as members of a vocational or social group. Leaving aside any discussion of such visions as the rotation of work, the citizen who engages in both industrial and agricultural activity, and the professional who also does manual labor, the communal ideas advanced by social ecology would give rise to individuals for whom the collective interest is inseparable from the personal, the public interest from the private, the political interest from the social.

The step-by-step reorganization of municipalities, their confederation into ever-larger networks that form a dual power in opposition to the nation-state, the remaking of the constituents of republican representatives into citizens who participate in a direct democracy—all may take a considerable period of time to achieve. But in the end, they alone can potentially eliminate the domination of human by human and thereby deal with those ecological problems whose growing magnitude threatens

the existence of a biosphere than can support advanced forms of life. To ignore the need for these sweeping but eminently practical changes would be to let our ecological problems fester and spread to a point where there would no longer be any opportunity to resolve them. Any attempt to ignore their impact on the biosphere or deal with them singly would be recipe for disaster, a guarantee that the anti-ecological society that prevails in most of the world today would blindly hurtle the biosphere as we know it to certain destruction.

## NOTES

1 Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," initially published in the ecoanarchist journal *New Directions in Libertarian Thought* (Sept., 1964), and collected, together with all my major essays of the sixties in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1972; republished, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977). The expression "ethics of complementarity" is from *The Ecology of Freedom* (San Francisco: Cheshire Books, 1982; revised edition, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991).

2 Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 109.

3 Paul Radin, *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 211.

4 Quoted in Alan Wolfe, "Up from Humanism," in *The American Prospect* (Winter, 1991), p. 125.

5 See *Der Spiegel* (Sept. 16, 1991), pp. 144-45.

6 All of these views were spelled out in the essay "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" by this writer in 1965, and were assimilated over time by subsequent ecology movements. Many of the technological views

advanced a year later in "Toward a Liberatory Technology" were also assimilated and renamed "appropriate technology," a rather socially neutral expression in comparison with my original term "ecotechnology." Both of these essays can be found in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.

7 See the essay "The Forms of Freedom," in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, "The Legacy of Freedom," in *The Ecology of Freedom*, and "Patterns of Civic Freedom" in *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987).

WHAT IS COMMUNALISM?  
THE DEMOCRATIC DIMENSION OF ANARCHISM

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

**-- September 18, 1994**

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I.

Seldom have socially important words become more confused and divested of their historic meaning than they are at present. Two centuries ago, it is often forgotten, "democracy" was deprecated by monarchists and republicans alike as "mob rule." Today, democracy is hailed as "representative democracy," an oxymoron that refers to little more than a republican oligarchy of the chosen few who ostensibly speak for the powerless many.

"Communism," for its part, once referred to a cooperative society that would be based morally on mutual respect and on an economy in which each contributed to the social labor fund according to his or her ability and received the means of life according to his or her needs. Today, "communism" is associated with the Stalinist gulag and wholly rejected as totalitarian. Its cousin, "socialism" -- which once denoted a politically free society based on various forms of collectivism and

equitable material returns for labor -- is currently interchangeable with a somewhat humanistic bourgeois liberalism.

During the 1980s and 1990s, as the entire social and political spectrum has shifted ideologically to the right, "anarchism" itself has not been immune to redefinition. In the Anglo-American sphere, anarchism is being divested of its social ideal by an emphasis on personal autonomy, an emphasis that is draining it of its historic vitality. A Stirnerite individualism -- marked by an advocacy of lifestyle changes, the cultivation of behavioral idiosyncrasies and even an embrace of outright mysticism -- has become increasingly prominent. This personalistic "lifestyle anarchism" is steadily eroding the socialistic core of anarchist concepts of freedom.

Let me stress that in the British and American social tradition, autonomy and freedom are not equivalent terms. By insisting the need to eliminate personal domination, autonomy focuses on the individual as the formative component and locus of society. By contrast, freedom, despite its looser usages, denotes the absence of domination in society, of which the individual is part. This contrast becomes very important when individualist anarchists equate collectivism as such with the tyranny of the community over its members.

Today, if an anarchist theorist like L. Susan Brown can assert that "a group is a collection of individuals, no more and no less," rooting anarchism in the abstract individual, we have reason to be concerned. Not that this view is entirely new to anarchism; various anarchist historians have described it as implicit in the libertarian

outlook. Thus the individual appears ab novo, endowed with natural rights and bereft of roots in society or historical development.<sup>1</sup>

But whence does this "autonomous" individual derive? What is the basis for its "natural rights," beyond a priori premises and hazy intuitions? What role does historical development play in its formation? What social premises give birth to it, sustain it, indeed nourish it? How can a "collection of individuals" institutionalize itself such as to give rise to something more than an autonomy that consists merely in refusing to impair the "liberties" of others -- or "negative liberty," as Isaiah Berlin called it in contradistinction to "positive liberty," which is substantive freedom, in our case constructed along socialistic lines?

In the history of ideas, "autonomy," referring to strictly personal "self-rule," found its ancient apogee in the imperial Roman cult of *libertas*. During the rule of the Julian-Claudian Caesars, the Roman citizen enjoyed a great deal of autonomy to indulge his own desires -- and lusts -- without reproval from any authority, provided that he did not interfere with the business and the needs of the state. In the more theoretically developed liberal tradition of John Locke and John Stuart Mill, autonomy acquired a more expansive sense that was opposed ideologically to excessive state authority. During the nineteenth century, if there was any single subject that gained the interest of classical liberals, it was political economy, which they often conceived not only as the study of goods and services, but also as a system of morality. Indeed, liberal thought generally reduced the social to the economic. Excessive state authority was opposed in favor of a presumed economic autonomy.

Ironically, liberals often invoked the word freedom, in the sense of "autonomy," as they do to the present day.<sup>2</sup>

Despite their assertions of autonomy and distrust of state authority, however, these classical liberal thinkers did not in the last instance hold to the notion that the individual is completely free from lawful guidance. Indeed, their interpretation of autonomy actually presupposed quite definite arrangements beyond the individual -- notably, the laws of the marketplace. Individual autonomy to the contrary, these laws constitute a social organizing system in which all "collections of individuals" are held under the sway of the famous "invisible hand" of competition. Paradoxically, the laws of the marketplace override the exercise of "free will" by the same sovereign individuals who otherwise constitute the "collection of individuals."

No rationally formed society can exist without institutions and if a society as a "collection of individuals, no more and no less" were ever to emerge, it would simply dissolve. Such a dissolution, to be sure, would never happen in reality. The liberals, nonetheless, can cling to the notion of a "free market" and "free competition" guided by the "inexorable laws" of political economy.

Alternatively, freedom, a word that shares etymological roots with the German Freiheit (for which there is no equivalent in Romance languages), takes its point of departure not from the individual but from the community or, more broadly, from society. In the last century and early in the present one, as the great socialist theorists further sophisticated ideas of freedom, the individual and his or her development were consciously



intertwined with social evolution -- specifically, the institutions that distinguish society from mere animal aggregations.

What made their focus uniquely ethical was the fact that as social revolutionaries they asked the key question -- What constitutes a rational society? -- a question that abolishes the centrality of economics in a free society. Where liberal thought generally reduced the social to the economic, various socialisms (apart from Marxism), among which Kropotkin denoted anarchism the "left wing," dissolved the economic into the social.<sup>3</sup>

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Enlightenment thought and its derivatives brought the idea of the mutability of institutions to the foreground of social thought, the individual, too, came to be seen as mutable. To the socialistic thinkers of the period, a "collection" was a totally alien way of denoting society; they properly considered individual freedom to be congruent with social freedom and, very significantly, they defined freedom as such as an evolving, as well as a unifying, concept.

In short, both society and the individual were historicized in the best sense of this term: as an ever-developing, self-generative and creative process in which each existed within and through the other. Hopefully, this historicization would be accompanied by ever-expanding new rights and duties. The slogan of the First International, in fact, was the demand, "No rights without duties, no duties without rights" -- a demand that later appeared on the mastheads of anarchosyndicalist periodicals in Spain and elsewhere well into the present century.

Thus, for classical socialist thinkers, to conceive of the individual without society was as meaningless as to conceive of society without individuals. They sought to realize both in rational institutional frameworks that fostered the greatest degree of free expression in every aspect of social life.

## II

Individualism, as conceived by classical liberalism, rested on a fiction to begin with. Its very presupposition of a social "lawfulness" maintained by marketplace competition was far removed from its myth of the totally sovereign, "autonomous" individual. With even fewer presuppositions to support itself, the woefully undertheorized work of Max Stirner shared a similar disjunction: the ideological disjunction between the ego and society.

The pivotal issue that reveals this disjunction -- indeed, this contradiction -- is the question of democracy. By democracy, of course, I do not mean "representative government" in any form, but rather face-to-face democracy. With regard to its origins in classical Athens, democracy as I use it is the idea of the direct management of the polis by its citizenry in popular assemblies -- which is not to downplay the fact that Athenian democracy was scarred by patriarchy, slavery, class rule and the restriction of citizenship to males of putative Athenian birth. What I am referring to is an evolving tradition of institutional structures, not a social "model."<sup>4</sup> Democracy generically defined, then, is the direct management of society in face-to-face assemblies

-- in which policy is formulated by the resident citizenry and administration is executed by mandated and delegated councils.

Libertarians commonly consider democracy, even in this sense, as a form of "rule" -- since in making decisions, a majority view prevails and thus "rules" over a minority. As such, democracy is said to be inconsistent with a truly libertarian ideal. Even so knowledgeable a historian of anarchism as Peter Marshall observes that, for anarchists, "the majority has no more right to dictate to the minority, even a minority of one, than the minority to the majority."<sup>5</sup> Scores of libertarians have echoed this idea time and again.

What is striking about assertions like Marshall's is their highly pejorative language. Majorities, it would seem, neither "decide" nor "debate": rather, they "rule," "dictate," "command," "coerce" and the like. In a free society that not only permitted, but fostered the fullest degree of dissent, whose podiums at assemblies and whose media were open to the fullest expression of all views, whose institutions were truly forums for discussion -- one may reasonably ask whether such a society would actually "dictate" to anyone when it had to arrive at a decision that concerned the public welfare.

How, then, would society make dynamic collective decisions about public affairs, aside from mere individual contracts? The only collective alternative to majority voting as a means of decision-making that is commonly presented is the practice of consensus. Indeed, consensus has even been mystified by avowed "anarcho-primitivists," who consider Ice Age and contemporary "primitive" or "primal" peoples to

constitute the apogee of human social and psychic attainment. I do not deny that consensus may be an appropriate form of decision-making in small groups of people who are thoroughly familiar with one another. But to examine consensus in practical terms, my own experience has shown me that when larger groups try to make decisions by consensus, it usually obliges them to arrive at the lowest common intellectual denominator in their decision-making: the least controversial or even the most mediocre decision that a sizable assembly of people can attain is adopted -- precisely because everyone must agree with it or else withdraw from voting on that issue. More disturbingly, I have found that it permits an insidious authoritarianism and gross manipulations -- even when used in the name of autonomy or freedom.

To take a very striking case in point: the largest consensus-based movement (involving thousands of participants) in recent memory in the United States was the Clamshell Alliance, which was formed to oppose the Seabrook nuclear reactor in the mid-1970s in New Hampshire. In her recent study of the movement, Barbara Epstein has called the Clamshell the "first effort in American history to base a mass movement on nonviolent direct action" other than the 1960s civil rights movement. As a result of its apparent organizational success, many other regional alliances against nuclear reactors were formed throughout the United States.

I can personally attest to the fact that within the Clamshell Alliance, consensus was fostered by often cynical Quakers and by members of a dubiously "anarchic" commune that was located in Montague, Massachusetts. This small, tightly knit faction, unified by its own hidden agendas, was able to manipulate many

Clamshell members into subordinating their goodwill and idealistic commitments to those opportunistic agendas. The de facto leaders of the Clamshell overrode the rights and ideals of the innumerable individuals who entered it and undermined their morale and will.

In order for that clique to create full consensus on a decision, minority dissenters were often subtly urged or psychologically coerced to decline to vote on a troubling issue, inasmuch as their dissent would essentially amount to a one-person veto. This practice, called "standing aside" in American consensus processes, all too often involved intimidation of the dissenters, to the point that they completely withdrew from the decision-making process, rather than make an honorable and continuing expression of their dissent by voting, even as a minority, in accordance with their views. Having withdrawn, they ceased to be political beings -- so that a "decision" could be made. More than one "decision" in the Clamshell Alliance was made by pressuring dissenters into silence and, through a chain of such intimidations, "consensus" was ultimately achieved only after dissenting members nullified themselves as participants in the process.

On a more theoretical level, consensus silenced that most vital aspect of all dialogue, dissensus. The ongoing dissent, the passionate dialogue that still persists even after a minority accedes temporarily to a majority decision, was replaced in the Clamshell by dull monologues -- and the uncontroverted and deadening tone of consensus. In majority decision-making, the defeated minority can resolve to overturn a decision on which they have been defeated -- they are free to openly and persistently articulate reasoned and potentially

persuasive disagreements. Consensus, for its part, honors no minorities, but mutes them in favor of the metaphysical "one" of the "consensus" group.

The creative role of dissent, valuable as an ongoing democratic phenomenon, tends to fade away in the gray uniformity required by consensus. Any libertarian body of ideas that seeks to dissolve hierarchy, classes, domination and exploitation by allowing even Marshall's "minority of one" to block decision-making by the majority of a community, indeed, of regional and nationwide confederations, would essentially mutate into a Rousseauian "general will" with a nightmare world of intellectual and psychic conformity. In more gripping times, it could easily "force people to be free," as Rousseau put it -- and as the Jacobins practiced it in 1793-94.

The de facto leaders of the Clamshell were able to get away with their behavior precisely because the Clamshell was not sufficiently organized and democratically structured, such that it could countervail the manipulation of a well-organized few. The de facto leaders were subject to few structures of accountability for their actions. The ease with which they cannily used consensus decision-making for their own ends has been only partly told,<sup>6</sup> but consensus practices finally shipwrecked this large and exciting organization with its Rousseauian "republic of virtue." It was also ruined, I may add, by an organizational laxity that permitted mere passersby to participate in decision-making, thereby destructuring the organization to the point of invertebracy. It was for good reason that I and many young anarchists from Vermont who had actively

participated in the Alliance for some few years came to view consensus as anathema.

If consensus could be achieved without compulsion of dissenters, a process that is feasible in small groups, who could possibly oppose it as a decision-making process? But to reduce a libertarian ideal to the unconditional right of a minority -- let alone a "minority of one" -- to abort a decision by a "collection of individuals" is to stifle the dialectic of ideas that thrives on opposition, confrontation and, yes, decisions with which everyone need not agree and should not agree, lest society become an ideological cemetery. Which is not to deny dissenters every opportunity to reverse majority decisions by unimpaired discussion and advocacy.

### III

I have dwelled on consensus at some length because it constitutes the usual individualistic alternative to democracy, so commonly counterposed as "no rule" -- or a free-floating form of personal autonomy -- against majority "rule." Inasmuch as libertarian ideas in the United States and Britain are increasingly drifting toward affirmations of personal autonomy, the chasm between individualism and antistatist collectivism is becoming unbridgeable, in my view. A personalistic anarchism has taken deep root among young people today. Moreover, they increasingly use the word "anarchy" to express not only a personalistic stance, but also an antirational, mystical, antitechnological and anticivilizational body of views that makes it impossible for anarchists who anchor their ideas in socialism to apply the word "anarchist" to themselves without a qualifying adjective. Howard

Ehrlich, one of our ablest and most concerned American comrades, uses the phrase "social anarchism" as the title of his magazine, apparently to distinguish his views from an anarchism that is ideologically anchored in liberalism and possibly worse.

I would like to suggest that far more than a qualifying adjective is needed if we are to elaborate our notion of freedom more expansively. It would be unfortunate indeed if libertarians today had to literally explain that they believe in a society, not a mere collection of individuals! A century ago, this belief was presupposed; today, so much has been stripped away from the collectivistic flesh of classical anarchism that it is on the verge of becoming a personal life-stage for adolescents and a fad for their middle-aged mentors, a route to "self-realization" and the seemingly "radical" equivalent of encounter groups.

Today, there must be a place on the political spectrum where a body of anti-authoritarian thought that advances humanity's bitter struggle to arrive at the realization of its authentic social life -- the famous "Commune of communes" -- can be clearly articulated institutionally as well as ideologically. There must be a means by which socially concerned anti-authoritarians can develop a program and a practice for attempting to change the world, not merely their psyches. There must be an arena of struggle that can mobilize people, help them to educate themselves and develop an anti-authoritarian politics, to use this word in its classical meaning, indeed that pits a new public sphere against the State and capitalism.



In short, we must recover not only the socialist dimension of anarchism but its political dimension: democracy. Bereft of its democratic dimension and its communal or municipal public sphere, anarchism may indeed denote little more than a "collection of individuals, no more and no less." Even anarcho-communism, although it is by far the most preferable of adjectival modifications of the libertarian ideal, nonetheless retains a structural vagueness that tells us nothing about the institutions necessary to expedite a communistic distribution of goods. It spells out a broad goal, a desideratum -- one, alas, terribly tarnished by the association of "communism" with Bolshevism and the state -- but its public sphere and forms of institutional association remain unclear at best and susceptible to a totalitarian onus at worst.

I wish to propose that the democratic and potentially practicable dimension of the libertarian goal be expressed as Communalism, a term that, unlike political terms that once stood unequivocally for radical social change, has not been historically sullied by abuse. Even ordinary dictionary definitions of Communalism, I submit, capture to a great degree the vision of a "Commune of communes" that is being lost by current Anglo-American trends that celebrate anarchy variously as "chaos," as a mystical "oneness" with "nature," as self-fulfillment or as "ecstasy," but above all as personalistic.<sup>7</sup>

Communalism is defined as "a theory or system of government [sic!] in which virtually autonomous [sic!] local communities are loosely in a federation."<sup>8</sup> No English dictionary is very sophisticated politically. This use of the terms "government" and "autonomous" does

not commit us to an acceptance of the State and parochialism, let alone individualism. Further, federation is often synonymous with confederation, the term I regard as more consistent with the libertarian tradition. What is remarkable about this (as yet) unsullied term is its extraordinary proximity to libertarian municipalism, the political dimension of social ecology that I have advanced at length elsewhere.

In Communalism, libertarians have an available word that they can enrich as much by experience as by theory. Most significantly, the word can express not only what we are against, but also what we are for, namely the democratic dimension of libertarian thought and a libertarian form of society. It is a word that is meant for a practice that can tear down the ghetto walls that are increasingly imprisoning anarchism in cultural exotica and psychological introversion. It stands in explicit opposition to the suffocating individualism that sits so comfortably side-by-side with bourgeois self-centeredness and a moral relativism that renders any social action irrelevant, indeed, institutionally meaningless.

It is important to emphasize that libertarian municipalism--or Communalism, as I have called it here--is a developing outlook, a politics that seeks ultimately to achieve the "Commune of communes." As such, it tries to provide a directly democratic confederal alternative to the state and to a centralized bureaucratic society. To challenge the validity of libertarian municipalism, as many liberals and ecosocialists have, on the premise that the size of existing urban entities raises an insurmountable logistical obstacles to its successful practice is to turn it into a chess "strategy" and

freeze it within the given conditions of society, then tally up debits and credits to determine its potential for "success," "effectiveness," "high levels of participation," and the like. Libertarian municipalism is not a form of social bookkeeping for conditions as they are but rather a transformative process that starts with what can be changed within present conditions as a valid point of departure for achieving what should be in a rational society.

Libertarian municipalism is above all a politics, to use this word in its original Hellenic sense, that is engaged in the process of remaking what are now called "electoral constituents" or "taxpayers" into active citizens, and of remaking what are now urban conglomerations into genuine communities related to each other through confederations that would countervail and ultimately challenge the existence of the state. To see it otherwise is to reduce this multifaceted, processual development to a caricature. Nor is libertarian municipalism intended as a substitute for association as such--for the familial and economic aspects of life--without which human existence is impossible in any society.<sup>9</sup> It is rather an outlook and a developing practice for recovering and enlarging on an unprecedented scale what is now a declining public sphere, one that the state has invaded and in many cases virtually eliminated.<sup>10</sup> If the large size of municipal entities and the decline of the public sphere are accepted as unalterable givens, then we are left with no hope but to work with the given in every sphere of human activity--in which case, anarchists might as well join with social-democrats (as quite a few have, for all practical purposes) to work with and merely modify the state apparatus, the market, and a commodity system of relationships. Indeed, on the basis of such

commonsensical reasoning, a far stronger argument could be made for preserving the state, the market, the use of money, and global corporations than could be made merely for decentralizing urban agglomerations. In fact, many urban agglomerations are already groaning physically and logistically under the burden of their size and are reconstituting themselves into satellite cities before our very eyes, even though their populations and physical jurisdictions are still grouped under the name of a single metropolis.

Strangely, many life-style anarchists, who, like New Age visionaries, have a remarkable ability to imagine changing everything tend to raise strong objections when they are asked to actually change anything in the existing society--except to cultivate greater "self-expression," have more mystical reveries, and turn their anarchism into an art form, retreating into social quietism. When critics of libertarian municipalism bemoan the prohibitively large number of people who are likely to attend municipal assemblies or function as active participants in them--and question how "practical" such assemblies could be--in large cities like New York, Mexico City, and Tokyo, may I suggest that a Communalist approach raises the issue of whether we can indeed change the existing society at all and achieve the "Commune of communes."

If such a Communalist approach seems terribly formidable, I can only suspect that for life-style anarchists the battle is already lost. For my part, if anarchy came to mean little more than an aesthetics of "self-cultivation," an titillating riot, spraycan graffiti, or the heroics of personalistic acts nourished by a self-indulgent "imaginary," I would have little in common

with it. Theatrical personalism became too much in style when the sixties counterculture turned into the seventies New Age culture--and became a model for bourgeois fashion designers and boutiques.

#### IV

Anarchism is on the retreat today. If we fail to elaborate the democratic dimension of anarchism, we will miss the opportunity not only to form a vital movement, but to prepare people for a revolutionary social praxis in the future. Alas, we are witnessing the appalling desiccation of a great tradition, such that neo-Situationists, nihilists, primitivists, antirationalists, anticivilizationists and avowed "chaotics" are closeting themselves in their egos, reducing anything resembling public political activity to juvenile antics.

None of which is to deny the importance of a libertarian culture, one that is aesthetic, playful, and broadly imaginative. The anarchists of the last century and part of the present one justifiably took pride in the fact that many innovative artists, particularly painters and novelists, aligned themselves with anarchic views of reality and morality. But behavior that verges on a mystification of criminality, asociality, intellectual incoherence, anti-intellectualism and disorder for its own sake is simply lumpen. It feeds on the dregs of capitalism itself. However much such behavior invokes the "rights" of the ego as it dissolves the political into the personal or inflates the personal into a transcendental category, it is a priori in the sense that has no origins outside the mind to even potentially support it. As Bakunin and Kropotkin argued repeatedly, individuality has never existed apart

from society and the individual's own evolution has been coextensive with social evolution. To speak of "The Individual" apart from its social roots and social involvements is as meaningless as to speak of a society that contains no people or institutions.

Merely to exist, institutions must have form, as I argued some thirty years ago in my essay "The Forms of Freedom," lest freedom itself -- individual as well as social -- lose its definability. Institutions must be rendered functional, not abstracted into Kantian categories that float in a rarefied academic air. They must have the tangibility of structure, however offensive a term like structure may be to individualist libertarians: concretely, they must have the means, policies and experimental praxis to arrive at decisions. Unless everyone is to be so psychologically homogeneous and society's interests so uniform in character that dissent is simply meaningless, there must be room for conflicting proposals, discussion, rational explication and majority decisions -- in short, democracy.

Like it or not, such a democracy, if it is libertarian, will be Communalist and institutionalized in such a way that it is face-to-face, direct, and grassroots, a democracy that advances our ideas beyond negative liberty to positive liberty. A Communalist democracy obliges us to develop a public sphere -- and in the Athenian meaning of the term, a politics -- that grows in tension and ultimately in a decisive conflict with the State.

Confederal, antihierarchical, and collectivist, based on the municipal management of the means of life rather than their control by vested interests (such as workers' control, private control, and more dangerously, State

control), it may justly be regarded as the processual actualization of the libertarian ideal as a daily praxis.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that a Communalist politics entails participation in municipal elections -- based, to be sure, on an unyielding program that demands the formation of popular assemblies and their confederation -- does not mean that entry into existing village, town and city councils involves participation in state organs, any more than establishing an anarchosyndicalist union in a privately owned factory involves participation in capitalist forms of production. One need only turn to the French Revolution of 1789-94 to see how seemingly state institutions, like the municipal "districts" established under the monarchy in 1789 to expedite elections to the Estates General, were transformed four years later into largely revolutionary bodies, or "sections," that nearly gave rise to the "Commune of communes." Their movement for a sectional democracy was defeated during the insurrection of June 2, 1793 -- not at the hands of the monarchy, but by the treachery of the Jacobins.

Capitalism will not generously provide us the popular democratic institutions we need. Its control over society today is ubiquitous, not only in what little remains of the public sphere, but in the minds of many self-styled radicals. A revolutionary people must either assert their control over institutions that are basic to their public lives -- which Bakunin correctly perceived to be their municipal councils -- or else they will have no choice but to withdraw into their private lives, as is already happening on an epidemic scale today.<sup>10</sup> It would be ironic, indeed, if an individualist anarchism and its various mutations, from the academic and

transcendentally moral to the chaotic and the lumpen, in the course of rejecting democracy even for "a minority of one," were to further raise the walls of dogma that are steadily growing around the libertarian ideal, and if, wittingly or not, anarchism were to turn into another narcissistic cult that snugly fits into an alienated, commodified, introverted and egocentric society.

#### NOTES:

1 L. Susan Brown: *The Politics of Individualism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993), p. 12. I do not question the sincerity of Brown's libertarian views; she regards herself as an anarcho-communist, as do I. But she makes no direct attempt to reconcile her individualistic views with communism in any form. Both Bakunin and Kropotkin would have strongly disagreed with her formulation of what constitutes "a group," while Margaret Thatcher, clearly for reasons of her own, might be rather pleased with it, since it is so akin to the former British prime minister's notorious statement that there is no such thing as society -- there are only individuals. Certainly Brown is not a Thatcherite, nor Thatcher an anarchist, but however different they may be in other respects, both have ideological filiations with classical liberalism that make their shared affirmations of the "autonomy" of the individual possible. I cannot ignore the fact, however, that neither Bakunin's, Kropotkin's nor my own views are treated with any depth in Brown's book (pp. 156-62), and her account of them is filled with serious inaccuracies.

2 Liberals were not always in accord with each other nor did they hold notably coherent doctrines. Mill, a free-thinking humanitarian and utilitarian, in fact exhibited a



measure of sympathy for socialism. I am not singling out here any particular liberal theorist, be he Mill, Adam Smith or Friedrich Hayek. Each had or has his or her individual eccentricity or personal line of thought. I am speaking of traditional liberalism as a whole, whose general features involve a belief in the "laws" of the marketplace and "free" competition. Marx was by no means free of this influence: he, too, unrelentingly tried to discover "laws" of society, as did many socialists during the last century, including utopians like Charles Fourier.

3 See Kropotkin's "Anarchism," the famous Encyclopaedia Britannica article that became one of his most widely read works. Republished in Roger N. Baldwin, ed., *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings by Peter Kropotkin* (Vanguard Press, 1927; reprinted by Dover, 1970).

4 I have never regarded the classical Athenian democracy as a "model" or an "ideal" to be restored in a rational society. I have long cited Athens with admiration for one reason: the polis around Periclean times provides us with striking evidence that certain structures can exist -- policy-making by an assembly, rotation and limitation of public offices and defense by a nonprofessional armed citizenry. The Mediterranean world of the fifth century B.C.E. was largely based on monarchical authority and repressive custom. That all Mediterranean societies of that time required or employed patriarchy, slavery and the State (usually in an absolutist form) makes the Athenian experience all the more remarkable for what it uniquely introduced into social life, including an unprecedented degree of free expression. It would be naive to suppose that Athens could have risen above the most basic attributes of ancient society in its day, which, from a distance of

2,400 years we now have the privilege of judging as ugly and inhuman. Regrettably, no small number of people today are willing to judge the past by the present.

5 Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 22.

6 Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Non-Violent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), especially pp. 59, 78, 89, 94-95, 167-68, 177. Although I disagree with some of the facts and conclusions in Epstein's book -- based on my personal as well as general knowledge of the Clamshell Alliance -- she vividly portrays the failure of consensus in this movement.

7 The association of "chaos," "nomadism," and "cultural terrorism" with "ontological anarchy" (as though the bourgeoisie had not turned such antics into an "ecstasy industry" in the United States) is fully explicated in Hakim Bey's (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson) *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (New York: Autonomedia, 1985). The Yuppie Whole Earth Review celebrates this pamphlet as the most influential and widely read "manifesto" of America's countercultural youth, noting with approval that it is happily free of conventional anarchist attacks upon capitalism. This kind of detritus from the 1960s is echoed in one form or another by most American anarchist newssheets that pander to youth who have not yet "had their fun before it is time to grow up" (a comment I heard years later from Parisian student activists of '68) and become real estate agents and accountants.

For an "ecstatic experience," visitors to New York's Lower East Side (near St. Mark's Place) can dine, I am told, at Anarchy Café. This establishment offers fine dining from an expensive menu, a reproduction of the

famous mural The Fourth Estate on the wall, perhaps to aid in digestion, and a maitre d' to greet Yuppie customers. I cannot attest to whether the writings of Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem, Fredy Perlman and Hakim Bey are on sale there or whether copies of *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, *The Fifth Estate* or *Demolition Derby* are available for perusal, but happily there are enough exotic bookstores nearby to buy them.

8 Quoted from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978).

9 History provides no "model" for libertarian municipalism, be it Periclean Athens, or a tribe, village, town, or city--or a hippie commune or Buddhist ashram. Nor is the "affinity group" a model--the Spanish anarchists used this word interchangeably with "action group" to refer to an organizational unit for the FAI, not to the institutional basis for a libertarian society.

10 A detailed discussion of the differences between the social domain, which includes the ways in which we associate for personal and economic ends; the public sphere or political domain; and the state in all its phases and forms of development can be found in my book *Urbanization Without Cities* (1987; Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992).

11 I should emphasize that I am not counterposing a Communalist democracy to such enterprises as cooperatives, people's clinics, communes, and the like. But there should be no illusions that such enterprises are more than exercises in popular control and ways of bringing people together in a highly atomized society. No food cooperative can replace giant retail food markets under capitalism and no clinic can replace hospital complexes, any more than a craft shop can replace factories or plants. I should observe that the

Spanish anarchists, almost from their inception, took full note of the limits of the cooperativist movement in the 1880s, when such movements were in fact more feasible than they are today, and they significantly separated themselves from cooperativism programmatically.

12 For Bakunin, the people "have a healthy, practical common sense when it comes to communal affairs. They are fairly well informed and know how to select from their midst the most capable officials. This is why municipal elections always best reflect the real attitude and will of the people." Bakunin on Anarchy, Sam Dolgoff, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972; republished by Black Rose Books: Montreal), p. 223. I have omitted the queasy interpolations that Dolgoff inserted to "modify" Bakunin's meaning. It may be well to note that anarchism in the last century was more plastic and flexible than it is today.

## LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM: THE NEW MUNICIPAL AGENDA

**MURRAY BOOKCHIN**

This article appears in [Anarchy Archives](#) with the permission of the author and consists of excerpts from *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987; London: Cassell, 1995), with revisions.

Any agenda that tries to restore and amplify the classical meaning of politics and citizenship must clearly indicate what they are not, if only because of the confusion that surrounds the two words. . . . Politics is not statecraft, and citizens are not "constituents" or "taxpayers." Statecraft consists of operations that engage the state: the exercise of its monopoly of violence, its control of the entire regulative apparatus of society in the form of legal and ordinance-making bodies, and its governance of society by means of professional legislators, armies, police forces, and bureaucracies. Statecraft takes on a political patina when so-called "political parties" attempt, in various power plays, to occupy the offices that make state policy and execute it. This kind of "politics" has an almost tedious typicality. A "political party" is normally a structured hierarchy, fleshed out by a membership that functions in a top-down manner. It is a miniature state, and in some countries, such as the former Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, a party actually constituted the state itself.

The Soviet and Nazi examples of the party qua state were the logical extension of the party into the state. Indeed, every party has its roots in the state, not in the citizenry. The conventional party is hitched to the state like a garment to a mannikin. However varied the garment and its design may be, it is not part of the body politic; it merely drapes it. There is nothing authentically political about this phenomenon: it is meant precisely to contain the body politic, to control it and to manipulate it, not to express its will--or even permit it to develop a will. In no sense is a conventional "political" party derivative of the body politic or constituted by it. Leaving metaphors aside, "political" parties are replications of the state when they are out of power and are often synonymous with the state when they are in power. They are formed to mobilize, to command, to acquire power, and to rule. Thus they are as inorganic as the state itself--an excrescence of society that has no real roots in it, no responsiveness to it beyond the needs of faction, power, and mobilization.

Politics, by contrast, is an organic phenomenon. It is organic in the very real sense that it is the activity of a public body--a community, if you will--just as the process of flowering is an organic activity of a plant. Politics, conceived as an activity, involves rational discourse, public empowerment, the exercise of practical reason, and its realization in a shared, indeed participatory, activity. It is the sphere of societal life beyond the family and the personal needs of the individual that still retains the intimacy, involvement, and sense of responsibility enjoyed in private arenas of life. Groups may form to advance specific political views and programs, but these views and programs are no

better than their capacity to answer to the needs of an active public body. . . .

By contrast, political movements, in their authentic sense, emerge out of the body politic itself, and although their programs are formulated by theorists, they also emerge from the lived experiences and traditions of the public itself. The populist movements that swept out of agrarian America and tsarist Russia or the anarcho-syndicalist and peasant movements of Spain and Mexico articulated deeply felt, albeit often unconscious, public desires and needs. At their best, genuine political movements bring to consciousness the subterranean aspirations of discontented people and eventually turn this consciousness into political cultures that give coherence to inchoate and formless public desires. . . .

The immediate goal of a libertarian municipalist agenda is not to exercise sudden and massive control by representatives and their bureaucratic agents over the existing economy; its immediate goal is to reopen a public sphere in flat opposition to statism, one that allows for maximum democracy in the literal sense of the term, and to create in embryonic form the institutions that can give power to a people generally. If this perspective can be initially achieved only by morally empowered assemblies on a limited scale, at least it will be a form of popular power that can, in time, expand locally and grow over wide regions. That its future is unforeseeable does not alter the fact that its development depends upon the growing consciousness of the people, not upon the growing power of the state--and how that consciousness, concretized in high democratic institutions, will develop may be an open issue but it will surely be a political adventure.

. . . The recovery and development of politics must, I submit, take its point of departure from the citizen and his or her immediate environment beyond the familial and private arenas of life. There can be no politics without community. And by community I mean a municipal association of people reinforced by its own economic power, its own institutionalization of the grass roots, and the confederal support of nearby communities organized into a territorial network on a local and regional scale. Parties that do not intertwine with these grassroots forms of popular organization are not political in the classical sense of the term. In fact, they are bureaucratic and antithetical to the development of a participatory politics and participating citizens. The authentic unit of political life, in effect, is the municipality, whether as a whole, if it is humanly scaled, or in its various subdivisions, notably the neighborhood.

. . .

A new political agenda can be a municipal agenda only if we are to take our commitments to democracy seriously. Otherwise we will be entangled with one or another variant of statecraft, a bureaucratic structure that is demonstrably inimicable to a vibrant public life. The living cell that forms the basic unit of political life is the municipality, from which everything--such as citizenship, interdependence, confederation, and freedom--emerges. There is no way to piece together any politics unless we begin with its most elementary forms: the villages, towns, neighborhoods, and cities in which people live on the most intimate level of political interdependence beyond private life. It is on this level



that they can begin to gain a familiarity with the political process, a process that involves a good deal more than voting and information. It is on this level, too, that they can go beyond the private insularity of family life--a life that is currently celebrated for its inwardness and seclusion--and improvise those public institutions that make for broad community participation and consociation.

In short, it is through the municipality that people can reconstitute themselves from isolated monads into an innovative body politic and create an existentially vital, indeed protoplasmic civic life that has continuity and institutional form as well as civic content. I refer here to the block organizations, neighborhood assemblies, town meetings, civic confederations, and the public arenas for discourse that go beyond such episodic, single-issue demonstrations and campaigns, valuable as they may be to redress to redress social injustices. But protest alone is not enough; indeed, it is usually defined by what protestors oppose, not by the social changes they may wish to institute. To ignore the irreducible civic unit of politics and democracy is to play chess without a chessboard, for it is on this civic plane that the long-range endeavor of social renewal must eventually be played out. . . .

All statist objections aside, the problem of restoring municipal assemblies seems formidable if it is cast in strictly structural and spatial terms. New York City and London have no way of "assembling" if they try to emulate ancient Athens, with its comparatively small

citizen body. Both cities, in fact, are no longer cities in the classical sense of the term and hardly rate as municipalities even by nineteenth-century standards of urbanism. Viewed in strictly macroscopic terms, they are sprawling urban belts that suck up millions of people daily from communities at a substantial distance from their commercial centers.

But they are also made up of neighborhoods--that is to say, of smaller communities that have a certain measure of identity, whether defined by a shared cultural heritage, economic interests, a commonality of social views, or even an aesthetic tradition such as Greenwich Village in New York or Camden Town in London. However much their administration as logistical, sanitary, and commercial artifacts requires a high degree of coordination by experts and their aides, they are potentially open to political and, in time, physical decentralization. Popular, even block assemblies can be formed irrespective of the size of a city, provided its cultural components are identified and their uniqueness fostered.

At the same time I should emphasize that the libertarian municipalist (or equivalently, communalist) views I propound here are meant to be a changing and formative perspective--a concept of politics and citizenship to ultimately transform cities and urban megalopolises ethically as well as spatially, and politically as well as economically. Insofar as these views gain public acceptance, they can be expected not only to enlarge their vision and embrace confederations of neighborhoods but also to advance a goal of physically decentralizing urban centers. To the extent that mere electoral "constituents" are transformed by

education and experience into active citizens, the issue of humanly scaled communities can hardly be avoided as the "next step" toward a stable and viable form of city life. It would be foolhardy to try to predict in any detail a series of such "next steps" or the pace at which they will occur. Suffice it to say that as a perspective, libertarian municipalism is meant to be an ever-developing, creative, and reconstructive agenda as well as an alternative to the centralized nation-state and to an economy based on profit, competition, and mindless growth.

Minimally then, attempts to initiate assemblies can begin with populations that range anywhere from a modest residential neighborhood to a dozen neighborhoods or more. They can be coordinated by strictly mandated delegates who are rotatable, recallable, and above all, rigorously instructed in written form to either support or oppose whatever issue that appears on the agenda of local confederal councils composed of delegates from several neighborhood assemblies.

There is no mystery involved in this form of organization. The historical evidence for their efficacy and their continual reappearance in times of rapid social change is considerable and persuasive. The Parisian sections of 1793, despite the size of Paris (between 500,000 and 600,000) and the logistical difficulties of the era (a time when nothing moved faster than a horse) functioned with a great deal of success on their own, coordinated by sectional delegates in the Paris Commune. They were notable not only for their effectiveness in dealing with political issues based on a face-to-face democratic structure; they also played a major role in provisioning the city, in preventing the

hoarding of food, and in suppressing speculation, supervising the maximum for fixed prices, and carrying out many other complex administrative tasks. Thus, from a minimal standpoint, no city need be considered so large that popular assemblies cannot start, least of all one that has definable neighborhoods that might interlink with each other on ever-broader confederations.

The real difficulty is largely administrative: how to provide for the material amenities of city life, support complex logistical and traffic burdens, or maintain a sanitary environment. This issue is often obscured by a serious confusion between the formulation of policy and its administration. For a community to decide in a participatory manner what specific course of action it should take in dealing with a technical problem does not oblige all its citizens to execute that policy. The decision to build a road, for example, does not mean that everyone must know how to design and construct one. That is a job for engineers, who can offer alternative designs--a very important political function of experts, to be sure, but one whose soundness the people in assembly can be free to decide. To design and construct a road is strictly an administrative responsibility, albeit one that always opens to public scrutiny.

If the distinction between policy making and administration is kept clearly in mind, the role of popular assemblies and the people who administer their decisions easily distinguishes logistical problems from political ones, which are ordinarily entangled with each other in discussions on decentralistic politics. Superficially, the assembly system is "referendum" politics: it is based on a "social contract" to share decision making with the population at large, and abide by the rule of the majority

in dealing with problems that confront a municipality, a regional confederation of municipalities, or for that matter, a national entity. . . .

That a municipality can be as parochial as a tribe is fairly obvious--and is no less true today than it has been in the past. Hence any municipal movement that is not confederal--that is to say, that does not enter into a network of mutual obligations to towns and cities in its own region--can no more be regarded as a truly political entity in any traditional sense than a neighborhood that does not work with other neighborhoods in the city in which it is located. Confederation--based on shared responsibilities, full accountability of confederal delegates to their communities, the right to recall, and firmly mandated representatives--forms an indispensable part of a new politics. To demand that existing towns and cities replicate the nation-state on a local level is to surrender any commitment to social change as such. . . .

What is confederalism as conceived in the libertarian municipalist framework, and as it would function in a free ecological society? It would above all be a network of councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages, towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. These confederal councils would become the means for interlinking villages, towns, neighborhoods, and cities into confederal networks. Power thus would flow from the bottom up instead of from the top down, and in confederations the flow of power from the bottom up would diminish with the scope of the federal council,

ranging territorially from localities to regions and from regions to ever-broader territorial areas.

The members of these confederal councils would be strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. The functions of the councils would be purely administrative and practical, unlike representatives in republican systems of government, who have policy-making powers. Indeed, the confederation would make the same distinction that is made on the municipal level, between policy-making and administration. Policy-making would remain exclusively the right of the popular community assemblies based on the practices of participatory democracy. Administration--the coordination and execution of adopted policies--would be the responsibility of the confederal councils. Wherever policy-making slips from the hands of the people, it is devoured by its delegates, who quickly become bureaucrats.

A crucial element in giving reality to confederalism is the interdependence of communities for an authentic mutualism based on shared resources, produce, and policy-making. While a reasonable measure of self-sufficiency is desirable for each locality and region, confederalism is a means for avoiding local parochialism on the one hand and an extravagant national and global division of labor on the other. Unless a community is obliged to count on others generally to satisfy important material needs and realize common political goals, interlinking it to a greater whole, exclusivity and parochialism become a genuine possibilities. Only

insofar as confederation is an extension of participatory administration--by means of confederal networks--can decentralization and localism prevent the communities that compose larger bodies of association from parochially withdrawing into themselves at the expense of wider areas of human consociation.

Confederalism is thus a way of perpetuating interdependence among communities and regions--indeed, it is a way of democratizing that interdependence without surrendering the principle of local control. Through confederation, a community can retain its identity and roundedness while participating in a sharing way with the larger whole that makes up a balanced ecological society. . . .

Thus libertarian municipalism is not an effort simply to "take over" city councils to construct a more "environmentally friendly" city government. These adherents--or opponents--of libertarian municipalism, in effect, look at the civic structures that exist before their eyes now and essentially (all rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding) take them as they exist. Libertarian municipalism, by contrast, is an effort to transform and democratize city governments, to root them in popular assemblies, to knit them together along confederal lines, to appropriate a regional economy along confederal and municipal lines.

In fact, libertarian municipalism gains its life and its integrity precisely from the dialectical tension it proposes between the nation-state and the municipal confederation. Its "law of life," to use an old Marxian term, consists precisely in its struggle with the State. Then tension between municipal confederations and the

State must be clear and uncompromising. Since these confederations would exist primarily in opposition to statecraft, they cannot be compromised by the State, provincial or national elections, much less achieved by these means. Libertarian municipalism is formed by its struggle with the State, strengthened by this struggle, indeed, defined by this struggle. Divested of this dialectical tension with the State, of this duality of power that must ultimately be actualized in a free "Commune of communes," libertarian municipalism becomes little more than sewer socialism.

Why is the assembly crucial to self-governance? Is it not enough to use the referendum, as the Swiss do today, and resolve the problem of democratic procedure in a simple and seemingly uncomplicated way? Why can't policy decisions be made electronically at home--as "Third Wave" enthusiasts have suggested--by "autonomous" individuals, each listening to debates and voting in the privacy of his or her home?

A number of vital issues, involving the nature of citizenship and the recovery of an enhanced classical vision of politics, must be considered in answering these questions. The "autonomous" individual qua "voter" who, in liberal theory, forms the irreducible unit of the referendum process is a fiction. Left to his or her own private destiny in the name of "autonomy" and "independence," the individual becomes an isolated being whose very freedom is denuded of the living social and political matrix from which his or her individuality acquires its flesh and blood. . . . The notion of



independence, which is often confused with independent thinking and freedom, has been so marbled by pure bourgeois egoism that we tend to forget that our individuality depends heavily on community support systems and solidarity. It is not by childishly subordinating ourselves to the community on the one hand or by detaching ourselves from it on the other that we become mature human beings. What distinguishes us as social beings, hopefully with rational institutions, from solitary beings who lack any serious affiliations, is our capacities for solidarity with one another, for mutually enhancing our self-development and creativity and attaining freedom within a socially creative and institutionally rich collectivity.

"Citizenship" apart from community can be as debasing to our political selfhood as "citizenship" in a totalitarian state. In both cases, we are thrust back to the condition of dependence that characterizes infancy and childhood. We are rendered dangerously vulnerable to manipulation, whether by powerful personalities in private life or by the state and by corporations in economic life. In neither case do we attain individuality or community. Both, in fact, are dissolved by removing the communal ground on which genuine individuality depends. Rather, it is interdependence within an institutionally rich and rounded community--which no electronic media can produce--that fleshes out the individual with the rationality, solidarity, sense of justice, and ultimately the reality of freedom that makes for a creative and concerned citizen.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the authentic elements of a rational and free society are communal, not individual. Conceived in more institutional terms, the municipality

is not only the basis for a free society; it is the irreducible ground for genuine individuality as well. The significance of the municipality is all the greater because it constitutes the discursive arena in which people can intellectually and emotionally confront one another, indeed, experience one another through dialogue, body language, personal intimacy, and face-to-face modes of expression in the course of making collective decisions. I speak, here, of the all-important process of communizing, of the ongoing intercourse of many levels of life, that makes for solidarity, not only the "neighborliness" so indispensable for truly organic interpersonal relationships.

The referendum, conducted in the privacy of one's voting booth or, as some "Third Wave" enthusiasts would have it, in the electronic isolation of one's home, privatizes democracy and thereby subverts it. Voting, like registering one's preferences for a particular soap or detergent in a opinion poll, is the total quantification of citizenship, politics, individuality, and the very formation of ideas as a mutually informative process. The mere vote reflects a preformulated "percentage" of our perceptions and values, not their full expression. It is the technical debasing of views into mere preferences, of ideals into mere taste, of overall comprehension into quantification such that human aspirations and beliefs can be reduced to numerical digits.

Finally, the "autonomous individual," lacking any community context, support systems, and organic intercourse, is disengaged from the character-building process--the *paideia*--that the ancient Athenians assigned to politics as one of its most important educational functions. True citizenship and politics entail the

ongoing formation of personality, education, and a growing sense of public responsibility and commitment that render communizing and an active body politic meaningful, indeed that give it existential substance. It is not in the privacy of the school, any more than in the privacy of the voting booth, that these vital personal and political attributes are formed. They require a public presence, embodied by vocal and thinking individuals, a responsive and discursive public sphere, to achieve reality. "Patriotism," as the etymology of the word indicates, is the nation-state's conception of the citizen as a child, the obedient creature of the nation-state conceived as a *paterfamilias* or stern father, who orchestrates belief and commands devotion. To the extent that we are the "sons" and "daughters" of a "fatherland," we place ourselves in an infantile relationship to the state.

Solidarity or *philia*, by contrast, implies a sense of commitment. It is created by knowledge, training, experience, and reason--in short, by a political education developed during the course of political participation. *Philia* is the result of the educational and self-formative process that *paedeia* is meant to achieve. In the absence of a humanly scaled, comprehensible, and institutionally accessible municipality, this all-important function of politics and its embodiment in citizenship is simply impossible to achieve. In the absence of *philia* or the means to create it, we gauge "political involvement" by the "percentage" of "voters" who "participate" in the "political process"--a degradation of words that totally denatures their authentic meaning and eviscerates their ethical content. . . .

Be they large or small, the initial assemblies and the movement that seeks to foster them in civic elections remain the only real school for citizenship we have. There is no civic "curriculum" other than a living and creative political realm that can give rise to people who take management of public affairs seriously. What we must clearly do in an era of commodification, rivalry, anomie, and egoism is to consciously create a public sphere that will inculcate the values of humanism, cooperation, community, and public service in the everyday practice of civic life. Grassroots citizenship goes hand in hand with grassroots politics.

The Athenian polis, for all its many shortcomings, offers us remarkable examples of how a high sense of citizenship can be reinforced not only by systematic education but by an etiquette of civic behavior and an artistic culture that adorns ideals of civic service with the realities of civic practice. Deference to opponents in debates, the use of language to achieve consensus, ongoing public discussion in the agora in which even the most prominent of the polis's figures were expected to debate public issues with the least known, the use of wealth not only to meet personal needs but to adorn the polis itself (thus placing a high premium on the disaccumulation rather than the accumulation of wealth), a multitude of public festivals, dramas, and satires largely centered on civic affairs and the need to foster civic solidarity--all of these and many other aspects of Athens's political culture created the civic solidarity and responsibility that made for actively involved citizens with a deep sense of civic mission.

For our part, we can do no less--and hopefully, in time, considerably more. The development of citizenship must become an art, not merely an education--and a creative art in the aesthetic sense that appeals to the deeply human desire for self-expression in a meaningful political community. It must be a personal art in which every citizen is fully aware of the fact that his or her community entrusts its destiny to his or her moral probity and rationality. If the ideological authority of state power and statecraft today rests on the assumption that the "citizen" is an incompetent being, the municipalist conception of citizenship rests on precisely the opposite. Every citizen would be regarded as competent to participate directly in the "affairs of state"--indeed, what is more important, he or she would be encouraged to do so.

Every means would be provided, whether aesthetic or institutional, to foster participation in full as an educative and ethical process that turns the citizen's latent competence into an actual reality. Social and political life would be consciously orchestrated to foster a profound sensitivity, indeed an active sense of concern for the adjudication of differences without denying the need for vigorous dispute when it is needed. Public service would be seen as a uniquely human attribute, not a "gift" that a citizen confers on the community or an onerous task that he or she must fulfill. Cooperation and civic responsibility would become expressions of acts of sociability and *philia*, not ordinances that the citizen is expected to honor in the breach and evade where he or she can do so.

Put bluntly and clearly, the municipality would become a theater in which life in its most meaningful

public form is the plot, a political drama whose grandeur imparts nobility and grandeur to the citizenry that forms the cast. By contrast, our modern cities have become in large part agglomerations of bedroom apartments in which men and women spiritually wither away and their personalities become trivialized by the petty concerns of amusement, consumption, and small talk.

The last and one of the most intractable problems we face is economic. Today, economic issues tend to center on "who owns what," "who owns more than whom," and, above all, how disparities in wealth are to be reconciled with a sense of civic commonality. Nearly all municipalities have been fragmented by differences in economic status, pitting poor, middle, and wealthy classes against each other often to the ruin of municipal freedom itself, as the bloody history of Italy's medieval and Renaissance cities so clearly demonstrates.

These problems have not disappeared in recent times. Indeed, in many cases they are as severe as they have ever been. But what is unique about our own time--a fact so little understood by many liberals and radicals in North America and Europe--is that entirely new transclass issues have emerged that concern environment, growth, transportation, cultural degradation, and the quality of urban life generally--issues that have been produced by urbanization, not by citification. Cutting across conflicting class interests are such transclass issues as the massive dangers of thermonuclear war, growing state authoritarianism, and ultimately global ecological breakdown. To an extent

unparalleled in American history, an enormous variety of citizens' groups have brought people of all class backgrounds into common projects around problems, often very local in character, that concern the destiny and welfare of their community as a whole.

Issues such as the siting of nuclear reactors or nuclear waste dumps, the dangers of acid rain, and the presence of toxic dumps, to cite only a few of the many problems that beleaguer innumerable American and British municipalities, have united an astonishing variety of people into movements with shared concerns that render a ritualistic class analysis of their motives a matter of secondary importance. Carried still further, the absorption of small communities by larger ones, of cities by urban belts, and urban belts by "standard metropolitan statistical areas" or conurbations has given rise to militant demands for communal integrity and self-government, an issue that surmounts strictly class and economic interests. The literature on the emergence of these transclass movements, so secondary to internecine struggles within cities of earlier times, is so immense that to merely list the sources would require a sizable volume.

I have given this brief overview of an emerging general social interest over old particularistic interests to demonstrate that a new politics could easily come into being--indeed one that would be concerned not only with restructuring the political landscape on a municipal level but the economic landscape as well. The old debates between "private property" and "nationalized property," are becoming threadbare. Not that these different kinds of ownership and the forms of exploitation they imply have disappeared; rather, they are being increasingly

overshadowed by new realities and concerns. Private property, in the traditional sense, with its case for perpetuating the citizen as an economically self-sufficient and politically self-empowered individual, is fading away. It is disappearing not because "creeping socialism" is devouring "free enterprise" but because "creeping corporatism" is devouring everyone--ironically, in the name of "free enterprise." The Greek ideal of the politically sovereign citizen who can make a rational judgment in public affairs because he is free from material need or clientage has been reduced to a mockery. The oligarchical character of economic life threatens democracy, such as it is, not only on a national level but also on a municipal level, where it still preserves a certain degree of intimacy and leeway.

We come here to a breakthrough approach to a municipalist economics that innovatively dissolves the mystical aura surrounding corporatized property and nationalized property, indeed workplace elitism and "workplace democracy." I refer to the municipalization of property, as opposed to its corporatization or its nationalization. . . . Libertarian municipalism proposes that land and enterprises be placed increasingly in the custody of the community--more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their deputies in confederal councils. . . . In such a municipal economy--confederal, interdependent, and rational by ecological, not simply technological, standards--we would expect that the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns. Here, citizenship



would come into its own, and rational as well as ecological interpretations of the public good would supplant class and hierarchical interests.

As for the workplace, public democracy would be substituted for the traditional images of productive management and operation, "economic democracy" and "economic collectivization." Significantly, "economic democracy" in the workplace is no longer incompatible with a corporatized or nationalized economy. Quite to the contrary: the effective use of "workers' participation" in production, even the outright handing over of industrial operations to the workers who perform them, has become another form of time-studied, assembly-line rationalization, another systematic abuse of labor, by bringing labor itself into complicity with its own exploitation.

Many workers, in fact, would like to get away from their workplaces and find more creative types of work, not simply participate in planning their own misery. What "economic democracy" meant in its profoundest sense was free, democratic access to the means of life, the guarantee of freedom from material want--not simply the involvement of workers in onerous productive activities that could better be turned over to machines. It is a blatant bourgeois trick, in which many radicals unknowingly participate, that "economic democracy" has been reinterpreted to mean "employee ownership" or that "workplace democracy" has come to mean workers' "participation" in industrial management rather than freedom from the tyranny of the factory, rationalized labor, and planned production.

A municipal politics, based on communalist principles, scores a significant advance over all of these conceptions by calling for the municipalization of the economy--and its management by the community as part of a politics of self-management. Syndicalist demands for the "collectivization" of industry and "workers' control" of individual industrial units are based on contractual and exchange relationships between all collectivized enterprises, thereby indirectly reprivatizing the economy and opening it to traditional forms of private property--even if each enterprise is collectively owned. By contrast, libertarian municipalism literally politicizes the economy by dissolving economic decision-making into the civic domain. Neither factory nor land becomes a separate or potentially competitive unit within a seemingly communal collective.

Nor do workers, farmers, technicians, engineers, professionals, and the like perpetuate their vocational identities as separate interests that exist apart from the citizen body in face-to-face assemblies. "Property" is integrated into the municipality as the material component of a civic framework, indeed as part of a larger whole that is controlled by the citizen body in assembly as citizens--not as workers, farmers, professionals, or any other vocationally oriented special-interest groups.

What is equally important, the famous "contradiction" or "antagonism" between town and country, so crucial in social theory and history, is transcended by the township, the traditional New England jurisdiction, in which an urban entity is the nucleus of its agricultural and village environs--not a domineering urban entity that stands opposed to them. A township, in effect, is a small region

within still larger ones, such as the county and larger political jurisdictions.

So conceived, the municipalization of the economy should be distinguished not only from corporatization but also from seemingly more "radical" demands such as nationalization and collectivization. Nationalization of the economy invariably has led to bureaucratic and top-down economic control; collectivization, in turn, could easily lead to a privatized economy in a collectivized form with the perpetuation of class or caste identities. By contrast, municipalization would bring the economy as a whole into the orbit of the public sphere, where economic policy could be formulated by the entire community--notably its citizens in face-to-face relationships working to achieve a general interest that surmounts separate, vocationally defined specific interests. The economy would cease to be merely an economy in the conventional sense of the term, composed of capitalistic, nationalized, or "worker-controlled" enterprises. It would become the economy of the polis or the municipality. The municipality, more precisely, the citizen body in face-to-face assembly, would absorb the economy into its public business, divesting it of a separate identity that can become privatized into a self-serving enterprise.

. . . The municipalization of the economy would not only absorb the vocational differences that could militate against a publicly controlled economy; it would also absorb the material means of life into communal forms of distribution. "From each according to his ability and

to each according to his needs"--the famous demand of various nineteenth-century socialisms--would be institutionalized as part of the public sphere. This traditional maxim, which is meant to assure that people will have access to the means of life irrespective of the work they are capable of performing, would cease to be merely a precarious credo: it would become a practice, a way of functioning politically--one that is structurally built into the community as a way of existing as a political entity.

Moreover, the enormous growth of the productive forces, rationally and ecologically employed for social rather than private ends, has rendered the age-old problem of material scarcity a moot issue. Potentially, all the basic means for living in comfort and security are available to the populations of the world, notwithstanding the dire--and often fallacious--claims of present-day misanthropes and antihumanists such as Garrett Hardin, Paul Ehrlich, and regrettably, advocates of "simple living," who can barely be parted from their computers even as they deride technological developments of almost any kind. It is easily forgotten that only a few generations ago, famine was no less a plague than deadly infectious diseases like the Black Death, and that the life-span of most people at the turn of the last century in the United States and Europe seldom reached fifty years of age.

No community can hope to achieve economic autarky, nor should it try to do so. Economically, the wide range of resources that are needed to make many of our widely used goods preclude self-enclosed insularity and parochialism. Far from being a liability, this interdependence among communities and regions can

well be regarded as an asset--culturally as well as politically. Interdependence among communities is no less important than interdependence among individuals. Divested of the cultural cross-fertilization that is often a product of economic intercourse, the municipality tends to shrink into itself and disappear into its own civic privatism. Shared needs and resources imply the existence of sharing and, with sharing, communication, rejuvenation by new ideas, and a wider social horizon that yields a wider sensibility to new experiences.

The recent emphasis in environmental theory on "self-sufficiency," if it does not mean a greater degree of prudence in dealing with material resources, is regressive. Localism should never be interpreted to mean parochialism; nor should decentralism ever be interpreted to mean that smallness is a virtue in itself. Small is not necessarily beautiful. The concept of human scale, by far the more preferable expression for a truly ecological policy, is meant to make it possible for people to completely grasp their political environment, not to parochially bury themselves in it to the exclusion of cultural stimuli from outside their community's boundaries.

Given these coordinates, it is possible to envision a new political culture with a new revival of citizenship, popular civic institutions, a new kind of economy, and a countervailing dual power, confederally networked, that could arrest and hopefully reverse the growing centralization of the state and corporate enterprises. Moreover, it is also possible to envision an eminently practical point of departure for going beyond the town and city as we have known them up to now and for developing future forms of habitation as communities

that seek to achieve a new harmonization between people and between humanity and the natural world. I have emphasized its practicality because it is now clear that any attempt to tailor a human community to a natural "ecosystem" in which it is located cuts completely against the grain of centralized power, be it state or corporate. Centralized power invariably reproduces itself in centralized forms at all levels of social, political, and economic life. It not only is big; it thinks big. Indeed, this way of being and thinking is a condition for its survival, not only its growth.

As for the technological bases for decentralized communities, we are now witnessing a revolution that would have seemed hopelessly utopian only a few decades ago. Until recently, smaller-scale ecotechnologies were used mainly by individuals, and their efficiency barely compared with that of conventional energy sources, such as fossil fuels and nuclear power plants. This situation has changed dramatically in the past fifteen to twenty years. In the United States, wind turbines have been developed and are currently in use that generate electric power at a cost of 7 to 9 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared with 20 cents only a decade earlier. This figure is very close to the 4-to-6-cent cost of power plants fueled by natural gas or coal. These comparisons, which can be expected to improve in favor of wind power in the years to come, have fostered the expansion of this nonfossil-fuel source throughout the entire world, particularly in India, where there has been "a major wind boom" in 1994, according to the Worldwatch Institute.<sup>1</sup>

A similar "boom" seems to be in the making in a variety of solar power devices. New solar collectors have been designed that increasingly approximate the costs of conventional energy sources, particularly in heating water for domestic uses. Photovoltaic cells, in which silicon is used to convert solar energy into electrons, have been developed to a point where "thousands of villagers in the developing world [are] using photovoltaic cells to power lights, televisions, and water pumps, needs that are otherwise met with kerosene lamps, lead-acid batteries, or diesel engines." In fact, more than 200,000 homes in Mexico, Indonesia, South Africa, and some 2,000 in the Dominican Republic have been "solarized," probably with a good many more to come.<sup>2</sup> It can be said with reasonable confidence that this increasingly sophisticated technology will become one of the most important--if not the most important--sources of electrical energy in the years to come, yet one that is eminently suitable for humanly scaled communities.

To view technological advances as intrinsically harmful, particularly nonpolluting sources of energy and automated machinery that can free human beings of mindless toil in a rational society, is as shortsighted as it is arrogant. Understandably, people today will not accept a diet of pious moral platitudes that call for "simple means" that presumably will give them "rich ends," whatever these may be, especially if these platitudes are delivered by well-paid academics and privileged Euro-Americans who have no serious quarrel with the present social order apart from whether it affords them access to "wilderness" theme parks.

For the majority of humanity, toil and needless shortages of food are an everyday reality. To expect them to become active citizens in a vital political, ecologically oriented community while engaging in arduous work for most of their lives, often on empty bellies, is an unfeeling middle-class presumption. Unless they can enjoy a decent sufficiency in the means of life and freedom from mindless, often involuntary toil, it is the height of arrogance to degrade their humanity by calling them "mouths," as many demographers do, or "consumers," as certain very comfortable environmentalists do.

Indeed, it is the height of elitism and privilege to deny them the opportunity and the means for choosing the kind of lifeways they want to pursue. Nor have the well-to-do strata of Euro-American society deprived themselves of that very freedom of choice--a choice, in fact, that they take for granted as a matter of course. Without fostering promising advances in technology that can free humanity as a whole from its subservience to the present, irrational--and, let me emphasize, anti-ecological--social order, we will almost certainly never achieve the free society whose existence is a precondition for harmony between human and human and between humanity and the natural world.

Which is not to say that we can ignore the need for a visionary ethical ideal. Ironically, it has been the Right's shrewd emphasis on ethics and matters of spirit in an increasingly meaningless world that has given it a considerable edge over the forces of progress. Nazism



achieved much of its success among the German people a half century ago not because of any economic panaceas it offered but because of its mythic ideal of nationhood, community, and moral regeneration. In recent times, reactionary movements in America have won millions to their cause on such values as the integrity of the family, religious belief, the renewal of patriotism, and the right to life--a message, I may add, that has been construed not only as a justification for anti-abortion legislation but as a hypostatization of the individual's sacredness, unborn as well as born.

Characteristically, liberal and radical causes are still mired in exclusively economic and productivistic approaches to political issues. Their moral message, once a heightened plea for social justice, has given way increasingly to strictly material demands. Far more than the Right, which practices egoism and class war against the poor even as it emphasizes community virtues, the political middle ground and the Left take up the eminently practical issue of bread on the table and money in the bank but offer few values that are socially inspirational. Having emphasized the need to resolve the problems of material scarcity, it is equally necessary to emphasize the need to address the moral emptiness that a market society produces among large numbers of people today.

Morality and ethics, let me add, cannot be reduced to mere rhetoric to match the claims of reactionaries but must be the felt spiritual underpinnings of a new social outlook. They must be viewed not as a patronizing sermon but as a living practice that people can incorporate into their personal lives and their communities. The vacuity and triviality of life today

must be replaced precisely by radical ideals of solidarity and freedom that sustain the human side of life as well as its material side, or else the ideals by which a rational future should be guided will disappear in the commodity-oriented world we call the "marketplace of ideas."

The most indecent aspect of this "marketplace" is that ideals tend to become artifacts--mere commodities--that lack even the value of the material things we need to sustain us. They become the ideological ornaments to garnish an inherently antihuman and anti-ecological society, one that threatens to undermine moral integrity as such and the simple social amenities that foster human intercourse.

Thus a municipal agenda that is meant to countervail urbanization and the nation-state must be more than a mere electoral platform, such as we expect from conventional parties. It must also be a message, comparable to the great manifestos advanced by various socialist movements in the last century, which called for moral as well as material and institutional reconstruction. Today's electoral platforms, whether "green" or "red," radical or liberal, are generally shopping lists of demands, precisely suited for that "marketplace of ideas" we have misnamed "politics."

Nor can a municipal agenda be a means for effacing serious differences in outlook. The need for thinking out ideas and struggling vigorously to give them coherence, which alone renders an agenda for a new municipal politics intelligible, is often sacrificed to ideological confusion in the name of achieving a specious "unity." A cranky pluralism is replacing an appreciation of focused

thinking; a shallow relativism is replacing a sense of continuity and meaningful values; a confused eclecticism is replacing wholeness, clarity, and consistency. Many promising movements for basic social change in the recent past were plagued by a pluralism in which totally contradictory views were never worked out or followed to their logical conclusions, a problem that has grown even worse today due to the cultural illiteracy that plagues contemporary society. . . .

A serious political movement that seeks to advance a libertarian municipalist agenda, in turn, must be patient--just as the Russian populists of the last century (one of whom is cited in the dedication to this book) were. The 1960s upsurge, with all its generous ideals, fell apart because young radicals demanded immediate gratification and sensational successes. The protracted efforts that are so direly needed for building a serious movement--perhaps one whose goals cannot be realized within a single lifetime--were woefully absent. Many of the radicals of thirty years ago, burning with fervor for fundamental change, have since withdrawn into the university system they once denounced, the parliamentary positions they formerly disdained, and the business enterprises they furiously attacked.

A libertarian municipalist movement, in particular, would not--and should not--achieve sudden success and wide public accolades. The present period of political malaise at best and outright reaction at worst renders any sensational successes impossible. If such a libertarian municipalist movement runs candidate for municipal

councils with demands for the institution of public assemblies, it will more likely lose electoral races today rather than win even slight successes. Depending upon the political climate at any give time or place, years may pass before it wins even the most modest success.

In any very real sense, however, this protracted development is a desideratum. With rapid success, many naïve members of a municipal electorate expect rapid changes--which no minority, however substantial, can ever hope to achieve at once. For an unpredictable amount of time, electoral activity will primarily be an educational activity, an endeavor to enter the public sphere, however small and contained it may be on the local level, and to educate and interact with ever larger numbers of people.

Even where a measure of electoral success on the local level can be achieved, the prospect of implementing a radically democratic policy is likely to be obstructed by the opposition of the nation-state and the weak position of municipalities in modern "democratic" nation-states. Although it is highly doubtful that even civic authorities would allow a neighborhood assembly to acquire the legal power to make civic policy, still less state and national authorities, let me emphasize that assemblies that have no legal power can exercise enormous moral power. A popular assembly that sternly voices its views on many issues can cause considerable disquiet among local authorities and generate a widespread public reaction in its favor over a large region, indeed even on a national scale.

An interesting case in point is the nuclear freeze resolution that was adopted by more than a hundred town

meetings in Vermont a decade ago. Not only did this resolution resonate throughout the entire United States, leading to ad hoc "town meetings" in regions of the country that had never seen them, it affected national policy on this issue and culminated in a demonstration of approximately a million people in New York City. Yet none of the town meetings had the "legal" authority to enforce a nuclear freeze, nor did the issue fall within the purview of a typical New England town meeting's agenda. Historically, in fact, few civic projects that resemble libertarian municipalism began with a view toward establishing a radical democracy of any sort.

The forty-eight Parisian sections of 1793 actually derived from the sixty Parisian electoral districts of 1789. These districts were initially established through a complicated process (deliberately designed to exclude the poorer people of Paris) to choose the Parisian members of the Third Estate when the king convoked the Estates General at Versailles. Thereafter the districts, having chosen their deputies, were expected to disband. In fact, the sixty districts refused to desist from meeting regularly, despite their lack of legal status, and a year later became an integral part of the city's government. With the radicalization of the French Revolution, the fearful city and national authorities tried to weaken the power of the districts by reducing their number of forty-eight--hence, the mutation of the old districts into sections. Finally, the sections opened their doors to everyone, some including women, without any property or status qualifications. This most radical of civic structures, which produced the most democratic assemblies theretofore seen in history, thus slowly elbowed its way into authority, initially without any legal authority whatever and in flat defiance of the nation-

state. For all their limitations, the Parisian sections remain an abiding example of how a seemingly nonlegal assembly system can be transformed into a network of revolutionary popular institutions around which a new society can be structured. . . .

What is of immense practical importance is that prestatist institutions, traditions, and sentiments remain alive in varying degrees throughout most of the world. Resistance to the encroachment of oppressive states has been nourished by village, neighborhood, and town community networks, witness such struggles in South Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The tremors that are now shaking Soviet Russia are due not solely to demands for greater freedom but to movements for regional and local autonomy that challenge its very existence as a centralized nation-state. To ignore the communal basis of this movement would be as myopic as to ignore the latent instability of every nation-state; worse would be to take the nation-state as it is for granted and deal with it merely on its own terms. Indeed, whether a state remains "more" of a state or "less"--no trifling matter to radical theorists as disparate as Bakunin and Marx--depends heavily upon the power of local, confederal, and community movements to countervail it and hopefully to establish a dual power that will replace it. The major role that the Madrid Citizens' Movement played nearly three decades ago in weakening the Franco regime would require a major study to do it justice.

The problem of dealing with the growing power of nation-states and of centralized corporations, property

ownership, production, and the like is precisely a question of power--that is to say, who shall have it or who shall be denied any power at all. Michel Foucault has done our age no service by making power an evil as such. Foucauldian postmodernist views notwithstanding, the broad mass of people in the world today lack what they need most--the power to challenge the nation-state and arrest the centralization of economic resources, lest future generations see all the gains of humanity dissipated and freedom disappear from social discourse.

Minimally, if power is to be socially redistributed so that the ordinary people who do the real work of the world can effectively speak back to those run social and economic affairs, a movement is vitally needed to educate, mobilize, and, using the wisdom of ordinary and extraordinary people alike, initiate local steps to regain power in its most popular and democratic forms. Power of this kind must be collected, if we are to take democracy seriously, in newly developed institutions such as assemblies that allow for the direct participation of citizens in public affairs. Without a movement to work toward such a democratic end, including educators who are prepared, in turn, to be educated, and intellectually sophisticated people who can develop and popularize this project, efforts to challenge power as it is now constituted will simply sputter out in escapades, riots, adventures, and protests. . . .

Power that is not retained by the people is power that is given over to the state. Conversely, whatever power the people gain is power that must be taken away from the state. There can be no institutional vacuum where power exists: it is either invested in the people or it is invested in the state. Where the two "share" power, this

condition is extremely precarious and often temporary. Sooner or later, the control of society and its destiny will either shift toward the people and their communities at its base or toward the professional practitioners of statecraft at its summit. Only if the whole existing pyramidal social structure is dismembered and radically democratized will the issue of domination as such disappear and be completely replaced by participation and the principle of complementarity.

Power, however, must be conceived as real, indeed solid and tangible, not only as spiritual and psychological. To ignore the fact that power is a muscular fact of life is to drift from the visionary into the ethereal and mislead the public as to its crucial significance in affecting society's destiny.

What this means is that if power is to be regained by the people from the state, the management of society must be deprofessionalized as much as possible. That is to say, it must be simplified and rendered transparent, indeed, clear, accessible, and manageable such that most of its affairs can be run by ordinary citizens. This emphasis on amateurism as distinguished from professionalism is not new. It formed the basis of Athenian democratic practice for generations. Indeed, it was so ably practiced that sortition rather than election formed the basis of the polis's democracy. It resurfaced repeatedly, for example, in early medieval city charters and confederations, and in the great democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century.

Power is also a solid and tangible fact to be reckoned with militarily, notably in the ubiquitous truth that the power of the state or the people eventually reposes in



force. Whether the state has power ultimately depends upon whether it exercises a monopoly of violence. By the same token, whether the people have power ultimately depend upon whether they are armed and create their own grassroots militia, to guard not only themselves from criminals or invaders but their own power and freedom from the ever-encroaching power of the state itself. Here, too, the Athenian, British, and American yeomen knew only too well that a professional military was a threat to liberty and the state was a vehicle for disarming the people.

A true civicism that tries to create a genuine politics, an empowered citizenry, and a municipalized economy would be a vulnerable project indeed if it failed to replace the police and the professional army with a popular militia--more specifically, a civic guard, composed of rotating patrols for police purposes and well-trained citizen military contingents for dealing with external dangers to freedom. Greek democracy would never have survived the repeated assaults of the Greek aristocracy without its militia of citizen hoplites, those foot soldiers who could answer the call to arms with their own weapons and elected commanders. The tragic history of the state's ascendancy over free municipalities, even the rise of oligarchy within free cities of the past, is the story of armed professionals who commandeered power from unarmed peoples or disarmed them presumably (as so many liberals would have it today) from the "hazards" of domestic and neighborhood "shootouts." Typically, this is the cowboy or "gunslinger" image of the "American Dream," often cynically imposed on its more traditional yeoman face.

Beyond the municipal agenda that I have presented thus far lies another, more long-range, one: the vision of a political world in which the state as such would finally be replaced completely by a confederal network of municipal assemblies; all socially important forms of property would be absorbed into a truly political economy in which municipalities, interacting with each other economically as well as politically, would resolve their material problems as citizens in open assemblies, not simply as professionals, farmers, and blue- or white-collar workers; and humanly scaled and physically decentralized municipalities.

Not only would people then be able to transform themselves from occupational beings into communally oriented citizens; they would create a world in which all weapons could indeed be beaten into plowshares. Ultimately, it would be possible for new networks of communities to emerge that would be exquisitely tailored--psychologically and spiritually as well as technologically, architecturally, and structurally--to the natural environments in which they exist.

This agenda for a more distant future embodies the "ultimate" vision I have elaborated in greater detail in my previous writings. Its achievement can no longer be seen as a sudden "revolution" that within a brief span of time will replace the present society with a radically new one. Actually, such revolutions never really happened in history. Even the French Revolution, which radicals have long regarded as a paradigm of sudden social change, was generations in making and did not come to its definitive end until a century later, when the last of the

sans culottes were virtually exterminated on the barricades of the Paris Commune of 1871.

Nor can we afford today the myth today that barricades are more than a symbol. What links my minimal agenda to my ultimate one is a process, an admittedly long development in which the existing institutions and traditions of freedom are slowly enlarged and expanded. For the present, we must try increasingly to democratize the republic, a call that consists of preserving--and expanding--freedoms we have earned centuries ago, together with the institutions that give them reality. For the future it means that we must radicalize the democracy we create, imparting an even more creative content to the democratic institutions we have rescued and tried to develop.

Admittedly, at that later point we will have moved from a countervailing position that tries to play our democratic institutions against the state into a militant attempt to replace the state with municipally based confederal structures. It is to be devoutly hoped that by that time, too, the state power itself will have been hollowed out institutionally by local or civic structures, indeed that its very legitimacy, not to speak of its authority as a coercive force, will simply lead to its collapse in any period of confrontation. If the great revolutions of the past provide us with examples of how so major a shift is possible, it would be well to remember that seemingly all-powerful monarchies that the republics replaced two centuries ago were so denuded of power that they crumbled rather than "fell," much as a mummified corpse turns to dust after it has been suddenly exposed to air.

Another future prospect also faces us, a chilling one, in which urbanization so completely devours the city and the countryside that community becomes an archaism; in which a market society filters into the most private recesses of our lives as individuals and effaces all sense of personality, let alone individuality; in which a state renders politics and citizenship not only a mockery but a maw that absorbs the very notion of freedom itself.

This prospect is still sufficiently removed from our most immediate experience that its realization can be arrested by those countervailing forces--that dual power--that I have outlined. Given the persistent destructuring of the natural world as well as the social, more than human freedom is in the balance. The rise of reactionary nationalisms and proliferation of nuclear weapons are only two reminders that we may be reaching a point of cosmic finality in our affairs on the planet. Thus the recovery of a classical concept of politics and citizenship is not only a precondition for a free society; it is also a precondition for our survival as a species. Looming before us is the image of a completely destructured and simplified natural world as well as a completely destructured and simplified urban world--a natural and social world so divested of its variety that we, like all other complex life-forms, will be unable to exist as viable beings.

#### NOTES

This article consists of excerpts from *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987; London: Cassell, 1995), with revisions.

1. Lester Brown et al., *State of the World: 1995* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), pp. 60-70.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

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