Whither Anarchism?

A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics

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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.*[1] 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

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[1] Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (San Francisco and Edinburgh: A.K. Press, 1995); hereinafter *SALA.*

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 pro-

duces 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

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[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.

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.[1] 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

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[1] 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.

"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.[2] 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.[3]

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.

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[2] Bob Black, *Anarchy After Leftism* (Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press, 1997); hereinafter *AAL.*

[3] 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.

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.[4]

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[4] For more on Black's activites, 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.

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).[1] 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 gossipy 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*.

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[1] 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).

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 maladaption 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.[1] 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 op-

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[1] As I did in *The Ecology of Freedom.*

pressed 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*?[2]

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 entirely. 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.

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

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[2] 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.

"future social ecology." As it turns out, Mumford also posited a dual legacy for civilization — and, like Mor and Sjoo, put quotation marks around "civilization" to cite one of them.[3]

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.*"[4] 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."[5] 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."[6]

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."

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[3] Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 186–87.

[4] Lewis Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power* (New ork: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), p. 356.

[5] Ibid., p. 404, emphasis added.

[6] Ibid., p. 373.

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.[1] 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

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[1] 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.

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 "inter-related" (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)[2]

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.

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[2] 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.

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.[3]

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."[4] 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).

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[3] Mumford, *Pentagon,* p. 404, emphasis added.

[4] 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.

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* be based 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 toreactionaries 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.[1]

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.[2]

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

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[1] 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.

[2] Marshall Sahlins, "Notes on the Original Affluent Society," in Lee and Devore, *Man the Hunter,* pp. 85–86.

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.[3] 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

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[3] 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.

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).[4] 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 Neandertalers), 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).

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[4] 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.

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.[5] 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.[6]

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

[5] Roger Lewin, "Past Perspectives," *Science,* vol. 240 (May 27, 1988), p. 1147.
[6] Thomas N. Headland, "Paradise Revised," *Sciences* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), pp. 46, 48.

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.[7]

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."[8]

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."[9] 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.[10] 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."[11]

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 "periodi-

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[7] Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 308.

[8] Ibid., pp. 308.

[9] 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.

[10] Richard Lee, "!Kung Bushmen Subsistence: An Input-Output 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.

[11] 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."

cally suffered" (*BB*, p. 110).[12] 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 sangfroid, "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 farbe 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).[13] Moreover,

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[12] 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 to 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 stupefication... 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)

[13] 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

"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 economistic, 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

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?

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 commoditiesfrom 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.[14] Moreover, the acquisition of commodities has now become of major important. Where once, as Lee put it, the charge of "stinginess" was one of "the most serious accusations one !Kung [could] level against another,"[15] 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

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[14] John E. Yellen, "The Transformation of the Kalahari !Kung," *Scientific American* (April 1990), pp. 102B-102D.

[15] Lee, *!Kung San,* p. 458.

for [the anthropologist]. Clearly, their stated values no longer directed their activity.[16] 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 "mega-machine" 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.

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[16] Yellen, "Transformation," p. 102D.

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, divinators, 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 thevalidity 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.[1] 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 myobjections 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

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[1] 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-rational 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.

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.[2] The nightmarish consequences of irrationalism, from Cossack pogroms to the killing fields ofCambodia, 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 re-

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[2] Not surprisingly, Watson rejects the idea that reason or other learned behavior is to be valued more highly that 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.

newed 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?[3] 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 economistic 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

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[3] 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.

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.[4] Let me emphasize that Paul Radin (who I used as asource 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."[5] 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

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[4] 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.

[5] Paul Radin, *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), p. 140.

that shamanism is "a complex process, bound to be of great interest to an organic, holistic outlook" (*BB*, p. 64).[6] 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

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[6] Watson's guru, Mumford, was more dubious about shamans and aboriginal subjectivity. He warned that "the taboo-ridden savage … is often childishly over-confident about the powers of his shaman or magicians to control formidable natural forces." See *Pentagon of Power,* p. 359.

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 were 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 fantasia 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").[1] 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.

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[1] 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.

In most arenas of responsible discourse, such behavior would be called immoral — but 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.[2]

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.[3] If Janet Biehl defends my views, she is my "hagiographer" (*BB,* p. 37), while someone

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[2] 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.

[3] 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-enlightenment 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).

who objects to Watson's hatchet job, Daniel Coleman (who I do not even know), must be my "sycophant."[4]

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.[5]

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 qui-

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[4] 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.

[5] "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.

etism 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.[6]

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.

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[6] 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.

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.[1]

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 maladaption 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

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[1] David Watson, "Swamp Fever, Primitivism, and the 'Ideological Vortex': Farewell to All That," *Fifth Estate* (Fall 1997); hereinafter *SF.*

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.[1]

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.[2] 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."[3]

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?[4]

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[1] 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.

[2] 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.

[3] Mary Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 102.

[4] 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.*

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.[5]

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)][6] 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.

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[5] Clark, *Anarchist Moment,* pp. 173, 175; hereinafter *AM.*

[6] 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).

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.

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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 deep ecology 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.[7]

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.[8]

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-invitation. 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.[9] 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, antihu-

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[7] Daniel Chodorkoff, executive director of the Institute for Social Ecology, letter to Murray Bookchin, Feb. 12, 1997.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "1992 AnnualMeeting/Summer Program Evaluation," Institute for Social Ecology, Oct. 3, 1992, p. 9; minutes taken by Paula Emery; Janet Biehl files.

manism 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.[10]

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

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[10] Chaia Heller, ISE faculty member, personal conversation with Murray Bookchin, 1997.

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."[11]

The eco-mysticism that abounds among deep ecologists ho 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.[12]

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-enchanting 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,

[11] Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 194, 205, 207, 209.

[12] Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Layton, UT: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), p. 67.

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[13] — 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."[14]

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

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[13] 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.

[14] 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.

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 — 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.*"[15]

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 *anti*rational, 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."[16] 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

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[15] Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism,* trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1951), pp. 181–82.

[16] "Mysticism, Nature and Assessment of," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), pp. 429, 430.

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 anti-humanism — 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.[17] 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

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[17] "Nader Campaign Targets Corporate Abuse of Power and the One-Party State," *Delta Greens Quarterly,* no. 43 (Summer 1996), p 1.

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 hundred-fold. 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."[18] 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.

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[18] John Clark, "The Spirit of Hope," *Delta Greens Quarterly,* no. 39 (Summer 1995), p. 2.

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.[19] 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.[20]

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 criti-

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[19] Max Cafard (pseud. for John Clark), "The Surre(gion)alist Manifesto," *Fifth Estate,* vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 1993), p. 18.

[20] Arthur C. Danto, *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral hilosophy* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 107, 110.

cism, and one that contradicts the history of the ecology movement.[21] 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" — having 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-enchanting 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."[22]

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,[23] 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.[24]

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

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[21] 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.

[22] Paula Emery, former ISE administrator (1987–93) and assistant director (1989–93), letter to Murray Bookchin, Feb. 11, 1997.

[23] 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.

[24] Although Clark/Cafard laments his space limitations, he devotes much of "Bookchin Agonistes" to mere grammatical errors.

are that I flew into the French capital on July13 — 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-wife, 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.[25]

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?

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[25] John L. Hess, "De Gaulle Insists on Public Order," *New York Times,* July 14, 1968, p. 1.

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.*[1]

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[1] 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 Clarks'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 book whose purposes 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

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

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.

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.

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Murray Bookchin
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A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics
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