

Bob Black

Withered Anarchism

THE ANARCHIST LIBRARY

Contents

Getting Personal(istic)	3
Stone Age or Old Age? An Unbridgeable Chasm	10
1. <i>Foraging as Anarchy</i>	11
2. <i>Foraging as Zerowork</i>	12
3. <i>Foraging as Egalitarian Communism.</i>	16
4. <i>Foraging as the Good Life</i>	18
Nightmares of Reason	21
Negative and Positive Freedom	27
Murray Bookchin, One-Dimensional Man	30
<i>Whither Anarchism?</i>	34
Appendix A: Book Filled with Lies	36
Appendix B: “Epitaph to Bookchinism” (a Blast from the Past)	42
Appendix C: Primitivism and the Enlightenment	43

“The general level of insight now is more educated, curiosity is wide awake, and judgments are made more quickly than formerly; so the feet of them which shall carry thee out are already at the door” — Hegel¹

The tale is told of the American tourist abroad who, encountering some natives who didn't speak his language, assisted their understanding by repeating himself in a louder voice. That is Murray Bookchin's way with wayward anarchists. In *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (1995)² the ex-Dean laid down for all time what anarchists are to believe and what they are not to believe, but many perversely persist in error. Its very title announces its divisive intent. Two books³ and a slew of reviews suggest an overwhelmingly adverse anarchist reaction to the ex-Dean's encyclical (although Marxists like Frank Girard and Kevin Keating/“Max Anger” are of course approving⁴). For Bookchin, there is only one possible explanation for anarchist intransigence: they didn't hear him the first time. For who — having heard — could fail to believe? And so it came to pass — like wind — that the ex-Dean is repeating himself, louder than ever, in *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left*, especially in the article “Whither Anarchism? A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics.”⁵ But it's not a reply, just a replay. “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13).

For those unfamiliar with the ex-Dean's dialectical mode of reasoning — shame on you! — the distinction between appearance and essence must be made incorrigibly clear. Thus, when the ex-Dean writes that “it is not my intention to repeat my exposition of the differences between social and lifestyle anarchism,” in appearance, he is saying that it is not his intention to repeat his exposition of the differences between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. But understood dialectically, in *essence*, he is saying that it is his intention to repeat his exposition of the differences between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. And that is exactly what, and all that, he proceeds to do, which validates the method.

Getting Personal(istic)

My book *Anarchy after Leftism*, according to the ex-Dean, teems with falsehoods so numerous “that to correct even a small number of them would be a waste of the reader's time.” *AAL* is “transparently motivated by a white-hot animosity toward [him],” in stark contrast to *SALA*, which is transparently motivated by Bookchin's own impersonal, disinterested quest for the truth, the

¹*Hegel: Texts and Commentary*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), 110. “The feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out” (Acts 5:9).

²Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1995) [hereafter *SALA*].

³Bob Black, *Anarchy after Leftism* (Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press, 1996) [hereafter: *AAL*]; David Watson, *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia and Detroit: Black & Red, 1996).

⁴“Max Anger,” “Lies, Damned Lies — and Trotskyoid Lies,” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* 16(1) (Spring-Summer 1998), 81 (“excellent and timely”); Frank Girard, review of *SALA*, *Discussion Bulletin* No. 82 (1997).

⁵Forthcoming from AK Press. “Whither Anarchism” is available electronically from Anarchy Press; in that format it is unpaginated.

whole, truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him History. “So malicious are its invectives [sic]” that the ex-Dean “will not dignify them with a reply.” Even a cursory reading of *SALA* — more than it merits — confirms that Bookchin himself is too high-minded to indulge in “invectives.” Never (except once) does he relegate Watson and other anarcho-primitivists to “the lifestyle zoo,” an expression so demeaning and vicious that I wonder why I didn’t think of it first. Nor does he descend, as does my “gutter journalism,” to the indiscriminate, malicious, and self-contradictory outpouring of such insults as “fascist,” “decadent,” “individualist,” “mystical,” “petit bourgeois,” “infantile,” “unsavory,” “personalistic,” “liberal,” “yuppie,” “lumpen,” “bourgeois,” “reactionary,” etc. Never does Bookchin, who is rationality incarnate, resort to these abusive epithets, except (a hundred times or so) as objective, scientifically validated characterizations of Lifestyle Anarchists. Bookchin is a hard act to follow, except with a pooper-scooper.

Since the ex-Deanly dialectic takes a little getting used to, consider another example. When he says that he will not dignify with a reply a critique full of numerous falsehoods and “intense and personalistic [sic] vilification,” such as mine, the reader unlearned in dialectics might naively suppose that Bookchin means that he will not dignify with a reply a critique full of numerous falsehoods and intense, personalistic vilification. Thus he would never dignify with a reply a book whose “almost every paragraph” contains “vituperative attacks, manic denunciations, ad hominem characterizations, and even gossipy rumors,” namely, David Watson’s *Beyond Bookchin*. And yet he does dignify (if that’s the word for what he does) Watson’s book with many thousands of turgid words of would-be rebuttal. Indeed, “almost every paragraph of *BB* is either an insult or a lie”: even I could scarcely have surpassed it in depravity. Once again I ask, what am I, chopped liver? (I wish Watson’s book was even a fraction as much fun as Bookchin makes it sound. Bookchin has given Watson a jacket blurb to die for.) But despair not, neophyte dialectician. Even a trained philosophy professor, avowed dialectician, and (for almost two decades) inner-circle Bookchin crony, John P. Clark, does not and — Bookchin belatedly relates — never did understand Dialectical Bookchinism. With the possible exception of his main squeeze Janet Biehl, only Bookchin is as yet a fully realized reasoning human who has mastered the dialectic and, deploying it masterfully, divines the “directionality” of the Universe itself. The rest of us are best advised not to play with fire but rather to play it safe and simply believe whatever Bookchin tells us this week.

If I had any reservations about the way I rudely and ruthlessly ridiculed the Dean in *AAL* — actually, I didn’t — “Whither Anarchism?” would have laid them to rest. In *Beyond Bookchin*, David Watson responded a lot more respectfully to Bookchin than I did, and a lot more respectfully than Bookchin ever responds to anybody. A fat lot of good it did him. The ex-Dean demonized Watson in the same hysterical terms he demonized me, but at much greater length. Bookchin isn’t remotely interested in being civil, reasonable or fair. To me, and not only to me, that was already obvious from *SALA*. Watson let himself be played for a sucker. I can’t say I’m especially sympathetic, since Watson affects a holier-than-thou attitude only a little less unctuous than Bookchin’s. He and his fellow anarcho-liberal *Fifth Estate* hippies gave me the silent treatment long before the ex-Dean did.

To correct even a small number of my errors, according to Bookchin, would

be a waste of the reader's time, unlike his correction of a large number of the errors of the miscreants Watson and Clark. The carping critic might complain that maybe the reader, not the writer, should get the chance to decide what is, and what isn't a waste of the reader's time. The number "one" is, if I remember my arithmetic, as small as a whole number can get, yet big enough for Bookchin to draw "one sample" to "demonstrate the overall dishonesty of [my] tract." Bookchin, the self-appointed champion of science, does not even know the difference between an example and a sample. One observation is, to a statistician, not a sample from which anything can be reliably inferred about even a population of two, any more than a coin coming up "heads" has any tendency to indicate whether next time it comes up heads or tails.

That someone has made one error has no tendency to prove that he has made "numerous" errors. Even Bookchin — for the first time, so far as I know — now admits that he made what he considers errors, indeed serious errors, in his earlier, positive characterizations of "organic" (primitive) societies. If one error is justification enough to dismiss an entire book from consideration, then every book by Bookchin must be dismissed from consideration. In fact, probably every book by anyone must be dismissed from consideration. How are we ever to further what Bookchin fervently avows — progress, cumulative improvement in understanding — without mistakes to learn from?

If my entire book-length critique is to be dismissed on the basis of one error, it should be a profoundly important error, one going to the fundamentals of Bookchin's dichotomy, his posited "unbridgeable chasm" between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism, or my more meaningful dichotomy between leftist and post-leftist anarchism. Instead, this denouncer of the "personalistic" preoccupations he attributes to the Lifestyle Anarchists is, as to me, exclusively indignant about my alleged errors in sketching his own personalistic political biography, as I do in chapter 1 of *Anarchy after Leftism*. And even then, his only substantive quibble is with my referring to him as "a 'dean' at Goddard College (*AAL*, p. 18), a position that, [Black] would have his readers believe, endows me with the very substantial income that I need in order to advance my nefarious ambitions," whereas the truth is that Bookchin "ended [his] professional connections with Goddard College (as well as Ramapo College, which [Black] also mentions) in 1981." My citation to the 1995 Goddard College Off-Campus Catalog, "a rare document," is an "outright fabrication," as the Catalog does not identify Bookchin as a Dean.⁶

Indeed it does not. I never said it did. For Bookchin to claim otherwise is an outright fabrication. This is what I *did* cite the Catalog for: "The material base for these superstructural effusions [i.e., the many books Bookchin cranked out in the 1980's] was Bookchin's providential appointment as a Dean at Goddard College near Burlington, Vermont, a cuddle-college for hippies and, more recently, punks, with wealthy parents (cf. Goddard College 1995 [the Off-Campus Catalog]). He also held an appointment at Ramapo College. Bookchin, who sneers at leftists who have embarked upon 'alluring university careers' [*SALA*, 67], is

⁶This statement is typical of Bookchin's declining capacity to express himself. He doesn't mean what he says, that the citation is an outright fabrication: the document "Goddard College 1995" does exist, as he had just confirmed. He meant to say that my alleged implication (that it supports the attribution of Deany status) is an outright fabrication. Similar errors abound in "Whither Anarchism?"

one of them.”⁷ I cited the Catalog, not to verify Bookchin’s academic career — I never suspected he would ever deny it, since he has boasted of it for so long — but rather in support of my characterization of what kind of a college Goddard College is, an expensive private college catering to the children of rich liberals. Maybe not an important point, but better a little truth than a big lie.

Still, if the credibility of my entire book turns on these three sentences, their truth assumes unwonted importance. Bookchin categorically asserts that he ended his professional connection with Ramapo College in 1981. But according to the jacket blurb for *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), he “is currently Professor of Social Ecology at Ramapo College in New Jersey.” If Bookchin was not then professionally connected with Ramapo College, he and/or his publisher must have wanted people to think he was for marketing purposes. By 1987, according to the jacket blurb for *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, he “is Professor Emeritus at the School of Environmental Studies, Ramapo College of New Jersey and Director Emeritus of the Institute for Social Ecology at Rochester, Vermont.” According to the 1994 Bookchin biography posted electronically “to Anarchy Archives on behalf of Murray Bookchin by Janet Biehl,” “in 1974, he [Bookchin] began teaching in Ramapo College in New Jersey, becoming full professor of social theory entering and retiring in 1983 in an emeritus status.”⁸ As all I said about that is that Bookchin *held* (notice the past tense) an appointment at Ramapo College, and all I implied was that this was in the 1980’s, Bookchin’s authorized spokeswoman confirms that I was right. She also confirms, contrary to Bookchin, that he did not end his professional association with Ramapo College in 1981, but rather in 1983. Does it matter? According to Bookchin it does, so who is anyone else to say it doesn’t?

Then there is the affiliation with Goddard College. Now in referring to Bookchin as “the Dean,” I was merely following the custom of referring to a distinguished retiree by his highest achieved dignitary title, the way people refer to “General Colin Powell” or Clinton referred to “Senator Dole” during the debates. Was my resort to this protocol, under the circumstances, ironic rather than honorific? Obviously. Bookchin is a self-important, pompous ass. He brings out the pie-throwing Groucho Marxist in me. Sure, I can also trounce him on his own sub-academic terms, and I did. So did Watson. But “beyond Bookchin” the pseudo-scholar is Bookchin the blowhard and Bookchin the bureaucrat. In a letter to me (April 28, 1998), C.A.L. Press publisher Jason McQuinn relates that “the first thing I did before I agreed to publish your book, was to call Goddard College to fact check the ‘Dean’ accusation. The first person to answer didn’t know who the hell he was, but someone else in the room confirmed that he had been such.” (I’d earlier made the same phone call and gotten the same answer.)

Bookchin’s stunning expose of my dishonesty rests, at best, on a pissant terminological quibble. As Janet Biehl says, “In 1974 he co-founded *and directed* the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainfield, Vermont, which went on to acquire an international reputation for its advanced courses in ecophilosophy, social theory, and alternative technology that reflect his ideas.” For whatever legal or administrative reasons, the ISE was set up as an entity formally distinct

⁷Black, *AAL*, 18.

⁸I know that the last part of the sentence is nonsensical, but the quotation is accurate.

from Goddard College, but for all practical purposes, it is the graduate school of Goddard College. Thus David Watson in *Beyond Bookchin* made what he undoubtedly considered an utterly noncontroversial reference to “the Institute for Social Ecology at Goddard College.”⁹ The administrator who has the title “Director” at the ISE has the title “Dean” at most other post-secondary schools. That’s why Goddard College spokesmen remember Bookchin as a dean. So Bookchin was a dean whether or not he was a Dean. And his “professional connection” with Goddard/ISE persisted at least until 1994 when, as Biehl then reported, “he still gives two core courses at the Institute for Social Ecology each summer, where he has the status of director emeritus. “

Let us recur to *why* I devoted all of several pages out of 140 to the Director’s bureaucratic and academic career, which spanned a quarter of a century. One immediate purpose was simply to flag Bookchin’s gross hypocrisy in denouncing leftists who embarked upon “alluring academic careers”¹⁰ when he had done the same thing himself for over two decades. A broader purpose, opening out from that, was to challenge what, if anything, Bookchin meant by his shotgun epithet “bourgeois.” If it is an objective category of class analysis, then Bookchin (I suggested) — as a salaried professional and order-giving bureaucrat — is a bourgeois himself,¹¹ unlike at least some of those he reviles as bourgeois, such as John Zerzan (a temp worker) and L. Susan Brown (an office worker), who are objectively proletarians. But if the Director’s use of the word is not objective and scientific, if he is not flexing his modest mental muscles — the “muscularity of thought” he says he brought to the mushminded Greens — then what does he mean by “bourgeois”? In what way is what he calls Lifestyle Anarchism bourgeois whereas what he calls Social Anarchism is not? He never says. For a devolved Marxist like Bookchin, “bourgeois” (and “fascist”) are, as H.L. Mencken remarked, just “general terms of abuse.”¹²

The ex-Dean, with typical obtuseness, never notices the obvious irony in my repeatedly referring to him as “the Dean,” “presumably on the assumption that mere repetition will make my title a reality.” In *SALA*, Bookchin refers to Hakim Bey (the pseudonym of Peter Lamborn Wilson) at least 27 times as “the Bey,”¹³ presumably on the assumption that mere repetition will make his title a reality. Hakim Bey is not a Bey. Nowadays nobody is. A Bey was the governor of a province or district in the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which ceased to exist decades before Wilson was born.

I *might* have erred in *Anarchy after Leftism* in once referring to Bookchin as “high income,” but even that remains to be seen. Bookchin can always release his tax returns to settle the point. Undoubtedly his income fell when he retired, as does everyone’s, but from what to what? In addition to his salaries from two colleges, Bookchin collected royalties from the sales of over a dozen books (and, as he says, advances on others), and collected fees from lecturing in (his own words) every major university in the United States. I have no idea whether he managed all this money wisely, I only point out that he must have had a goodly chunk of change to manage. I stand by my original assertion that Bookchin

⁹Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 38 n. 21.

¹⁰Bookchin, *SALA*, 67.

¹¹Black, *AAL*, 28.

¹²H.L. Mencken, *The American Language: Supplement One* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 306.

¹³Bookchin, *SALA*, 20–26.

probably has a higher income than anybody he denounces (it's certainly higher than mine).

In "Whither Anarchism?" the narrow, impoverished critique of *SALA* is further foreshortened. In *SALA* (Inshallah), the Director Emeritus startled anarchists, whom he had neglected for many years, by abruptly departing the Green fields of Social Ecology for the killing fields of Social Anarchism. He argued — or rather, he declaimed — that a tendency he calls Lifestyle Anarchism, the sinister shadow of Social Anarchism, has since the 60's increasingly supplanted the latter, a usurpation he attributes to a "climate of social reaction" which has prevailed for the last 25 years or more. Curiously, this was the period in which almost all the Director's books were published, including all of them with even a little explicit anarchist content (several had none). Apparently the climate of social reaction proved as congenial to Bookchin as to the Lifestyle Anarchists, for whom he never had a discouraging word until recently. But in his reply to recent anarchist critics, the Director Emeritus addresses, not criticism of his Social Anarchism, but criticism of his Social Ecology. He changes the subject. And even on that plane, his rebuttal dwindles to not much more than denouncing David Watson and John P. Clark as mystics, which, even if true, is only name-calling, unresponsive to their concrete criticisms. And not even Bookchin is insolent enough to accuse me of mysticism.

The Director Emeritus and diviner of world-historical directionality disdains to debate me directly, except as to details of his biography, already dealt with to his disadvantage. Ignoring me didn't work for him before and it won't work now. It's only an extreme expression of the essay's monumental lack of proportion. He says nothing about work, organization, and municipal politics, but devotes 2-1/2 single-spaced pages (over 7% of the text) to debating with Watson the political meaning of a Goya engraving. The Director declines to explain or justify his previous abuse of the epithet "bourgeois" — in fact, he makes even more use of it, as if other words are failing him — but spares four pages to denounce Taoism. All his personalistic, self-serving stories — especially concerning John Clark's decades of discipleship — are, even if accurate, not a reply to critics. Judging Bookchin's priorities from what he finds important to discuss, he is much less interested in the future of anarchism than in the future of his reputation. The irony is that *SALA* and the reaction to it have surely done more damage, and much sooner, to Bookchin's anarchist reputation than has its molecular erosion by Lifestyle Anarchist tendencies.

Some of the Director's ongoing obsessions are of only symptomatic interest to me. I don't speak Spanish and I don't know anything about Goya. Having never read Lewis Mumford, I continue to stay out of the unseemly custody struggle for his corpse — I meant to say, his corpus — between Bookchin and Watson. I don't think that trees talk to each other, a possibility Watson reportedly does not rule out, but I do think that no tree could be a worse woodenheaded listener than Murray Bookchin.

Only a little more interesting to me is John Clark's opinion that Taoism is, or could be, compatible with anarchism. Offhand it looks like it all depends on what you mean by Taoism and what you mean by anarchism; if this seems like a banal observation, it is. Bookchin now claims that he could "never accept Clark's Taoism as part of social ecology," but he kept his criticisms private so long as Clark acted in public as his loyal adjutant. According to the Director, "that my association with Clark lasted as long as it did is testimony

to my silent endurance of his Taoist claptrap and my distinctly nondogmatic tolerance of views not in accordance with my own.” Such stoic fortitude! Such latitudinarian generosity! “But in the late 1980s, as this type of mystical quietism gained more and more influence into [sic] the ecology movement, I could no longer remain silent.” So then (the reader has been primed to expect) — more in sorrow than in anger — the Director went public with his critique of Clark, notwithstanding that Clark was “widely assumed” to be the Director’s “spokesman,” perhaps because “from the mid-1970s until early 1993, the author was a close associate of [his]”? Actually, not. As the Director goes on to say, in the late 1980s he critiqued, not Clark, but “deep ecologist” Dave Foreman of *Earth First!* Whatever Foreman’s failings, and they are many, he is no Taoist. Bookchin never openly repudiated Clark’s dabbling in Taoism until Clark broke with Bookchin in 1993. The Director’s “silent endurance” — silence, like “quietism,” is a quality Bookchin does not conspicuously display — looks more like opportunism than tolerance. Either way, Bookchin must never have thought that Taoism was any kind of serious threat to, or important influence on, contemporary anarchism — and it isn’t.

It does the Director no good to disinvite me to his (vanguard) party. Erisian that I am, I’m crashing it. I don’t need the Director’s direction to identify targets of opportunity. Of these, the most conspicuous is the Director’s dogged and dogmatic reiteration of the bourgeois Hobbesian myth of the lives of pre-urban anarchist foragers as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short,¹⁴ in dramatic contrast to the life of Murray Bookchin: nasty, brutish, and long.

For all his huffing and puffing, the Director Emeritus adds nothing to the inadequate and dishonest “evidentiality” (one of his gratuitous neologisms) of *SALA* which Watson and I have already shown to be lacking. He continues to ignore the anthropological studies summarized in John Zerzan’s *Future Primitive*, Watson’s *Beyond Bookchin*, and my *Friendly Fire*¹⁵ and *Anarchy after Leftism*. He continues to pretend that the thesis that stateless hunter-gatherers enjoyed a sort of primitive affluence was a short-lived 60’s fad, like smoking banana peels — little more than the rebellious, euphoric romanticizing of non-Western peoples by tripped-out hippies, like the ones who fell for Carlos Casteneda’s “Don Juan” hoax. This anthropological aberration, he again assures us, has been corrected by the sober scholarship of the period of social reaction.

Before going into the merits of that contention (none), let us consider its implications for Bookchin’s own theory of a protracted period of “social reaction” as the explanation for why decadent Lifestyle Anarchism has supplanted heroic Social Anarchism over the last 30 years. The implication is that periods of — what? social progress? political turbulence? — foster theoretical progress, such as that accomplished by the Director. His clear implication, by dating the commencement of the period of social reaction to the 1970’s, is that the 60’s were not a period of social reaction. Indeed it was then that the Director came into his own as an anarchist theorist, proof enough of the fructifying influence of

¹⁴Hobbes himself believed this condition “was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places where they live so now,” as in many parts of America. His theory is an “Inference, made from the passions” — deductive, not inductive. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 187, 186; cf. C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 20.

¹⁵Bob Black, “Primitive Affluence,” in *Friendly Fire* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1992), 19–41.

those heady times. Yet this was also when the hippie anthropologists concocted their ludicrous “primitive affluence” thesis based on little more than intensive ethnographic fieldwork and careful historical research. Incredibly, this absurd, empirically-grounded conception prevailed as anthropological orthodoxy, as the Director Emeritus complains, well into the 80’s. Undoubtedly it owed much of its undue influence to its qualified endorsement by the Director Emeritus himself in *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), an epochal work which — as I demonstrated in *AAL* by surveying all its academic reviews (both of them)¹⁶ — took the world of social science by storm. If, and insofar as, there has been a professional reaction against the primitive-affluence thesis, it is entirely, like Social Ecology and Lifestyle Anarchism, the product of a period of social reaction. How odd (and yet, how dialectical) that from decadence, from decay, the life-force, conscious “second nature” — renewed by rot and reaction — is resurgent in the person and the praxis of the Director of directionality and such lackeys as he finds useful from time to time.

Stone Age or Old Age? An Unbridgeable Chasm

To support his claim that Hobbesianism has been restored to anthropological orthodoxy, the Director cites one highly controversial book, one review of that book, and a pop science story,¹⁷ none of which is of very recent vintage. It is characteristic of Bookchin’s scrupulously scientific method that he affirms as the new consensus — because it suits his political purposes — the most extreme statement of one polar position (Edwin Wilmsen’s) in what is actually an ongoing unresolved controversy (see Appendix “C”). Make that “controversies”: anthropologists are debating a number of issues involving foragers, issues at least partly and often wholly independent of one another. What most exercises the specialists turns out to be what’s least relevant to anarchists. To say that “the !Kung [San] model of the foraging lifeway — small, nomadic bands — is no longer taken as typical of preagricultural human societies”¹⁸ does not mean much unless the components of “the” model are disaggregated. As of 1992 there were already at least 582 items published relating to the Kalahari foragers¹⁹ — ample evidence of controversy. And yet, insofar as any generalization is possible, even a leading revisionist, Thomas N. Headland, approvingly quoted by the Director,²⁰ very recently writes that “while we now doubt that prehistoric hunter-gatherers were as affluent as Sahlins, Lee and others first suggested, we do not want to return to the pre-1966 Hobbesian idea that their lives were nasty,

¹⁶Black, *AAL*, 93–96.

¹⁷Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Thomas N. Headland, “Paradise Revised [a review of Wilmsen],” Sept.-Oct. 1990, 45–50; Roger Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” *Science* 240 (May 27, 1988), 1146–1147 (“Past Perspectives,” cited by Bookchin as if it were an independent article, is just a four-paragraph sidebar to the Lewin article).

¹⁸Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1146–1147.

¹⁹Alan Barnard, *The Kalahari Debate: A Bibliographical Essay* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

²⁰Headland, “Paradise Revised.” Note that the title is “Paradise Revised,” not “Paradise Refuted.”

brutish and short . . . ”²¹ In *Anarchy after Leftism* I already quoted M.A.P. Renouf, writing in 1991, to the effect that “although the more idealized aspects of the Lee and DeVore model are commonly acknowledged, I think it is fair to say that no fundamental revision of it has been made.”²²

For present purposes, as in *AAL*, I am *only* addressing aspects of forager society of direct relevance to anarchism. Revisionist corrections mostly relate to other issues. It doesn’t matter to anarchists, for instance, if contemporary foragers are “living fossils” who have always lived as they do now, in “pristine” societies. It doesn’t matter that they have histories, including histories of trade and other interactions with agriculturalists and herders. It doesn’t matter if foragers aren’t always and everywhere the benign caretakers of the environment. It doesn’t matter if prehistoric humans were scavengers (not a revisionist thesis, by the way, but rather a quirky Bookchinist thesis). So what *does* matter to anarchists about these people? In two of my books I specified two crucial points:

“They operate the only known viable stateless societies.”

“And they don’t, except in occasional emergencies, *work* . . . ”²³

To these I would now add (or rather, make explicit) two more. The first — courtesy of the Director — is the egalitarian communism of hunter-gatherers:

“There is very much we can learn from preliterate cultures . . . their practices of usufruct and the inequality of equals [?] are of great relevance to an ecological society.”²⁴

And finally, a somewhat general, summary contention:

Foragers enjoy a relatively high quality of life, when the blessings of anarchy, leisure, equality and community are considered along with relative good health and longevity.

It is only certain aspects of this last contention (of those of any interest to anarchists) which some revisionist anthropologists would seriously dispute, but even if we had to bid farewell to it, the first three points would still stand.

1. *Foraging as Anarchy*

So far as I can determine, none of the research or arguments of the revisionists even purport to deny the long-established and unanimous anthropological consensus that nonsedentary hunter-gatherers, at least — and at least most of the sedentary ones — have always been stateless. This was common ground between them and the Lee/DeVore school and all their predecessors. Not even Bookchin seems to dispute the primitive-anarchy thesis, the thesis most important to anarchists.

²¹Thomas N. Headland, “Revisionism in Ecological Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1997), 609.

²²M.A.P. Renouf, “Sedentary Hunter-Gatherers: A Case for Northwest Coasts,” in *Between Bands and States*, ed. Susan Gregg (Carbondale, IL: Southern University of Illinois at Carbondale, 1991), 90; see also Margaret W. Conkey, “To Find Ourselves: Art and Social Geography of Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers,” in *Past and Present in Hunter Gatherer Societies*, ed. Carmel Schrire (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1984), 257.

²³*AAL*, 106, quoting Bob Black, *Friendly Fire* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1992), 54.

²⁴Bookchin, *SALA*, 41.

2. Foraging as Zerowork

In “The Original Affluent Society,” which Bookchin has apparently not read,²⁵ Marshall Sahlins wrote: “A good case can be made that hunters and gatherers work less than we do; and, rather than a continuous travail, the food quest is intermittent, leisure abundant, and there is a greater amount of sleep in the daytime per capita per year than in any other condition of society.”²⁶

Citing the then-unpublished results of Richard B. Lee’s fieldwork among the !Kung San (“Bushmen”), Sahlins estimated that the San worked a four-hour day. In their refined, published version, Lee’s figures were even lower, 2.2 to 2.4 hours a day.²⁷ Such evidence renders ridiculous what Bookchin is still spouting in 1998, the Marxist dogma about “toil and material uncertainties (as well as natural ones)²⁸ that have in the past shackled the human spirit to a nearly exclusive concern for subsistence.”²⁹ The foraging San were not preoccupied with subsistence. They had no reason to be.

The quantitative data, as startling as they are, only begin to disclose the qualitative difference between primitive and modern work, in respects I summarized in *Friendly Fire*: “In addition to shorter hours, ‘flexitime’ and the more reliable ‘safety net’ afforded by general food sharing, foragers’ work is more satisfying than most modern work. We awaken to the alarm clock; they sleep a lot, night and day. We are sedentary in our buildings in our polluted cities; they move about breathing the fresh air of the open country. We have bosses; they have companions. Our work typically implicates one, or at most a few hyper-specialized skills, if any; theirs combines handwork and brainwork in a versatile variety of activities, exactly as the great utopians called for. Our ‘commute’ is dead time, and unpaid to boot; they cannot even leave the campsite without ‘reading’ the landscape in a potentially productive way.”³⁰ To which I might add that hunting, in Europe as elsewhere, has always been the “sport of kings” — play, not work — characterized by what Kierkegaard called “the lovable seriousness which belongs essentially to play.”³¹ The synthesis of work (production for its own sake) and play (activity for its own sake) is what I have long called, and long called for, the abolition of work. Someone else might phrase the goal

²⁵I infer this for two reasons. One is that Bookchin never cites it, rather citing a brief excerpt from it, “Notes on the Original Affluent Society,” from *Man the Hunter*, ed. Richard B. Lee and Erven DeVore (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1968). The other is that when Bookchin refers to Sahlins, he always assumes that Sahlins’ only data were those on the San supplied by Lee. In fact, Sahlins provided a second extended example — the Australian aborigines — based on both historical and ethnographic evidence, as I mentioned in *Friendly Fire*, 19.

²⁶Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 14.

²⁷Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 256.

²⁸Another manifestation of Bookchin’s faltering command of the English language: what’s the difference between “material” and “natural” subsistence uncertainties for hunter-gatherers whose way of life he repudiates precisely because it is merely natural?

²⁹I just noticed that the Director, in “Whither Anarchism?” when he cites Sahlins, cites Sahlins’ brief comments from the “Man the Hunter” conference as reprinted in Richard B. Lee & Erven DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968). This is *not* the influential Sahlins essay “The Original Affluent Society,” merely a few of its highlights. It does not appear as if the Director Emeritus ever did read the essay, which is far more than a short summary of Lee’s research among the !Kung San.

³⁰Black, *Friendly Fire*, 33.

³¹Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/The Sickness Unto Death* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, n.d.), 131.

differently, as, for instance, “a joyous artfulness in life and work” — as once did Murray Bookchin.³²

According to an author highly regarded by Bookchin, “the labor of pastoral peoples is so light and simple that it hardly requires the labor of slaves. Consequently we see that for nomadic and pastoral peoples the number of slaves is very limited, if not zero. Things are otherwise with agricultural and settled peoples. Agriculture requires assiduous, painful, heavy labor. The free man of the forests and plains, the hunter as well as the herdsman, takes to agriculture only with great repugnance.”³³ The anarcho-primitivist crazy who wrote these words was Mikhail Bakunin.

It is not just that foragers work much less than the members of agricultural and industrial societies, if by work is meant production. It is not just that they work differently, in more varied and mostly more challenging and satisfying ways.³⁴ It is not just that they work in cooperation, not in competition. It is not just that they are almost always free of time-discipline, *i.e.*, at any particular time they literally don’t *have* to do anything.³⁵ It is not just that they sleep in as late as they like and loaf a lot. In every one of these particulars, forager working life is superior to ours, but more important is what their coincidence implies about the foraging mode of production. At some point, less work plus better work ends up as activity it no longer makes sense to call work at all, although it furnishes the means of life. Foragers are at that point. *They don’t work*, not if work means forced labor, compulsory production, or the subordination of pleasure to production when these objectives diverge.

Now it is possible to define work in other ways than I do. No one owns the word. But an important revolutionary current, by now rooted mainly in anarchism, is explicitly anti-work in approximately the sense I’ve defined work in several essays, one of them well-known,³⁶ going back at least fifteen years.³⁷

³²Murray Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980), 45.

³³“Physiological or Natural Patriotism,” in *From Out of the Dustbin: Bakunin’s Basic Writings, 1869–1871*, ed. Robert M. Cutler (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1985), 190–191.

³⁴“Men know no occupations other than hunting and warring, which our own civilization still considers the most noble callings; . . .” *Ibid.*, 191. I hasten to confess that I have truncated the statement to remove a reference to the women doing all the real work. I did so because it isn’t true. Bakunin repeats the standard misperception of Europeans who only observed Indians in their villages, not on “the hunt — where the writing kind of European does not seem to have followed.” Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 92. Richard B. Lee found that San women did less work than San men. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 277–278.

³⁵“When we consider people living under some of the harshest, most commanding conditions on earth, who can nevertheless do what they like when the notion occurs to them, we should be able to witness the contemporary doubt about civilization’s superiority without growing indignant.” Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 240. Wishful thinking: there is very little that Murray Bookchin witnesses, except Vermont town meetings and seminars stocked with his acolytes, without growing indignant. After quoting scraps of Watson’s sentence, the Director delivers a damning riposte: “One can only gasp: Really!”

³⁶“The Abolition of Work,” in Bob Black, *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays* (Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited, 1986), 17–33, and in many more places. In the utterly unlikely event the Director never saw it before, he certainly saw it in *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, ed. Howard J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1996), 236–253, along with Murray Bookchin, “Anarchism: Past and Present,” 19–30. “Abolition” has been published in translation in Russian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Slovene. A Finnish translation is in the works.

³⁷*Ibid.*; *Friendly Fire*, 11–62; AAL, ch. 9 & *passim*; “What’s Wrong With This Picture?”

There is widespread appreciation among anarchists that the abolition of the state without the abolition of work is as fatally incomplete — and as fated for failure — as the abolition of capitalism without the abolition of the state. In his early anarchist essays, Bookchin seemed (to many of us) to say so too when he condemned needless and stultifying “toil.” I of course prefer my own definitions — to which I have devoted some years of careful thought — and which I like to think identify the essentials of work while still corresponding with common usage. But if somebody else prefers a different terminology, that’s fine, as long as he makes its meaning explicit and refrains from squidlike outgushing of eccentric verbiage to muddle the matter. Words are a means to an end: the expression of meaning. If somebody wants to call what I call “the abolition of work” something else, that’s all right with me, especially if it makes the idea less scary to the timid. But whatever you call it, foragers usually had it. They were zeroworkers.

With respect to the San, Bookchin fudges the figures about working time in a crude way which is extraordinarily, and blatantly, dishonest even by the relaxed standards of his dotage. He claims that “[Richard B.] Lee has greatly revised the length of the workweek he formerly attributed to the Zhu [sic]³⁸; the average workweek for both sexes, he wrote in 1979, is not eighteen but 42.3 hours.”³⁹ Now I cannot do better than I did in *Friendly Fire* to refute, in advance, this clumsy lie. Originally, “Lee studied the San equivalent of what is conventionally accounted work in industrial society — hunting and gathering in their case, wage-labor in ours.” In other words, as I discuss in *Friendly Fire*, “shadow work” — housework — was originally excluded from the comparisons Sahlins made, not only because Lee had yet to measure housework, but also because housework had always been excluded by our economists from what they measure as work because it is unpaid, and anything not measured in money is invisible to economists.⁴⁰ This does not, as I wrote in *Friendly Fire*, invalidate the comparison, although it invites the more expansive comparison which Lee returned to the field to record, and which I summarized as follows: “Upon returning to the field, Lee broadened his definition of work to encompass all ‘those activities that contribute to the direct appropriation of food, water or materials from the environment’ — adding to subsistence activity tool-making and -fixing and housework (mainly food preparation). These activities didn’t increase the San workload as much as their equivalents in our sort of society increase ours — relatively we fall even f[u]rther behind. *Per diem* the manufacture and maintenance of tools takes 64 minutes for men, 45 minutes for women.”⁴¹ San women devote 22.4 hours a week to housework, 40.1 hours to all work.⁴² American women with full-time jobs devote 40-plus hours a week to them in addition to doing 25–35 hours of housework.⁴³

After the deceptive citation to Lee, Bookchin adds, as if to clinch the point:

Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed, No. 43 (Spring/Summer 1997): 11–14 (reviewing Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work*).

³⁸“Zhu” is not a synonym for “San,” rather, it is one of the three regional divisions of the !Kung-speaking northern San peoples. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 37–38.

³⁹Citing Lee, *The !Kung San*, 278.

⁴⁰Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20.

⁴¹Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20.

⁴²Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20–21, citing Lee, *The !Kung San*, 277–278.

⁴³Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), 83.

“Irven DeVore, the Harvard anthropologist who shared Lee’s conclusions on [sic] the Bushmen in the 1960s and 1970s, has observed: ‘We were being a bit romantic. . . Our assumptions and interpretations were much too simple.’”⁴⁴ Nothing in the article by Roger Lewin (quoting DeVore) suggests that DeVore is referring to the data on working time. The article’s only reference to forager working time is to summarize the original Lee/DeVore finding “that the !Kung were able to satisfy their material needs with just a few hours work each day, their effort being divided between male hunting and female gathering of plant foods.”⁴⁵ Lewin reports challenges to several aspects of the Lee/DeVore model, but none to the findings on working time.

Lee studied the !Kung San of the Dobe area of the Kalahari. Jiri Tanaka studied another group of San in the Kade area of the Kalahari in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. His figures on working time, though slightly higher than Lee’s, in general provide independent support for the primitive-zero worker thesis. The daily average of time away from camp, hunting and gathering, is 4 hours and 39 minutes; this includes breaks, as “the sun’s rays beat down mercilessly on the Kalahari most of the year, [so] the San often stop to rest in the shade during their day’s work . . .” In-camp chores add about two hours a day.⁴⁶ That makes for a workweek of 46 hours and 33 minutes, a bit higher than Lee’s estimate (44.5 hours for men, 40.1 hours for women). Tanaka is Japanese, from a nation of workaholics. It is unlikely he was subject to the counter-cultural influences which Bookchin improbably blames for the primitive-affluence theory. Tanaka did not come to the Kalahari as a believer in that theory: the figure he arrived at “is less than [he] expected.”⁴⁷

So far as I can tell, none of the Director’s cited sources overturns or even qualifies the primitive-zero work thesis. The Lewin article I have already dealt with. Wilmsen’s polemic *Land Filled with Flies* is a fierce critique of most aspects of the Lee/DeVore model, but does not address forager working time. Headland’s review of Wilmsen, “Paradise Revised,” after mentioning Lee’s contention that “the Dobe !Kung were able to supply their needs easily by working only two or three hours a day,” goes on to make the point that Lee’s original “calculations of the amount of work the !Kung devoted to subsistence ignored the time spent in preparing food, which turned out to be substantial.”⁴⁸ Headland does not say how much time devoted to food preparation he considers substantial, but there is no reason to think that the time that San foragers devote to food preparation (about two hours a day) is much different from the time we devote to it, factoring in shopping and eating out. Whereas the time they devote to direct food acquisition is, as we have seen, far less.

For no apparent reason, the Director fast-forwards (or -backwards) to medieval Europe: “Given the demands of highly labor-intensive farming, what kind of free time, in the twelfth century, did small-scale farmers have? If history is any guide, it was a luxury they rarely enjoyed, even during the agriculturally dormant winters. During the months when farmers were not tilling the land and harvesting its produce, they struggled endlessly to make repairs, tend animals,

⁴⁴Quoted in Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1146.

⁴⁵Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1147.

⁴⁶Jiri Tanaka, *The San: Hunter-Gatherers of the Kalahari: A Study in Ecological Anthropology* (Tokyo, Japan: University of Tokyo, 1980), 77.

⁴⁷Ibid., 78.

⁴⁸Headland, “Paradise Revised,” 46, 48.

perform domestic labor, and the like.” The appeal to history is unaccompanied by any reference to what historians actually say about work in medieval Europe. How many weeks of work a year did Englishmen devote to subsistence in 1495? *Ten!*⁴⁹ Marxist that he is, Bookchin should remember that Paul Lafargue in *The Right to Be Lazy* wrote that 25% of the pre-industrial French peasant’s calendar consisted of work-free Sundays and holidays.⁵⁰ But, for peasants as for foragers — although to a lesser degree — simply counting days of work and days of leisure understates the superior quality of low-energy modes of production for the direct producers. “The recreational activities of the Middle Ages,” writes historian Keith Thomas, “recall the old primitive confusion as to where work ended and leisure began.”⁵¹

3. *Foraging as Egalitarian Communism.*

This is the one aspect of forager society which Bookchin even now accepts and approves of. The revisionists have not gone very far in dispelling this conception, to which both Marx and Kropotkin subscribed: they have just identified a few more exceptions to the general rule of equality and food-sharing. Usually, as I pointed out in *Anarchy after Leftism*, it is the sedentary hunter-gatherers who may (but often do not) develop some social stratification, as did the Northwest Coast Indians with permanent villages adjoining salmon runs in which property rights were recognized. Their anarchy is a borderline case.⁵²

⁴⁹Black, *Friendly Fire*, 27, citing Joseph Eyer and Peter Sterling, “Stress-Related Mortality and Social Organization,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9(1) (Spring 1977), 15. Bookchin’s word “farmers” is inaccurate and anachronistic. A farmer is a capitalist, an agricultural entrepreneur producing for the market. There were no farmers in Europe in the 12th century. 12th-century cultivators were peasants tilling the soil to sustain their households and, like peasants everywhere, to pay rent, tithes and taxes to their exploiters. Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 2. When Wolf wrote of them over 30 years ago, peasants were the majority of the world’s population. I don’t know if that’s still true, but peasants are certainly still a substantial proportion of the world’s people, and conspicuously so south of the U.S. border, in Mexico. If, as Bookchin insists, the anarchist revolution must be worldwide and all-encompassing if it is to succeed, his fixation on urbanism impedes that revolution, for it reduces the peasantry, in traditional Marxist fashion, to semi-conscious cannon fodder of the revolutionary proletariat. Now this is rather odd, because Bookchin’s beloved civilization has usually been associated with urbanism and always associated with statism. *Ibid.*, 10–11. Peasant anarchists actually engaged in revolution, as opposed to just talking about it, haven’t noticed the inherent anarchist potential of the city, possibly because it hasn’t any. The Makhnovists, Ukrainian peasant anarchists, according to Makhno himself were mostly not consciously anarchists, but “in their communal life they behaved with that anarchist solidarity which, in ordinary life, only those toilers are capable whose natural simplicity has not yet been infected by the political poison of the cities. For the cities always give out the smell of lying and betrayal from which many, even among the comrades who call themselves anarchists, are not exempt.” Quoted in E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965), 184.

⁵⁰Cited in Black, *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*, 23.

⁵¹Keith Thomas, “Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society,” *Past & Present* No. 29 (Dec. 1964), 53. “The pastoral relationships of country life in the high Middle Ages tempered the purely economic necessities of feudalism with a sort of freedom; play often took the upper hand in the corvee, in the dispensing of justice, in the settlement of debts.” Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (2[nd], rev. ed.; London: Rebel Press & Seattle, WA: Left Bank Books, 1994), 256.

⁵²Harold Barclay, *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchism* (London: Kahn & Averill with Cienfuegos Press, 1982), 48–49.

It's not impossible, however — just extremely rare — for even nomadic hunter-gatherers to distribute wealth unequally or assert ownership rights to the means of production. A 19th century example is the Tutchone, a nomadic Athapaskan Indian people in the Yukon. Despite their general poverty, they allocated food resources unequally and even maintained a form of domestic slavery, allegedly without borrowing these practices from other stratified societies.⁵³ In *SALA*, Bookchin cited another example, the Yuqui.⁵⁴ But that's just “the ‘not-so-in-Bongobongoland’ style of argument.”⁵⁵ If forager egalitarianism is not universal, it almost is, and every other form of society departs from equality to the extent of its greater complexity.

To seriously challenge the thesis of forager egalitarianism, the revisionists would have to reveal inequality among the many foraging peoples among whom ethnographers have hitherto found equality. So far as I know, the only revisionist to make such a claim is Edwin Wilmsen in *Land Filled with Flies*. His provocative example is, improbably, the San. Wilmsen asserts that “meat sharing — the putative sine qua non of San egalitarianism — is thoroughly controlled to meet the political ends of the distributors.”⁵⁶ There are several difficulties here. The distributor of meat (the owner of the arrow which killed the animal) has no political ends, for the San are anarchists. What he does have is expectations to satisfy which are determined mainly by kinship. To infer inequality from this is a non sequitur, for few if any San are entirely without family and friends at a campsite. If in fact they are without family or friends, they should be, and soon would be, on their way to somewhere else more hospitable. San principles of food-sharing priorities do not mathematically guarantee absolute distributive equality, but in practice they approximate it.

However, even arguments at this modest level of sophistication are unnecessary to dispose of Wilmsen's example — for that's all it is: a single “anecdote” (his word) about a San who complained of receiving no meat from a household in which she had no relatives. These San were *not foragers*, they were pastoralists who hunt, part-time, from horseback, and partly with rifles.⁵⁷

Wilmsen's claim for class distinctions among foraging San is his “most contentious,” overstated, and least accepted proposition.⁵⁸ Several anthropologists, even Wilmsen's main target Richard B. Lee, credit Wilmsen with placing more emphasis on the historical dimension of San studies, but they contest the findings of his fieldwork, which commenced only in 1973, as “so at odds with previous works that it is impossible to reconcile one's prior knowledge of the Kalahari with what Wilmsen presents.”⁵⁹ Even a fellow revisionist like Thomas Headland, in a review which Bookchin cites approvingly, concludes that “one can be generally convinced by Wilmsen's [historical] account of outside influence in the Kalahari desert while being troubled by his complete rejection of earlier

⁵³Dominique Legros, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1997), 617.

⁵⁴Bookchin, *SALA*, 45.

⁵⁵David Pollock, review of *Yanomami Warfare*, by R. Bryan Ferguson, *Ethnohistory* 44(1) (Winter 1997), 191.

⁵⁶Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 229.

⁵⁷Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 229, 227.

⁵⁸Jacqueline S. Solway, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *American Ethnologist* 18 (Nov. 1991), 817.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 816.

portraits of the !Kung.”⁶⁰ Wilmsen’s embrace of history (and archeology⁶¹) at the expense of ethnography looks like sour grapes. He arrived in the field too late to study viable San foragers, as Lee, Howell, Tanaka and others had done, and so he rummaged the archives to prove that there’d never been any such foragers, only the same impoverished underclass he found in the 1970’s.

Still another of Wilmsen’s reviewers notes that “page after page denounces Richard Lee and a host of other ethnographers with unnecessary stings, while some other pages rely on the findings of these very scholars.”⁶² Murray Bookchin is right to recognize in Wilmsen a kindred spirit, another lawyer trapped in the body of a scholar, except that Bookchin isn’t even a scholar. “Scholarship,” according to one of Bookchin’s rare scholarly reviewers, “is not his point, or his achievement,” and his “method is to ransack world history — more or less at random” for examples that seem to support his position.⁶³ Bookchin relies on Wilmsen in exactly the opportunistic way Wilmsen relies on Lee “and a host of other ethnographers,” grabbing whatever sounds like support for an advocacy position, and never mind what it really means or the context or the rest of the story. When lawyers pillage history this way, historians refer to the result contemptuously as “law-office history.”⁶⁴ Bookchin writes law-office history, law-office anthropology, and law-office philosophy, which is to say, pseudo-history, pseudo-anthropology, and pseudo-philosophy.

4. Foraging as the Good Life

By the catchall phrase “the good life” I refer to various further features of foraging society which are significant for what I can only refer to, vaguely at the outset, as the quality of life. Necessarily, interpretation and value judgments enter into the assessment of this dimension even more openly than in the assessment of the first three, but just as necessarily there is no avoiding them. Viable anarcho-communist societies naturally interest anarchists, but if hunter-gatherers enjoy little more than the freedom to suffer, and equality in poverty, their example is not very encouraging. If that is all that anarchy offers, anarchism has no appeal except to the fanatic few. Abundance and good health, for instance, may not be supreme values, but values they are. If they are too lacking for too long, the widest liberty, equality and fraternity lose their savor. But for foragers, the price of liberty, equality and fraternity is not nearly so high.

When Marshall Sahlins characterized hunter-gatherers as the original affluent society, he meant to make several points. One I have already dealt with:

⁶⁰Headland, “Paradise Revised,” 50.

⁶¹Little archeological research has been conducted in the Kalahari, but Wilmsen has made expansive claims that it proves 2,000 years of extensive socio-economic interactions between San and Iron Age Bantu. A recent review of the literature finds the evidence entirely insufficient. Karim Sadr, “Kalahari Archeology and the Bushmen Debate,” *Current Anthropology* 38(1) (Feb. 1997): 104–112.

⁶²Parker Shipton, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *American Anthropologist* 93 (Sept. 1991), 756.

⁶³Anonymous review of Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs* 32 (Fall 1988): 628, quoted in *Anarchy after Leftism*, 96.

⁶⁴Alfred Kelly, “Clio and the Court: An Illicit Love Affair,” *1969 Supreme Court Review*, 119–158.

relatively short working time. The other, which has always attracted more attention, is the contention that foragers typically enjoy a food supply not only abundant but reliable. They do not work very much because they have no need to work any longer or harder in order to have all that they want to consume. They do not store much food or for long, partly for lack of the requisite technology, but fundamentally because of their confidence that they can always go out and get some more.⁶⁵ Instead of the desperate preoccupation with survival which Bookchin attributes to them, the foragers' attitude toward the quest for subsistence, is, as Sahlins says, one of "nonchalance."⁶⁶

The world of the foragers is not, any more than ours is, absolutely secure. Such words as "paradise" and "edenic" are never used by anthropologists and not often used, and then usually metaphorically, by anarcho-primitivists. It is their critics, above all Bookchin, who put these words in their mouths, compounding the deception by putting these nonexistent quotations in quotation marks — a Bookchin abuse I targeted in *Anarchy after Leftism* but which the Director Emeritus now indulges in more recklessly than ever. Like Bookchin, but unlike a fine wine, it has not improved with age.

As everyone acknowledges — Watson and I included⁶⁷ — although abundance is the norm among contemporary hunter-gatherers, they may go hungry occasionally. There's a two-month period of the year, for instance, in which San food intake declines. That does not validate the Hobbesian view, which is exactly the opposite: that for foragers, hunger is the norm and satiety the exception. Lee and demographer Nancy Howell measured a 1% to 2% loss in San body weight during the low point, "far short of [the] 4 to 6.5 percent average loss observed among agriculturalists."⁶⁸ And although saying so incenses the easily irked Director,⁶⁹ it is obviously relevant to the primitive-affluence thesis that in prehistoric times, foragers had all the world's habitats to enjoy, not just the marginal wastes to which contemporary foragers are relegated by civilized techno-violence. It is reasonable to infer that when foragers had the whole world to themselves, they enjoyed even greater ease and affluence, the material base of their successful anarchy. I daresay that more Americans than foragers will go to sleep hungry tonight.

Just as he fudged the figures for San working time, the Director goes on to misrepresent the figures on their caloric intake, although this time without bothering to cite any of them. He claims — citing only himself — that "Richard Lee's own data on the caloric intake of 'affluent' foragers have been significantly challenged by Wilmsen and his associates. . . Lee himself has revised his views on this score since the 1960s." The identical passage appears in *SALA*.⁷⁰ Between 1969 and 1979, Lee did revise his estimates of San forager caloric uptake: *up-*

⁶⁵Were Bookchin to claim that it is their limited technology which precludes foragers from accumulating capital and making long-term economic plans and arrangements, he would be espousing the technological determinism which David Watson plausibly accuses him of and which the Director, implausibly denies in "Whither Anarchism?" But the other horn of the dilemma also gores him. It implies that culture or social organization determines technology, which is tantamount to saying that primitive peoples can refuse technology, as Watson, Zerzan and I have suggested. No anti-progressive heresy riles the Director more than this one, which denies the directionality he divines in the cosmos itself.

⁶⁶Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 18.

⁶⁷Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 110.

⁶⁸Lee, *The !Kung San*, 301.

⁶⁹See note 2 *supra*.

⁷⁰Bookchin, *SALA*, 45–46.

ward, from 2,140 kilocalories to 2,355 kilocalories, as noted by Wilmsen himself! I had already drawn attention to the revision in *Friendly Fire* as had Watson in *Beyond Bookchin*. And far from “sharply challenging” Lee’s estimates, Wilmsen agreed with them: “considering the margin of error inherent in calorie counting, either figure is in good agreement with my estimate of 2,294 kilocalories/person/day for foraging Zhu in July 1975.”⁷¹ As of 1960, over half the world’s people consumed less than 2250 calories a day, less than the San did; the civilized people of China, India and Indonesia consumed much less than that.⁷² Bookchin’s blunders are so basic that they cannot have been committed in good faith unless by someone whose intellectual capacities are gravely impaired.

For many years now, the Director Emeritus has exhibited a personalistic preoccupation with old age. Shortly after he turned 60, Bookchin’s *Ecology of Freedom* (1982) advanced, among other eccentricities, the thesis that the origin of hierarchy in human society was gerontocracy, domination by the elderly. No anthropologist thought so then and none thinks so now. The only anthropologist to review the book (and surprisingly sympathetically) wrote that the Director’s “emphasis on age stratification as the key to domination is unconvincing and suffers from such a paucity of empirical evidence that it reads at times like a ‘Just-So’ story.”⁷³ With characteristically well-crafted cruelty, I quoted this comment in *Anarchy after Leftism* in a context that implied that Bookchin’s belief in gerontocracy — “the original form of hierarchy (and still the best!)” — was wishful thinking.⁷⁴ Something approximating gerontocracy does prevail on college campuses (there it’s known as “tenure”) such as those where the Director Emeritus spent the latter half of his adult life — but in few other areas of contemporary society. The Director’s personalistic obsession with age increases as his own does.

In *SALA*, and now again in its sequel, Bookchin indicts the San (standing in for hunter-gatherers) for their brief life-spans. Unlike in *SALA*, Bookchin this time provides a source for his claim that the average San lifespan is 30 years — it is Headland’s review of Wilmsen.⁷⁵ Headland has done no research on the San and provided no reference to anyone who has. In *SALA*, Bookchin left the impression that “Wilmsen and his associates” came up with this figure,⁷⁶ but Wilmsen does not even refer to San lifespan, much less purport to estimate it based on his own research. This is actually a difficult research problem, because the San don’t know how old they are, and in their own language they can only count to three.⁷⁷ The most thorough investigation of San demography was done by Nancy Howell, a member of the Lee/DeVore team, among the Dobe San. Her estimate of life expectancy at birth was 30–35 years.⁷⁸ Another study, which I cited in *Anarchy after Leftism*, produced an estimate of 32 years.⁷⁹

⁷¹Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 235.

⁷²Jean Forestie, *The Causes of Wealth* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), 102–103, cited in Wolf, *Peasants*, 4–5.

⁷³Karen L. Field, *American Anthropologist* (1992), 161, quoted in Black, *AAL*, 94.

⁷⁴Field, 161, quoted in *AAL*, 94. I have only just noticed, to my dismay, that the Field reference does not appear in the *AAL* bibliography.

⁷⁵Headland, “Paradise Revised,” 46.

⁷⁶Bookchin, *SALA*, 45–46.

⁷⁷Tanaka, *The San*, 81.

⁷⁸Nancy Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 82.

⁷⁹*AAL*, citing Melvin Konner and Marjorie Shostack, “Timing and Management of Birth Among the !Kung: Biocultural Interaction in Reproductive Adaptation,” *Cultural Anthropology* 2(1) (Feb. 1987), 12.

For the ¹Kade San, Tanaka's estimate was 40 years.⁸⁰ By comparison, the life expectancy for ancient Romans and medieval Englishmen was 30 years. Just a century ago, American life expectancy was only 40 years.

Are these statistics appalling? No doubt they are to a sick, scared old man like Bookchin who knows his time is short. Had he died at 40, none of his books would ever have been written. It is embarrassingly obvious that his recent tirades are the outbursts of someone in a desperate hurry to perpetuate an ideological legacy he rightly perceives to be in eclipse. He fears the loss of the only kind of immortality he believes in. But his private terror at the prospect of death and disregard is a personalistic demon. There is more to the quality of life than the quantity of life. How much more is strictly a value judgment. Achilles chose a short life as a hero over a long life as a nobody. Pirates preferred a short and merry life to a longer life of drudgery. Some people, as Zapata put it, would rather die on their feet than live on their knees. And some people can pack a lot of life into a short span. If foragers generally live lives of liberty, conviviality, abundance and ease, it is by no means obvious that their shorter, high-quality lives are inferior to our longer, low-quality lives. Murray Bookchin tells us that it is modern medical technology which is keeping him alive. It would never occur to him that the enemies he defames might not consider this an argument in favor of modern medical technology. Judging from *SALA* and "Whither Anarchism?" the Director Emeritus is not enjoying his golden years. Nobody else is enjoying his golden years either.

Before anyone else panics over the statistics, let's consider what they really mean. In *Anarchy after Leftism* I already pointed out that life expectancy at birth is no measure of how long those who survive infancy can expect to live.⁸¹ In all human populations, including ours, infant mortality is high relative to the mortality of all other age groups except the very old. In this respect, as Nancy Howell concluded, "the !Kung have an age pattern of mortality more or less like everyone else."⁸² The high rate of infant mortality depresses the average lifespan, but real people live, not the average lifespan, but their own lifespans. According to Bookchin, back in the Old Stone Age, "few lived beyond their fiftieth year."⁸³ As Nancy Howell discovered, that was not true of the San. Over 17% were over 50; 29% were over 40; 43% were over 30. One San man was approximately 82.⁸⁴ According to Tanaka, too, many San live far beyond the age of 40.⁸⁵

Nightmares of Reason

Unconscious irony has become a hallmark of Late Bookchinism, the Highest Stage of Leftism. Well-known examples include Bookchin's denunciation of leftists with alluring academic careers just as the Director retired from an alluring academic career; his scathing contempt for John Clark's "cowardly" hiding be-

⁸⁰Tanaka, *The San*, 86.

⁸¹*AAL*, 109–111.

⁸²Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*, 82.

⁸³Bookchin, *SALA*, 46.

⁸⁴Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*, 30, 35; cf. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 44–48.

⁸⁵Tanaka, *The San*, 86.

hind a pseudonym the way Bookchin did in the 60's⁸⁶; his personalistic abuse of individuals he accuses of personalism; his vilification of other writers for appearing in the same “yuppie” publications he’s been published or favorably reviewed in; and his denunciations of anarchists for agreeing with what he used to write. (See also Appendix A.) Although inconsistency, not to mention hypocrisy, is nothing new for Bookchin (see Appendix B), lately the devolution of his reasoning powers is dizzying. Paradoxically — or is it? — his intellectual decline coincides with the Director’s shrill defense of Reason With a Capital R against the Lifestyle Anarchists and the rest of the irrationalist hordes. To borrow one of Bookchin’s favorite clichés, you might say that his commitment to Reason is honored in the breach.

The Director taxes Watson (that poor “philosophical naif”) for referring “to science (more properly, the sciences, since the notion of a Science that has only one method and approach is fallacious) . . .” — for speaking of Science in the singular. In *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Bookchin, who is never fallacious, or even facetious, nonetheless found it meaningful, not only to speak of Science in the singular, but to say strikingly Watsonish things about it: “Indeed, we have begun to regard science itself as an instrument of control over the thought processes and physical being of man. This distrust of science and of the scientific method [emphasis added] is not without justification.”⁸⁷ Distrust of Murray Bookchin is likewise not without justification.

Someone who admires or pities the Director more than I do might like to interpret this as a cautious condonation of methodological pluralism, what the late Paul Feyerabend called “epistemological anarchism.” Alas, it is not so. Bookchin is no more an epistemological anarchist than he is any other kind of anarchist. Elsewhere in the same interminable paragraph, the Director rules out any such possibility: “Watson is free to say *anything* he wants without ever exposing it to the challenge of reason or experience. As Paul Feyerabend once wrote: ‘Anything goes!’” Let’s put aside Bookchin’s here openly announced hostility to freedom of speech — enough by itself to confirm my contention that he’s not an anarchist.⁸⁸ In the sequence in which Bookchin places it, the Feyerabend quotation — unreferenced — looks like a summons to freak out. In fact, it was only an endorsement of pluralism in methodology. Feyerabend’s point was that scientific discovery does not necessarily or even normally result from following rules, including the rules of *the* scientific method (which Bookchin agrees does not exist).⁸⁹ The tales of Diogenes in the bathtub and Newton under the apple tree may be mythical, but, as good myths do, they express non-literally a truth. In principle, any context may serve as what Karl Popper called the context of discovery: religion, drugs, psychosis, chance — anything. According to the Director, “mythopoesis” (mythmaking) has its place, but only in art. The “experience” to whose authority he appeals confirms a wider role for mythopoesis and nonsystematic sources of insight. As Feyerabend put it: “There is no idea, however ancient or absurd that is not capable of improving

⁸⁶So successfully that in 1968, his situationist critics thought that Herber was Bookchin’s follower, not his pseudonym. *Situationist International: Review of the American Section of the S.I.* No. 1 (June 1969) (reprint ed.; Portland, OR: Extreme Press, 1993), 42.

⁸⁷Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, 57.

⁸⁸Black, *AAL*, chs. 5, 10 & *passim*; cf. Zerzan, “Murray Bookchin’s Libertarian Municipalism,” *Future Primitive*, 164–166.

⁸⁹Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Verso, 1978), 27–28.

our knowledge.” One stimulus to the Copernican theory that the Earth moves, for instance, was Hermetic writings (also carefully studied by Newton) reviving that long-discredited Pythagorean notion.⁹⁰ Nor was the Enlightenment as scientific and secular as the Director imagines: “The eighteenth century was too deeply involved with the occult to have us continue to associate it exclusively with rationalism, humanism, scientific determinism, and classicism. Manifestations of irrationalism, supernaturalism, organicism, and Romanticism appeared throughout.”⁹¹

The Director’s reverence for Reason rises in inverse proportion to his practice of it. He now says that he has “long been a critic of mythopoesis, spiritualism, and religion,” although I have found no such criticism in his extant writings of the 60’s and 70’s. He also claims to be a longstanding critic of conventional, analytic, instrumental Reason. Much more revelatory, he says, is *dialectical* Reason, “the rationality of developmental processes, of phenomena that self-elaborate into diverse forms and complex interactions — in short, a secular form of reason [there’s a religious form?] that explores how reality, despite its multiplicity, unfolds into articulated, interactive, and shared relationships.” What, if anything, this means is anybody’s guess. Do “developmental processes” exhibit an inherent rationality? What’s rational about gangrene or cancer? By definition, relationships are interactive and shared, so what do these adjectives add to whatever the Director is trying to say? Casting about for a dimension of reality which, despite its multiplicity, unfolds into articulated, interactive, and shared relationships, what first comes to mind is capitalism.

In *Anarchy after Leftism*, I quoted the Director’s admission that his is “a fairly unorthodox notion of reason.”⁹² To say the least. His brand of reason, he says, is dialectical, but only in the sense that I long ago defined dialectics, “a Marxist’s excuse when you catch him in a lie.”⁹³ To hear the Director talk, what dialectical reason adds to the ordinary variety is the developmental dimension, but none of his bombast makes any more sense diachronically than synchronically. Bookchin denounces his renegade disciple John Clark for mistaking dialectics for functionalism, the notion that “we can identify no single cause as more compelling than others; rather, all possible [sic⁹⁴] factors are mutually determining”: “This morass of ‘reciprocity,’ in which everything in the world is in a reciprocal relationship with everything else, is precisely what dialectical causality is not, unless we want to equate dialectics with chaos. Dialectics is a philosophy of development, not of mutually determining factors in some kind of static equilibrium. Although on some remote level, everything does affect everything else, some things are in fact very significantly more determining than others. Particularly in [sic] social and historical phenomena, some causes are major, while others are secondary and adventitious.”⁹⁵ Dialectical causality

⁹⁰Ibid., 47 (quoted), 49.

⁹¹Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 7.

⁹²Black, *AAL*, 100, quoting Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982), 10.

⁹³Black, *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*, XXXXX.

⁹⁴Misspeaking yet again, the Director says “possible” when he must mean “actual.” No one claims that possible but nonexistent factors are even a little bit determining.

⁹⁵Here the Director collapses two distinctions into one. The dichotomy between primary and secondary causes is not the same as the dichotomy between necessary and contingent, “adventitious” factors. An adventitious factor — such as the death of an important individual

focuses on what is *essential* in producing change, on the *underlying* motivating [sic] factors, as distinguished from the incidental and auxiliary.” So then what’s dialectical about it? As Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel have written: “[Marxist] dialecticians have never been able to indicate exactly how they see dialectical relations as different from any of the more complicated combinations of simple cause/effect relations such as co-causation, cumulative causation, or simultaneous determination of a many variable system where no variables are identified as dependent or independent in advance. . . there is only the word and a lot of ‘hand waving’ about its importance.”⁹⁶ Peter Kropotkin, who, unlike Bookchin, was an anarchist and a scientist, dismissed dialectics as unscientific.⁹⁷

“Objective ethics,” the directionality of nature, humanity as “second nature,” articulated multiplicity, collective consciousness, “the actualization of rationally unfolding potentialities” — all this jargon and gibberish marks mucid Murray as a mystic. His pseudo-system is exactly what Marx said Hegel’s philosophy was: “logical, pantheistic mysticism,”⁹⁸ only less logical. The Director may not refer to God by name, but his abstract universal principle of directional development, ever more conscious and mastering of its nature and destiny, is the World-Spirit which Hegel identified with the Christian God.⁹⁹ If it looks like a God, acts like a God, and (through His oracle, the Director) quacks like a God, it’s probably God, up to His old tricks. Putting another name on Him, or It, or not naming It at all, makes no difference. Christians say God, Jews say Yahweh, and Muslims say Allah, but they are all theists and monotheists, and so is Bookchin.

Even if none of his other doctrines did, the Director’s moralism would discredit him as a rationalist. There is no such thing as an “objective ethics.” What is passed off in certain times and places as objectively true morality is only the morality which then and there is popular or imposed by power. No matter how far you range across space and time, you will never find a universally accepted moral tenet — and even if you did, that wouldn’t prove that it was objectively true, only that everybody till now happens to believe in it, a consensus easily shattered by the first skeptic. There must have been a time when everyone believed that the sun revolved around the earth, but it was never true. The only universally true generalization about moral propositions is that they express the subjective values of those who believe in them (this is the “emotive” theory of ethics).¹⁰⁰ This is one respect in which Bookchin’s regression to Marxism has not gone far enough, for Marx and Engels noticed early on that morality was not only subjective, it was usually relative to class interests.

As usual with Bookchin’s dichotomies, his moralism/amoralism distinction fails to match up with his Social Anarchism/Lifestyle Anarchism distinction. Some Lifestyle Anarchists, such as David Watson, also subscribe to objective

— may be a primary cause, a weighty cause, although it is not a necessary cause rooted in an underlying process of social development.

⁹⁶Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, *Unorthodox Marxism: An Essay on Capitalism, Socialism and Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1978), 52–53.

⁹⁷“Modern Science and Anarchism,” in *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 152.

⁹⁸Karl Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State,” in *Early Writings*, ed. Quentin Hoare (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 61.

⁹⁹Black, *AAL*, 100–101.

¹⁰⁰Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), ch. 6.

moralism. And some Social Anarchists reject it, such as Emma Goldman. In her essay “Victims of Morality,” anarcho-communist Goldman denounced the unimpeachable “Lie of Morality”: “no other superstition is so detrimental to growth, so enervating and paralyzing to the minds and hearts of the people, as the superstition of Morality.”¹⁰¹ I do not propose to rehash here my own critique of moralism or that of any anarchist or Marxist or Situationist. I refer the interested reader to Stirner and Nietzsche among many others. Bookchin has never bothered to provide, or even purport to provide, a rational basis for a belief obviously derived from revealed religion.

What Bookchin describes is determinism, not dialectics. It’s what Marx called mechanical materialism. The distinctive feature of dialectical reasoning is the progressive approximation to truth through the clash of opposites and their supersession: “Truth exists not in unity with, but in refutation of its opposite. Dialectics is not a monologue that speculation carries on with itself, but a dialogue between speculation and empirical reality” (Feuerbach).¹⁰² There is nothing like that in Bookchin. The Director is predictably wrathful at Watson’s likening his dialectic to Stalin’s, but the comparison is apt. Both Leninists, Stalin and Bookchin, deploy the jargon of dialectics to justify their abrupt ideological reversals, their opportunistic changes of “line.”

Bookchin’s dialectical naturalism may be restated as follows: nature follows a “law of evolution” consisting of “an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.”¹⁰³ Herbert Spencer, high priest of Social Darwinism and laissez-faire capitalism, first published these words in 1864.¹⁰⁴ There is something developmental but nothing dialectical about Spencer’s “rigid and mechanical” formula.¹⁰⁵ And its political implications are as conservative as Spencer was. Industrial capitalism with its social division of labor is the supreme example of definite coherent heterogeneity. In the words of Spencer’s disciple William Graham Sumner, “the sentimentalists have been preaching for a century notions of rights and equality, of the dignity, wisdom and power of the proletariat, which have filled the minds of ignorant men with impossible dreams.” Society must be left alone to work out its destiny, “through hard work and self-denial (in technical language, labor and capital).” Should we arrive at “socialism, communism, and nihilism,” “the fairest conquests of civilization” will be lost to class war or mob rule.¹⁰⁶

As is typical of Stalinist disputation, vulgar determinism in the abstract accompanies an opportunistic voluntarism in practice. In George Orwell’s *1984*, one day Oceania would be at war with Eurasia — it had always been at war with

¹⁰¹Emma Goldman, “Victims of Morality,” in *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman (New York: Random House, 1972), 127.

¹⁰²Ludwig Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” in *The Young Hegelians*, 110.

¹⁰³Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology* (6th ed.; New York: D. Appleton, 1912), 367.

¹⁰⁴I use the phrase “Social Darwinism” as it is usually used, but it is not literally accurate. Spencer’s so-called Darwinism actually preceded Darwin’s Darwinism, which might be called Biological Spencerism. Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), 122–125.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰⁶William Graham Sumner, “Sociology,” in *Darwinism and the American Intellectual: An Anthology*, ed. R. Jackson Wilson (2[nd] ed.; Chicago, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1989), 123, 124.

Eurasia — the next day, Oceania would be at war with Eastasia, had always been at war with Eastasia.¹⁰⁷ It is the same with John Clark, the Director's Emmanuel Goldstein. Bookchin says that "it is difficult to believe that from the mid-1970s until early 1993, the author was a close associate of mine," that they "had a personal friendship that lasted almost two decades." Betrayed and insulted by his erstwhile acolyte, the Director says: "How could Clark have so completely misjudged me for almost two decades?" A better question is: how could Bookchin the Great have so completely misjudged Clark, his intellectual inferior, for almost two decades? How could so principled and penetrating an intellect as Bookchin's have failed for so long to detect this snake in the grass? The Director's answer, such as it is, is Orwellian. "Our ideas," he says, "indeed, our ways of thinking, are basically incompatible": "I could never accept Clark's Taoism as part of social ecology." And yet, the Director continues, "despite the repugnance I felt for some of his ideas, I never wrote a line against Clark in public" — not until he had no further use for Clark, or Clark had no further use for him. Bookchinism is basically incompatible with Clarkism, starting today. Bookchinism has always been basically incompatible with Clarkism, starting today. Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia, starting today.

I have no interest in defending Clark, who is at least as much in need of excuses as Bookchin for their long-term relationship. And Taoism is so peripheral to anarchism that how reconcilable they may be hardly matters to me. But there's something important, and disturbing, about the way the Director is going about discrediting Clark. Clark, says Bookchin, came to anarchism *from the right*, he was "never a socialist." As a young man, Clark was a "right-wing anti-statist," a Goldwater Republican in 1964: "Causes such as the workers' movement, collectivism, socialist insurrection, and class struggle, not to mention [so why does he mention them?] the revolutionary socialist and anarchist traditions, would have been completely alien to him as a youth; they were certainly repugnant to the right-wing ideologues of the mid-1960s, who afflicted [sic] leftists with conservatism, cultural conventionality, and even red-baiting." (The last part of the sentence makes no sense, but the quotation is accurate.)¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet Books, 1950), 15, 31–32.

¹⁰⁸As if this purely speculative reverse McCarthyism wasn't sleazy enough, the Director aims another blow below the belt. "In any case, 1964, the year Goldwater ran for president, was also a year when the best and brightest Americans of Clark's generation were journeying to Mississippi (in the famous Mississippi Summer), often risking their lives to register the state's poorest and most subjugated blacks for the franchise. Although Mississippi is separated from Louisiana, Clark's home state, by only a river, nothing Clark ever told me remotely suggests that he was part of this important civil rights movement." Instead Clark, "at the robust age of nineteen," was presumably in the personalistic pursuit of a college degree. And where was the 43 year old Bookchin in 1964? 43 may not be as robust an age as 19, but one did not need to be robust to register blacks at that time and place, only courageous and dedicated. Three civil-rights workers were murdered that summer. Men of Bookchin's generation, such as Walter Reuther and Martin Luther King, Jr., were not too old for civil rights marches, civil disobedience and other actions placing their lives and liberty at hazard. All we know about Bookchin when *he* was at the robust age of 19, in 1940, is that he was kicked out of the Communist Party and went over to the Trotskyists, which is like changing deck chairs on the Titanic. If Bookchin in all his life has ever taken a risk or broken a law or done anything for anarchism or revolution except generating verbiage, he has never said so, and he is not a man to be modest about his accomplishments. According to John P. Clark, Bookchin's boldest political act was once complaining about the quality of Ben & Jerry's ice cream. I don't know if a few hundred or a few thousand young Americans participated in the Mississippi Summer, but I do know that tens of millions of their peers did not. But many went on to participate in the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the feminist movement, the

Assuming all that to be true, what are the implications for anarchist revolution? Apparently, anybody who has never been an old-fashioned revolutionary leftist can never be, or be trusted to be, a revolutionary anarchist. Bookchin, who accuses Clark and other alleged Lifestyle Anarchists of elitism, is imposing a severely limited, exclusivist entrance requirement on the millions of Americans who, he claims, are itching for anarchist revolution. The Director is the elitist. There are very few living Americans who have ever been socialists or left-anarchists. In opinion polls, twice as many Americans identify themselves as conservatives than as liberals, and liberals are well to the right of the few people who identify themselves as leftists (“progressives” is the current euphemism). If a right-wing background disqualifies one as a revolutionary anarchist, then there will be no American anarchist revolution, because there just won’t be enough revolutionaries. So long as ideologues like Bookchin continue to think in terms of left and right, so long as they quarrel on those terms, the right will always win, or if the left wins, it won’t make much difference. Bookchin’s nostalgia for the Left That Was is literally reactionary.

Negative and Positive Freedom

Some of the Director’s readers must be puzzled by his terms negative and positive freedom, especially if they know what they mean. Negative freedom is “*liberty from*,” positive freedom is “a fleshed-out concept of *freedom for*.” Bookchin does not define these opaque expressions, he simply assigns them as gang colors. Lifestyle Anarchists “celebrate” negative freedom — also known as autonomy — in keeping with their bourgeois individualist liberal heritage. Social Anarchism, in contrast, “espouses a substantive ‘freedom *to*.’”¹⁰⁹ It “seeks to create a free society, in which humanity as a whole — and hence the individual as well — enjoys the advantages of free political and economic institutions.” The Director has made a category mistake. What a conception of freedom means and what kind of society would realize it are questions of a different order. And these particular formulations are also empirically false in obvious ways. The celebration of individual freedom is not the definition of Lifestyle Anarchism, for liberals and laissez-faire libertarians also celebrate individual freedom, but they are not anarchists.¹¹⁰ The quest for a free society cannot define Social Anarchism, for, as Bookchin says, “many lifestyle anarchists eagerly plunge into direct actions that are ostensibly intended to achieve socialistic goals.”¹¹¹ Social Anarchists may be right and Lifestyle Anarchists may be wrong, but not by definition, especially in the absence of definitions.

Although he never explains what these phrases mean, the Director does

environmentalist movement and the other oppositional currents of the 60’s. It is thanks to a few of them that anarchism escaped extinction and commenced the modest recovery which continues to this day. To use participation in one small albeit conspicuous project as a litmus test of anarcho-revolutionary bona fides 30 years later is to write off an entire generation — the last generation, according to Bookchin, which even came close to realizing a “utopistic” revolution.

¹⁰⁹Bookchin, *SALA*, 4.

¹¹⁰As Bookchin confirms, with respect to the libertarians, in *SALA*, 5, and in “Whither Anarchism” (second paragraph) with respect to the liberals.

¹¹¹Bookchin just had to throw in “ostensibly.” He’s constitutionally incapable of acknowledging that anyone he disagrees with might be acting in good faith. Yet by his own admission he’s a poor judge of character, having misjudged the blackguard Clark for so many years.

say where he got them: Sir Isaiah Berlin's well-known essay "Two Concepts of Liberty."¹¹² Although this forceful polemic was at one time much discussed by philosophers, it never quite made the distinction clear. Generally, negative freedom means freedom from prevention of action, from interference, or as John P. Clark says, "freedom from coercion."¹¹³ Positive freedom is the freedom — I think "capability" or "power" is the better word — to accomplish one's purposes. The reader who finds this confusing or hair-splitting has my sympathy. What use is freedom of choice with nothing worth choosing? How is the power to act possible without some protection from interference? I am persuaded by Gerald C. MacCallum's argument "to regard freedom as always one and the same triadic relation, but recognize that various contending parties disagree with each other in what they understand to be the ranges of the term variables." Freedom is a relationship among an agent, "preventing conditions" [such] as constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers," and "actions or conditions of character or circumstance."¹¹⁴

What Sir Isaiah did make quite clear was his judgment as to the political implications of the two concepts. He was writing during the Cold War and he was strongly committed to the West. Negative freedom implies limits on state action, but positive freedom is totalitarian in tendency.¹¹⁵ At least since Rousseau, many theorists of positive freedom have, like Bookchin, equated freedom with identification with the general will. Real freedom consists, not in unconstrained individual indulgence, but in fulfilling one's — or everyone's — true nature. In the case of humans, rising above their animal origins, self-realization occurs in and through the social whole. As Bookchin has approvingly written, "Bakunin emphatically prioritized the social over the individual."¹¹⁶ It can happen that the individual, as Rousseau put it, can and should be forced to be free. I do not care for the prospect of society prioritizing me. Negative freedom is not necessarily anarchist — Berlin is no anarchist — but positive freedom, he thinks, is necessarily authoritarian. This of course is diametrically opposed to Bookchin's use of the distinction, which explains why Bookchin keeps the specifics of Berlin's argument out of his own.

Berlin's own census of major philosophers of freedom shows that his distinction is no predictor of their politics. Adherents of negative freedom include Occam, Erasmus, Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, Constant, J.S. Mill, Tocqueville, Jefferson, Burke, and Paine. Adherents of positive freedom include Plato,

¹¹²Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958).

¹¹³John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), 59. Note that this book was published when Clark was a Bookchinist. I suspect this was where, and why, Bookchin came across the distinction.

¹¹⁴Gerald C. MacCullum, Jr., "Negative and Positive Freedom," 76 *Philosophical Review* (July 1967), 312, 314. His "claim is only about what makes talk concerning the freedom of agents intelligible," *ibid.*, 314, and I acknowledge that there are intelligible ways of speaking of freedom which fall outside the formulation, such as freedom in the sense of political participation. John Gray, "On Negative and Positive Liberty," in *Conceptions of Liberty in Political Philosophy*, ed. Zbigniew Pelczynski and John Gray (London: The Athlone Press, 1984), 326. I prefer to refer to democracy as democracy, not freedom or political freedom, so as not to beg the question of democracy's relation to freedom in the personal sense. The concept of freedom should not be identified with what Bookchin calls the forms of freedom by definitional fiat. The Director's beloved Athenian citizens, for instance, enjoyed political freedom but were almost entirely without personal freedom. Black, AAL, 66.

¹¹⁵Berlin *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 6.

¹¹⁶Bookchin, *SALA*, 5.

Epictetus, St. Ambrose, Montesquieu, Spinoza, Kant, Herder, Rousseau, Hegel, Fichte, Marx, Bukharin, Comte, Carlyle, T.H. Green, Bradley, and Bosanquet.¹¹⁷ Bookchin has accused Lifestyle Anarchists of perpetuating the pernicious German philosophical tradition which led from Fichte and Kant through Stirner to Heidegger and Hitler.¹¹⁸ (For obviously self-serving reasons he skips over Hegel and Marx, and does not remind the reader of his former admiration for “Fichte’s stirring prose.”) All these gentlemen adhered, as does Bookchin, to the positive concept of freedom.

For Bookchin, of all the malignant influences on Lifestyle Anarchism, Max Stirner seems to be the worst. Stirner with his individualist, arational, amoral egoism epitomizes more of what Bookchin loathes than any other classical anarchist thinker. In 1976, the Director’s disciple John Clark devoted an entire book to refuting Stirner’s heresies, which had not received so much hostile attention since Marx and Engels wrote *The German Ideology* 130 years before. Stirner, then, should be an exponent, maybe the ultimate exponent of negative freedom. Rather he is the ultimate exponent of positive freedom: “Who is it that is to become free? You, I, we. I, therefore, am the kernel that is to be delivered from all wrappings and — freed from all cramping shells. What is left when I have been freed from everything that is not I? Only I; nothing but I. But freedom has nothing further to offer to this I himself. As to what is now to happen further after I have become free, freedom is silent — as our governments, when the prisoner’s time is up, merely let him go, thrusting him out into abandonment.”¹¹⁹ For Stirner as for Bookchin, negative freedom is insufficient at best, a formalistic mockery at worst.¹²⁰ What Bookchin calls positive freedom, Stirner calls “ownness” (*die Eigenheit*): “I have no objection to freedom, but I wish more than freedom for you: you should not merely *be rid* of what you do not want; you should not only be a ‘freeman,’ you should be an ‘owner [*Eigner*],’ too.”¹²¹

Even if it has some utility in other contexts, the distinction between positive and negative freedom does nothing to differentiate Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. On the contrary, as John Clark says, “anarchism is the one major political theory which has attempted to synthesize the values of negative and positive freedom into a single, more comprehensive view of human liberty.”¹²² Bookchin has never demonstrated that any Lifestyle Anarchist espouses negative freedom to the exclusion of positive freedom. His misappropriates the distinction to try to infuse some content into his own incoherent dichotomy between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism, but the infusion does not relieve the confusion. The Director is, as so often, showing off by pretending to be more knowing than he really is.

¹¹⁷MacCallum, “Negative and Positive Freedom,” 321 n. 7.

¹¹⁸Bookchin, *SALA*, 11, 29–30, 50, 61.

¹¹⁹Max Stirner, “Art and Religion,” in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 344.

¹²⁰Clark, *Max Stirner’s Egoism*, 61.

¹²¹Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142. Stirner goes on to characterize (negative) freedom as “the doctrine of Christianity”! Ibid. The quotation also gives the lie to the accusation by Marx, Kropotkin and Bookchin that Stirner’s egoism is for the individual egoist alone (in which case the charge of elitism would have some merit). Stirner exhorts “you” — the reader — to assert *your* ownness. The effectiveness of his own egoism is multiplied by the ownness of others. Cf. For Ourselves, *The Right to Be Greedy* (Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited, n.d.).

¹²²Clark, *Max Stirner’s Egoism*, 61.

Murray Bookchin, One-Dimensional Man

My first time around, in *Anarchy after Leftism*, I gave Bookchin's history of recent anarchism the scant attention it deserves. This time I'll scrutinize it in more detail. Basically it goes like this. At the economic base, there are periods of "apparent capitalist stabilization" or "capitalist stability," of "social peace," and then there are periods of "deep social unrest," sometimes giving rise to "revolutionary situations." When capitalism is crisis-ridden, Social Anarchism "has usually held center stage" as far as anarchism goes. When capitalism is, or seems to be, stabilized — the ambiguity is a big help to the argument — then the Lifestyle Anarchists come to the fore to flaunt their cultural and individual eccentricities.

The first thing to be said about this analysis is that it reads more like a justification than a critique of Lifestyle Anarchism. It looks more like a reasonable social division of labor between what the Director calls the two "extremes." When social revolution is a possibility, let those so disposed lead the way. When revolution is not on history's agenda, it makes sense to uphold the black flag on the cultural and individual terrains. Better Lifestyle Anarchism than no anarchism at all (although Bookchin would surely disagree). Somebody has to keep alive what the Spanish anarchists called "the idea" in a climate of social reaction.

But that was just the first thing. Here's the second: a time of capitalist stabilization can also be a time of social unrest. The 1900's and the 1960's were periods of prosperity *and* protest (both liberal and radical). In the years before the First World War, anarcho-communists and especially anarcho-syndicalists were as conspicuous as they would ever be in the United States and several other countries. Since Bookchin's thesis is empirically inconsistent, you can read this fact as either proving or disproving it, which is just to say that the thesis is unverifiable, unfalsifiable and meaningless. As for the 1960's, there is an unbridgeable chasm between Bookchin's recent junk Marxism and his own earlier, accurate conclusion that 60's unrest was important precisely because it was *not* the reflex of an economic crisis, but rather a qualitative crisis of everyday life. The May-June 1968 uprising in France "exploded the myth that the wealth and resources of modern industrial society can be used to absorb all revolutionary opposition."¹²³ Inexplicably, in the 1970's the same wealth and resources underwrote a period of popular quiescence and social reaction which persists to this day.

No matter which determinant of anarchist fortunes you get out of Bookchin — "capitalist stabilization" or "social unrest" — it fails as an explanation. If you go for capitalist stabilization, that explains why (as he concedes) Lifestyle Anarchism was more influential than Social Anarchism in the 60's, but fails to explain why Lifestyle Anarchism increased its lead over Social Anarchism through the 1970's, a period of recession and retrenchment. That was the decade in which emerged such Lifestyle Anarchist themes as primitivism, anti-organization, zerowork, and the critique of technology. Bookchin is even less of an economist than he is an ecologist, so it's hard to tell what he means by capitalist stabilization. It's quite a capacious concept if it encompasses the recession of the early 70's and the prosperity of the late 90's. The suspicion

¹²³Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 249 (quoted), 249–250 & *passim*.

arises that this is not an economic concept at all, but rather a synonym for social reaction and an antonym for social unrest.

The social unrest explanation is equally flawed. According to this theory, Social Anarchism should have dominated in the 1960's and Lifestyle Anarchism thereafter, with a resurgence of Social Anarchism in the 90's when, the Director assures us, the system is creating "mass discontent."¹²⁴ That's not what happened; that's not even what Bookchin says happened. Rather, for thirty years or more, in times of protest as in times of privatism, the Lifestyle Anarchists have gained on the Social Anarchists. That is exactly what Bookchin is complaining about. The Director's thesis, in either version, does not meet the tests of reason *or* experience.

Here is a more accurate description of the last 40 years of North American anarchist history.¹²⁵ In 1960, anarchism was dying and nearly dead. By then, according to George Woodcock — who once believed in it — anarchism was "a ghost that inspires neither fear among governments nor hope among peoples nor even interest among newspapermen." Moreover, "nor is there any reasonable likelihood of a renaissance of anarchism as we have known it since the foundation of the First International in 1864; history suggests that movements which fail to take the chances it offers them are never born again."¹²⁶ In 1966, two academics who set out "to take anarchism seriously" — and did — nonetheless acknowledged that "few today entertain either hope or fear that government might be abolished as easily as it was called into being."¹²⁷ After 40 years of decline, anarchism was a historical curiosity not far from suffering the fate of the Shakers.

In 1967, Woodcock reconsidered. There was still no "obvious" — he should have said "overt" or "avowed" — anarchist revival, but he detected an anarchist influence in America on the New Left and especially the counter-culture.¹²⁸ But this anarchism, he thought, was not the revival of the classical ideology but something new. He was right. The new anarchism developed, not out of

¹²⁴Bookchin, *SALA*, 1.

¹²⁵As in AAL, I prefer to confine the scope of my argument to American and Canadian anarchism, corresponding to Bookchin's subject in *SALA*. I know far more about recent anarchist history in these countries than in any others, and it would be reckless of me, not to mention chauvinistic, to project that history onto other parts of the world. But I know, as my foreign readers know, that nontraditional and post-leftist anarchisms have emerged in strength in many countries, among them France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Greece. They are present in Mexico and Quebec. They are even manifest, and in sophisticated forms, in Turkey and India. Apparently the American or Anglo-American individualist tradition so hateful to Bookchin is not necessary for Lifestyle Anarchism to spread.

¹²⁶George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland, OH & New York: Meridian Books, 1962), 468.

¹²⁷Leonard I. Krimmerman and Lewis Perry, "Foreword," *Patterns of Anarchy: A Collection of Writings on the Anarchist Tradition*, ed. Leonard I. Krimmerman and Lewis Perry (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), xvi, xv. This is the best anarchist anthology in English. I have a personal reminiscence to put in here. I was in junior high school and high school in 1965–1969. In one class — I think it was a seventh-grade literature class — we read Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience." It was the only anarchist text which any of us had ever read. Our reaction was unanimous. We rose up, as one, to denounce it.

¹²⁸George Woodcock, "Anarchism Revisited," *Commentary* (Aug. 1968), quoted and summarized in Michael Lerner, "Anarchism and the American Counter-Culture," in *Anarchism Today*, ed. David E. Apter and James Joll (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1971), 34–59 (Woodcock quoted, 34). This is the same Michael Lerner who now serves as a court intellectual to the Clintons, especially Hillary, who seems to do most of their deep thinking, such as it is.

the old versions, but out of the youth culture.¹²⁹ It could do so because the youth culture's tendency was anarchistic. Anarchism was the best theoretical synthesis of the New Left and the counter-culture. Unfortunately, anarchism had sunk so far into obscurity that few radicals had the opportunity to make the connections to anarchism which are so obvious in retrospect. Also, Bookchin is not all wrong to identify an anti-theoretical tendency in the youth culture which delayed widespread awareness of its anarchist affinities. Although we speak of "the 60's," implying a decade of dissidence and dissonance, the radical phase lasted only some five or six years. The rush of events was overwhelming, and a lot of people were, yes, going through changes. When militants felt the lack of theory, their first inclination was to turn to what was available, not what was appropriate — to Marxism, not anarchism.¹³⁰ That turn was a turnoff; many lost their way. The movement wasted time, unaware how little it had left.

No one has ever explained to my satisfaction the left's abrupt freefall in late 1970. It astonished me then and it astonishes me now. I see now, as to some extent I suspected at the time, that the decline was exaggerated by the media. The 70's were not the times of flatline social reaction which Bookchin makes them out to be. I also appreciate now that most people cannot indefinitely sustain a revolutionary pitch of intensity in the indefinite absence of revolution itself. Even some who felt regret at the decline of activism felt some relief too. Whatever the explanation, the decade was critical for the development of contemporary North American anarchism.

Already in the 60's, the vestigial anarchist groups and projects were, relative to their size, inundated by the few young radicals who consciously identified themselves as anarchists. Intergenerational friction might ensue, as it did in the Industrial Workers of the World.¹³¹ In the 70's, 60's veterans and their younger counterparts of similar background and outlook increasingly identified themselves as anarchists, participating in existing projects — mostly publications — and starting new ones. Mostly they came from the campus and/or the counter-culture. Thanks to a flurry of academic interest in anarchism which continued out of the 60's, anarchist histories, biographies, anthologies and classics appeared almost in abundance, sometimes from mainstream commercial publishers like Dover, Doubleday, Schocken, Norton, Dell, Random House, Beacon Press, etc., and from university presses. Ramparts Press published Bookchin's *Post Scarcity Anarchism* in 1971. Important anarchist presses commenced which still publish: Black & Red in Detroit, Black Rose Books in Montreal, Left Bank Books in Seattle. One of the original underground newspapers, Detroit's *Fifth Estate*, went anarchist in 1975 and immediately became influential. Other noteworthy anarchist tabloids included *No Limits* (Madison, Wisconsin) and *Front Line* (Washington, DC). Not in 70 years had anarchist ideas been so accessible to North Americans. More and more people, myself included, appropriated some of these ideas, sometimes critically, sometimes not — and sometimes added their own.

¹²⁹Lerner, "Anarchism and the American Counter-Culture"; David E. Apter, "The Old Anarchism and the New — Some Comments," in Apter and Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today*, 7–8.

¹³⁰According to Bookchin, "When the rebellious 1960s bubbled up after a decade of social quiescence and numbing mediocrity, lifestyle anarchism enjoyed great popularity among the countercultural elements, while social anarchism exercised a measure of influence with some New Leftists." This is nostalgic nonsense. No kind of anarchism enjoyed "great popularity" with anybody.

¹³¹XXXX

The distinctive novelty of the 60's persisted: the youth culture connection to anarchism. Punk rock is the conspicuous example. Punks have been explicitly involved with anarchism, as ideology or affectation, for over twenty years. Some of the earliest punk bands, such as CRASS, openly proselytized for "the idea," and some still do. The nexus goes beyond punk music as such, or any style of music as such. Subcultures oriented to other marginal music genres (industrial, hip hop, etc.) are also connected, and music is not the only or the only important expression of youth culture. Deviations in diet, drugs, sex, religion, reading tastes, and defections from leftism or libertarianism — usually in combinations — any or all of these, with or without music, are typical of those who nowadays become anarchists, mostly Lifestyle Anarchists. Anarcho-leftism, I should add, has also gained support from the youth culture connection, especially as represented on campus, "college boys in designer hardhats."¹³² The formulas of classical anarchism provide the belief structures so necessary to reduce to modest order the intellectual confusion of anarchists like Jon Bekken, Jeff Stein, Tom Wetzel and Chaz Bufe who could never quite cut the umbilical cord to the campus. The traditional leftists got a spillover share from the general resurgence of anarchism — but not a proportionate share. It is in that context, and in awareness of its ominous implications, that the Director denounces the Lifestyle Anarchists while he still can. But it is already too late. The men who will carry him out are already at the door. The women too.

The youth/counter-culture connection has its drawbacks. Most North American anarchists are younger than most San anarchists, but not nearly as well adapted to their environment. Even if they are in — or have been in — college, their general education is inferior to what was provided in the 60's and 70's. This is one of the few points on which Bookchin and I, who have both toiled to teach them, probably concur. Song lyrics are really not the most effective vehicle for conveying political ideas, except maybe Fascist or Fundamentalist Christian ideas. Necessarily the message is drastically oversimplified even if the ideas are expressed with all the amplitude the form permits. Some punk anarchists are as stupid as they are ignorant. For many it's just a phase they're going through, although there always seem to be more — and more of them — to take their place.

Nonetheless the point is that, since the 60's, there have always been open channels of access and attraction, however imperfect, between anarchists and young people. The channels have not been as broad or deep for decades, not since the anarchists lost influence over the classical workers' movement and then that movement withered away. Without such channels, a theory or ideology grows old and dies. I am as exasperated with much of what passes for anarchism as Bookchin is, and I said so a decade sooner,¹³³ with better reasons.¹³⁴ But potential anarchists have to come from somewhere, and youth/alternative culture is where they've mostly come from for over 30 years. Exceptional individuals also wander in from unexpected places, as they always have — as Bakunin and Kropotkin wandered in from the Czarist aristocracy — and these exceptionals often contribute ideas and energy out of all proportion to their

¹³²Black, *Beneath the Underground*, 32.

¹³³Black, "Anarchism and other Impediments to Anarchy," in *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays*, 149–151 (originally written in 1985).

¹³⁴Further elaborated in Black, *Friendly Fire*, 181–193, 199–201, and Bob Black, *Beneath the Underground* (XXXX),

numbers. But unless a lot of people who are not, or not as, extraordinary also wander in — as at certain times and in certain places they have, in large numbers — anarchism has no future except as an ancestor cult and a magnet for crackpots.

The Director may be cycling, but anarchism isn't. The leftist varieties are stagnant or in decay. In North America the most ambitious recent effort at anarcho-leftist organizing, the Love & Rage federation, just went through a three-way split. In Britain, Class War split in two: the final issue of their newspaper admitted their ineffectuality. As organizationalists, these leftists stand self-condemned. Some anarcho-leftist projects may be surviving artificially on life-support. Rich anarchists, like rich people generally, tend to be conservatives. Noam Chomsky subsidizes select anarchist projects. So does the triple-platinum English band Chumbawamba, the only anarchists who have ever performed on "The Tonight Show," the best source of anti-Unabomber jokes. AK Press, Bookchin's publisher, is among their favorite charities, but the band has done nothing for the *Green Anarchist* defendants who are on trial (two so far were convicted, but their convictions were reversed on appeal, one acquitted, with two to go) for nothing more than publishing news reports of acts of resistance. No quantity of financial formaldehyde preserves against decay forever.

Whither Anarchism?

If this is, as Bookchin's title implies, the question, it is one for which he has no answer. In "The Left That Was," the appendix to *SALA*, he all but concedes that the classical left is forever defunct.¹³⁵ Long ago he announced that "the traditional workers' movement will never reappear."¹³⁶ He does not discuss the social composition of the "millions of people today" who experience "the sense of powerlessness" which renders them "a potentially huge body of supporters" of anarchism.¹³⁷ Who are they? They cannot be bourgeois, for the bourgeois are by definition the enemy. They cannot be proletarians, for the proletariat, according to Bookchin, has been bought off and bourgeoisified. They cannot be the underclass, the idle poor, for these are the "lumpens" Bookchin says are actual or potential fascists.¹³⁸ So who's left for the left?

After repeatedly denouncing Lifestyle Anarchists for their personalism, individualism, narcissism, navel-gazing and psychologism, the Director himself defines the yearning millions of potential anarchists in purely personalistic, psychological terms, in terms of their "sense of powerlessness." Are they powerless, or do they just think they are? Do they need revolution or just therapy? If all they need is therapy, the system is surely capable of supplying it (for a price). An awareness of powerlessness is surely as old as its reality. The slaves and

¹³⁵Bookchin, *SALA*, 66–86, esp. 86.

¹³⁶Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 28.

¹³⁷Bookchin, *SALA*, 1.

¹³⁸"Mere opposition to the state may well unite fascistic lumpens with Stirnerite lumpens, a phenomenon that is not without its historical precedents." Bookchin, *SALA*, 61. As the Director refers to "precedents," in the plural, there must be at least two historical examples of this bizarre union. Regrettably, Bookchin identifies not even one, perhaps because not even one such example exists. I have searched the Marxist scriptures in vain for a definition of the lumpenproletariat. As far as I can tell, operationally, a proletarian is a lumpen who follows Marxist orders, and a lumpen is a proletarian who does not.

peasants of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia must have known that they were powerless, but such awareness more often results in resignation than revolution. Bookchin cannot explain why powerless people sometimes revolt but usually don't. For that matter, Bookchin can't explain anything else either.

According to the Director, the enormities and the eccentricities of the Lifestyle Anarchists are "in no small measure" responsible for the anarchist failure to recruit and deploy "a potentially huge body of supporters" ripe for revolution.¹³⁹ That's an extraordinary measure of blame to heap upon an imperceptible fraction of the population with no access to the mainstream media. Absolutely no evidence supports the assumption that anything anarchists of any orientation have done or not done in recent years has repelled vast numbers of people. There is absolutely no evidence that vast numbers of Americans have ever encountered anarchism in any form. Bookchin brags of having lectured at every major university in the United States, which provided him forums on a scale no Lifestyle Anarchists have ever had access to. Here was his opportunity to convert strategically situated cadres of the youth intelligentsia to his advanced ideology. Here he could have gone far toward strangling Lifestyle Anarchism in the cradle. He failed. Or rather, he never even tried. His self-promotional careerism took priority. Is it accidental that it was only when his career was over that Bookchin assailed the Lifestyle Anarchists?

According to the Director, thousands of decadent Lifestyle Anarchists have discouraged many millions of other Americans from embracing anarchism in a version Bookchin approves of. What discouraged many millions of Americans from embracing anarchism in the many decades before Lifestyle Anarchism came along, he does not say. (Did the machinations of Leninists like himself have anything to do with it?) One suspects that anarchism's unpopularity had more to do with anarchism in general than with any of its particular versions. Bookchin's fantastic exaggeration of the influence of Lifestyle Anarchists corresponds to his fantastic exaggeration of his own influence. The Lifestyle Anarchists must possess very powerful juju in order to outshout the voice of Reason as it booms forth so often and so eloquently from Murray Bookchin.

As in *SALA*, the Director rebukes the Lifestyle Anarchists — belatedly including John Clark — for elitism. This dictum, again unexplained, makes no more sense than it ever did. It is not clear why collectivist elitism — vanguardism — is superior to individualist elitism. Bookchin decries "abstract individualism" but never entertains the possibility that what his enemies espouse is concrete individualism, what Vaneigem calls radical subjectivity. Nor does he consider the possibility that what he espouses is abstract collectivism, not concrete collectivism (community). Abstract collectivism is totalitarianism, which is much worse than abstract individualism (classical liberalism). Elitism implies exclusivity, but Bookchin is the one who is reading thousands of anarchists out of the movement. Lifestyle Anarchism is intolerable, so Social Anarchism is intolerant. The movement "must become infected with intolerance against all who retard its growth by subservience to spontaneity,"¹⁴⁰ as the lawyer Lenin

¹³⁹Bookchin, *SALA*, 1. The Director is much given to the double-negative grammatical gambit by which he is able to say something implausible or defamatory while reserving the right to back away from its literal meaning if he has to. Thus he will say that some supposed tenet of Lifestyle Anarchism is "not unlike" a tenet of fascism — technically, he hasn't called anybody a fascist, but the emotive impact is almost as strong as if he had.

¹⁴⁰V.I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (New York: International Publishers, 1943), 44.

put it.¹⁴¹ There may be a sense in which some so-called Lifestyle Anarchists might be elitists, *i.e.*, they aspire to excellence and they want to level up. But they want *everybody* to level up — they want company — they want a world of what Raoul Vaneigem calls “masters without slaves,” not out of pity or paternalism but because they crave a community of fulfilled, enriched, masterful other individuals to relate to. John Simon, referring to the late American critic Dwight Macdonald, admitted that Macdonald was an elitist of sorts, but “an elitist, then, who would eagerly help others join the club, who would gladly have abandoned his badge of superiority for the sake of a world full of coequal elitists.”¹⁴² Only in that sense are post-left anarchists elitists.

Bookchin’s proposed means of overthrowing hierarchy are patently hierarchical. Anarchists require “an organization ready and able to play a significant role in moving great masses of workers.” The vanguard is to lead, the masses are to follow, as usual. Bookchin would no doubt protest that he envisions something more dialectical, but on his own account, dialectics is not mere reciprocity, “some things are in fact very significantly more determining than others.” The organization is significantly more determining than the masses — that’s its purpose. This is Leninism — not metaphorical Leninism, not swear-word Leninism — it’s the real thing. The dog has returned to his vomit. The mantle of leftism which Bookchin has donned is a shroud.

Appendix A: Book Filled with Lies

The latest of the Director’s ironic indiscretions is his heavy reliance on Edwin Wilmsen’s *Land Filled with Flies* to bash the anarcho-primitivists. In *SALA*, Bookchin asserted an affinity between anarcho-primitivism and post-modernism, with sublime indifference to the fact that post-modernism has no harsher critic than John Zerzan.¹⁴³ To any reader of Wilmsen not in thrall to an ulterior motive, Wilmsen is blatantly a post-modernist. One of his reviewers, Henry Harpending, is a biological anthropologist who is charmingly innocent of exposure to PoMo. He had “a lot of trouble” with the beginning of the book, which contains “an alarming discussion of people and things being interpellated in the introduction and in the first chapter, but my best efforts with a dictio-

¹⁴¹As some of my enemies, such as Fred Woodworth and his dittohead Chaz Bufe delight in reporting, I too am a lawyer. I don’t practice law. I never did, except as an occasional favor to friends or anti-authoritarians — *Processed World*, for instance, and a few prisoners, such as anarchist Avi Naftel. My status is as an “inactive” member of the California Bar, meaning that I can’t practice law even in California. I was never a litigator. My expertise is in legal research and writing. Exceptionally, last year I won an administrative appeal on behalf of an SSI disability claimant, which I could do because anyone can represent a claimant in Social Security proceedings. Does any anarchist have a problem with that? No Social Anarchist or anarcho-leftist, as far as I know, has ever denigrated Bakunin and Kropotkin for being Russian nobles. I haven’t bothered to collect examples of anarchist lawyers, although I often come across them as I read about anarchism, but two prominent examples that I happen to remember are the American individualist Lysander Spooner and the Italian collectivist Luigi Galleani.

¹⁴²John Simon, “Introduction” to Dwight Macdonald, *Against the American Grain: Essays on the Effects of Mass Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), vi.

¹⁴³John Zerzan, “The Catastrophe of Postmodernism,” *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia & Columbia, MO: *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, 1994), 101–134.

nary left me utterly ignorant about what it all meant.”¹⁴⁴ Not surprisingly: the jargon (“interpellation of the subject”) is that of Louis Althusser, the structuralist Marxist who went mad and murdered his wife. Other anthropologists, more widely if not better read, have noticed Wilmsen’s post-modernism.¹⁴⁵ According to Thomas Headland, Wilmsen-style “revisionism is not just testing and rejecting hypotheses. Partially fueled by postmodernism, it seems to be ideologically driven.”¹⁴⁶

When it was published in 1989, *Land Filled with Flies* created a sensation, as it was meant to. Not only did it debunk the conventional wisdom, it did so as insultingly as possible. Not only did it furnish startling new data drawn from language, archeology and history in addition to fieldwork, it placed them in a pretentious theoretical apparatus. And it seethed with self-righteousness. By not recognizing the San for what they are — an underclass, the poorest of the poor under comprador capitalism — all other anthropologists were ideologically complicit in their subjugation. Since all anthropologists who have lived with the San are strongly committed to some notion of their rights and autonomy, naturally they were infuriated to be castigated as the dupes or tools of neo-colonialism. Rebuttals were soon forthcoming, and the controversy still rages. But Wilmsen enjoyed a strategic advantage: his quadruple-barreled shotgun attack. His linguistic, archeological, historical and ethnographic researches all converged on the same or on congruent conclusions.

Academics are the timid type in the best of circumstances. By temperament they prefer to be the big fish in a pond however small. The phrase “a school of fish” says as much about school as it does about fish. Specialization is the source and the limit of the academic’s authority. The expert in one subfield, such as ethnography, cannot help but lose self-confidence — something he probably never had very much of — when his certitudes are impeached by researches in three other subfields. He begins to wonder if he can be sure of even the evidence of his own senses (or what he remembers to be such). Wilmsen, by purporting to possess expertise in so many areas, intimidates the experts in all of them — at first, anyway. But scholars have started checking up on Wilmsen, just as anarchists have started checking up on Bookchin, and with similar consequences.

Most of Edwin Wilmsen’s observations of 70’s San are strikingly unlike the observations of all his dozen-odd predecessors in the field. Previous anthropologists had already reported how abruptly the San foraging life-way was succumbing to pressures ranging from protracted drought to entanglement in counterinsurgency in Southwest Africa to the sedentarizing, nationalizing policies of newly and nominally independent Botswana.¹⁴⁷ Nobody now denies that most of the San have been forced into the capitalist world-order at its very bottom level — and while it was happening, nobody did deny it — but only Bookchin is obscene enough to enthuse over this particular extension of the development of the productive forces. He doesn’t care what happens to people so long as he

¹⁴⁴Henry Harpending, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *Anthropos* 86 (1991), 314. He continues: “When I deduced that ‘interposing instruments of production between themselves and subjects of labor’ (48) meant spearing animals I gave up on the rich language of the theoretical arguments and decided to concentrate on the substance of the book.” *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵*E.g.*, Headland, “Revisionism in Ecological Anthropology,” 609; Michael S. Alvard, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (August-Oct. 1997), 610; Allyn Maclean Stearman, “Comment,” *ibid.*, 623.

¹⁴⁶Thomas N. Headland, “Reply,” *ibid.*, 624.

¹⁴⁷*E.g.*, Lee, *The !Kung San*, ch. 14 (“Economic and Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s”).

can turn it to polemical advantage.

Most of Wilmsen's fieldwork was done at a waterhole he calls CaeCae, whose inhabitants he labels, according to how he classifies their "principal production activities," as variously "pastoralist, independent, forager, reliant, and client" — a rather elaborate typology for just 16 households, only 9 of which were San.¹⁴⁸ There's almost a category for every San household, which rather defeats the purpose of categorization. In 1975–1976, only two households (both San) consisted of foragers, people deriving over 95% of their food from hunting and gathering; by 1979–1980, both subsisted on a combination of relief and casual wage-labor. As for the "independents," who owned some livestock but derived over half their subsistence from foraging, there were three households in the earlier period, two in the later.¹⁴⁹ Those in the other households did some hunting, but subsisted mainly by other means. Now even if Wilmsen's findings are accurate, they derive from a ridiculously small sample, 2–5 households at the most, of people who were obviously caught up in a process of proletarianization so accelerated that it would have made Karl Marx's head spin.

I read a bunch of reviews of Wilmsen's book, pro and con, before I read the book itself. Nothing prepared me for the sheer, shocking near-nothingness of its ethnographic database. Nothing Wilmsen says he found in the field, even if true, refutes or even calls into question what previous researchers discovered about far larger groups of San at earlier times and in other places. Wilmsen berates his predecessors for ignoring history (they didn't¹⁵⁰). But he's the one who has trouble accepting the possibility that, just as the people he studied were living differently in 1980 than they were in 1975, the people that Lee, DeVore, Howell, Tanaka and others studied before 1975 might have in a rather short time come to live differently. The historian himself needs historicizing.

Among Wilmsen's most controversial claims is for longstanding social stratification among the San and between the San and Bantu-speaking peoples. Since his ethnographic evidence is paltry, he relies mainly on evidence of inequality embedded in the languages of the San and their Bantu neighbors, such as the Herero. Unfortunately for Wilmsen, one of his reviewers, Henry Harpending, actually knows these languages. Wilmsen claims that a word the Herero apply to the San they also apply to their cattle, implying that the San are their chattels. However, the Herero apply the same word to the Afrikaaners, and nobody would say that the Afrikaaners are the Herero's property. The Herero word implies antagonism, not ownership, just as I do when I say that Freddie Baer is a cow. According to Harpending, Wilmsen derives sociological conclusions from bad puns: "This all, and much more, is fanciful drivel. It is like saying that the people of Deutschland are called 'Germans,' meaning 'infected people,' from the word 'germ' meaning a microorganism that causes illness. Almost every foray into linguistics appears to be entirely contrived, created from nothing, even when there is no reason to contrive anything." Yet another "bizarre analysis," this one drawn from San kinship terminology, Harpending characterizes thusly: "It is as if I were to claim that the English word grandmother refers to a custom whereby old people stay at home and grind wheat for the family bread and that grandmother is really a corruption of grindmother. Of course, if I were to write such nonsense it would never be published. Editors and referees would

¹⁴⁸ Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 225 (quoted), 225–226, 198.

¹⁴⁹ Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 225–226.

¹⁵⁰ *E.g.*, Lee, *The !Kung San*, ch. 3 ("The Dobe Area: Its Peoples and Their History").

laugh me out the door because they would be familiar with English. But hardly anyone in Europe and North America is familiar with !Kung and Otjiherero.”¹⁵¹

Wilmsen claims that archeology demonstrates — well, let’s let Bookchin say it in his own inimitable way — “The San people of the Kalahari are now known to have been gardeners before they were driven into the desert. Several hundred years ago, according to Edwin Wilmsen, San-speaking peoples were herding and farming [Wilmsen never says they were farmers, an ecological impossibility], not to speak of trading with neighboring agricultural chiefdoms in a network that extended to the Indian Ocean. By the year 1000, excavations have shown, their area, Dobe^[152], was populated by people who made ceramics, worked with iron, and herded cattle . . .”¹⁵³ These conclusions the Director serves up as indisputable facts. That they are not.

Karim Sadr has recently taken up Richard Lee’s exasperated proposal for independent review of all of Wilmsen’s controversial claims.¹⁵⁴ Sadr addresses only the archeological claims, and concludes that they are unsupported by what little evidence is available so far. Wilmsen’s ally Denbow, as Sadr has recently related, “says that his model is based on over 400 surveyed sites and excavations at 22 localities. The 400 or more surveyed sites, however, provide no relevant evidence. The model is really based on a dozen of the excavated sites, and of these only three have been adequately published.”¹⁵⁵ One does not have to be an expert to notice how forced and foolish some of the Wilmsenist arguments are. Rock paintings of uncertain age depicting stick figures, supposedly San, alongside cattle are claimed to be evidence that the San at some indefinite past time herded cattle. From this premise — even if true — is drawn the illogical conclusion that the San were working for Bantu bosses who owned the cattle (why the San were incapable of owning and herding their own cattle is not disclosed). As Sadr says, “the stick figures may be herding or stealing the cattle, or the Bushmen may have received the cattle in fair trade. To stretch the point, maybe the paintings represent wishful thinking. One alternative is as speculative as another.”¹⁵⁶

The main evidence cited to show San “encapsulation” by Iron Age Bantu speakers from the sixth to eleventh centuries is cattle and sheep remains found at San sites. The proportions, however, are extremely small, like those found in the Cape area where there were no Iron Age chiefdoms to encapsulate foragers. The evidence of all kinds is scanty and inconclusive. San might have been encapsulated at certain times and places, dominant at others. Nothing rules out the possibility “that they may very well have retained their autonomous hunting and gathering way of life until historic times.”¹⁵⁷ Wilmsen claims that when Europeans perceived hunter-gatherers (in 19th century parlance, “savages”),

¹⁵¹Harpending, review, 314.

¹⁵²Sorry to interrupt so compelling a narrative, but Dobe is only a small part of the Kalahari now inhabited by the San. Wilmsen’s fieldwork, for instance, was conducted elsewhere, far to the north. The Dobe area was where Lee, DeVore, Howell and associates focused their research in the 60’s and 70’s. Obviously Bookchin has not even bothered to read Wilmsen’s book from end to end, but only skimmed it to cull quotes for the purpose of advocacy.

¹⁵³Bookchin, *SALA*, 44.

¹⁵⁴Richard B. Lee and M. Guenther, “Errors Corrected or Compounded? A Reply to Wilmsen,” *Current Anthropology* 32 (1991): 298–305.

¹⁵⁵Karim Sadr, “Kalahari Archeology and the Bushman Debate,” *Current Anthropology* 38(1) (Feb. 1997), 105.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 111.

they were constructing them as such in accordance with ideological preconceptions. But when Herero pastoralists, refugees from a vicious German military campaign in Southwest Africa, passed through the Kalahari in 1904 and 1905, they, too, saw only San who lived entirely by foraging.¹⁵⁸ It is unlikely that these Bantus were readers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Lewis Henry Morgan or Friedrich Engels. It is almost as if the San would have been foragers even if there had been no Europeans to construct them.

Which brings us to the strictly historical content of Wilmsen's case. He made more, and more systematic use, of archival evidence than any previous ethnographer of the Kalahari. Identifying these sources and emphasizing their importance may well be his only lasting accomplishment.¹⁵⁹ What he made of them is something else again. Travelers reported seeing "Bushmen with cattle somewhere in the Kalahari in the nineteenth century," but since nobody ever doubted that Bushmen have long been in contact with cattle-raising Bantu, this does not prove anything about the Bushman way of life.¹⁶⁰ Wilmsen denounces the classical social evolutionists and also those he derides, with questionable cause, as their latter-day inheritors. But he shares with them the assumption that upon contact with the higher, more complex systems of society, the lower, simpler systems are subsumed or else wilt and wither away. To Wilmsen, as to Bookchin, it is unthinkable that foragers might hold their own against herders or farmers. They are, by definition, inferior! Exposure to a higher level of social organization is like exposure to pathogens to which the savages have no immunity. Trade or any other interaction necessarily subordinates them to those with a higher, more sophisticated form of society.

The only thing wrong with this assumption is everything. It begs the question. For all anybody knows, foragers might have dealt with their neighbors from a position of strength. If you look at the situation from a purely military perspective, for instance, the foragers had definite advantages over the Bantus. The Bantus permanently occupied villages whose locations were easy for an enemy to ascertain. The San often moved their campsites, taking their scanty personal property with them. The Bantus mainly lived off their cattle, whose whereabouts were easily known, and which could be stolen or killed. The San lived off of wild game and gathered plant food which no enemy could destroy or despoil them of. The Bantus could probably mobilize more manpower for war than the San, but to do what? There's no reason to think that Bushmen and Bantus have, or ever had, some cause of chronic conflict. Wilmsen's own argument holds otherwise. The peoples had some incentive to interact, perhaps some incentive to avoid each other otherwise, but no known incentive to wage permanent war on each other.

It is above all with history that Wilmsen seeks to overawe the anthropologists. His book is very much part of the historical turn the discipline has taken in the last twenty years. "People without history"¹⁶¹ nowhere exist. Berating other anthropologists as ahistorical possesses a strategic advantage for someone like Wilmsen in addition to its trendiness. When he contradicts the ethnography of a dozen predecessors, they are inclined to retort that either conditions

¹⁵⁸Harpending, review, 315.

¹⁵⁹Harpending, review, 315.

¹⁶⁰Harpending, review, 314.

¹⁶¹Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

changed or Wilmsen is wrong. It wouldn't be the first time an anthropologist with an ideological agenda went into the field and saw what he wanted to see. But if Wilmsen was a latecomer, perhaps a too-latecomer to the field, he was almost a pioneer in the archives where time is on his side. If the others point to the 1960's, he can point to the 1860's. Take that! But there is a crucial disadvantage too. There is no returning to the ethnographic 1960's, but the archival 1860's are available for others to visit. Wilmsen's critics did research his sources, as I researched Bookchin's, and with the same devastating results.

Richard B. Lee and Mathias Guenther sought out the traders' and travelers' diaries (in English, German and Afrikaans), the maps, the letters and the other sources on which Wilmsen relied to prove that the remote arid region of the Kalahari where the Lee/DeVore anthropologists found foraging San a century later was a major trade crossroads in the mid-nineteenth century. The Dobe area, according to Wilmsen, "pulsed" with commercial activity in which Europeans, Bantus and San were all heavily involved. On this account the San, however, were herders, not hunters — they were the serfs of the Bantus whose cattle they tended — and when disease decimated the cattle in the late nineteenth century, the San lost their livelihoods and were forced into the desert to forage ("literally devolved, probably very much against their will," in Bookchin's learned words). Even *a priori* there was reason to doubt this remarkable discovery. As Harpending writes: "There is more trade through Xai Xai than anywhere in South Africa! Yet Xai Xai is perhaps the most remote isolated place I have ever visited. I am ready to believe that the occasional trader showed up at Xai Xai, but I am not ready to believe that it was ever a hub of major trade routes."¹⁶²

According to Wilmsen, the records left by European traders confirm their commercial activity in the Dobe area. But not according to Lee and Guenther.¹⁶³ Repeatedly, the diaries and maps cited by Wilmsen to place these Europeans in or near the Dobe area actually place them hundreds of kilometers away. In fact, the Europeans say that they went well out of their way to avoid the area. It was unmapped — all the maps Wilmsen refers to display the Dobe area as a big blank spot — its commercial potential was limited, and its inhabitants, who were mostly the then-numerous San, were known to be hostile to intruders.

The chicanery doesn't end there. Wilmsen's linguistic flimflammy, previously noted, isn't confined to obscure African languages where he might hope to get away with it. He mistranslates German too. One of his most highly-hyped findings is in a German-language source which, he claims, identifies "oxen" at an archeological San site. The German word quoted actually means onions, not oxen. Lee and Guenther also adduce other mistranslations which even I, whose German is scanty, found fishy. In self-serving ways Wilmsen inserts words which clearly have no counterparts in the German originals, usually for the purpose of faking evidence of ethnic stratification.

Revisionism in the extreme form espoused by Wilmsen is untenable, but nothing less extreme debunks the primitive-affluence thesis as Bookchin has caricatured it. The reader will by now be weary of !Kung calorie-counting and kindred esoterica: and Bookchin is counting on it. He deploys an argument almost as persuasive as the argument from force, namely, the argument from

¹⁶²Harpending, review, 314–315.

¹⁶³Richard B. Lee and Mathias Guenther, "Problems in Kalahari Historical Demography and the Tolerance of Error," *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 185–235.

boredom. Anything you say, Murray, just don't say it to me! Anyone ever involved with a leftist group knows the school where Bookchin learned "process." Bookchin's perverse paradise is precisely this pathology generalized.¹⁶⁴ The winner of every argument is the guy who won't shut up, the Last Man Grandstanding.

Appendix B: "Epitaph to Bookchinism" (a Blast from the Past)

How surprised — and then, how unsurprised — I was to come across evidence of a fracas 30 years ago between Bookchin (not yet a Professor or Director) and the American Section of the Situationist International. The Situationists adjudged to be unacceptable Bookchin's articles about the French uprising of 1968 which had appeared in the *Rat*, an underground newspaper in New York City. Presumably these articles are identical or substantially equivalent to the ones Bookchin reprinted in 1971 in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.¹⁶⁵ Situationists (although not the Americans among them) influenced and prominently participated in the events of May-June 1968. With his usual prudence and courage, Bookchin timed his arrival in Paris for after the insurgency ended. Since the 1930's he has always managed to sit out every even slightly revolutionary situation which might have been even slightly hazardous to his health. Anyway, the SI's American Section (then known as "the Council") produced a critique, rejected for publication by the *Rat*, which I have not seen and almost nobody else has either. For present purposes I am interested, not in the merits or content of this critique, but in how characteristically Bookchinist was Bookchin's way of dealing of it:

"The Council wrote its 'Reply to Murray Bookchin Concerning His Theories of the Recent French 'Revolution' in response to the last of Bookchin's series of articles appearing in the *Rat*. The editor of that New York paper rejected the reply on the grounds that it was over the heads of the readership, and that it lacked entertainment value. We were also told that some of the editor's old friends did not understand that the *Rat* just really wanted to make a buck.

"The 'Reply' was mimeographed (with a comment on its fate with the *Rat*), distributed by hand, and eventually sent out in the general mailing announcing the Council's dissolution and the plans for this magazine. Before the mailing, a copy was sent to Bookchin (and his ever loyal followers, Herber and Keller). He immediately contacted us, asking if we would either print an answer that he would write in reply or consent to his sending it out to the mailing list which would be receiving the 'Reply.' The answer, naturally, was no.

"It was, according to him, our 'democratic' responsibility to allow him to answer directly to those who had received the 'Reply,' but not apparently his democratic responsibility to see that our 'Reply' find its way to those who had received his commentary. Failure to do so naturally signified that we were neither open nor democratic, thus attempting to place us in a position of helping him disseminate his ideology. The obvious duplicity — and attempted manipulation — behind this little charlatanism has found echo in subsequent developments.

¹⁶⁴Black, *AAL*, 66–70.

¹⁶⁵Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (San Francisco, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 247–280 (essays dated "Paris July 1968").

“It does not seem to have occurred at all to Bookchin that he could have printed the ‘Reply’ and his answer in his own magazine *Anarchos*, which has since appeared; that nothing of any of this has been made *public by him*; that rather he has gone about spreading rumors from ear to ear about undemocratic practices which we engage in.

“Bookchinism, peculiar American variety of anarcho-bolshevism, is comprised of three main theoretical fetishes: ecology, technology and false historicism (as Bookchin’s Greek ecclesia of the future). Its effective practice is manipulative, in memory of Leninist humanism.

“Having broken with Bookchin already in December 1967 over his spirited defense of sacrificial militants and mystics, we will only add that our concern is with individuals consciously engaged in the qualitative negation of class society (which, for Bookchin, does not exist, or if it exists, does not matter). From this base, real dialogue only takes place in the active process of demystification. To step aside to banter with an ideologist who publicizes the fact (*Anarchos*, books, speeches, lectures, etc.) would be to give up all and re-enter the old world on its rules.”

Appendix C: Primitivism and the Enlightenment

“There is nothing new,” the Director Emeritus intones, “about the romanticization of tribal peoples. Two centuries ago, denizens of Paris, from Enlighteners such as Denis Diderot to reactionaries like Marie Antoinette, created a cult of ‘primitivism’ [sic] that saw tribal people as morally superior to members of European society, who presumably were corrupted by the vices of civilization.” Actually, two centuries ago — 1798 — they were both dead. The Director makes it sound like they were collaborators. If there was a Parisian cult of the primitive, the airhead Marie Antoinette (d. 1793) — who was Austrian, by the way — had no part in creating it. Her cult of choice was Catholicism. Denis and Marie never met. And, as so often with Bookchin, the quotation marks around “primitivism” do not identify a quotation, they imply disapproval — an abuse, especially rife among Marxists, which I have already protested.¹⁶⁶ No one called himself a primitivist in the eighteenth century. The word didn’t enter the English language until the mid-twentieth century.¹⁶⁷ Am I quibbling about dates and details? Doesn’t the Director? This guy claims to discern the directionality, not only of human history, but of natural history. How can he tell where history is going if he doesn’t even know where it’s been, or even when?

Bookchin misdates the romanticizing of the primitive not by years but by centuries and, in the Garden of Eden version, by millennia. The noble savage was not dreamed up at a Parisian salon. Although it is not quite primitivism, the pastoral ideal goes back to Bookchin’s dream-world, the urban-dominated world of classical antiquity.¹⁶⁸ The German barbarians of Tacitus are likewise

¹⁶⁶Black, AAL, 38, quoting Theodor W. Adorno, “Punctuation Marks,” *The Antioch Review* (Summer 1990), 303.

¹⁶⁷*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 2: 2354.

¹⁶⁸Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 19–24. “In Elizabethan writing the distinction between primitive and pastoral styles of life is often blurred, and devices first used by Theocritus and Virgil appear in many descriptions of the new continent.” *Ibid.*, 39.

noble and free. European notions of primitive freedom, virtue and comfort are at least as old as extensive European contacts with primitive peoples, especially in the Americas. That was Columbus' first impression of the Indians, and the first impression of Captain John Smith. Neither of these conquistadors was by any stretch of the imagination an Enlightenment humanist. In 1584, a sea captain working for Sir Walter Raleigh scouted the coast of Virginia. He saw it as a garden of "incredible abundance" whose inhabitants were "most gentle, loving and faithfull, voide of all guile and treason, and such as live after the manner of the golden age."¹⁶⁹ In *The Tempest* (1611), the "honest old Councillor" Gonzalo envisages Prospero's enchanted island — under his own self-abolishing rule — as an anarchist, communist, amoral, libertine, pacific, primitivist, zerowork commonwealth, a place not to repeat the mistakes of civilization.¹⁷⁰ I am not claiming Shakespeare as a primitivist, only as a sensitive witness that one pole of the European perception of primitives was already, well, primitivist in 1611. Accurate or not, these impressions indicate an attraction for the primitive which long antedates the eighteenth century. And is it so unthinkable that some of these early-contact impressions, formed before European aggression and spoliation embittered relations with the Indians, might be true? Several historians — historians, mind you, not anthropologists — believe that they are.¹⁷¹ That there is nothing new about an idea does not mean that there is nothing true about it. Pythagoras, not Ptolemy, turned out to be right about the movement of the earth.

Of all the things Bookchin does badly, intellectual history may be the worst. He is hardly capable of an accurate statement about the history of religion. At one point — actually, at too many points — he castigates David Watson for thinking that civilization as such represents regression for humanity. The Director makes the obvious comparison to the Garden of Eden story, with which I find no fault except for its banality. He should have left it at that. Everything he goes on to say reveals him as an ignorant bigot.

"This sort of rubbish," he continues in his usual dispassionate voice, "may have been good coin in medieval universities." Evidently Bookchin is unfamiliar with the curricula of medieval universities. They taught the Thomist interpretation of Aristotelian teleology, which Bookchin's dialectical naturalism is much closer to than it is to the mechanistic philosophy of his revered Enlightenment. Official Christianity was never anti-urban or anti-civilizational. Christianity originated in the urban-dominated Roman Empire, and its original appeal was in the cities, not the countryside — the word "pagan" derives from the same root as the word "peasant." Saint Augustine would not have written of the City of God if he thought God had something against cities. The medieval university was a purely urban institution.

Christian orthodoxy has never interpreted human history or destiny as the recovery of the primal innocence preceding the Fall. That was the teaching of

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 36–37.

¹⁷⁰William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, II. I. 143–160; Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 48–49.

¹⁷¹Jennings, *The Invasion of America*; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975); Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Anthropologists have drawn similar conclusions from historical sources, among them Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State* (New York: Urizen Books, Mole Editions, 1977).

anarchic heretics like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Adamites, the Diggers and the Ranters. Christianity, like Marxism and Bookchinism, is forward-looking, eschatological. The Kingdom of Heaven is not the Garden of Eden restored, it's the City of God, the ultimate *polis*, except that a loving Lord as a special blessing on the saved excuses them from attending town meetings. In the Republic of Hell, attendance is obligatory for all eternity. By the 18th century, the dominant tendency in religious thought was to regard the Fall as an "episode in prehistory" marking the origin of human society, and not such a bad thing after all.¹⁷²

So here's the Director's *next* sentence: "But in the late Middle Ages, few ideas in Christian theology did more to hold back advances in science and experimental research than the notion that with the Fall, humanity lost its innocence." Try as I have, I am unable to understand why the notion that humanity lost its innocence should retard scientific progress. So far as I know, no historian has ever said so. And I'm unaware that anyone in the later Middle Ages was even trying to conduct experimental research, aside from the alchemists. Presumably, if the Fall-from-innocence idea retarded scientific and technological progress in the late Middle Ages, it must have done so throughout the Middle Ages. That nearly reverses the reality. Scientific progress, it is true, was slowed by the prevailing ideology — not by Christianity, but by ideas inherited from pagan classical antiquity, from men like Aristotle, Galen and Ptolemy. On the other hand, there was rapid technological progress, unlike the stagnation of Greek and Roman times. The mold-board plough opened up vast new territories for farming. Other innovations included the windmill, the clock, and advances in shipbuilding and navigation destined to transform the world. Military technology, especially, progressed by invention and adoption: heavy armored cavalry, the longbow, the crossbow, artillery, firearms, stone castles, etc. Architecture surpassed its classical limitations — Bookchin's beloved Athenian *polis* could never have built Notre Dame.

The Sage of Burlington continues: "One of the Enlightenment's great achievements was to provide a critical perspective on the past, denouncing the taboos and shamanistic trickery that made tribal peoples the victims of unthinking custom as well as the irrationalities that kept them in bondage to hierarchy and class rule, despite [?] its denunciations of Western cant and artificialities." Mopping up this mess will take me awhile.

Having credited, or rather discredited, the Enlightenment with inventing primitivism, the Director now credits it with refuting primitivism by denouncing the taboos and tricky shamans holding tribal peoples in bondage. But how would "a critical perspective on the past" bring about these insights? 18th century Europeans had little interest in and less knowledge of the histories of any tribal peoples except those mentioned in the Bible and the classics. They wouldn't have been able to learn much even if they wanted to. They were barely beginning to learn how to understand their own histories. Anything resembling what we now call ethnohistory was impossible then. Bookchin implies that the Age of Reason was the first historicist period. In fact it was the last period which was not. The Enlightened ones typically posited a universal, invariant human nature. People are always and everywhere the same: only their circumstances

¹⁷²Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 102.

are different. The same circumstances always determine the same behavior. A politician in 18th century Britain or America, for instance, will act the same way as an Athenian or Roman or Florentine politician acted, as reported by Thucydides, Livy and Machiavelli, in the same situation. So really there was little to learn from the primitives. They were merely contemporary confirmatory examples of a stage of society already inferred from Homer and Hesiod and Tacitus and the Old Testament.

“Shamanistic trickery” is the crudest kind of soapbox freethought cliché. Many primitive peoples have no shamans to dupe them. Many are not in thrall to supernatural fears; some have a rather casual attitude toward the spirit world. Shamans — healers through access to the supernatural — aren’t frauds: they believe in what they do.¹⁷³ And what they do does help. Medical science is taking great interest in their medications. Beyond that, shamans alleviate the suffering of victims of illness just by providing an explanation for it. American physicians serve the same shamanistic function, and they know that they do.¹⁷⁴

Custom is not necessarily irrational: indeed no society could function without it. Calling a custom a tabu does not demonstrate its irrationality. The tabu against driving on the left side of the road, for instance — which was a custom long before it was enacted into law¹⁷⁵ — is a very sensible approach to traffic regulation. It would be just as sensible to place the tabu against driving on the right side, as most countries do, but that doesn’t make either tabu irrational, even if it had originated in some superstition. Consider food tabus. Thus one may be a vegetarian for any of several reasons — religion, morality, politics, finances, health — but if the practice has positive consequences, it has them regardless of motivation. Even so rational a man as Murray Bookchin, I suspect, does not eat the insects available in his back yard, although that might reduce his food bill a bit. It makes no sense to call a food tabu irrational if there is other food available. And usually, if the alternative to transgressing the tabu is starvation, people transgress it, as in cases of lifeboat cannibalism.

As in *SALA*, Bookchin’s choice of words betrays his ignorance of real-life primitives. In the above quotation, he blames the irrationalities of tribal peoples, such as tabus and shamanistic trickery, for keeping them in bondage to hierarchy and class rule. Most tribal peoples exhibit far less hierarchy than any civilization ever has. And almost by definition, tribes are not subject to class rule. By way of the primitivists, most anarchists have been exposed to these anthropological commonplaces. Indeed, they may be found in Kropotkin, greatest of the Social Anarchists. What kind of idiots does Bookchin take us for.

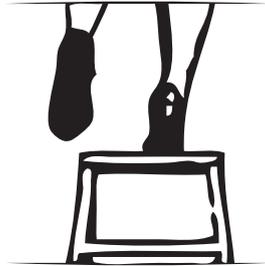
¹⁷³For five years of his life, over a 30-year period, and on over 20 occasions, anthropologist Napoleon A. Chagnon lived among the Yanomamo, warlike horticultural Indians who live in Venezuela and Brazil. Their shamans, who undergo a rigorous year of preparation (including celibacy and near-starvation), enjoy no special privileges and clearly believe in their own healing powers derived from (drug-assisted) access to the spirit world. Napoleon A. Chagnon, *Yanomamo* (4th ed.; Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1992), 116–119.

¹⁷⁴Megan Biesele & Robbie Davis-Floyd, “Dying as Medical Performance: The Oncologist as Charon,” in *The Performance of Healing*, ed. Carol Laderman & Marine Roseman (New York & London: Routledge, 1996), 314.

¹⁷⁵John Chipman Gray, *The Nature and Sources of the Law* (2d ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 289

THE ANARCHIST LIBRARY

October 17, 2009



Anti-Copyright.
<http://theanarchistlibrary.org>
Author: Bob Black
Title: Withered Anarchism
Publication date: Unknown

Retrieved on April 21, 2009 from
<http://www.spunk.org/texts/writers/black/sp001843/wither.html>
Send comments to Bob Black, P.O. Box 3142, Albany, NY 12203-0142, USA. Initial page
mark-up by Jean Heriot. Additional mark-up by Chuck0 Munson, Fall 1998