Basic Principles, Future Prospects

Murray Bookchin

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In this interview from 1994, Murray Bookchin presents a summary of his ideas on social ecology and libertarian municipalism. Although intended for a Japanese audience, it is a very good general introduction to his thought.

Richard Evanoff: For people in Japan who might not be so familiar with the concept of social ecology, could you talk about what social ecology is and what some of its basic principles are?

Bookchin: Social ecology is an attempt to get to the roots, both historically and currently, of the ecological problems we face today – problems of such immense dimensions that the very survival of our species is really in question.

It was very easy to try to deal with this monumental issue by simply talking about living in "friendly" way with the natural world, living ecologically by recycling, saving energy, dealing with toxic wastes, trying to diminish the use of harmful chemicals, and the like. On this score, in fact I have been very deeply involved as far back as 1951 when I completed an article (published in 1952) called "The Problems of Chemicals in Food" in Contemporary Issues , an Anglo-American periodical published by an international group with which I worked for a large number of years. So I do not challenge the need to conserve, to prevent the building of nuclear reactors, the building of roads, the destruction of soil, the use of chemicals, and the like – these common, important issues that have to be faced every day, if only to keep our anti-ecological society from simply racing off the precipice and landing us and coming generations in a hopelessly irrevocable crisis.

But in dealing with these problems I personally found that I had to go deeper than just lifestyles, an ecological sensibility, and, if you like, a spiritual attitude that was "nature-friendly", depending on what is meant by the word nature. Today it's become a commonplace to advocate these step-by-step immediate remedies – which are not remedies but just attempts to hold back a headlong drive to who knows what type of abyss lying before us. I felt I had to look behind these very important attempts, attempts which I designate as "environmentalism", and examine what were the causes that have produced the ecological crisis. I don't believe, speaking from my own life experience, that it comes from mere consumerism. I'm a man of the twentieth century. I was born in 1921 and lived in a major city, New York, for a very large portion of my life, through the entire pre-war/World War Two period, and for the large part of the post-World War Two period. And I know that people are not simply born consumers and that they are filled with stupid, often meaningless wants that have to be satisfied by industry, which industry claims it is trying to do. I find, in looking deeper into what seem to be the causes of the present environmental crisis – and

certainly the more formidable one that will be emerging over the years – that I have to examine the social causes that have produced this crisis and that are magnifying it continually.

It's very noble to want to protect wilderness – a word, by the way, that I believe has to be defined. It's very noble to try to foster a species' diversity and prevent the destruction of many life-forms that are so beautiful and so, in fact, necessary for ecological stability and ecological development. But what about the social forces that produce a mentality that advocates dominating nature? That is what intrigues me. Because that is today, or was until recently, the prevalent mentality. So far as modern society is concerned, particularly the economy, the notions that we have to grow and grow and grow and structured into the very nature of modern social thinking, particularly in the profit-oriented business world, where the maxim "grow or die" – I use a very common quotation – is regarded as a law of life.

Where did this mentality come from? Where did this ideology come from? What are the social causes that have generated a "grow or die" mentality, that is turning forests into paper, that is turning soil into sand, that is turning the atmosphere and the oceans into a cesspool of toxic wastes that will be with us, in the case of nuclear materials, for tens of thousands of years, poisoning all life forms, including our own, to one degree or another?

So social ecology is an attempt to look deeper into, look fundamentally into, the basic social factors that have generated the present-day ecological crisis and that have created an ideology of dominating nature fuelled by an economy that is definable by, and determined by, its capacity to grow. And in doing so, it is an attempt to search for the forces historically and more contemporaneously that have given rise to this outlook and this practice – which is even more important in a sense than the outlook. I began to work on ecological issues from a different standpoint that one customarily encounters. I wasn't simply interested in how to live in an environmentally friendly way; I was interested in looking for the causes of and alternatives to the social conditions that have produced and are magnifying the present ecological crisis. Even more fundamentally social ecology is an attempt to understand how the ideology of dominating the natural world stems from the very real domination of human by human. I believe that the ideology of dominating nature did not spring like Minerva from the head of Jove so to speak. Something was going on historically, to some extent for thousands of years and almost certainly within the past four or five centuries, in human relationships and the way in which human beings deal with other human beings, which produced the idea that nature is an object to be dominated. So that approach guided me in developing the ideas of social ecology. These ideas have been presented in a large number of books, of which I can only hope in this discussion to give the briefest possible summary.

Evanoff: What are some of the basic ideas of social ecology?

Bookchin: I would say that going back thousands of years a situation began to emerge, possibly in very early tribal life, where we began to see systems of domination emerging. Initially perhaps these systems of domination were not very striking. For example, I have mentioned the view that one of the earliest forms of domination in a basically egalitarian society, say at the level of bands and the early formation of tribes, was primarily the needs for elders, who always have been situated in a very precarious way due to their failing physical powers and the face that that they are often incapable of providing for their own subsistence, to gain a certain degree of status – hierarchical status – which privileged them amongst the rest of the population. You see this today, most certainly in Japan and elsewhere in the world, in the form of ancestor worship and in the form of an enormous degree of respect toward the elders. One could understand that there

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was an emerging hierarchy, which oddly enough was rather democratic in the sense that if you grew or lived long enough you would become old enough to become part of that hierarchy.

By degrees, however, one begins to see how the domestic world of women, which was basic to early societies – the nurturing of children, caring for crops, maintaining a household – tasks which primarily fell to women in the early division of labor before cities appeared – would place a great deal of political and social weight to women. I'm not saying that there were matriarchies, the so-called "rule" of women over men. I would say that there existed a complementary relationship between the men who did the hunting and who protected the community – a very important role in a parochialized band and tribal world – and the female world of child caring, food preparation, and food gathering. Women were the ones who mainly gathered the vegetable matter needed by the community, which generally 80 per cent of the biomass of what people ate.

But by degrees, as population began to increase, as conflicts began to occur between these highly parochialized tribal groups, you began to see a civil society emerging, notably a society in which men – initially hunters, but turning more and more into warriors – began to acquire a greater and greater role in the community. And so increasingly the male world of hunting, making treaties, engaging in what at that time would be a form of simple politics, began to edge out and increasingly supplant in significance the role of women – which is not to deny that the role of women was immensely important; it formed the substrate at all times until modern agriculture, plow agriculture, appeared and cattle were used as draft animals as well as sources of food. Men began to take over. And added to the gerontocracy – the rule of the elders which at least privileged them and finally gave them more and more authority – you begin to witness the emergence of a patricentric world oriented toward men, which then began to give rise increasingly, with the development of economic life and the elaboration of culture, particularly of civil society, to male domination, often quite mild, but still as domination over women.

In some cases, where there were pastoral communities, such as existed among Semitic peoples in the Arabian desert or among people in the steppes of central Asia such as the Mongols, even among Nordic peoples in the Northern parts of Europe, as well as Asia, one begins to witness patriarchies – outright patriarchies – in which not only women, but also young men, were subservient to their fathers. As late as classical times a Greek or Roman patriarch still had to right to kill his own son if the son was disobedient. In fact, one of the major functions of the state was to deprive the patriarch of that privilege because it needed the young men as soldiers, bureaucrats, and so forth and wanted to remove them from the disposition of their fathers. Patriarchy, in other words, seems to combine at once a system of domination of the elder male, often side by side with the elder female, such as one finds in the Judeo-Christian religion, as, for example, in the case of Abraham and Sarah. She has as much to say as he does – but it is a patriarchy nonetheless.

Gradually, with the emergence of warriors, you begin to see the chieftains and so on, and finally you have a whole scale of domination. Now this domination of human by human begins to give rise very slowly to the idea of dominating the natural world. Just as human beings are being increasingly reduced to subjects, and ultimately to objects in the case of slavery or serfdom, so the natural world is reduced to objects to be used and to be exploited. I use the word "exploitation" in a very qualified way because I don't think what we call "nature" knows that it is being exploited or dominated. But these human attitudes are projected outward to the nonhuman world. In fact, it remains ironical that to the extent that the natural world is seen in a highly animistic way, the more social forms of domination become feasible. We begin to treat outer nonhuman phenomena

"as though" they are human, such as in Disney cartoons. That's the flip side of the idea that we are disenchanting the natural world.

With the emergence of modern capitalism, all of these relationships are exacerbated to a breaking point. Whatever you can say about the past, there at least existed the ideal, whether it was Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, Jewish – it makes no difference what religion you're talking about – that people should live cooperatively. It's with modern capitalism that the ideal of cooperation is replaced with the ideal of competition. Each individual is urged to go out into the world on his or her own and to make his or her own fortune at the expense of everyone else. This leads to unrestricted transgressions of what could basically be called ecological tenets for development.

Society now begins to run riot, as we can see. No matter how well-intentioned anyone may be – be it a corporation or an individual, a property owner or a wealthy person – in trying to facilitate our relationship with the natural world and trying to behave in an ecologically sound way, the capitalist market drives corporations and entrepreneurs like an engine. It is not they who exercise any control over this engine. It is the system as such – the imperative to grow or die, compete or be destroyed, expand or be devoured – that ultimately governs everyone's behaviour. Thus, to emphasize consumption as such, as though it were autonomous, and to contend that people autonomously devoured the earth because they want more of this or more of that – whatever the commodities may be is grossly misleading. That such a mentality can exist does not explain how it came to be and how to remove it.

Evanoff: You've talked about social ecology as a critique of past and existing social relations, but I think within social ecology there is also a strong emphasis on imaginative thinking about the future. I'd like to hear a little about the positive vision of social ecology.

Bookchin: If we can demolish hierarchy, if we can create an atmosphere in which we live in a friendly way with what we call the natural world – I'm using the language that seems to be coming into vogue these days: in an "environmentally friendly way" with the natural world – then we can conceive of a society where it would be possible to take all our enormous knowledge of science and our enormous knowledge of technology and bring it to the service not only of meeting our own needs but in fact in creating, and improving upon, the natural world itself. We can begin to develop techniques that do minimal, if any, damage to the environment. We can in fact develop sciences and technologies that will improve the natural world, for example in fostering biological diversity.

Where ordinarily we might have very inhospitable areas for life, the soil can be enriched within a few years – a process that would take ten or twenty thousand years to achieve under natural conditions. We can prevent, or at least mitigate, the impact of natural catastrophes that have been visited upon the natural world by what we broadly call "nature" itself. We can create a cooperative society, living on the land and sharing it with other life forms, in such a way that we not only improve the human condition and sensitize people to the natural world, but also deal with problems that our whole biosphere confronts, such as the situations that arise from earthquakes, volcanic activity, storms, and the like, fostering life in places which even "nature" would render life impossible. Finally, we can create a society, non-hierarchical and nonclass in character, in which we, living in cooperation with each other and creating entirely new institutional forms of direct democracy, would produce a garden in the best sense of the word, necessary both of our own well-being and for other life forms.

Evanoff: How would you distinguish social ecology from some of the other forms of environmentalism that have come up in the last two decades or so?

Bookchin: The kind of "Al Gore" environmentalism that I encounter generally – the good-natured benign idea of living within the limits of the planet – is certainly to be welcomed as long as we recognise that these limits are not set by an abstract law or by murky, well-intentioned attitudes. Limits to growth can hardly be determined in advance by a system whose very nature, notably capitalism, is structured around growth. Capitalism is defined as a growth society. It is defined as a competitive society. You might as well ask an elephant to fly or a whale to talk. It's absurd. Such intentions may be well-meaning but they don't go to the roots of the problem, which is the reason why environmentalism generally today takes the form of cost-benefit analyses. Environmentalists negotiate with lumber companies, mining companies, and developers, not on whether or not there should be lumbering, mining or development as such, but merely how much.

Usually this negotiation involves the surrender of pristine areas, or fertile areas, or what are euphemistically called "natural resources" in which the environmentalist gets one-tenth and the developer/miner/lumberer gets the other nine-tenths. We keep whittling down the amount that we get all the time when we function merely as environmentalists.

In other words, we're always being placed in the position where we, if we are environmentalists, have to work on the terms and according to the rules of those who are degrading the environment. They set up the rules and then afterward we who are trying to negotiate with them really adopt the rules. We offer no basic challenge to the rules themselves, to the whole system itself, or any basic alternative to them.

Thus, should we leave it up to General Dynamics in the United States or Mitsubishi in Japan to give us solar energy? Are we naïve enough to suppose that these giant multinational corporations are going to give us anything that would be unprofitable to them – in fact, that they must do that if they want to stay in existence? If it isn't General Dynamics or Mitsubishi then it will be another corporation, be it in the US, in Japan, or elsewhere, that will supplant them if they happen to be too generous. Capitalists can't afford, under capitalism, under a market economy based on bitter competition, and guided by the rule "grow or die", to be generous – assuming they even care. It isn't a question of what the personal attitude of an entrepreneur or the leading members of a corporation may be; they are forced no less than we are forced to grow or die. Thus we are told, if there is no growth we will not have jobs. Well, one should welcome the possibility of not having jobs if we lived in an economy that was guided by "from each according to his or her ability, and to each according to his or her needs." The fewer jobs there are, the more free time we would have in such a society. And the more free time we have, the more we can cultivate ourselves as individuals. The more we can cultivate ourselves as individuals, the more democratic our society hopefully will become, the richer it will become culturally, and the more ecologically sensitive it will become.

So notice the trap in which we're placed. We are told that we must have jobs. If we must have jobs we have must economic growth. Now why are the two co-related except for the fact that we live in a world based on private property, organized around corporations, which in turn have to grow or die? At that point, by playing according to these insane rules, we are always going to be the losers, because there can't be enough growth to supply enough jobs to supply enough means of life within the framework of this kind of setup.

And environmentalists generally miss the point. They think that if they personally don't throw any trash on the ground or recycle everything they get, they, like devout Christians in the Middle Ages, will create a new Eden. Well, we've had 2,000 years of this message – this spiritual message, this self-help message, this plea for doing the good thing – by the Catholic Church

throughout medieval Europe and into early modern times with absolutely no real consequences for human progress. That there has been progress in civilization is something I do not deny. In fact, I would affirm this against most anti-social people nowadays who claim that humanity is a cancer on this planet.

Which brings me to the so-called deep ecologists, who tell us that we have to change our outlook. Good – but if everyone changed his or her outlook today, and went no further than doing that, there be a tremendous economic crisis. Given the kind of economy we have today, people are obliged to consume if the wheels of industry are to keep turning. And before long, former deep ecologists would be banging on the doors of banks and corporations looking for jobs and the wherewithal by which to live. If we all decided as the result of a miraculous sweep of an angelic wand to stop buying, except what we strictly need, does anyone in his or her right mind believe that this would transform the global corporations that exist today, that they would somehow say, "Here, take over the society. We want to dispossess ourselves of our wealth, our means of life, and our resources that belong to you." I would say such a viewpoint is incredibly naïve.

What we have to do then is to form social movements, and more precisely political movements, that directly challenge the market society, the competitive imperatives that guide it, and the grow-or-die consequences that flow from it and that give rise to the ecological crisis we face today. I'm not going to go back again to the Middle Ages and the spirituality involved there, in which converting people one by one is supposed to produce an Edenic world. I'm very blunt in saying that well-meaning as many of these people may be – either environmentalists or deep ecologists (and I'm not saying we shouldn't do anything in the meantime to try and stop as much damage as we can) – we must ultimately create a social ecology movement that directly confronts the sources of hierarchy, the ideologies of domination, systems of private property, class rule, competition, and the like which have given rise to the present ecological crisis. And in turn we must offer an alternative – politically, socially, economically and technologically – to the existing society.

That's why I call the ecology I adhere to "social" ecology. It would be very cheap and easy for me to call it "spiritual" ecology. But I'm saying that a good deal of the so-called spiritual that abounds everywhere has yielded futile results and has, in a sense, become more of an introverted, privatistic indifference to the suffering of those who can't afford to hold such lofty attitudes, such as people in the South, people in the so-called "Third World". I'm particularly irritated by the extent to which many so-called environmentalists or deep ecologists are indifferent to the human condition, as though human beings were less victims of the existing social order and its values, than, let us say, bald eagles, dolphins, whales, seals, wolves and the like. Indeed much of what today passes for deep ecology and to a great extend even environmentalism is merely conservation. This conservation movement has existed for over a hundred years in the United States, and it has yielded very limited results indeed.

Evanoff: On the one hand, there are people who would say that the only way to improve our quality of life is by more economic growth. On the other hand, there are those who would say that since economic growth is not ecologically sustainable we need to go back to some kind of primitive lifestyle. But social ecology seems to offer a third alternative. Could you elaborate on what kind of alternative that is?

Bookchin: First, I'm realistic enough to realize that since mere persuasion will not induce multinationals to surrender their strangling control over what we call "natural resources", growth

rates, and the lifeways that exist today, I would call for the organization of a movement to oppose them. And I don't mean a movement that consists of a lot of well-meaning people holding rallies and demonstrations, putting signs on their cars protesting against this or that. I would call for a political movement that tries to empower people at a grass roots level. We have tried political parties in the past, only to find that they almost invariably become corrupt. They are structured, as Robert Nichols once wrote, to turn into bureaucracies that become ends in themselves. Moreover, they work within the existing social order – or the "political" order, to use the word political in a conventional sense. They go into parliaments working within the framework of what parliamentary activity allows, notably negotiation within the existing social system, as in the case of the German Greens. The Green Party in Germany has turned into servants of the existing social order, providing that order with a patina of being Green, so that "Green" in Germany – even France and elsewhere – today often means little more than beautification of city streets, preservation of certain recreation areas that go under the name of "wilderness", using automobiles that are less polluting, and doing what one can without inhibiting industrial growth.

What I'm speaking of, therefore, is a movement that tries to do what I would call a genuine new politics, operating on the neighbourhood, municipal, town level, in which people try, not only through education but political activity, to create, even in the largest cities, neighbourhood assemblies based around compact, or at least definable, groups of individuals who can meet and discuss and then, if possible – and I believe it is possible give enough time – elect city councils in which the people in these various neighbourhoods will make the decisions and the deputies of these people in the city councils will try to execute these decisions.

This involves creating a tension, frankly, between the local level – more precisely the municipal level – and the nation-state. Needless to say, the nation-state will say that everything you're doing is illegal. So what you do may take on an extralegal form, say by building up counter-institutions, not just a counterculture, to the highly concentrated power of the nation-state. Now, if you did that in only one community, it would obviously be inadequate. So I would like to introduce again a very old, a very traditional, and in my opinion a potentially democratic form of association between communities, namely "confederalism". Instead of speaking in terms of a centralized state in which people surrender their power to a representative who meets in parliament and who functions as an executive or judge, people would elect deputies to confederal councils, whose main goal is to negotiate all the different views that exist in different municipalities, given a certain region, and bring back to the assemblies a shared proposal or anything that involves an approximation to a shared proposal to the assemblies. Then, by a majority vote the region would decide what positions to take on specific issues.

Today the nation-state penetrates almost every aspect of life. It penetrates provinces in Canada, states in the US, and prefectures in Japan. It's also a presence through funding and taxes in the life of municipalities. I'm only too cognizant of the fact that it would do everything it can to prevent such a development, a confederal development, from taking place in Japan, as it would in the United States. But let's start out with the idea that such an attempt begins first as a moral movement. Such an effort would try to organize these assemblies, which as yet did not have legal power, and these assemblies would send deputies to municipal councils, who as yet cannot executive these policies.

But they would, in making demands for a change to democratize and gain legitimacy for neighbourhood assemblies and to confederal councils produce a tension between confederated municipalities and the nation-state. I would regard such a tension as absolutely necessary. If

the nation-state gave in to the municipal councils and then tried to coopt them – as I've seen this in Burlington, Vermont where the city council made it possible for neighbourhood planning assemblies to exist primarily so that they could be used by a liberal city government – then I would say that any movement that tries to form them is not practicing a libertarian or confederal municipalist policy – the names that I give to the political approach that I have. I want to see confrontation! That's the name of the politics in which I believe. In other words, I am trying – and I will make no denial about this – to pit the great majority of the people organized through municipal councils and neighbourhood assemblies against the nation-state. As long as the nation-state exists we will never have a true democracy in which people directly manage their own affairs.

So the political solutions that I advocate are actually very developmental. They must be seen as a formative and transformative process that involves profound social and structural changes in municipal life. They start with a minimum program of electing social ecologists to municipal councils, establishing neighbourhood assemblies in various districts of various communities, even in parts of a larger city or megalopolis such as Tokyo, without the consent of municipal governments. I believe that we can institutionally break down controls and devolve power to the people even in at least part of the most gigantic of urban areas. Why? Because we're talking about institutions. I'm not talking at this moment about physical decentralization, which must ultimately occur.

Thereafter, a transitional program would consist of developing this activity, first by spreading it as much as possible through the United States and Japan, and second by demanding more and more and more, such as demanding city charters if they don't exist. Where they do exist or when they are given, we would demand that greater legality and power be given to neighbourhood assemblies. And finally, ultimately, I believe that there would have to be a confrontation with the nation-state. How that would be resolved is not anything I can envision. It's something that would be the result of a long process, depending on the traditions of a particular country and the power of the nation-state itself. More than one nation-state has simply been hollowed out by developments similar to what I'm talking about and thereby lost the ability to effectively demolish alternative forms of democratic political structure.

Note well that when I talk about politics here I'm not talking about statecraft. Statecraft should be seen exactly for what it is: the techniques used by the state as a professional body of men and women who have been plucked out of society, so to speak, given jobs as policy, as military, as judges, as deputies in various parliaments, as executives, as administrators, and as bureaucrats. That is the state. The state is notable in that it is not part of society. Rather, it is a kind of corporate mechanism in its own right. When I talk of politics, I'm using the word in its original Greek meaning, which suggests a polis, controlled by the community itself. That is to say, I define politics in its original sense, not in the conventional sense today of politicians, which generally means parliamentarians, bureaucrats, or appointed administrators.

So I draw a distinction between the political sphere and the state. And then, of course, there is the social sphere – my view is tripartite – in which one has children, belongs to a family, has friends, engages in economic activity and so on. What I'm trying to emphasize as a political solution is the creation of a new kind of politics and a new phenomenon call the "citizen" which today is basically a meaningless word. At present, most people, even in so-called democracies – really republics, let's be quite frank, because democracy means direct rule by the people – are basically "constituents" or "taxpayers". They're not citizens in the active sense that this word

meant thousands of years ago and indeed meant throughout a good deal of the Middle Ages and certainly in many parts of the West. To re-create citizens involves the development of individuals who now see themselves as members of the community, not as members of a specific profession, or of a specific class, or of a specific ethnic group, or of a specific geographical area. Citizens are people who – freed of the concerns that modern capitalism has imposed on them, are reflective and engaged in self-management – are in a position to make judgments that are not guided by any special interests, including their own special interests. As citizens they are concerned with their communities, not with their particular professions or personal interests.

It is for this reason that I am not a great advocate of workers' control of industry, because what often happens in such cases is that where the workers even control a particular factory, they tend to become a separate interest, even under socialist or communist concepts of society. I'm not interested in multiplying the number of professional associations among doctors, teachers, lawyers – as if lawyers would be needed any more! – because these would all become separate interests, which if brought into a neighbourhood assembly, would pit their interests against others'. So I'm talking of a new kind of human being, a truly civic human being, a communal human being. I would call many of my ideas basically communalist, in the sense they include but go beyond socialism, anarchism and communism, while drawing the best out of Marxist and anarchist theories. A communalist theory, I think, is more encompassing than the nineteenth century radical theories that are at our disposal today.

Evanoff: How do you feel about the word "communalism"?

Bookchin: I would use the word "communalist" politically and I would explain my ideas as being rooted in "social ecology". There's nothing new about that. One's specific designation, whether one wants to call oneself an anarchist, a libertarian socialist, a libertarian communist, or in my case a libertarian communalist, denotes a distinct politics. Social ecology denotes a philosophy, an outlook. So one can say that social ecology represents a form of communalism that is more radical than many people who are even likely to call themselves "communalists". I can think of writers today who would call themselves "communalists" but would have a more restricted concept of what constituted a libertarian or confederal municipalist politics than I have. They might believe, for example, that we should have more organic food stores, more community centers, more democratically controlled cooperatives of one sort or another, that patients should have more of a say in the medical community than they have today, and so forth. I would distinguish my views – libertarian communalism if you like – from these restricted concepts of community and often reformist concepts of "community control".

Additionally, I believe that municipalities should begin increasingly to take over the means of life – land, workshops, factories – and place them under control of popular assemblies, knitted together by city, town and village councils, or municipal councils. In other words, I believe in a libertarian communalism that is not only political, but also economic. And here we face a very interesting series of choices. We can either believe in the nationalization of the economy, Soviet-style, Leninist-style, or even social democratic style, which in my opinion has patently proved to be a failure. What the nationalization of the economy has produced in the twentieth century has been immense industrial bureaucracies. One can believe in workers' control of industry, which often leads to competition between collectively owned shops by workers. This happened in the Spanish Civil War among the anarchosyndicalists.

Evanoff: You're talking about employee ownership and the like?

Bookchin: Employee ownerships and even workplace democracy. Regrettably, such forms of ownership or democracy have never prevented workplaces from becoming little collective capitalistic entrepreneurs competing with similar workplaces in the same industry. This actually occurred in Barcelona in 1936, when workers took over the factories and in many cases, even though they were members of anarchosyndicalist trade unions, competed with each other in the same industry until the anarchosyndicalist unions took over control of the workshops, and very pathetically, established trade-union bureaucracies, merging together with the Catalan government (Catalonia, I should add, was the province most significantly peopled by anarchists – indeed the Spanish homeland in 1936 of anarchosyndicalism, together with Aragon). So we have the alternative of either nationalized industries with their huge bureaucracies or so-called workers' control of shops, which can easily turn into collectivized forms of capitalist enterprise, each competing with others. Or we have the choice of private property – which has produced the mess we have today. So almost by a form of elimination the idea of a citizens' controlled municipal economy, confederated with other economies, also municipally controlled within a given region, provides for me the most disinterested solution to the social problems generated by the other three forms of property ownership or control.

To achieve municipal control of the economy in a confederated way, in my opinion, is part of a transitional program in which municipalities try step by step, and hopefully through the control o f neighbourhood assemblies, to take over more and more of the local economy. If we think this solution through, and work it out, and if there is a movement devoted to achieving the two goals of genuine participatory democracy on the political level and a genuine municipalized economy on the material level – then, I believe, there is a potential answer to the global crisis we face today. If municipalities begin to generate their own means of life through confederations – I don't believe that one municipality can do anything at all by itself – and to utilize an ever greater number of material resources in their own localities or regions, we can begin to circumvent the mobility of capital, notably its ability to simply take off when it doesn't like a situation and go to some other part of the world.

Evanoff: Which really is the big problem in the world right now.

Bookchin: But it hasn't been answered, from my point of view, by socialists or, for that matter, by many people who call themselves anarchists in any of the literature I've encountered.

Evanoff: You see a very active participatory form of citizen developing, but when we look at the situation now it seems that people tend to be fairly passive and inactive politically. Do you think that there's a need for a kind of psychological transformation of consciousness for people to become this new type of citizen?

Bookchin: A movement cannot be a substitute for the fact that there are historical forces that must converge with ideas. A Robespierre, a Danton, a Jacques Roux, or whoever you like in the French Revolution , would simply be lost in the crowd if the revolution wasn't brewing. A Bakunin would have had no influence if he had been confined to the Peter and Paul Fortress by Nicholas I for the rest of his life. He had to get out of there, and there also had to be an International Workingmen's Association to which he could present his views. Similarly, a Lenin needed the stormy year 1917, a time of tremendous social upheaval in Russia, to try to realize his goals, which, tragically became increasingly limited by virtue of the waning of the revolutionary forces toward the end of his life. I would say that at least history has to cooperate, so to speak, with any movement – as seemed to be the case toward the end of the First World War, and as seemed to be the case in the 1930s, or in the 1960s (although there was more theatre in the sixties

than reality). It is my personal conviction that history is not stagnant and that one does not simply recycle the same old ideas again and again.

But by degrees forces may eventually converge that will create a period of social transformation. These are not entirely dependent upon movements. What movements can best do is bring to consciousness what is already going on subterraneanly as a result of historical and social forces in what we might call the collective unconscious. When Lenin cried "Land, Peace and Bread" and "All Power to the Soviets!" he was merely articulating in simple words what people were feeling in varying degrees during the months leading up to the famous October Revolution of 1917. That is true of all great revolutionary movements.

At the same time, I don't believe that without developing – and I'm going to be very explicit about this – a vanguard, by which I do not means a highly centralized general staff whose orders have to be followed as though one were in the military but people who are an avant-garde – a term that seems quite acceptable when we speak of art and I don't know why it isn't any more acceptable when we speak of politics – an avant-garde, notably of those who have a higher level of consciousness as a result of more education, experience, training, reflection, and discussion – without such an avant-garde emerging I doubt that people will inevitably, spontaneously, and miraculously arrive at a solution to their problems. They'll go in many different ways.

So I believe that it is very important to establish a political movement and specifically an organization that advocates, hopefully, the views that I have tried to advance and that is continually educating itself, partly through study groups, exploring old and new ideas, and to produce an increasingly creative political program and outlook. I believe in movements. I believe in institutions. I believe in organizations. It's in this sense that I think a vanguard is necessary.

Let me stress that I'm not talking of a vanguard party that's running for parliament. I'm not talking of a vanguard that trying to command people the way a general staff commands an army. I'm talking of people who are educators and mobilizers, who are more advanced in their thinking and consciousness than most, just as we would like to think more mature people are ahead of adolescents and children in knowledge and experience. Why that grouping necessarily has to become an elitist force in any domineering sense is beyond my understanding. If its main thrust is to empower the great majority of people in a country, and specifically in a municipality; if it is trying to create forces, such as popular assemblies, that would countervail any attempt on its part to become literally a commanding force – what do we have to fear?

Evanoff: Do you see the various types of alternative institutions that are developing, such as cooperatives and worker-owned companies, as being stepping stones towards the society you envision or do you feel we need to go directly from our present situation to into libertarian municipalist point of view? Put differently, do alternative institutions give people a foretaste of what might be possible in the future? Do they help to prepare people psychologically, so to speak, for the future?

Bookchin: To some degree, yes – but they are not substitutes for a political movement. Insofar as people learn methods of self-organization – good, but in terms of their ultimate effects, my response would be that no food co-op can ever compete in the United States or Japan with giant shopping centers. I don't believe that any worker-owned factory is likely to make workers more libertarian in their outlook. If anything it's likely to make them more "proprietarian" although the attempt to organize a factory may seem, on the surface of it, a more democratic way of proceeding economically. On the whole, many of these institutions, insofar as they last – and most do not last; they're amazingly ephemeral – tend to provide a patina for the existing social order.

The existing social order is only too glad to create a myth of workplace democracy so that it can exploit workers more effectively. It's only too glad to adopt an "environmentally friendly" face and a seemingly humane demeanor, for the express purpose of preserving what is basically an oppressive society. In other words, there is an enormous intellectual industry today, fostered in great part by various managerial types who advocate "worker participation," even using anarchist terms such as "affinity groups," who advocate a more "personalistic" relationship between the boss and the worker. But the boss still remains the boss. The worker still remains the worker. And this seemingly more humane relationship is more easily capable of exploiting and manipulating workers by bringing them into complicity with their own exploitation. So I have a very jaundiced view towards such attempts. More often they tend to dissolve into lifestyle forms of "politics". People go into the countryside and form co-ops, but what does it all turn out to be? They're living nicely or they're living as comfortably as they can. And sooner or later, as with the kibbutzim in Israel, they begin to hire employees if they're successful or they break up over who should wash the dishes, who should paint the rooms, or how the furniture should be arranged. So I tend not to have a very positive view about the outcome of such endeavors.

I believe the system is covered by a whole series of masks, if I may use postmodernist language, and we have to peel away these masks. One of these masks is that the system is more humane, that it is concerned with human welfare – this is especially true of Japan I'm sorry to say; less so in the United States – and therefore one should go along with it. And there are more than enough social democrats and liberals who are prepared to find this the best possible approach for dealing with the ills of the existing society. Environmentalists are very striking in this respect. We have a real problem in California where it's impossible for the Green party, which is not exactly anything to celebrate, to run candidates against Democrats, because they and the Democrats are so much in agreement with each other. That is to say, Greens are so reformist and so willing to work within the system that they have no reason to run against the Democrats.

Evanoff: How do you assess the direction that the Green movement is going in the United States now?

Bookchin: I'm sorry to say that I regard most of the Green movement that I know of as being failures, mainly because they are so politically uneducated, so theoretically anaemic, and made up so much, particularly in the United States, of pure activists – because, you know, in the United States to do things is more important than to think about things. The Greens fail to recognise the need to maintain principled positions against the social order as such. They thus tend to work within the existing irrational system as "rationally" as they can, which, as I said, simply makes an irrational system seem less irrational. But it remains irrational and continues to get worse and worse.

Evanoff: How do you view the formation of Green parties at the state level?

Bookchin: You mean running for governors and their equivalent in Japan? I bitterly oppose that. My whole point about libertarian or confederal municipalism is that I want to increase the tension between confederated localities and the state, and by the state I don't mean they nation-state alone; I also mean all its intermediate structures and even within the municipality itself.

Let me stress that if people adopt the approach that I am advocating and some are beginning to do that, they must be prepared to be in a minority until the time has come to change things, until the opportunity exists to make basic transformations. They will be in the minority in the very neighbourhood assembly that they call for. They will in the minority in the very town meetings that they have helped to create. There will always be tendencies even within a

libertarian or confederal municipalist movement that want to make concessions to the system, and they will have to fight that attempt to compromise a libertarian municipalism. I've seen this in Canada, very painfully, where people who avowed a libertarian or confederal municipalist position entered in a coalition with social democrats, denaturing their own position so that they could form an electoral coalition in a given city. I regard that as reprehensible, and disassociate myself from any such attempts to do so. If we are not willing as libertarian municipalists to stand in the minority and fight and be guided by principles that are uncompromising in relationship to the nation-state and in relationship to strictly reformist movements that wish to work within the framework of the nation-state and may need our help – if they agree to accept these coalitions and these compromises, then I would disassociate myself from them, and I would do so very critically.

Evanoff: One of the objections that often comes up when I try to explain the concept of libertarian municipalism to students in Japan is what happens in the case when, for example, one small community decides that they want to build factories and cause a lot of pollution and the pollution is going to be carried over into another local area. Isn't there a need for some type of centralized organization to be able to handle these kinds of interregional problems? How are these problems resolved in libertarian municipalism?

Bookchin: They are resolved in every practical way that is necessary to prevent them from doing it, neither more nor less. First of all, I believe in majority votes, not consensus. This separates me from anarchists who are strictly individualists and say that society is merely a collection of individuals. That sounds very much like Margaret Thatcher's statement that there is no society, there are only individuals. There are many anarchists who believe that – I'm not including socialists or communists because they don't believe it. There are also anarchists who say that you have to operate by consensus, even if you have institutions (the individualist anarchists don't even believe in institutions) and I totally separate myself from that. Majority votes must exist.

I believe that one cannot separate ideas, values, and practices from the kind of movement one has been creating. If a libertarian municipal society is brought about as a result of a movement and people who are ecologically oriented, it would be utterly incongruous if suddenly a portion of that society decided it wanted to go around and freely pollute – additionally, pollute because it wanted to expand industry! We would have to enter into consultation with either such a municipality or such a region and say, "You have to stop this. By trying to pollute and by trying to develop entirely on your own, you're acting in the same manner as the very society we tried to eliminate." And if they say, "Well, we demand our sovereign right (either as individuals or as communities) to do what we want, or to secede," we would answer, "You can secede. You can do whatever you like provided it doesn't affect other people. And if you're polluting an area, damaging the planet or even part of it, a planet that should be the common heritage of all living forms including human beings, then we're going to stop you." Suppose they defiantly answer, "We refuse!" Well, if things come to such as point, we'll come in with armed militias and we'll put an end to it – unless one assumes that society is made up of "autonomous individuals" who are free to veto anything, who are free to do whatever they want – to "do your thing" as Jerry Rubin said.

This individualistic point of view is simply ridiculous. I do not believe that individuals can ever be completely "autonomous". From birth onward, we always depend on numerous collective efforts to sustain us and to permit us to mature and become functional beings. I flatly reject a so-called individualism of this nature – and if this is anarchism, I'm not anarchist. I'm a socialist. Let me add that a tremendous schism is opening up in anarchism between individualistic extremes

on one side – "lifestyle" anarchists – and social anarchists, who hold views similar to my own. I would prefer in some respects to use the word "communalist" because it focuses more clearly on what I believe. Without any adjective to describe it, anarchism is a negative term; it means no authority, no archon, no rule. I'm not a "negative" libertarian. The negative liberty advocated by Isaiah Berlin is not enough for me. I have a substantive notion of what constitutes liberty; in fact I would prefer the word freedom, because liberty is much too closely associated with the personal autonomy that characterizes liberalism. Freedom has a more collective meaning, and in my view, more radical implications.

Now in that case I definitely oppose, as petty bourgeois at best and perhaps even simply bourgeois, "individuals" who tell me, "I oppose democracy because democracy is the rule of the majority over the minority." First of all, I do not like their use of the pejorative word "rule". A minority should be given every opportunity to transform popular opinion or to transform the ideas of the majority. But at least let us agree that there are certain institutions without which any society would be impossible, that there are ways of making decisions without which any decision-making would be impossible. And that must be by a majority. In fact, I don't even want a homogeneity of opinion that one encounters in a graveyard. Dissension is very important, first of all because it stimulates people to think. It keeps them in a developmental stance and makes them into developmental beings. A minority is needed to egg things on, to stimulate.

But that doesn't mean that the minority has a right to do whatever it wants on the basis of negative liberty. "I'm free to do whatever I want as long as I don't harm anyone". Hogwash! There are a lot of things one can do that initially do not seem to harm anyone but ultimately do harm people in the long run. We are living in a society. No individual can be free of some type of collective responsibility. It's interesting to note that the anarchosyndicalists had a very great slogan, which incidentally was borrowed from the First International, the International Workingmen's Association: "No rights without duties; no duties without rights." Whoever wants to abdicate from the society, well, let them build a raft and go out into the Pacific or Atlantic Oceans and build their own little society there, if society it can be. To me society is much more than a collection of individuals.

Now, I've heard this from anarchists who oppose organization, who call for total individual autonomy – "Do your own thing". No single person, according to one recent anarchist writer L. Susan Brown, can be obliged by a majority to do what he or she disagrees with. Well, in that case step out of society and see how well you do – if you can even find a way to step out of society. There is one lunatic in Finland who has recently stepped out of society – or he thinks he has. But of course he has axes and other tools that were acquired from a hardware store. Such implements do not grow on trees. He has decided that World War III should come, remove most of the world's population so we can then live more harmoniously with "nature." He lives by fishing, gathering berries, and has turned into a total misanthrope. I do not remember his name but his book is a rage in Finland today. This to me is not self-sufficiency. It's the dissolution of selfhood and, what I regard as an important component of selfhood, of responsibility to a community of people. The individual who so separates himself from society wanders off into a dreamland of his own, and his opinions aren't worth a damn.

Evanoff: In Japan decisions often are made on a consensus basis – it seems to be part of the culture of Japan. The idea of deciding things by majority is pretty much alien to Japanese culture. These types of differences exist between different cultures. One of the things you've tried to do

is to show the fact that rationality as such is potentially universal. How does this work out in light of the fact that there are various cultural differences which exist between peoples?

Bookchin: Well, I have due respect for cultural differences – aesthetically speaking. This involves a respect for musical traditions, which may be alien to my ear but which may be very meaningful or desirable to another ear. This may involve painting which may be alien to my eye but which may be very congenial to another people. Dress … traditions … belief systems. But when it comes to how people are going to share this world together, I am frankly universalistic. I am much more concerned with human beings as human beings than I am with their specific cultural, national, and ethnic background. I'm in this respect, however unecological it sounds, a cosmopolitan. I believe this accords with social ecology in a very special way. One may love one's locale. One may treasure the habitat in which one lives. But I believe that human beings are also more than animals that live in a habitat and merely adapt to it. I believe that human beings are constituted by their own natural evolution, which in their later development, is always intertwined with a certain measure of cultural evolution, notably a collective evolution, participatory evolution.

This view isn't an ideology that someone created in the West or elsewhere. This is the way we are structured. The Japan that may seek consensus is one that has been so greatly modified by human beings as to be only vaguely and remotely related to what it was before human beings appeared there. And this is true, I believe, of every part of the world, including the most remote fastnesses of the Amazonian forest. As human beings we all descend from one species called Homo erectus. Our ancestors used fire to radically transform so-called "original nature". We have created a "second nature" which involves not only the modification of non-human nature but also the elaboration of human nature through cultural, institutional and historical experiences.

So the question that arises in my mind when you ask about a people's proclivity for consensus is, "How are they going to develop without dissent?" – and the need to preserve dissent, not to erode it by seeking a low common denominator on which everybody can agree. If people in Japan arrive at a decision only if everyone agrees with each other, they run the risk of precluding disagreements that may ultimately turn out to be stimuli for a better decision or for a more creative act or for further development later in time. I therefore feel that this is an issue that should be debated in Japan. The wisdom of arriving at consensus is very arguable, unless one assumes that a society is so perfect and homogenous that everyone will hold the same opinion automatically if they are reasonably intelligent.

I would say that there's no such thing as a completely perfect society, an "end to history," or a "last man", to use the language of Hegel and Nietzsche. So I think that dissent is terribly important. I think what we have to work out is how to accommodate a minority and to give it all the freedom of expression it requires to provoke us, until ultimately the minority through the give-and-take of dialogue changes the majority's view. Imagine having to agree on everything, including whether or not one wants to go out for a walk, whether or not to use green paint for a room and someone else wants to use yellow paint. I know I'm caricaturing the position. But the situation becomes very serious when we're talking about a major course of action, such as, in a rational and ecological society, whether or not to build a road, whether or not to deal with recalcitrants who want to pollute the air. At that particular point we get into major debates. Debates that arrive at the lowest common denominator, which often happens with consensus, may involve no lasting solution whatever.

I've seen this in practice in the Clamshell Alliance, an anti-nuclear movement that reached mass proportions in New England, where I live. Their attempt to arrive at consensus led them to adopt the most minimal, least stimulating, and insignificant decisions that they could reach in order to achieve consensus. Worse still, it led to tyranny by a minority over the majority, and indeed the manipulation of that majority by a handful or well-organized people who in the name of seeking consensus actually imposed their own will over a much larger and more passive majority. So I'm very suspicious of consensus in practice and I'm very alienated from it in theory.

But how do you deal with it? Well, this is something that I do not have to deal with, as a Westerner or an American, but something Japanese people will have to deal with. I have a suspicion that when historical forces begin to collect to shake Japan, and pose major alternatives to the Japanese people, there will be a great deal of dissent. That apparently happened even in the recent decision to install a socialist prime minister in Japan, although I can't say that I know enough about Japanese politics to make any further comment. I'm positive right now that in the trade war that might develop between Japan and the United States there are many Japanese businessmen who feel very uncomfortable and whether in the name of consensus or just by abstention would like to see things otherwise – and that sentiment may very well act against the existing policy of the Japanese government, despite the myth that consensus is supposed to exist everywhere.

Evanoff: In the West we might have more of tendency to speak, as Roderick Nash does, of the "rights of nature" whereas in Japan there may be more of a tendency of think in terms of "obligations towards nature". Is there a way for us to reason out this apparent cultural difference?

Bookchin: Nature has no "rights". It does not have "intrinsic rights". Like it or not, we confer rights on the natural world, just as we create rights among ourselves as human beings. There may be an objective basis for these rights. One might say, for example, that freedom, self-consciousness are potentialities that imply the existence of latent rights. I wouldn't call them "rights," however, but "norms" or ethical standards which people would ultimately want to achieve. The whole toil of history, I would like to think (insofar as I identify history exclusively with progress in ever-greater developments of freedom, technology and self-consciousness) consists of the unfolding of latent rights which history will actualize one day in a rational and ecological society. One can even trace the potentiality for self-consciousness and freedom in the ever-greater subjectivity that occurs over the course of evolution in increasingly complex animals, that at certain levels begin to make seemingly intelligent choices. They are intelligent to one degree or another, though let's not exaggerate the extent to which they are so. But we know that chimpanzees don't know what death is. We know that because they cannot speak and cannot create symbolically formed concepts; they are very limited in the range of their intelligence and their level of consciousness. These abilities are minimal by comparison with those of human beings. Humanity has made a quantum leap over all other forms of life.

So one can trace the potentiality for freedom and self-consciousness in natural evolution. That is the way I define the word "nature." "First" nature, or biological nature, for me is the cumulative evolution of life toward ever-greater subjectivity and nascent forms of freedom, such as choice. But to speak of rights in a meaningful, recognizable, acknowledged, and clearly formulated sense is something that only human beings can do. I would take issue with the title of Roderick Nash's book, The Rights of Nature, as though there were intrinsic rights in the natural world that existed in the absence of human beings. I believe that the words "intrinsic worth," which are so commonly

used by deep ecologists, simply beg the question of how did they ever become "intrinsic" in the first place and what kind of "worth" one is talking about. Kant has allowed himself the liberty of speaking that way, but he did that at the expense of any kind of contact with the "real" thing-in-itself and talked essentially about how the human mind formulates and structures a system of rights. At various points, particularly in the Critique of Practical Reason and the Critique of Judgment, he fell back on intuition.

From my viewpoint we merely beg the question when we say that there are rights intrinsic in "nature." "Nature" is not a realm of ethical judgment. Apart from human beings, there is no subject in "nature" that is making such ethical judgments. Animals have no notion of each other's "rights". When we start talking about their rights it's what we endow them with, just as we begin to formulate rights during the course of our own social development in "second" nature, hopefully to a point where we finally reach a synthesis of both "first" and "second" nature in what I have called "free" nature, namely a nature as expressed through human beings that is self-conscious and free. But without human beings there are no rights.

Let me say furthermore, at the risk of being very provocative, that my interest in this planet would be minimal if I were a space traveller from another planet who visited earth and saw no evidence of human beings. I would find a lot of greenery and protoplasm. Splendid! But I would have to undergo a whole process of acculturation to say that elephants are "beautiful," that lions are "sleek," and that deer are "graceful". Do these words mean anything if there were no human beings and society around to celebrate them?

Evanoff: In social ecology you've developed what I think is one of the most comprehensive theoretical approaches towards ecology. At this time, there are a number of conflicting views of how we should be thinking about ecology. How do you balance a need for theoretical coherence with an acceptance of the face that in the environmental movement in general there are a variety of different perspectives? How important do you feel it is to keep that theoretical coherence and unity, even if it's at the expense of perhaps alienating people who are coming at ecology from other perspectives?

Bookchin: I couldn't give a damn about who I alienate! If I am ever concerned about popular opinion, I'm doomed. I'm doomed subjectively speaking. At this time in particular, popular opinion couldn't interest me in the least. I am now approaching my seventy-fifth year. I have a very limited amount of lifespan left, and I am not trying to benefit from anything I do in any personal sense. I'm going to be as truthful as I can possibly be. I should make that very plain.

Nor do I find that it will do any movement that seeks to get to the roots of any question any good by trying to compromise my views. There are enough liberals who stand between me and the rest of the public who do more compromising than is good for the public. Let me take over that job. Someone has to come out and speak for what, to me in any case, is a tremendous tradition, the grand tradition of social emancipation – and very ecumenically in a sense that could be shared by Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Kropotkin, in short socialism, which, as Kropotkin said, lies at the core of anarchism.

Coherence is vital. I'm not saying that coherence means dogma. But coherence is vital insofar as we have to have an ordered sense of our relationship with the world – or else we will have no real relationship with the world. If we do not have coherence, if we do not see the connections between things, if we do not know how to order a future reality rationally as well as imaginatively, we will have no meaningful and creative relationship to reality. We will be "free" vendors of any

kind of tripe that comes along. Therefore I'm not impressed by people who say, "I have no answer to this question". I'm not suggesting that they should lie. I'm not suggesting that if they don't have an answer to a question they shouldn't be honest enough to say so – and there are many questions I have no answer to. I'm suggesting this as a bad credo, this celebration of ignorance and indecision. Socrates was a liar when he repeatedly declared: "I know nothing". He knew a great deal indeed. And his statement was merely a form of posturing. Admittedly it was an expression of his critical mind. But it was posturing nonetheless. So consequently, I'm not overly impressed by liberal views that claim they are "wide open" When I'm "wide open" I'm shapeless, I'm formless, I'm lacking in perspective, and I'm not fit to have an opinion until I work desperately and hard enough to formulate one, or at least formulate a hypothesis to test one.

Today one of our biggest problems is lack of coherence. I saw this very dramatically in the 1960s. You see, I've come out of and was very deeply immersed in the left of the 1930s. I was immensely conscious of the entire left tradition going back to the French Revolution – and in my opinion, as far back as the English Revolution of the 1640s. I was immensely conscious of the enormity of this tradition and its desperate attempt to create an ordered world based on reason and freedom.

In the 1960s, this tradition was mindlessly abandoned. Suddenly history was supposed to being all over again with the Free Speech Movement of 1964, say, or the Civil Rights Movement of 1963. Well, that was rubbish. We can now look back in retrospect, after witnessing this whole parade of "holier-than-thou" revolutionaries who sprang up like mushrooms after a rain between 1965 and 1969, and see with what wanton abandonment they have fled back into the present social order and are busy in academies, or as publishers and writers, continually trying to efface the real meaning of the '60s were, a meaning that I think, alas, was in some respects far more limited than I believed at the time. The '60s was a period of great potentialities, but these were not actualized in the years that followed, not even by the ecology movement.

Therefore I'm all the more desperately concerned with retaining my identity – I mean this in an intellectual, a subjective, an ideological way – through coherence. Take away coherence and as Paul K. Feyeraband – in my opinion one of the most repellent nihilists to appear in recent memory – said, "Anything goes." That is the maxim of his Against Method. Jerry Rubin said "Do your thing" and Jerry Rubin was in Wall Street until his recent death. But "anything" does not go. It is very important to find out what "goes" and what does not. If anything goes and one's relativism is that extreme, one will have no basis for choosing between the validity of anti-Semitism and the validity of humanitarianism. This literally came up in Feyeraband's book, Science in a Free Society. And do you know what Feyeraband believed determines which decision is sound or correct? Power. Might. He sounds like Thrasymachus in Book I of Plato's Republic: "Might makes right." So the answer to anti-Semitism is that humanitarianism will prove to be more powerful than anti-Semitism! But anti-Semitism and humanitarianism, indeed racism and humanitarianism, are, so far as Feyeraband is concerned, in a purely relational situation. One is defined by the other, and relativism is all that prevails in forming a judgment about whether racism or humanitarianism, anti-Semitism or for that matter fascism, are correct or sound views. The functional role that what is going to prevail or not is vicious.

Thus, coherence is absolutely essential in sorting out this vicious relativism, and discarding and replacing it with an objectivism that, on the one hand, is not totalitarian, but that enjoys the validity of truth per se in the most naturalistic and indeed materialistic way. I feel very strongly about this. Coherence is absolutely essential in being able to make a judgment that does not

dissolve into relativism and formlessness. And if coherence seems like a tyranny to most post-modernists today, may I suggest that coherence does not mean dogmatism.

On the other hand, their incoherence is one form of dogmatism. When I hear from Nietzsche that all facts are interpretations, I'm getting a dogma. How does he know this? He tries nowhere to validate this maxim. The same can be said for that whole prelapsarian mentality of Heidegger, who spent his time working for the Nazis until 1945. He never seriously tried to account for this relationship to fascism. There have been far too many fascist precursors of postmodernism, people who if they opposed the Nazis did so because they were French nationalists, not because they opposed fascism. One thinks of Maurice Blanchard, the man who gave us the "Great Refusal" – this remark is wrongly attributed to Marcuse. And there is Georges Bataille. So forgive me on this score: I am very emphatically for coherence because that's the only way I can at least even say that I have an idea that can be subjected to the test of reality. Otherwise, I have to deny reality, and thereby toss out incoherent statements that cannot be tested, which seems to be very common these days.

Murray Bookchin
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