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Contents

have a diversified mosaic of energy sources — utilizing, as it were, all of the forces of Nature so that they interplay with our lives. In this way, we can develop a more respectful — even reverential — attitude toward the natural world. We would be asserting our dependence on the natural world, and in this way, providing a stronger motivation for dealing with ecosystems in a truly ecological fashion.

clinics, and much else. But the energy centers would play their part in stripping away the hierarchical mentality that has sustained the present system of domination.

You are going to be working on a practical application of alternative sources of energy, then. What are some of your ideas about the practicalities of this research?

In addition to solar energy (and that's an area being elaborated every year) one can think of the use of liquid hydrogen fuel. A friend of mine, Wilson Clark, is writing a book on this subject, assessing the entire fuel picture from the standpoint of alternative energy sources. That book will probably be out next year. Clark has emphasized that, through electrolytic dissociation, using the sun as the source of initial energy, we can probably produce hydrogen in sufficient quantity to replace many of the fuels (probably all of them) that involve the combustion of hydrocarbons or nuclear activity. New conceptions crop up all the time. But I would emphasize the need for diversification, for an interplay of many kinds of energy resources. Solar power would not be used just to produce hydrogen, but also for space heating and a great deal else. And it would be valuable to bring wind and water power into the picture.

Basically, it's a question of developing an eco-technology, a humanistic technology. Let's put it in Marx's words: "not only the humanization of nature, but the naturalization of humanity." I think a dialectic is needed here, and our goal should be not simply a balance between humanity and the natural world, but a balance within the human being and thus within society.

If that means we can have one fuel — like solar-produced hydrogen — which could replace all sources of energy, even novel ones, I believe we should not do so. We should always

Murray Bookchin, ecologist and anarchist, has written several books on subjects related to man, technology, and the environment, including Crisis in our Cities and Post-Scarcity Anarchism. The interview that follows is slightly edited transcript of a conversation between Bookchin and Eugene Eccli of Alternative Sources of Energy magazine. Further elaboration of many of the ideas discussed can be found in Post-Scarcity Anarchism, published by Ramparts Press, Berkeley, California 94704 at $2.95.

WHAT IS ecology?

I would say that ecology is not simply a problem of the relationship of human beings to the natural world, but of human beings to each other. There is not only the realm of natural ecology, there is the realm of social ecology, and of urban ecology. The ecological outlook is, first of all, a holistic one. That is to say, "The whole is larger than the sum of its parts." The ecological outlook is, in addition, a world view that sees in unity and differentiation the overall course of not only natural, but social development. It also implies that this development must be free to find its own equilibrium spontaneously. Without coercion, without hierarchy, without domination. Variety is to be sought for, for its own sake, and not only in the natural world, but also in the social world. In our new eco-technologies and our new eco-communities, we will foster diversification. When one talks of alternative sources of energy, for example, the real problem is to find a diversified mosaic of energy sources. Solar energy alone is not a solution, nor wind power alone. But utilizing solar energy with wind power, say, together with geothermal energy and hydroelectricity, we have now diversified the sources of energy for a community. These would yield a new energy base which would involve a minimal, If any, use of the traditional energy sources.

Notice here that diversification is employed as a solution of the energy problem. This is a typical ecological approach. Ecology has seen that the course of biological evolution has been the continual diversification of life, which, in tum, in its ever-varying forms, colonized the earth. We now know that the solution to pest problems, for example, entails a playing of a diverse group of species against each other in such a way as to produce a harmonious situation. The more simplified an ecosystem, the more prone it is to pest infestation. The more complex is it, the less likely that a pest infestation will take place.

This thinking, in a sense, applies to every facet of life. The complete human being, for example, is a rounded human being, with a wide diversity of stimuli and a many-faceted existence. The most complete society is one made up of highly individuated people, each of whom has a self that can participate directly in self-management and self-control.

This approach was basic to the development of Greek society in ancient times — everyone was an amateur in everything, and therefore a more complete human being. The Greek "Golden Mean" stems from this approach, also the Renaissance conception of the complete individual. Yet this is simply the ecological outlook applied to human nature as well as to biological nature. Here I draw a very important distinction between an ecological outlook and a simply environmentalist outlook, which involves a manipulation of things on the basis of engineering principles . How to avoid pollution? By working out a new "gizmo". That's the environmentalist approach. By elaborating the old technology — not an eco-technology, but a new device to install in the existing technology. Like a scrubber, an afterburner, or whatever.

tem by bringing consciousness to the service of the natural world.

Would these polises also be research communities?

Some would. I would like to see the widespread establishment of "energy centers," as it were. I mean the pooling of interests and talents by working communally in small groups. I'd like to see such energy centers develop in various parts of the United States, and I'd like to see people — of diverse talents — bring their abilities to bear on projects that can actually demonstrate the feasibility of the new technologies that are available or being developed. Such research communities would be creative work communities. They would publish their own material, set up demonstration projects (models for others to examine), and, in short, participate in a new kind of "Enlightenment" which is occurring not just in the United States, but just about everywhere.

I would see these energy centers as "Enlightenment communes," if you like. They would try to promote and foster the cultural changes that have slowly been taking place in this country, reaching every corner of it until consciousness has been sufficiently changed so that the majority will want a total reconstruction of society.

For example, some friends and I are planning to establish such an energy center not too far away from New York City, where we would plan to build solar houses and wind turbines, and work with the new technologies. If there were many such energy centers throughout the United States, they would play an important role in changing people's consciousness. Such centers, to be sure, are only part of a much larger whole — including women's liberation, the anti-war movement, children's liberation, food co-operatives, people's medical

tionally. Interlink smaller communities technologically. These communities should be carefully tailored to the ecosystems in which they are a part.

Three principles seem to be at work here. The first is that we are developing a multi-purpose technology on a small scale — machines that can take on many different tasks. Second, once we develop a rational-type community, we can produce goods that will last, instead of goods that are deliberately engineered for obsolescence and require continual renewal. In other words — quality goods.

Third, we no longer require giant installations to produce many of the commodities which we require today for our survival and comfort. These three lines of development now make it possible to conceive of truly ecological communities that are scaled to the human dimensions in which people can directly control their society.

What I really have in mind, if one wants to go back to a historically reasonable image, would be the Greek polis. Ancient Athens, and various polises that existed on the Greek promontory and islands, and in portions of Italy before the Roman Empire took over Mediterranean social life, were in many ways — if not exact paradigms — interesting examples of how people can establish direct democracies scaled to human dimensions. In the polis, the citizen could comprehend social processes and the management of the community, thus partake in running it directly.

As to future polises, we can envision that they would be interlinked by agricultural and industrial operations. We can also envision these communities as being big enough to avoid obliteration of any type of culture — yet not so large that one cannot comprehend the culture that's being created. Well balanced agriculturally, ecologically, and in terms of the so-called "resources" that are available, they would live in harmony with the ecosystems in which they are located, returning to nature what is taken from her; and, in fact, improving upon the ecosys-

You seem to draw a distinction between ecology and environmentalism. Could you explain further what you mean by that?

Most of the people today who involve themselves — by which I mean government officials and even scientific personnel — are actually "environmentalists" rather than "ecologists". Environmentalism is actually (in my view) a form of what could be called biological engineering. Nature is seen not as an organic whole, but as a habitat. The natural world is viewed merely as a repository of natural resources. Thus, one speaks of 'improving the environment' and one often brings an environmentalistic — that is, a " magic bullet" — approach to such solutions. What we should do, the environmentalists tell us, is engineer the environment in such a way that it will not be 'harmful' to us. I should add that one finds the same environmentalist approach among city planners. The city, too, is conceived as a repository of "urban resources" rather than a really organic community. Now, an ecological approach is basically different. The complex interrelationships and food chains and/or the spontaneous development of various processes in nature, are what really preoccupy the ecologist. In ecology, one does not see human beings as engineering the environment, adapting it to their needs alone. From an ecological viewpoint, human beings are part of a much larger whole called the natural world. Not "on top" of the natural world, not sitting on top of a biotic pyramid, as it were, but as one facet of nature. We are not the Lords of the Universe, as the Bible would have us believe — the masters of all that fly, crawl, and swim — but part of the natural world and seeking a harmonious relationship with it.

The environmentalist approach and the ecological approach really conflict. Take alternative sources of energy. When people try to apply a strictly environmental approach to alternative technology, we find that they get into "gimmicks" — into

magic bullets, into "solutions" that really reflect the engineering viewpoint instead of an ecological viewpoint.

For example, take the proposal that we try to resolve our energy problems by establishing a gigantic solar reflector in space, some 35 square miles in size, or whatever. Now this is a typical environmentalist approach to the solar energy problem. How are they going to solve it? In much the same way that they tried to solve energy problems 100 years ago. It's still the Industrial Revolution, the profit-making approach. For environmentalists, the real problems are "efficiency" and profits, and the solution, one of industrial gigantism. But technological problems are not resolved by developing a technology — which is still beyond the comprehension of the individuals whom the technology is supposed to service. An ecological approach would call for a human scale, which is also a natural scale. Inasmuch as human beings would be conceived of as part of the environment — the natural world — technological solutions would be based on what human beings can comprehend. An attempt would be made to rescale the relationship of people to nature in such a way that there is a clear comprehension of the role that nature plays in any individual's life.

Using the sun would not be a question of creating a gigantic solar installation in space, which again would be in the hands of industrial hierarchs, but would involve a decentralized approach, the formation of ecological communities, and an attempt to artistically "tailor" technology to the ecosystem in which the community is located. In this way, technology would mediate the relationship between humanity and nature in a truly organic fashion. We would be able to see from our immediate experience the role that technology plays in harmonizing humanity with the natural world. Correspondingly, communities would be tailored to the ecosystem in which they are located and they would be scaled to the comprehension of the people in the community. Individuals would learn how to make their own technologies — so that technology would not

Can you go more fully into what you mean by a "liberatory technology"?

Well, parallel to the existing technology — by which I mean the gigantic installations that produce our most basic commodities — we are beginning to witness the development of an entirely new type of technology. This technology is based on alternate sources of energy which need not pollute, or at most yield only a minimum amount of pollution. It is based on labor-saving devices that can now be scaled to human dimensions and produce lasting products. These are technologies which lend themselves to decentralized types of communities, and thus accord with the vision of human social life scaled to human dimensions.

Contrast this with the gigantic state apparatus, Immense industrial Installations, and great cities we have today.

We now have alternate sources of energy for the fossil fuels that are used today, end even for projected nuclear fuels. These alternatives consist of once again utilizing the elemental forces of Nature the sun, the wind, the tides, and so on. In combination, they could be substitutes for the hydrocarbon fuels we use today.

Similarly, we have developed, either in pilot form or on the drawing boards, new steel-making processes which can now be scaled to almost any dimension. We are no longer captive to the giant rolling mills and immense installations that have marred the landscape of Pittsburgh for generations. We even no longer need to have giant automobile assembly plants.

Then there is a very sophisticated hobby technology which could foster craftsmanship as a supplement to mass production and to the immense installations that go along with it. A rational use of land could make for a decentralization of the cities, and a "recolonization " of the entire planet on a truly ecological basis. Break up the cities and deploy the new technologies — ra-

You mentioned that you hope that things are changing — that there are possibilities in the "counterculture". Why is there such a historical alternative at this point?

Well, I think the capitalist system has brought hierarchical society to the limits of its development. It is now blatantly clear that the traditional institutions that have existed for thousands of years will no longer work. People have reacted to that reality. I think there is a great tension between what exists and what has existed for thousands of years. For those thousands of years we were really strait-jacketed by scarcity. Technology was so undeveloped that people, even if they had enough to eat, felt materially insecure. Seasonal vicissitudes, changes in weather and climate, could make for either feast or famine.

But today we have developed a technology that could provide material security. Immediately, for the people of the First World, and fairly rapidly for the people of the Third World. And I think that because of this development of technology people realize that many institutions and social relations that made sense for thousands of years are today irrational. Ironically enough, the technology that now enslaves people, could liberate them — in other words, a "liberatory technology".

There is now a tremendous tension between a rational, humanistic, and truly ecological society that could exist — and the irrational, anti-human, and anti-ecological society that does exist today. And this tension has, I think, bred a rejection of the established System on a scale that we really have never seen before.

be a mysterious force that exists over them. On the contrary, technology would now become, from the ecological viewpoint, a medium relating to nature and using natural forces in an intimate humanistic fashion.

There is a profound difference, then, between the two approaches. Consider, for example, the concept of the earth as a rocket, as it were, using the cybernetic-type language so familiar to readers of Buckminster Fuller's writings. Here one is really dealing with environmentalism, with "natural engineering". We're going to "engineer" nature. (Laughs). Nature consists of "resources", not a holistic unity. An ecological approach wouldn't even use that type of language.

In the environmental approach, you have a typically hierarchical attitude toward Nature. Man seizes control of Nature! You know, Man conceives of himself (a very patriarchal outlook, "himself") as standing over all that lives. Man "engineers" Nature for its benefit. The ecological approach is different. Here, differences exist, but are not arranged hierarchically, Human beings are different from animals, but not superior or inferior to them, or vice versa. Similarly, vegetation; similarly, the soil. The conference in Stockholm was an environmental conference. They were concerned not with ecology, but with re-engineering the planet. The methodology involved, and the language utilized, was borrowed from the world of heavy industry, of rocket design. A truly ecological conference would have been conducted under entirely different circumstances and with entirely different perspectives. Not only would there have been an attempt to work with a mentality that views humanity as part of Nature rather than above it, but an attempt would have been made to work out problems in social terms — something not done at Stockholm. One can't think of simply an "eco-technology" or "alternate technology" without an alternate community.

To sum up, there has to be a balance not only between humanity and Nature, but the mediating factors that enter into

that relationship — like technology — also have to be part of the harmonious mosaic.

How do you see the organic ecological point of view expressing itself?

It expresses itself primarily in the "counterculture", not scientific and technical conferences. The youth counterculture is making some attempt, whether consciously or intuitively, to develop non-hierarchical attitudes toward people and the natural world. And I think that this impulse is more important from the standpoint of the ultimate achievements of an ecological outlook than all the official government and even professional conferences that are held, or the campaigns that are launched, or the legislation that is passed.

We must transform people. If we ourselves do not undergo a self-transformation that changes our very mode of thinking and our ways of relating to each other, then we will not be able to relate to the natural world in an ecological fashion. So, I think that our best attempt to achieve what I would call an "ecological society" — and I regard the present society as eminently anti-ecological — involves developing within the individual an ecological culture and psyche.

Where do you think some of the anti-ecological attitudes have come from?

Well, I think that the basic anti-ecological attitude comes from the domination of human by human. I think we began first by older people dominating young people — then men dominated women, and finally men dominated men. All of this began to produce the social relations, and the mental and psychological attitudes, that led to the concept of dominating Nature. In other

words, domination, as a social condition, was projected onto humanity's relationship with the natural world.

We even began to recast our images of the natural world in terms of hierarchical domination. We speak of the lion as the "King of Beasts", or we talk of the "lowly" ant. Now, this is ecological nonsense. There are no kings, princes, dukes, and what have you — no hierarchies — in Nature, in spite of much rubbish that appears even in books on ecology. So — I would say that our anti-ecological outlook emerges from the domination of human by human. We now have something even worse. With the development, finally, of what is called the "free" market system — a system which implies the destruction of all kinds of kinship ties, of the extended family, of tribes, of the early peasant villages, — you begin to produce the solitary individual in a social jungle, the true predator.

How does technology fit into this? One can say that as a result of the capitalist market system (of course, because of monopoly, it is no longer "free") you begin to have an accelerated development of technology. The differences between our society and earlier ones based on domination is, I would say, that we have developed such a formidable technology that we can do far more damage than the precapitalist societies of the past. But the same attitudes existed after clan and tribal society was destroyed, and they have been supremely developed under the market system.

The result is that we find a convergence of two tendencies. The first is domination, exaggerated to the point where power becomes an end of itself. Under modern capitalism, based on the accumulation of commodities, "production merely for the sake of production" becomes an end in itself. On the other side, converging with this, we see the development of technology to such a degree that attitudes based on domination can, within one generation, produce more damage than had been produced in thousands of years.