

Culture and Ideology



When will he wake up?

Drawing by Philip Sansom issued as a print by Freedom Press, 1949.

THE RAVEN

**ANARCHIST
QUARTERLY**

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Neil Birrell

Notes on Culture and Ideology

Culture and ideology are both difficult terms to tie down. The different pieces which we present with this edition approach the questions raised by both concepts from a wide variety of angles. Where can we find a common axis, the rhizome which draws them all together?

Culture and ideology are, in different ways, forms of social cement. They both refer to those non-material aspects of human society which make it possible and indeed mould it into the form that it takes. With regard to culture we can view it as the collective values, history and concepts that is passed on from one generation within a given social group to another. Whilst we are not clones of our ancestors and culture is in a state of permanent flux it is still true to say that to a large degree we are a product of the society that spawns us. One example is simply the language that we speak. We have no meaningful control over which language we will acquire as infants: we will simply acquire it from our social surroundings and, to the extent that we share it with those around us, we can, even if only in some rudimentary way, be said to share with those people a common culture.

This is the way I wish to conceive of culture and contrast it with ideology. Although the first term, culture, has had various definitions given to it – some of them elitist – I wish to think of it here as a social glue which acts on a horizontal plane. I see it as growing organically within a given group where all the members are, at the same time, innovators and replicators reproducing images of the prevailing culture which reinforce it and also introducing mutants which allow it to evolve. I have said that it is what makes human society possible – echoing somewhat Levi-Strauss when he differentiates culture from nature by saying that nature is the ‘raw’ and culture is the ‘cooked’. Language, in this context, is the applied heat which serves nature up in palatable form. As such it is primarily a basic or, as Illich might say, a convivial tool which is equitably available to all insofar as we have vocal chords and those other physical attributes which allow us to reproduce and use it. This means that it is primarily the individual, interacting with others, which allows for the circulation of cultural signs within a community. There is little room here for one group or individual to hijack the process and force

culture down a given path unless, of course, they have access to tools which are less than convivial.

This is, for me, where ideology enters the picture. It also brings about social cohesion but, in contrast to culture, it does so in vertical mode. I choose to define it as that body of ideas and values which presents the world from the point of view of one particular section of society and supports their interests. I shall argue that in contrast to culture it can be imposed by a minority – be they fundamentalist Christians or dogmatic anarchists – if they have the means to do so.

In the sense in which I am using the term it would seem cultural signs can only meaningfully circulate within a small community. Ivan Illich, writing in 1978, pointed out that only fifty years previously, “most of the words heard by an American were personally spoken to him as an individual, or to someone standing nearby. Only occasionally did words reach him as the undifferentiated member of a crowd – in the classroom or church, at a rally or a circus”.

This observation allows us also to see where ideology begins to appear on the scene as (apart perhaps from the circus perhaps the theatre will fit the bill better) those words which met him as an undifferentiated member of a crowd did so in a medium – we have introduced that word – which allows for ideology.

I will return to these issues of how cultural and ideological signs circulate within society but I want first to go back a stage. A hard materialist approach would argue that it is economic relationships which determine the dominant ideology and it is necessary to change these relationships before other changes follow.

It is clearly true that the economic circumstances we are born into can have a determining effect on our culture almost as much as our language and this is perhaps why we can identify so easily different cultures (working class, bourgeois etc.) within one society and this will also explain how the imposition of one cultural set of values can in turn become ideological control.

Most certainly I would not disagree with this but I feel that when we are talking about the economic determinants in any society more is involved than simply the question, for example, of who owns the means of production. All human discourse is trade and exchange of a kind and as I have argued above we all own the convivial tools to achieve a measure of reinforcing the cultural code and also mutating or subverting it. I feel it follows that we are actually forced into this choice, to the extent that we are aware of it, of choosing at all times which path to follow, i.e. to reinforce the dominating signs of our culture or to challenge them. This in turn might suggest that different

cultural possibilities exist (at least in embryonic form) in any given society. So what might be the economic factors which we can identify in human society which might compliment the generation of culture (horizontal, convivial) rather than ideology (vertical, technocratic)?

The Gift Economy

Anarchists have often been self-critical of their economic analysis deeming it to be at best weak or at worst virtually non-existent. Many feel that talk of LETs schemes seems an inadequate beast to hold up as an alternative to the might of General Motors and with regard to talk of the Gift Economy it sounds like we expect society to run with all the fun of a never ending birthday party.

I wish to consider the notion of the Gift Economy and argue that it is more worthy of serious consideration than it has perhaps received in the past. It is, in my opinion, not just a difficulty for anarchists that when dealing with economic questions one problem which seems always to come up relates to precisely the point I am trying to make which is that economic realities may indeed to a degree dictate social realities but also that social realities to a degree dictate economic realities. Free market text books almost invariably analyse economic questions with the proviso *caeterus paribus*: all things being equal and then proceed to consider their questions in a clinical, test-tube like manner which cannot be justified given cultural, political, historical etc., backgrounds which are being bracketed in order to make an argument which is then almost by definition faulty.

One of the few attempts I am aware of by an anarchist to analyse the Gift Economy came from Harold Sculthorpe in *The Raven* no. 31 where he emphasised the social or cultural side of the question: "The Gift Economy depends on trust and trust depends on knowing, so that it is most effective when a community is clearly identifiable and of a size where nearly everyone knows, or at least knows of, most of the others". By contrast, as we shall see, the type of exploitation which characterises an exchange value economy works best when the participants do not know each other. Many would find the enjoyment they derive from many of the commodities available in their local high street hugely diminished if they had direct experience of the working and living conditions in, for instance, China's Special Economic Zones where much manufacturing goes on.

These themes raised by Sculthorpe are echoed and elaborated upon in a recent analysis of the Gift Economy by Lewis Hyde. He looks at the role of the gift as a means of exchange which he says is best described as 'anarchist property'. The reason for this he argues

is that: "The connections, the 'contracts' established by their circulation differ in kind from the ties that bind in groups organised through centralised power and top-down authority".

The gift is given freely with the donor's expectation that it will not be used for personal gain but will instead circulate further, adding to the social wealth of the community, from which the donor also gains as it returns. To try and illustrate this a little Hyde typifies certain professions as being typical of the commodity economy (and by the way masculine) e.g. banking and others as being more typical of the gift economy (and feminine) e.g. education. Banking is a clinical exchange mediated by money and requiring no contact between the participants and where winners and losers can win or lose without much reference to the society around them. Education is more of a social product – as members of society become more literate and numerate and as they learn new skills it is society which benefits. Indeed, Hyde argues that it is this very use-value as opposed to exchange value nature of this type of work which means it cannot be quantified by the market. He does not dodge the issue of exploitation – teachers get less pay in capitalist society than bankers – and argues that they should, of course, receive fair remuneration: "My point here is simply that where we do so we shall have to recognise that the pay they receive has not been 'made' the way fortunes are made in the market, that it is a gift bestowed by the group".

One of Hyde's central themes, alluded to above, is the power gift exchange, which I have argued it shares with culture, to bind a community together and he contrasts this with commodity exchange which he typifies as doing the opposite namely atomising society.

"It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, while the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection. I go into a hardware store, pay the man for a hacksaw blade and walk out. I may never see him again. The disconnectedness, is in fact, a virtue of the commodity mode. We don't want to be bothered. If the clerk always wants to chat about the family, I'll shop elsewhere. I just want a hacksaw blade".

Whilst the above points to the essence of what the gift is and how it differs from the commodity the two different modes of exchange function better in different social contexts. Essentially gift exchange operates best in the smaller community. Let us continue to refer to Hyde:

"I should now state directly a limitation that has been implicit for some time, that is, that gift exchange is an economy of small groups. When emotional ties are the glue that holds a community together, its size has an

upper limit. [...] A group formed on ties of affection could, perhaps, be as large as a thousand people, but one thousand must begin to approach the limit. Our feelings close down when the numbers get too big. Strangers passing on the street in big cities avoid each other's eyes not to show disdain but to keep from being overwhelmed by excessive human contact. When we speak of communities developed and maintained through an emotional commerce like that of gifts, we are therefore speaking of something of limited size. It remains an unsolved dilemma of the modern world, one to which anarchists have repeatedly addressed themselves, as to how we are to preserve true community in a mass society, one whose dominant value is exchange value and whose morality has been codified into law".

Not only would it seem an unresolved dilemma but it also points to the very emergence of a way of thinking that allowed capitalism to emerge. Given the limitation of the Gift Economy in terms of size it has been, for a long time, a problem for societies as to how they should deal with what is essentially trade beyond their own borders. Hyde looks in some detail at the role of organised religion in all of this. For one example he looks at the history of usury and how it was (and was not) acceptable according to the laws of the Old Testament. Two verses from Chapter 23 of Deuteronomy:

19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury;

20 Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury.

Thus a dual standard is introduced and a brother, that is a member of one's own community, is differentiated from a stranger. Hyde traces the history of all this and starts by using the metaphor – very deliberately chosen – of blood, “a liquid that flows when it carries the inner air and hardens when it meets the outer air, a substance that moves freely to every part but is nonetheless contained, a healer that goes without restraint to any needy place in the body”, and he goes on to describe the history of usury as the history of this blood.

“As we have seen, there are two primary shades of property, gift and commodity. Neither is ever seen in its pure state, for each needs at least a touch of the other – commodity must somewhere be filled and gift somewhere must be encircled. Still, one usually dominates. The history of usury is a slow swing back and forth between the two sides”.

And today the pendulum has swung markedly in one direction. “Gift exchange takes refuge in Sunday morning and the family. The man who would charge interest to his wife would still be hardhearted, but outside the family circle there is still little to restrain the fences of usury”.

The circulation of cultural signs

I have argued therefore that certain material conditions, particularly small scale communities, favour gift exchange and also the circulation of cultural signs in a horizontal mode which befits them. Cultural signs is perhaps a too technical term (borrowed from semiology) and whilst I feel it is a useful term rather than mere jargon we can substitute it for a more popular term.

Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* introduces us to the notion of the meme which he argues is a new type of replicator – just like genes – which is, ‘still in its infancy, still drifting clumsily about in its primeval soup, but already it is achieving evolutionary change at a rate that leaves the old gene panting far behind’. Examples of the meme might be tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. They are the very stuff of culture. If these phenomena catch on they pass from brain to brain replicating themselves as they go.

It is my contention that it is the ability to control the flow of memes which allows for ideological control and just like genes it is largely (although not exclusively) the number of times which it can regenerate itself that allows for the meme to become widespread and so the ability to reproduce memes allows for the vertical and elitist control I have identified as ideological. Whereas above culture was typified as an exchange between two people which could then, certainly, replicate itself further this was an equitable phenomenon in so far as we all had the vocal chords to participate.

Indeed to a degree we all had the power to speak to larger groups of people even if it was more likely to be the town crier or the priest who had this prerogative. Where the big change came about was with the advent of media (as the term is commonly understood) and in particular today the mass media.

It is the advent of the mass media which has allowed for the quantum leap in mind control which also means we live today in a society which is subject to ideological control in a manner greater than that dreamt of by the most megalomaniac of totalitarians. It is what allows for control to pass from the small community, like that of the community required for gift exchange and simple culture, to mass civil society which allows for exploitation and exchange between strangers. All four concepts ride together on two tandem like constructions.

A definition of mass media is now useful and I borrow one from Richard Ohmann. Although he chooses to use the term mass culture for his own reasons I find his definition fits well with my notion of ideological control.

“Mass culture in societies like this one includes voluntary experiences, produced by a relatively small number of specialists, for millions across the nation to share, in similar or identical form, either simultaneously or nearly so; with dependable frequency; mass culture shapes habitual audiences, around common needs or interests, and it is made for profit.”

All of these notions deserve elaboration but I wish to concentrate on the second one which demands that the media be controlled by a relatively small number of people.

It is becoming more and more well known how concentrated global media outlets are becoming. The five largest media firms in the world in terms of their sales which, to a degree, point to the size of their audiences are Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom and News Corporation.

Although it comes in at number five News Corporation aims to own “every form of programming – news, sport, films and children’s shows – and beam them via satellite or television stations to homes in the United States, Europe, Asia and South America”. The CEO of Viacom Sumner Redstone says of Murdoch – whose family has a 30% stake in News Corporation – that, ‘he basically wants to conquer the world. And he seems to be doing it.’ Time Warner executive Ted Turner has, in a more sinister tone, likened him to Adolph Hitler.

Herman and McChesney call News Corporation “the best case study for understanding global media firm behaviour”. If they are right we can clearly see how media is moving towards a phenomenal concentration of power. We are emphasising here the simple size of these operations and in so doing are referring to their ability to reproduce the phenomena which Dawkins called memes. The table opposite, taken from Herman and McChesney, shows the staggering reach of News Corporation.

Clearly there are more factors involved in meme replication than simply volume. The environment must be receptive and so on and the environment where they seem most at home is that of the modes of communication – newspapers, cinema, television, CDs and so on. To the extent that these different media are one way streets it allows those who control the content which is allowed to circulate in those media to control the circulation of ideas in society and thus determine the agenda and terms of debate.

Ideology is circulated in this ‘one way street’ fashion. It comes from the top down and allows little room for any cross fertilisation coming from below. Other media can allow for a two way process – letter writing, using a telephone or the Internet and in some senses therefore they are more open to popular control. Like the difference

between the exchange economy and the gift economy there is a blurring of the lines. Newspapers usually allow for a letters page where readers may express their views, television is sometimes open to individual input and on the other hand telephones can be tapped thus dissuading people from using them for some purposes and letters can be censored – indeed this is where the word first came into common use when the censor censored soldiers' letters home.

Thus we need to see a continuum in the field of culture and ideology where certain media seem to serve one field of interests as opposed to the other. Perhaps something like this:

IDEOLOGY > Television > Cinema > Radio > Newspapers > the Internet > Telephone > Voice > CULTURE

Nearer the cultural end of the spectrum we find those media which are typified by the equal access of participants and inability to reach a large audience and at the other end a privileged level of access and the ability to reach a large audience. The media which compliment the ideological society seem to mirror the factors involved in defining the economic corollary, i.e. capitalist or exchange value society and the media which compliment the cultural society seem to mirror the defining characteristics of the anarchist or gift society. Perhaps it is those in the middle which point to the type of media which can be usefully be used by anarchists who are looking for a stepping stone from one to the other.

Further reading

The Global Media by Edward Herman and Robert McChesney (Cassell)

The Right to Useful Unemployment by Ivan Illich (Marion Boyars)

The Raven No. 31 on 'Economics and Federalism' (Freedom Press)

The Gift by Lewis Hyde (Vintage)

The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins (OUP)

Selling Culture by Richard Ohmann (Verso)

News Corporation's more significant media holdings include the following:

- Some 132 newspapers (Primarily in Australia, Britain, and the United States), making it one of the three largest newspaper groups in the world;
- Twentieth Century Fox, a major film, television, and video production centre; which has a library of over 2,000 films to exploit.
- The US Fox broadcasting network;
- Twenty-two US television stations, the largest US station group, covering over 40% of US television households;
- Twenty-five magazines, most notably *TV Guide*;
- Book-publishing interests, including HarperCollins;
- A 50% stake (with TCI's Liberty Media) in several US and global cable networks, including fX, fXM, Fox Sports Net;
- Fox News Channel;
- Asian Star Television, satellite service and television channels;
- Controlling interest (40%) in British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB) (1996 sales: \$1.6 billion);
- BSkyB has a 40% stake in UK's Granada Sky Television satellite channel group;
- A 49.9% stake in Germany's Vox channel;
- A 30% stake in Sky Latin America digital satellite service;
- A 40% stake in US Sky Television, a digital satellite joint venture with Echostar and Concert;
- A 50% stake in Japan Sky Broadcasting digital satellite service;
- Australian Foxtel cable channel;
- A 49.9% stake in India's Zee television;
- The Spanish-language El Canal Fox in Latin America;
- UK Sky Radio;
- A 15% stake in the Australian Seven networks;
- India Sky Broadcasting digital satellite service;
- A 50% stake in channel V, Asian music video channel;
- A 45% stake in Hong Kong-based Phoenix Satellite Television Company

Iain A. Boal

The Campus and the Commons

Recently I found myself on cable television debating a scheme to sell on-line higher education in domestic US and global markets. We were allotted an unusually generous seven and a half minutes to trade soundbites on the coming of the 'virtual university'. My opponent, from the staff of the Governor of California, spoke of the novel possibilities for community, for access, for democracy and the common good.

As a salesman of the cyber-commons he was almost certainly unaware of the antiquity of his pitch; he had been anticipated by a disciple of Saint-Simon, who in 1852 announced: "A perfect network of electric filaments will afford a new social harmony". In the following year, 'eminent domain' entered the language, to denote the state's rationale ('superior dominion of the sovereign power over all lands within its jurisdiction') for the seizure of private property for public use. The dynamo of eminent domain was the infrastructural imperative of industrial capitalism, specifically the new rail, road and electromechanical links. Far too costly for private development alone, they brought profound change both in land use, and in conceptions of time and space together with brutal dislocations and reconnections forged by urbanisation and labour migration. These vast displacements produced in turn utopian fantasies of a retrievable lost intimacy by means of the newfangled apparatus of the telegraph and the telephone. In a sense, the 'global village' was just a 1960s gloss on this old trope of communications as community, and today's preachers of the electronic sublime are McLuhan's offspring.

Distance learning itself is, of course, nothing new – correspondence courses go back to the nineteenth century, and the Open University in Britain, the largest experiment of this kind anywhere, has conferred almost a million degrees. The Open University did not fetishise the new medium of television that it used for the dissemination of instruction; rather it was inspired by the class-emancipatory vision of social democrats like Jennie Lee and Raymond Williams. By contrast, the rhetoric of redemption and freedom surrounding the Internet springs from a deep American tradition of technological utopianism.

The chief booster of the new infrastructure has been Al Gore. His guiding metaphor is the 'superhighway' the interstate road network

begun in the 1950s, whose legislative architect in Congress was Gore's own father. It has had many unforeseen effects on collective and private life in the US; the consequences of that massive Department of Defence project, and of the lure of automobilism, are only now coming into focus, some forty years on. One striking historical fact was the absence of public voices – Lewis Mumford being an important exception – raised against the combination of real estate developers, military engineers, and the automobile and petroleum lobbies. Their vision of a networked nation echoed older and forgotten prophets of communication.

This time around, the millennium is being announced under the sign of 'the virtual'. The new mix of information techniques – videotape, CD, fibre optics, xerography, satellites, calculating machines, digital telephony – is now said to have reached a critical mass, bringing in its train profound societal and global transformation, mediated by the Internet.

The Internet is, like the interstate highway grid, a Cold War infrastructure that has transcended its genesis in the nuclearised state. It is quite typical for technological systems to outrun the intentions and imaginations of their designers, who, in this case, were mostly sitting at a small number of powerful nodes in elite research institutions and universities within the NATO alliance. Certainly the new technics of information are producing new forms of sociality, perhaps as surprising to the military and scientific bureaucracies that oversaw the network's creation as was the use of public space by students in the '60s to the campus managers. One might press the historical parallels, to question the manifestos of liberation made on behalf of cyberspace. The free speech movement at Berkeley was focused on the commons around Telegraph Avenue, specifically Spoul Plaza and People's Park; not that today's students could guess this by looking at Mano Savio's memorial – a plot of dedicated ground the size of a manhole cover with standing room for one person. A pathetic irony, given that Savio's life and oratory was a testament to informed collective action. The state managers, however, have not forgotten the power and pleasure of the crowds that Savio addressed, the assault on the academic commons and the dismantling of essentially free higher education in California is the other face of the legacy

There are, besides, larger stakes in the struggle over the campus as commons – a counterweight to the staggering new concentrations of private wealth. In casting around for a theory of urbanism adequate to the new millennium, Mike Davis draws on the ecological anarchism

of Kropotkin and Geddes, and notes that “public affluence – represented by great urban parks, free museums, libraries, and infinite possibilities for human interaction – offers another route to a rich standard of life – ‘carnavalesque’ and sensual – that is also sustainable and egalitarian. (University and college campuses often unconsciously embody these principles of collective consumption in rich public space.)” It was as a site of concentration not however of wealth but of critical attention – that Wallace Stevens defended the ‘ivory tower’ from universal abuse. “The ivory tower was offensive if the man who lived in it wrote, there, of himself for himself. It was not offensive if he used it because he could do nothing without concentration, as no one can.”

At least as important as the new forms of community are the new forms of commodity produced by late capitalist science and technics. These developments may be seen as part of the long historical tendency within capitalism for property to ramify into new modes. In the context of the virtual university, administrators are positioning the institution to take proprietary control of what was formerly conceived as commons and as outside commodification.

Faculty unions are beginning to respond, with assertions of individual property rights. This tactic is likely to end in strategic disaster, since it stands on the ideological bedrock of bourgeois property law, namely to suppress or obscure not only the primitive accumulation of capital, but also the social nature of labour in the process of value creation, not to mention the massive public subsidies that have been the essential condition of later private profit.

The campus is lately becoming a space of intensified exploitation – both as production site and as market. David Noble, a historian both of automation and of the university (medieval and modern) as a gendered knowledge factory, is well placed to notice the automation, de-skilling and down-sizing in higher education. The academy is of course not one place; it is highly differentiated, in its stratigraphies of class and region. Indeed this whole discussion will seem surreal to many intellectuals in the third world, who are often starved of the most fundamental resources – paper, writing tools, copying facilities – things taken for granted by many in the north. Paradoxically, this very scarcity suggests a possible market in the south for distance learning materials.

The reasons for resisting the virtualisation in the academy is not because it violates some humanistic ideal of Socratic, face-to-face exchange, in which students and scholars commune together to imbibe and extend the common stock of knowledge. Rather it

precisely threatens to privatise what there is of an academic and intellectual commons via the technologically mediated enclosure of that form of social wealth typical of research and pedagogy on the campus. Take, for example, the heart of a campus, namely, its library, which can be viewed as the repository of collective knowledge in congealed form. It is no accident that the struggle is now joined over the preservation of the very idea of the library as a commons.

Free access to the library system at Berkeley, flagship of the grand post-war experiment in California public education, was closed off to the public some years ago. The digitisation of print and image is facilitating the imposition of user fees and hence the further expropriation of the commons. But the larger vision of the virtual university cannot get off the ground, as it were, unless ownership of the intellectual productions of scholars and instructors can be asserted by the university as a corporate body. Historically scholars have been taken to hold copyright in virtue of authorship. But in attempting to claim a proprietary interest in, say, taped lectures, and even in syllabi, bibliographies, course outlines, exam questions – the banal stock-in-trade of pedagogy – the university administration is arguing from a powerful precedent under its nose, viz. the research conducted in campus laboratories. In 1980 revised US patent law established that no lab worker could claim ownership of the fruits of their labour. Legally it represented a shift in status from artisan ('author') to proletarian ('worker for hire'); in reality it reflected the start of structural adjustment on the campus sparked by the staggering profit potential in the licensing of life processes and in the products of silicon technologies. It brought the intellectual property regime of academic research into alignment with business and industry.

As I emerged from the television studio – a converted San Francisco longshore warehouse rendered obsolete by containerisation, the enclosure of cargo – I pondered the lost struggles of the longshoremen and how I too had been cast as technophobic, facing backwards rejecting the future. In a word, a Luddite. But, of course, the Luddites were skilled and often innovative artisans and their resistance movement was directed against unemployment, de-skilling and the incarceration of production in factories. What they were rejecting was not the future, but rather its foreclosure as the dawn of the continuing catastrophe in which the world's resources – human and otherwise – are cast onto the market by means of the expropriation of the commons, forcing 'freedom' upon labourers severed from the means of subsistence.

Over time, enclosure has taken on many new forms. The recent sequestration of the airwaves, via the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and now the threat of enclosure of the academic commons such as it is – must be resisted no less than the privatising of communal lands.

I stood in the sunlight, at the edge of the vast Pacific ocean, and thought of the strange and unsatisfying nature of my screen encounter. I realised that, far from being a travesty of the age of information it was its very expression. Then another thought occurred, and I took heart; according to academic sources, 72 % of history still happens outdoors.

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Lee Tan

Solidarity Campaigning

This world is one which many people say is a globalised society. We have speakers who talk about colonisation, which as a result has imposed a political system on people, a political system which is dominated by the so called western system. We've also seen an economic system being imposed on people, through the whole globalised free trade agenda. And also the financial system through its use of the so called shares and foreign exchange and all that sort of thing. And the banking system which seeks to unify the value placed on resources through money. Unify how they're being traded; unify how they're being used.

We've also seen, through colonisation and the economic trade, how society in each of the regions has changed cultures. Nearly every place on earth now has Coca-Cola. We have seen also how this kind of consumer culture has imposed itself in every part of the world. When I walked into a village in the interior of Sarawak, I saw plastic bags, I saw Twistie packages and all that sort of thing. Christianity has also imposed its value throughout the world. People are praying in the middle of the rainforest in Borneo, not in their own traditional way, but in a way which has been imposed on them by the missionary.

And then we talk about international solidarity here. As I was sitting up here I couldn't help but think, 'If I couldn't speak English could I be here? If I haven't been through the Western institutions like the universities and what have you that I have attended, would I be here today? How then can the people that we say are oppressed, people who are within a repressive regime, can they, you know, have the opportunity, can their voices be heard? I often wonder that. And you know, can we then speak on behalf of them? I feel very uncomfortable doing that'.

But what I can say is, just from my own personal experience, working with different people, different cultures, and people whose economic system traditionally has been very different from the one that talks about stock market prices and all that, I have learned a lot from the people in those regions, in those areas, and I'm still learning. I do not have a solution, I do not claim that we can all work in solidarity with each other. What does solidarity mean? I'm not going to give you an Oxford dictionary definition, but my experience

of solidarity has been a very mixed one. Before we can actually work in solidarity with anybody, there are a lot of issues that I think we can, we must address. I still believe very strongly that we should try and work in solidarity to try and address many of the inequalities that we see today, but we must recognise and respect differences, inequality, and some of those factors which affect the way we relate to one another.

For example, while it's very good to say that, 'Oh, you know, for the environmentalists, our common ground is forests, for example, so we should go to places where people are fighting to protect their land'. Our interest is to make sure those precious 500 million year old rainforest ecosystems are being conserved and the indigenous people in those regions are trying to protect their forest and land and so on, so we march in there and then we work in solidarity. I have seen how people who are trying to export their own values, export their culture, and also export what they think is a solution and impose it on the people in those regions, very sadly, and came out with some atrocious and appalling results (or disasters, more appropriately).

So it's all very well to say that we have common ground, we do have common ground. Sometimes we are fighting against the same government, other times we are fighting to protect the environment and then other times we are trying to seek justice, but are we all equal? When I walk into a village, I recognise my own position when I walk into that village. I don't think I'm equal to the person that we are interacting with, whether it's the village heads, or a representative of a particular tribe, or of a particular refugee camp. I think, because I speak English, and because I've got qualifications from some Western institution that seems to have, by hook or by crook, given me some legitimacy to speak, and given me some freedom to express and to be able to write about things when I get out from that dispossessed area in another part of the world. And I feel very, very uncomfortable about that.

So how can we actually work in so-called solidarity? I think first of all, when we walk into an area in which we're trying to work in solidarity with the people, first of all we have to humble ourselves to admit that we know bugger all about them, and that they have a culture, they have a system. And that they may have a very different way of looking at life, different way of living with one another, different way or interacting with their own environment, be it forest, water, land or mountain or, anything. They may not necessarily, often they do not necessarily, share our way of how we look at things.

How then can we reconcile ourselves in that situation? We may not reconcile, but the least we could do is to recognise that they have a lot of differences, but not to impose and think that our system or the system that we know well or the system that breeds us and so called cultivated us is a better system as compared to their system.

Secondly we have to recognise our own position, as I have mentioned earlier. Often when we walk into a particular area it also indicates first of all that we've got better economic power to get there, because we have the money to purchase either air tickets or boat tickets or four wheel drive sports or bus tickets or anything like that, that we need to recognise. Can the same people in that area get out to where we are and speak and talk to us? If they can't, then we have to think about that, we have to address that inequality of economic power (putting it in that more academic way).

And then thirdly, we go there and then we look at their health, so called health conditions. We look at their so called economic trading situation. They may not have money in the community because they've been existing for many, many years in a self sufficient manner maybe, or another economic system. So what do we do? How do we then, you know ... can we be romantic and say 'oh, your system is the best one, you know, you shouldn't change, you shouldn't change', who are we to actually say whether or not people want to change or people should or should not change? But you know at the same time I think it's very important, instead of giving solutions all the time, instead of saying this is what you should do and this is what you shouldn't do we should actually sometimes look at our own experience in the world that we know best, in the world in which we have grown up. Expose the negative impact of some of the economic and political systems that were subject to. Expose the impact of the so called consumer based capitalist system. Why owning a car is not such a good idea, why flying an international flight can pollute the environment as well. Why buying washing machines, having a phone, having this having that, is not as sound and as nice and as glossy as it seems but at the same time not to say that you can't do it, but at least to outline some of the problems we have of these modern consumer goods. To outline why we think Coca-Cola is bad.

I remember as a child, as a young child growing up in Malaysia, how the Nestlé company had used sales women dressed up like a nurse coming to my mother, and telling my mother that condensed milk is actually full of nutrition because the label says that it contains calcium and this and that. And also giving little kids good incentive

to persuade their mothers to go and buy them by giving you books on tropical fish and this and that if you buy that condensed milk. And I never forgive them for wrecking my teeth because my mother switched to buying condensed milk from Nestlé.

Yeah so I mean, very often, when you see somebody drinking coke in a third world country, instead of jumping at them and saying 'hey, how dare you do this, this multinational that rips U off', but we have to understand the kind of propaganda and also the kind of information that's being imposed on them. And also in those societies the whole entire system, not only in their national system but international systems, they say that you know, in order to be important one has to dress up in a Western suit. You know how many of us today who are not Western would walk down the street wearing our traditional costume and not feeling weird. I wish, you know, I wish I'm not wearing what I'm wearing, but on the other hand it has been so much imposed on us that we forgot that we actually had a costume once or some other clothes once upon a time apart from what we're wearing today.

So we need to also recognise all these differences and all those values that have been imposed on us. And also when we look at an issue we must not just look at it from a very compartmentalised one, like, mining, forest, nuclear waste or trade, militarism, indigenous rights or land rights. I think they're all interlinked. We should step away from the Western institutionalised way of looking at things, where so and so studies biology, the other one studies chemistry, the other one studies physics, they never talk to one another and they look at things only from a physician's, or a biologist, or a botanist, or a chemist point of view. When in normality, the whole world is about chemistry, biology plus much more and spirituality and all the other things are just as valid.

So in terms of effective international solidarity, whether it's national or international, we must ask ourselves are we doing this, when we get involved in a so-called solidarity campaign, are we doing it just to ease our own conscience or are we really trying to address the problems faced by those who are so called oppressed or repressed and to try to work with them in solidarity to try and free not only them but ourselves from the system which seek to repress and oppress us? That's a question I think that we need to ask.

(Lee Tan works with Friends of the Earth, Fitzroy)

Piergiorgio Moro

International Solidarity: is it Possible?

Introduction

The field of international solidarity is a huge and complicated one and because of time constraints, I can only address certain aspects of it. The following comments are from my own personal experiences and from discussions with other comrades over the years.

My aim with this talk is to stimulate debate and to encourage people to think more critically about international solidarity.

International solidarity (IS) has always attracted many activists in this country who initiated and/or joined solidarity groups for a variety of reasons. While there has been much good political work achieved by solidarity activists, my focus today will be to concentrate on some of the problems with IS work. More specifically, I would like to argue that there are too many 'Christians' and 'Nationalists' within the IS movement. What do I mean by these terms, and why are they a problem?

Christians

- 1) people who join IS groups motivated by a sense of trying to help someone, over there, to overcome injustice.
- 2) What is to help? Is it to achieve freedom? What is freedom? Freedom for whom, from what? Freedom to talk or freedom from hunger?
- 3) Help who? Is it the poor victims out of a sense of charity? Are they seen as real people, as active participants of their societies or just as victims in need of help?
- 4) What is the political stance of the people who join IS groups? Is it because they feel they need to help? What is their kind of analysis/understanding of the social struggle that they are trying to get involved in? What about the history of the place? The economic and political situation?
- 5) What is their role within the IS movement? Is it just to provide money? Are they just going to become a financial/political cheer squad? Will they have any input in the direction of the IS movement, and also of the struggle in the overseas country, or will they just wait for their direction/advice to come from the overseas struggle?
- 6) What was their motivation to choose to get involved in solidarity group x and not solidarity group y? Are there reasoned political reasons for their choice or is it just a case of 'solidarity hopping'?

where the IS group was chosen as it was the easiest to get to the meetings, had a friend in it already, had the best music or had the more exotic culture?

Nationalists

1) Do people join the struggle on a romanticisation of the exotic? That is, that the struggle, being somewhere over there, is appealing as it is foreign and exotic?

2) Do they see the struggle strictly along nationalistic lines? Are they trying to free a particular country from oppression? Are they aware of the class, political, gender and cultural divisions that exist in any society?

3) They do not see the political/economic interlinking that exists between countries and treat each country's struggles as separate. That is, what's happening over there has no significance over here and vice versa.

4) What is their understanding of the complexities of the movement in the overseas country and the various political differences that occur in any political struggle? Will they have any understanding of the reasons behind any eventual splits in the movement or will they be surprised by such an eventuality?

5) This nationalistic outlook then, can cause problems between the 'Australians and the immigrants' in the group. Problems that may arise include: issues over who has the most power/standing in the group; who has the greater understanding of the struggle; who has the greater understanding of the situation in Australia; who the group is targeting; and general issues of race and cultural sensitivities.

Yes, to IS but only up to a point.

I will give only three examples of why I see the above points as problems and how these are played out in reality:

a) Nicaragua

The late 1970's and the 1980's were the years where the Central American IS movement was at its peak with people attracted to the notion of a successful revolution and the colourful history of the region; it was an easy target for anti-American (anti-imperialist) sentiment, and a way of supporting a Third Way of political/economic development.

The problem was, of course, that the Sandinistas' revolution had many political limitations, being a popular front with many contending

forces. There was never any apparent strategy to overcome – let alone defeat – the US's indirect war on the Sandinistas. Within the IS groups here in Australia there was a tendency to overlook the political shortcomings of the Sandanistas. This was to such an extent that when the Sandanistas lost the elections in the late 1980s there was general disbelief at this loss of popular support.

The next question is where have all the IS activists gone now? It's not like the struggle in Central America has stopped, the class struggle has just shifted focus and is not currently a question of guerrilla warfare. Has the region lost its exotic value as there are no heroic guerrillas to support anymore? Are we then just waiting for the next guerrilla group to appear so we can support it?

b) The Philippines

The early 1980's were the glory years of IS with the revolutionary movement in the Philippines. IS groups were springing up all around Australia, with a successful communist revolution seemingly just around the corner.

Then, when Marcos did fall, he was not replaced with a people's representatives but with Mrs Aquino who was, and is, a member of one of the richest landowning families in the Philippines.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) explained her presence as only a temporary regime but once she consolidated her power, the CPP suffered intense internal strains leading to a three way split in 1990.

The IS groups here in Australia were totally unprepared to deal with and unable to comprehend the political debates that were splitting the CPP apart and thus they too suffered internal tensions in relation to who to support, why and what for. The outcome was that the Philippines IS movement self-destructed in a climate of bitterness and mutual distrust with many of the disputes becoming intertwined with personal issues.

c) South Africa

During the 1980s and early 1990s, it was very trendy to be in favour of the oppressed blacks in South Africa with the coming to Australia of Nelson Mandela in the early '90s more akin to a pop-star tour than a visit by a politician.

Everyone was in favour of the dismantling of Apartheid and for the freedom of the Blacks but there was always very little discussion as to what kind of freedom and society the new South Africa was to be.

Thus, currently the ANC is steadily promoting a very orthodox, monetarist capitalist economic policy where productivity and

competitiveness are being promoted above housing for people in the shanty towns. As well, on a law and order campaign the ANC government is considering bringing back the death penalty, the very same sentence which was used to murder many of its activists not so many years ago.

So, where are all the IS groups now, especially since the government is seemingly adamant that it will become the regional economic/political power in Southern Africa, if not even further north?

Things can become hard

One of the features of doing work in IS movements is that it is often the easy option compared to involvement with struggles here in Australia with all the difficulties, compromises, and fights that such an option would entail. Examples of local struggles that were/are just as important as any IS involvement are:

a) The situation of Australia's indigenous people. Since the Royal Commission on Black Deaths in custody brought down its findings, another 107 aborigines have died in corrective institutions. The rate of deaths has gone up from 10.4 deaths a year during the period that the Commission investigated to the present 11.4 deaths per year.

While it is very encouraging for people to express solidarity with Australia's indigenous people and to support their right to Land Rights, this will not in itself change the balance of forces within Australian society. The question to ask is, what practical action are people taking to confront the Australian state and to change this balance of forces in favour of the Australian Aborigines?

b) The smashing of the Builders Labourers Federation and the Pilots Union in the 1980's by the ALP in conjunction with the leadership of the Australian trade union movement. These two events were clear cases of government repression, restriction of civil liberties, the introduction of special repressive legislation and in the case of the Pilots dispute the use of the military in a civilian setting.

Many of the workers that were targeted in those two disputes are still black-balled and unable to find work in their chosen professions. Where were all the IS activists that were busy helping struggles overseas when one was happening in their midst?

c) Another case in point is the plight of migrants/refugees here in Australia with a progressive tightening of rules and increasing restrictions to their civil liberties over the last two decades. The

previous ALP government instituted dawn raids of workplaces to flush out illegals, constructed bigger and more isolated detention centres and increased the rate of deportations.

Given that such measures have led directly to the death of people, is not this an issue that should spawn a huge human rights campaign here in Australia? Who is fighting politically for the rights of these people and arguing for their rights as human beings and against the ideology of narrow chauvinism and country specific nationalism? My intention is not to downgrade IS, on the contrary, I believe that IS is crucial for any political undertaking. What I've been trying to highlight though, is that IS is an important political undertaking, which is as complex and difficult as any other political activity. International solidarity is then not just about 'helping them/feeling good' but should be seen as a serious political activity between comrades living in different countries, operating in a different social and political context leading to the attainment of mutually agreed goals.

One of the main deficiencies of international solidarity groups is their lack of critical analysis of the social environment in which they work and their lack of clarity in defining what exactly it is they are striving for and how. In other words, what are the most productive strategies that can be carried out to further the cause of internationalism when we live in a capitalist society that is dominated by individualism, sexism and nationalism, just to name three social characteristics of our society.

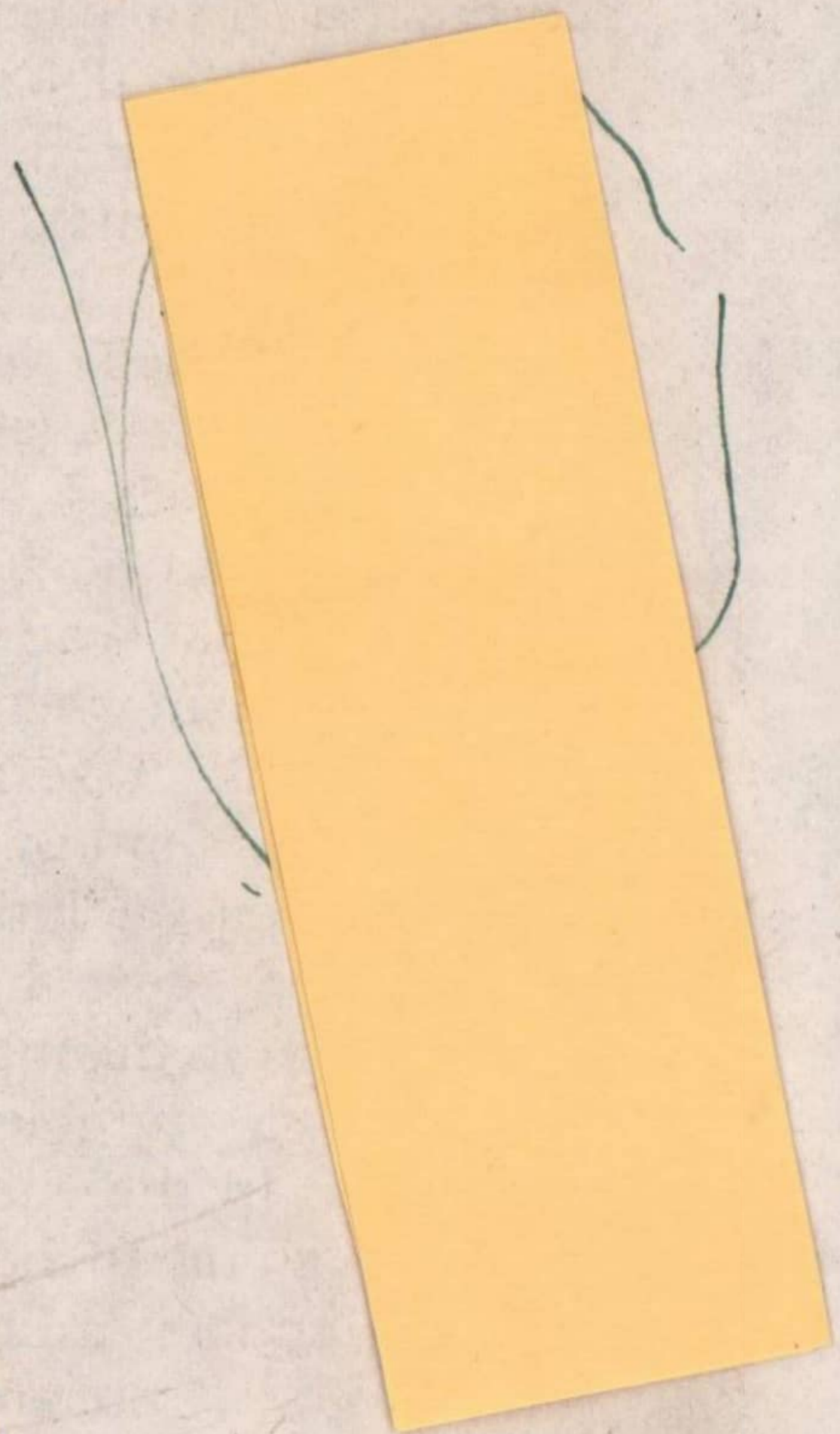
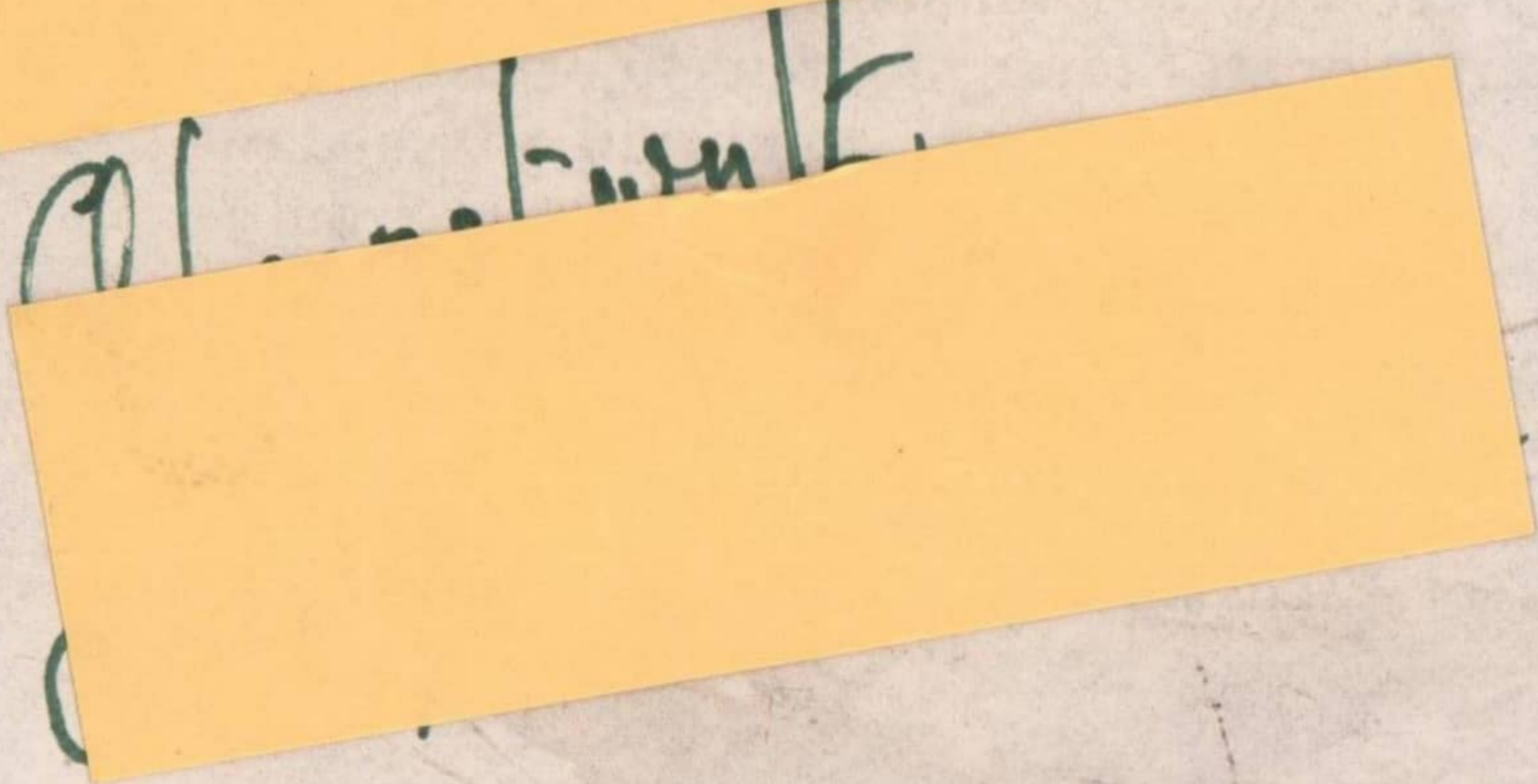
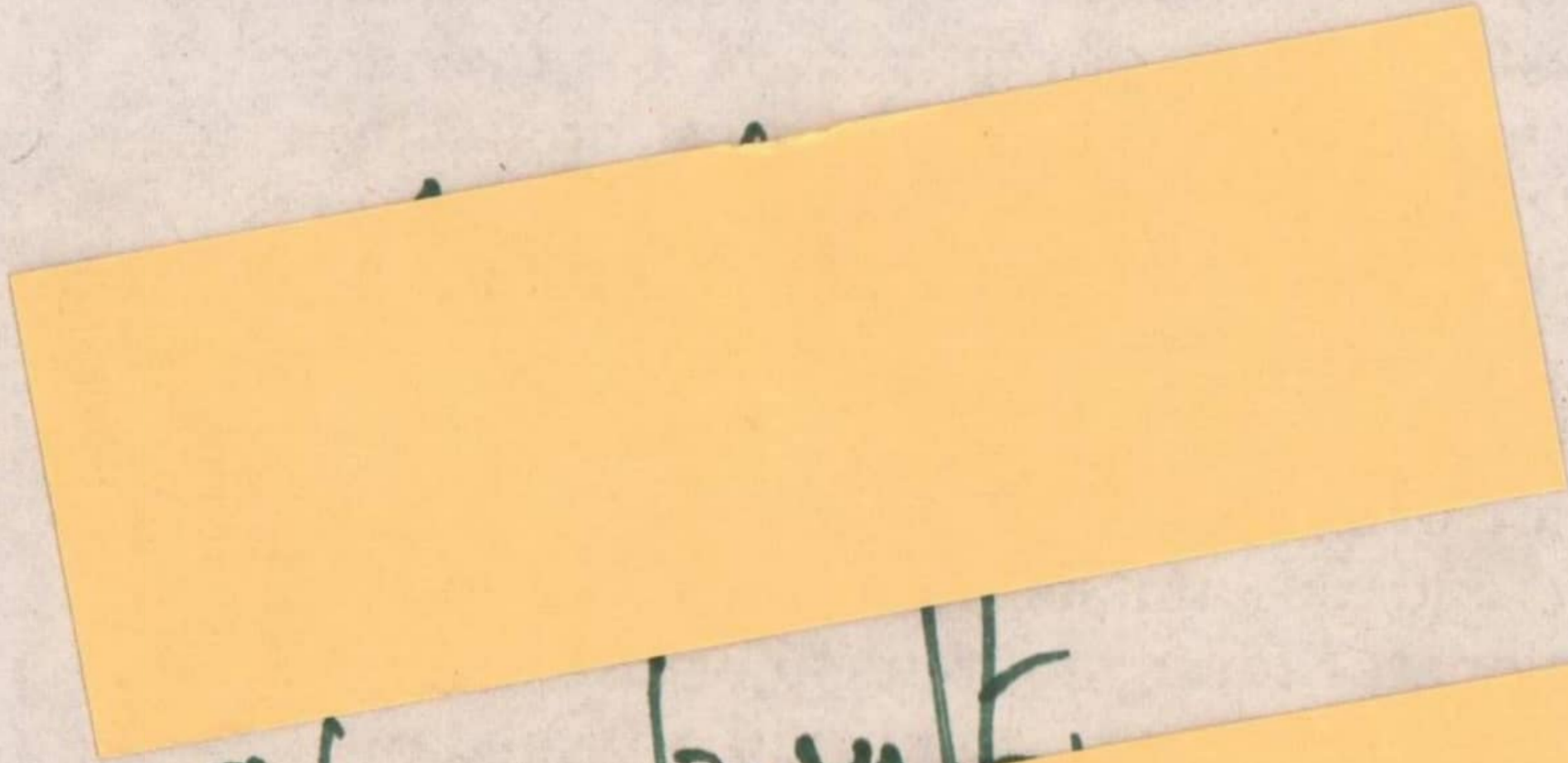
While no easy solutions are being offered here, the first step is the need to be more honest and accountable for our actions and involvement in the international solidarity movement or else we shall continue to stumble on from solidarity campaign to solidarity campaign. In the end the pre-requisite for any solidarity group, if they are going to be serious about their task, is to have a clear political understanding of itself and of its goals, a strategic plan in which to carry out their actions and with internal structures set up to further the political understanding of its members concerning both the importance of solidarity work and the wider political struggle.

(Piergiorgio Moro is an activist who has been involved in international solidarity for many years.)

'Runway Two'

Dear *Raven*,

The article 'Runway Two' which appeared in *The Raven* number 36 (volume 9, page 381) under my Christian name 'Julian' did so because the person who submitted it was unaware of my surname. As somebody who always makes a point of giving my full name and never a false name when on the campaigns – because I saw no cause for shame or concealment in what we were doing – I would simply like to state that my name is Julian Fitzgerald.



Henry Rosemont

Which Rights? Whose Democracy?

For much of my professional life my research has centred on comparative philosophy, especially as between early Chinese thought and the Western philosophical tradition in which I was trained. This research has been liberating for me personally because it has consistently obliged me to not merely inherit my own tradition, but also to attempt to step outside it, and view it as non-Western thinkers might. It is not that I have sought definitive answers in early China to the mind-body, free will versus determinism, or the existence of evil problems that so thoroughly permeate the writings of Western philosophers. Rather have I had to come to terms with the fact that the early Chinese philosophers thought long and hard about what it was to be a human being, the good society, and the place of humans in the larger scheme of things, without ever raising these problems which are so central to the Western tradition.

My fellow comparativists and I, however, do not undertake our research solely for personal reasons, nor merely to subvert the entire Western intellectual tradition. On the contrary we endeavour to build on that tradition in general, and in particular to make the discipline of philosophy as genuinely universalistic in the future as it was as mistakenly thought to be in the past.

Many comparativists are also concerned with contemporary affairs, and we pursue our research in non-Western thought partly in the hope of making a small contribution to the intercultural dialogues that are becoming a more prominent part of international affairs, especially those dialogues which take up fundamental issues such as democracy, human rights and global justice: the ultimate goal of these dialogues is to increase the probability that the five and a half billion human citizens of the global community will live more peaceably with one another in the twenty-first century than they did in the twentieth.

If this ultimate goal is to be realised, it is essential that the dialogues be genuine dialogues, with give and take, and with all sides being willing to entertain seriously the possibility that their own moral and political theories might not capture the essence of the human spirit. The necessity of the dialogues being genuine is of especial importance to citizens of the United States, for it is clearly the most powerful voice in virtually every international gathering; the World

Court would be a far more effective institution if the US would agree to abide by its decisions, and our oceans much more ecologically sound if it would sign the Law of the Sea. But if the US is to become more internationally responsible, its regnant ideology must be challenged. We certainly have a monopoly on power, but once the political rhetoric is seen for what it is, it is by no means clear that we occupy a similar position with respect to concepts of truth, beauty justice, or the good.

The regnant ideology I wish to challenge may be loosely but usefully referred to as 'modern Western Liberalism', meaning by the expression support for a partial welfare state so long as it does not conflict with the basic concern of classical liberalism, namely, to protect individual freedom against the power of governments. But challenges will come to naught if they are based on premises or presuppositions that are either factually mistaken, or embody basic values that modern liberalism finds abhorrent. Thus it will do no good to defend, for example, female genital mutilation on the grounds that it is embedded in a culture different from the West's but with its own integrity, and hence should be left alone to evolve in accordance with its own dynamics. Similarly, Western liberals – and many others – are rightfully sceptical of arguments that a particular people aren't ready for democracy yet, or that rights are a luxury the peoples of poor nations cannot afford. I wish, in other words, to question the conceptual framework of liberalism, but at the same time believe that those who accept the framework nevertheless have moral instincts that closely approximate my own.

To be at all useful then, a challenge to modern Western liberalism will have to show that certain values central to the Western intellectual tradition cannot be realised so long as other values championed by modern liberalism dominate our moral and political discourse. And I also wish to go deeper, and challenge as well the underlying Eurocentric philosophical bias that so thoroughly permeates Western liberalism via its universalistic claims that are perhaps less truly universal than they are an ongoing rationale for the ongoing dominance of Western industrial and post-industrial capitalism.

In what follows, I will first discuss briefly the concepts of human rights and democracy as they are currently employed in the West to criticise virtually all of the governments of East and Southeast Asia, arguing along the way that most of these latter governments do not embody 'Asian authoritarianism' as much as Madeline Albright and Newt Gingrich suggest. Most of the 'Asian values' debates have been less truly debates than they have been name-calling exercises, but

the US media have focused almost solely on our set of names: the Asian side has been voiceless for the most part.

I will then sketch an alternative to Western liberalism, the tradition of classical Confucianism, and I do this because the so-called authoritarianism of most Asian governments is regularly portrayed as stemming from Confucianism.

Against this background I will then return to a brief further critique of Western liberalism as it is exemplified in the US today and then conclude by peering through a glass darkly at what we might all learn if the Asian values debate becomes a genuine dialogue.

I have titled my paper to signal an indebtedness to the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre is, of course, as deeply suspicious of modern Western liberalism as I am. He is usually portrayed as an arch-conservative, fully committed to a modern version of Aristotelian Thomism. But he is not a relativist – pragmatic or otherwise – and unlike the great majority of ‘liberal’ philosophers and political theorists, he takes Confucianism seriously as a genuine rival moral tradition. Perhaps most important, he has argued well that incommensurable discourses between rival traditions can be made commensurable if certain conditions are met, and thus genuine dialogue can indeed take place. In his own words:

“The only way to approach a point at which our own [moral] standpoint could be vindicated against some rival is to understand our own standpoint in a way that renders it from our own point of view as problematic as possible and therefore as maximally vulnerable as possible to defeat by that rival. We can only learn what intellectual and moral resources our own standpoint, our own tradition of theoretical and practical inquiry possess, as well as what intellectual and moral resources its rivals may possess, when we have understood our own point of view in a way that takes with full seriousness the possibility that we may in the end, as rational beings, have to abandon that point of view. This admission of fallibilism need not entail any present lack of certitude, but it is a condition of worthwhile conversation with equally certain antagonists.”

Most philosophical conversations of this kind, because of historical determinants, are being conducted in English, as are the great majority of the intercultural dialogues on human rights, democracy, and justice. This linguistic hegemony, if such it is, is not merely owing to the economic and military superiority of the West, for which English is now the *lingua franca*. It is deeply embedded in, and has established the agenda for the intercultural dialogues themselves. There are no traditional close semantic equivalents for ‘democracy’, ‘justice’, or ‘rights’ in most of the world’s languages:

these are Western. The former two have their origins in Greek *demos* and *dike*, and 'rights' we owe largely to the writings of John Locke with conceptual roots that may go back to the *sokes* and *sakes* of late medieval England, and perhaps earlier.

Thus, if we are to follow MacIntyre methodologically, we must allow the other their otherness, and, without in any way surrendering rationality, nevertheless allow for the possibility that not only don't we have all the answers, we may not have been asking all the questions in as universal a vocabulary as has hitherto been presupposed. Specifically for the early Confucians, there are, in addition to 'rights', 'democracy' and 'justice', no analogous lexical items for most of the modern Western basic vocabulary for developing moral and political theories: 'autonomy', 'freedom', 'liberty', 'subjective', 'objective', 'individual', 'rational', 'choice', 'private', 'public', 'dilemma' and – perhaps most eerie of all for a modern Western moral theorist – no term corresponding to English 'ought', prudential or obligatory. Thus the comparativist must be especially sensitive to the choice of terms employed in dialogue, so as not to beg the questions, for or against, the view under analysis and evaluation.

Which Rights?

In other writings, I have taken into account differences between rights theorists on such issues as natural rights, absolute rights, rights as 'trumps', defeasible rights, and so forth, but here I want to concentrate on what binds them together (and binds them as well to most social scientists, especially economists): the vision of human beings as free, rational, autonomous individuals.

For myself, the study of classical Confucianism has suggested that rights-oriented moral and political theories based on this vision are flawed, and that a different vocabulary for moral and political discourse is needed. The concept of human rights, and related concepts clustered around it like liberty, the individual, property, autonomy, freedom, reason, choice, and so on, do not capture what it is we believe to be a human being: they have served to obscure the wrongness of the radical maldistribution of the world's wealth – both intra- and internationally – and even more fundamentally they cannot, I believe, be employed to produce a coherent and consistent theory much less a theory that is in accord with our basic moral intuitions, intuitions that have been obscured by concepts such as 'human rights' and 'democracy' as these have been defined for us in the contemporary capitalist West. Other definitions are possible, and they can be given without in any way giving aid or comfort to the

Husseins, Li Peangs, Suhartos or Milosevics of this world.

A global concern for human rights has grown appreciably since the UN Declaration of 1948 with human rights activists found in every country, sufficient in quality and quantity as to render flatly wrong the view that human rights – and democracy – are simply Western conceits. There is increasing international insistence that human rights be respected, and democracy encouraged.

In the course of these dialogues, and in recent political and moral theory, rights have been roughly placed in three categories: civil and political, social and economic, and solidarity rights. It is usually understood that each succeeding set of rights is a natural progression from the preceding set, evidenced in the terms by which we refer to them: first, second and third generation rights.

Unfortunately upon closer examination it becomes less obvious that second generation rights are a natural conceptual progression from first generation rights. And if we are to understand the early Confucians, we must first come to appreciate the difference between the two.

For Locke, civil and political rights accrued to human beings as gifts from their Creator. But God is seldom invoked today to justify first generation rights. Instead, they are grounded in the view that human beings are basically autonomous individuals. And if I am indeed essentially an autonomous individual, it is easy to understand and appreciate my demands that, *ceteris paribus*, neither the state nor anyone else abridge my freedom to choose my own ends and means, so long as I respect the civil and political rights of all others. But on what grounds can autonomous individuals demand a job, or health care, or an education – the second generation rights – from other autonomous individuals? There is a logical gap here which no one has successfully bridged yet. From the mere premise of being an autonomous individual, no conclusion can follow that I have a right to employment. Something more is needed, but it is by no means clear what that something might be, unless it conflicted with the view of human beings as basically autonomous individuals.

Put another way, jobs, adequate housing, schools, health care, and so on, do not fall from the sky. They are human creations, and no one has been able to show how I can demand that other human beings created these goods for me without them surrendering some significant portion their first generation rights which accrue to them by virtue of their being true, autonomous individuals, free to pursue their own projects rather than being obliged to assist me with mine.

To see the logical gap between first and second generation rights in another way, consider this difference between them: 99% of the time

I can fully respect your civil and political rights simply by ignoring you (you certainly have the right to speak, but no right to make me listen). If you have legitimate social and economic rights, on the other hand, then I have responsibilities to act on your behalf and not ignore you. And what would it take for your social and economic rights claims to be legitimately binding on me? Basically what is required is that I see neither you nor myself as an autonomous individual, but rather see both of us as co-members of a human community.

To deepen our analysis of this state of affairs, and to bring the Confucian persuasion more directly to bear on the analysis, we turn now from the woefully brief consideration of human rights to the other issue central to inter-cultural dialogue today: democracy.

Whose Democracy?

The basic moral ideal that underlies our espousal of democracy is, I suggest, that all rational human beings should have a significant and equal voice in arriving at decisions that directly affect their own lives. This is indeed an ideal, for it does not seem to ever have been realised even approximately in any nation-state, with the possible exception of Catalonia for a few months in early 1937 before the Communists and the Falange combined to crush the anarchist co-operatives established there.

If this be granted, it follows that all ostensible democracies are flawed, and consequently must be evaluated along a continuum of more or less. A basic criterion used in the evaluation will, of course, be how much freedom any government grants its citizens. By this criterion the so-called 'democratic republics' of Vietnam, North Korea and Myanmar (Burma) fare very poorly, and the United States ranks high.

But while a healthy measure of freedom is necessary for considering state democratic, it cannot be sufficient. By any standard, the citizens of the US enjoy a very large amount of freedom. But an increasing majority of those citizens have virtually no control over the impersonal forces – economic and otherwise – that directly affect their lives, and they are becoming increasingly apolitical. They have a sense of powerlessness, with good reason: democracy has been pretty much reduced to the ritual going to the democracy temples once every four years to pull a lever to Tweedledee or Tweedledum, cynically expressed in the saying 'If voting could really change things, the government would find a way to make it illegal'.

My point here, however, is not simply to criticise the US for the present sorry state of democracy within its borders, sorry though it is. Rather is the criticism based on the slow evolution of the

democratic ideal since 1789. The United States has always been a flawed democracy – slavery, institutionalised racism, lack of women's suffrage, etc., but it was a fledgling democracy at least – most white males had some voice in political decisions that directly affected their lives. And, of course, possibilities for enhancing democracy developed: slavery was abolished, women got the vote, and institutional racism dismantled. Most of these evolutionary changes did not, however, come about by voting in representative elections. Slavery was effectively abolished on the battlefields of Shiloh, Antietam and Gettysburg, not at the ballot box, and it was the courts that initiated the breakdown of the institutional racism it had earlier strengthened when *Dred Scott* and *Plessy versus Ferguson* were replaced by *Brown versus Board of Education*. And the rights of women, and all working people (now being lost), were obtained by their own militant organising efforts.

Given then that the US form of democratic government has been in existence for over two hundred years, how much has been accomplished toward realising the democratic ideal? That is to say, another criterion we must employ in evaluating nation-states with respect to democracy is the extent to which they nourish those qualities of character that enable their citizens to be self-governing, and sustain those institutions intermediate between the individual and the state – schools, local government, churches, unions, etc. – which are necessary for self-government to be effective, and hence for democracy to flourish.

By these lights, the United States may well not be evaluated as at the higher end of the democratic scale, as the modern liberal tradition would have it. To see this point another way, let us contrast the US with a very different contemporary state.

Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, along with Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, are usually portrayed in the West as advocating 'Asian Authoritarianism' – more or less Confucian inspired – as against the liberal democratic tradition of the West. And Mahathir surely has been vocal in criticising Western social, economic and political institutions, as has Lee. But then what are we to make of Mahathir's 'Asian Authoritarianism' when he says:

"When Malaya became independent in 1957, our per capita income was lower than that of Haiti. Haiti did not take the path of democracy. We did. Haiti today is the poorest country in all the Americas. We now have a standard of living higher than any major economy in the Americas, save only the United States and Canada. We could not have achieved what we have achieved without democracy."

Moreover, Mahathir has publicly criticised China for its policies on Tibet, the Indonesian government for its atrocities in East Timor, and the Burma generals for their ill-treatment of Muslims – and of course there are contested elections in Malaysia. What, then, might 'Asian Authoritarianism' mean, other than as a shibboleth?

If we assume that Mahathir was sincere in his statement, then we might see the policies of his 'national front' government as designed to foster self-government, especially among the majority ethnic Malays and to foster human rights as well. Malaysia – like Singapore and many other nation-states rich and poor – is multi-ethnic, and the avowed goal of the government was as much to achieve a strong measure of economic equity between the ethnic groupings as to minimise communalist ethnic strife. Further, to the extent Malaysia allows market forces to operate, the government requires major corporations to measure their success largely in terms of production and employment, rather than the way US corporations measure their success in the market, i.e. by consumption and return on investment.

Malaysia remains a flawed democracy; its citizens are certainly not as free as their US counterparts. But it has given its citizens the franchise, and tolerated criticism, as has Singapore, despite its caning practices, and ban on gum-chewing – given how little a democratic base the Malaysian government had in 1957 (and Singapore in 1961), these countries have indeed come a long way socially, politically and economically by their focus on equity across ethnic and religious boundaries, and have equally been encouraging of self-government within and between those communalist groupings. (In both countries today, and in Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, there are strong and vocal opposition political parties, all of which criticise governmental policies.)

If this be so, and when it is realised how many young nation-states are multi-ethnic today, then an argument can be made for Asian authoritarianism perhaps being not altogether authoritarian, but rather sensitive to cultural influences historically, yet supportive of a democratic ideal, perhaps a better one than is insisted upon by the United States. And if this argument has merit, it will follow in turn that the fledgling democracies of East and Southeast Asia might provide a better model for the evolution of self-government than the US model proffered by modern Western liberalism, and it may well fall to these Asian countries to be the true champions of democracy and human rights in the twenty-first century. This is precisely the claim – startling as it initially appears – made by political scientist Edward Friedman in an incisive recent article.

“Since it is difficult to long maintain a fledgling democracy without economic growth ... dynamic Asian societies are seeking communalist equity ... If the economic pie does not expand, then the only way the previously excluded can get their fair share of the pie is to take a big bite out of what established elites already have ... Lacking the benefits of East Asia’s more dynamic statist and equitable path to growth, a polarising democracy elsewhere, in neo-liberalist guise, can quickly seem the enemy of most of the people. This has been the case with numerous new democracies in both Latin American and Eastern Europe. At the end of the twentieth century ... pure market economics further polarises a society. What is emphasised in the post-Keynesian orthodoxy is containing inflation. What is rewarded is creating a climate welcomed by free-floating capital; concerns of the marginalised, the poor, and the unemployed are not high on this agenda ... State intervention on behalf of equity – with the way Singapore tries to make housing available to all, as with Malaysia’s success with state aid to rural dwellers – is far more likely sustain democratic institutionalisation.”

Without idealising the government of East and Southeast Asian fledgling democracies – some defenders of ‘Asian Authoritarianism’ are indeed authoritarian and hostile to democracy – it remains true that countries like Malaysia – and to a lesser extent, Singapore and the five ‘mini-dragons’ – have come a fair distance in nourishing self-government, and their record is especially impressive when compared to the US: they began with much less, both economically and politically, and they have achieved much both economically and politically in or one-fifth of the time the US has been around.

A Confucian Alternative

Against this background let me quickly sketch my answer to the question of whether precursors of the concept human rights – and derivatively democracy – may be found in classical Confucianism. Unsurprising, my answer is ‘Yes and no’. ‘No’ if the most basic rights are seen as civil and political, grounded in the view that we are free autonomous individuals: and ‘yes’ if our most basic rights stem from membership in a community with each member assuming a measure of responsibility for the welfare of all other members.

I do not believe much argumentation is necessary to establish that the classical Confucians are no more autonomous than they are automatons. *Ren*, the highest human excellence, must be given expression in interpersonal endeavours. Rituals (*li*), necessary for self-cultivation and the ordering of society are communal activities. In order to exercise *xiao* (filial piety), I must have parents, or at least their memory. This point is virtually a truism: in order to give human expression to the qualities inherent in being a friend, spouse, sibling,

or neighbour, I must have a friend, spouse, sibling and neighbour, and these all-too-human interactions are not an accidental or incidental part of my life for a Confucian, on the contrary, they are absolutely essential if I am to achieve any significant measure of self-realisation.

It is not merely that we are obliged, of necessity, to interact with others, we must care about them as well, and this caring, while it begins with the family, must nevertheless extend beyond it. The obligation to be attentive to the needs of all others in the community – large or small – is found in the earliest Chinese texts, now over three thousand years old.

This same theme permeates the Analects, with Confucius insisting that even the humblest peasant was entitled to his opinions – which deserved attention – and insisting as well that the first responsibility of an official was to see that the people under his jurisdiction were well fed, with the attendant disgrace if he should be well fed when the people were not, and after they have been fed they should be educated. And that is exactly what is also required for generating those qualities of character that lead to public self-government – the democratic ideal. Moreover, think of how often Confucius' disciples ask socially oriented questions: about government, about filial piety, about rituals, and so on. A very common question, of course, concerns the qualities of the *jun zi* (authoritative person), and in the great majority of cases the Master places his response in a social setting: In the presence of superiors the *jun zi* does X, in the presence of friends Y, and in the presence of 'mean people' he does Z. Albeit in a semantically camouflaged way, his successor Mencius justifies regicide when the ruler does not care for his people, and places him at the bottom of the moral hierarchy even when he does. At a much more profound philosophical level, Mencius maintains that this caring for others is foundational intuition in humans.

Moreover, this caring for all other was not to be only a personal excellence to be nurtured: it was to be institutionalised as well. Another early Confucian, Xun Zi, makes this point explicitly. To take only one example – after insisting that the ruler appoint ministers on the basis of their moral qualities rather than on the basis of lineage or wealth, he goes on to say:

“When it comes to men of perverse words and theories, perverse undertakings and talents, or to people who are slippery and vagrant, they should be given a task to do, taught what is right and allowed a period of trial ... In the case of the five incapacitated groups, the government should gather them together, look after them and give them whatever work they are able to do. Employ them, provide them with food and clothing, and take

care to see that none are left out. [L]ook after widows and orphans and assist the poor.”

This remarkable passage – and there are many others in a similar vein in Xun Zi – requires comment. First, despite a number of semi-authoritarian pronouncements in this and other chapters, Xun Zi is clearly advocating the functional equivalent of job trainer programs, AFDC, welfare and Medicare for the Chinese peoples: on this score he is far to the left of either the Republicans or Democrats, and he lived twenty-two hundred years ago. What makes this advocacy all the more impressive is that it requires the state to provide many goods and services to groups of people who cannot possibly pose a threat to that state’s power: Machiavellean it is not.

Second, it is significant that Xun Zi’s concern for the well-being of the sick, the poor, the marginalised and the unlettered is not mirrored in the political treatises composed by his near-contemporaries on the other side of the globe. We will read Plato’s *Republic* and the *Laws* and Aristotle’s *Politics* in vain if what we wish to learn is the obligations of the state toward its neediest and most helpless members.

Third, and perhaps most important in attending to this passage, and to the several others cited above, and to a great many others in the classical Confucian corpus, is it not possible to discern not one a sense of self-governance but a sense of the importance of nurturing self-governance in others as well? Might we here be seeing a genesis for the development of social and economic rights, and for democracy? The answer, of course, is no, if our model of democracy is free, autonomous individuals freely exercising their franchise at the voting booth. But bracket the US, and return for a moment to Mahathir Mohamad’s Malaysia and Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore. If we agree that these countries, warts and all, are nevertheless fledgling democracies, then whose theoretical perspective more significantly underlies the social, economic and political progress that has been made, Xun Zi’s or John Locke’s?

As a final example of the Confucian claim that we cannot merely dwell among the birds and beasts – i.e. we are not autonomous individuals – and at the same time meet the common objection that Confucian community norms are highly particularistic, let us examine another early Confucian text, *The Great Learning*. Tu Weiming has well argued that there is a strong spiritual dimension in *The Great Learning*. This dimension is signaled by the large number of times that words like ‘repose’, ‘tranquillity’, ‘peace’ and ‘the highest good’ appear in it.

Its religious message is, however, singular. I know of no close parallel to it in other traditions. To find peace and dwell in the highest good, as defined by the West, for example, we are uniformly instructed to look inward, to know ourselves, as Socrates put it, or to know ourselves in relation to deity, as the texts of the three Abrahamic religions make clear. In the *Da Xue*, on the other hand, looking inward and coming to know ourselves is more of a means than the ultimate end towards which we must strive. That goal is to augment *tian xia*, which may fairly be translated as 'the world community', despite the monocultural orientation of the Han Dynasty author(s) of the text. And we reach this goal by first shrinking our perspectives and activities from *tian xia* through the state, the clan, the family and then to our own heart-mind. But once this task is accomplished, we may then begin to expand our perspective and activities outward again, until they eventually encompass the world community. Herein lies the highest good, to serve our fellow humans – Mao's abuse of the expression two millennia later notwithstanding.

There is a great deal I could say to justify the claim that a sound basis for second generation rights, grounded in membership in a community, is contained in both the letter and the spirit of the classical Confucian writings. And I will go further, to also claim that if we can learn to read those writings against a global background that goes beyond modern Western liberalism, we may also see a basis for the development of democracies that is of direct relevance today. I am not suggesting that 'Alle Menschen werden Bruder' is reflected in the classical corpus: to my knowledge, Zhang Cai's beautiful *Xi Ming* is the first text to do that. But 'No man is an Island' thoroughly permeates classical Confucianism, and very probably we must fully appreciate Donne's vision before we can embrace Schiller's.

In sum, Confucian selves are not autonomous individuals, they are altogether relational persons, persons leading lives integrated morally, aesthetically, politically and spiritually – moreover, they lead these lives in a human community. As Confucius said:

"I cannot herd with the birds and beasts: if I am not to be a person in the midst of others, what am I to be?"

All of the specific human relations of which we are a part, interacting with the dead as well as the living, will be mediated by the courtesy, customs, rituals and traditions we come to share as our inextricably linked histories unfold, and by fulfilling the obligations defined by these relationships we are, for early Confucians, following the

human way. It is a comprehensive way. By the manner in which we interact with others our lives will clearly have a moral dimension infusing all, not just some, of our conduct. By the ways in which this ethical interpersonal conduct is effected, with reciprocity and governed by civility, respect, affection, custom, ritual and tradition, our lives will also have an aesthetic dimension for ourselves and for others. And by specifically meeting our defining traditional obligations to our elders and ancestors on the one hand, and to our contemporaries and descendants on the other, the early Confucians offer an uncommon, but nevertheless spiritually authentic form of transcendence, a human capacity to go beyond the specific spatio-temporal circumstances in which we exist, giving our personhood the sense of humanity shared in common and thereby a sense of strong continuity with what has gone before and what will come later, and a concomitant commitment to leave this earth in a better condition than we found it. There being no question for the early Confucians of the meaning of life, we may nevertheless see that the view of what it is to be a human being provided for every person to find meaning in life.

This, then, is all too briefly a sketch of the conceptual framework of early Confucianism, wherein rights-talk was not spoken and within which I am not a free, autonomous individual, I am a son, husband, father, grandfather, neighbour, colleague, student, teacher, citizen, friend. I have a very large number of relational obligations and responsibilities, which severely constrain my choices of what to do. These responsibilities occasionally frustrate or annoy, they more often are satisfying, and they are always binding. If we are going to use words like 'freedom' here it must be seen as an achievement, not a stative term, as Confucius himself suggests in describing the milestones of his life. And my individuality, if anyone wishes to keep the concept, will come from the specific actions I take in meeting my relational responsibilities: there are many ways to be a good teacher, spouse, sibling, friend, and so forth – if Confucian persons aren't free, autonomous individuals, they aren't dull, faceless automatons either. As Herbert Fingarette has noted well, for the Confucians there must be at least two human beings before there can be any human beings.

Furthermore, the language of Confucian discourse is rich and varied, permitting me to eulogise a Martin Luther King – it allows me a full lexicon to inveigh against the Chinese government for its treatment of Han Dongfang, Wei Jingsheng, Wang Dan and others, and against the Indonesian government for the horrors visited on the

East Timorese people. I can express outrage at the rape of Bosnian women and petition the Governor of Pennsylvania to grant a new trial to Mumia Abu Jamal. I can, in sum, fully express my moral sentiments without ever involving the language of first-generation human rights.

Perhaps, then, we should study Confucianism as a genuine alternative to modern Western theories of rights (and democracy), rather than merely as an implicit early version of them. When it is remembered that three-quarters of the world's peoples have, and continue to define themselves in terms of kinship and community rather than as individual rights-bearers, we may come to entertain seriously the possibility that if the search for universal moral and political principles is a worthwhile endeavour, we might find more of a philosophical grounding for those principles and beliefs in the writings of Confucius and Mengzi than those of John Locke, Adam Smith and their successors. To emphasise this argument, let us return to the contemporary world.

Beyond the liberal tradition

The best way to go beyond modern Western liberalism in a global context is, I believe, to focus on economics. Large corporations are increasingly unrestrained in their behaviours both intra- and internationally, in an increasingly relentless drive for greater profits. The adverse social effects of this drive are obvious, yet we seem incapable of changing things – why?

One major reason, I submit, is that the Western – now international – legal system that is designed to protect the first generation civil and political rights of autonomous individuals equally protects the rights of autonomous individual corporations to do pretty much as they please, and the so-called democratic process, especially in the US, is so money-driven that those corporations can pretty much choose the candidate who will please them. (It is for this reason that I do not worry much about the future of Hong Kong's democracy. The Chinese political parties are dominated by the well-to-do elite, which generates the same kind of hollow democracy as currently obtains in the United States).

Consider a statement from Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labour. Upon being challenged for expressing a measure of unhappiness at AT&T's decision last year to lay off 40,000 workers after declaring near-record dividends, he responded:

"I don't question the morality of AT&T. In fact, I am very much against villainising any of these people. And with regard to whether they did it wisely

– the share price went up. By some measures, AT&T did precisely what it ought to have done. But the fundamental question is whether society is better off.”

This is an astonishing statement. If society is better off for AT&T's action, then it would *prima facie* suggest the action was moral, and, if society is worse, off then immoral. How, then, can Reich not wish to question the morality of AT&T's action? Worse, the answer to the 'fundamental question' he asks surely appears to be that US society is worse off for the job losses, even when we take shareholder gains in account. A great many AT&T shares are owned by a very few people.

In this light, we may better appreciate why the governments of the fledgling democracies in East Asia are so often called 'authoritarian'. They enact laws prohibiting major corporations from laying off large numbers of workers in order to secure greater profits, and in this way those governments restrict 'free trade'.

Japan, too, restricts free trade, which is at least partially responsible for the 'Asian Authoritarian' label continuing to be affixed to the way the country is run. The curmudgeonly economist and political analyst Edward Luttwak has brought home succinctly the difference between a restrictive Japan and a free US:

“When I go to my gas station in Japan, five young men wearing uniforms jump on my car. They not only check the oil but also wash the tyres and wash the lights. Why is that? Because government doesn't allow oil companies to compete by price, and therefore they have to compete by service. They're still trying to maximise shareholder value, but they hire the young men. I pay a lot of money for the gas. Then I come to Washington, and in Washington gas is much cheaper. Nobody washes the tyres, nobody does anything for me, but here too there are five young men. The five young men who in Japan are employed to wash my car are, here, standing around unemployed waiting to rob my car. I still have to pay for them through my taxes, through imprisonment, through a failed welfare system. I still have to pay for them. But in Japan at least they clean my car.”

Similarly, Clinton defended NAFTA by claiming that it would raise GNP and create more hi-tech jobs. But as Luttwak also noted, the US already has the highest GNP in the world, and it is not important, for the vast majority of US citizens, to give great weight to increasing it further. And to ascertain just how badly we need a lot more hi-tech jobs, just ask virtually any laid-off steel or auto worker. What we do need is more decent-paying semi-skilled jobs for those five young men waiting to steal Luttwak's car, and for millions more young (and not so young) men and women just like them.

Perhaps I am mistaken here: we might indeed need to increase

GNP and secure more hi-tech jobs. That is not my point. Rather, I wish to suggest a question: Why is it in this most free of all nations, we freely-choosing autonomous individuals have no democratic choice about whether we want to spend our money having our windshields washed, or building more prisons?

Consider the results of a poll recently conducted by the Preamble Center for Public Policy (completed shortly before President Clinton signed the end-of-Welfare bill): 70% of eight hundred registered voters believed corporate greed, not the global economy, was responsible for downsizing, and an equal number supported increased governmental action to curb that greed and promote socially responsible conduct. Almost 80% favoured obliging large employers to provide health benefits and pension plans, and equally favoured 'living wage' laws.

As indicated earlier, one reason we have little or no real choice in such matters is that our legal system, significantly designed to protect and enhance the first generation rights of free, autonomous individuals, equally protects and enhances those rights for large corporations.

A related reason is a cardinal tenet of modern Western liberalism: the government, being public, must say nothing of the highest good; that is a private matter for each autonomous individual to freely choose for him/herself. The state cannot legislate morality (which is why Secretary Reich did not wish to question AT&T's action).

This is a powerful point, which contributes greatly to the support we are inclined to give to modern Western liberalism and its universalistic philosophical underpinnings: we – especially we members of the educated elite – do want to be free to choose our own ends; we each have our individual hopes and dreams, and do not want our manner of expressing them dictated or altered by others. Herein lies, I believe, the basic appeal of the concept of civil and political rights for free, autonomous individuals.

But as Michael Sandel has argued in a recent work:

“By insisting that we are bound only by ends and roles we choose for ourselves [modern Western liberalism] denies that we can ever be claimed by ends we have not chosen – ends given by nature or God, for example, or by our identities as members of families, peoples, cultures or traditions.”

For the Confucians this liberal denial is flatly mistaken at best, self-serving at worst, for human beings do indeed, they insist, have ends they have not chosen, ends given by nature, and by their roles in families, as members of communities and as inheritors of tradition.

The highest good is not many, it is one, no matter how difficult to ascertain – and it is communally realised. Put in our terms, only co-members of a community can achieve personal freedom.

This, then, in far too brief a compass, is a sketch of a challenge to modern Western liberalism from a Confucian perspective. I believe it will meet MacIntyre's criteria for intercultural discourse, for I have attempted to challenge contemporary Western liberalism largely on its own grounds, without recourse to any views liberals would claim to be patently false and by appeal to a number of basic moral values I believe the majority of liberals would endorse. And I have also attempted to suggest how and why those basic values cannot be realised in the modern liberal tradition owing to its commitment to other values, namely those that attach directly to free, autonomous individuals – and transnational corporations.

If my challenge is at all sustainable, it suggests that either the liberal or some other tradition must conceptually reconcile first and second generation rights claims much more clearly in the future than has been done in the past, or that we must give pride of place to second and third generation rights in future intercultural dialogues on the subject, and future dialogues on democracy (and justice) as well. But if the latter, it must follow that these dialogues can no more be value-neutral than can the governments or fledgling democracies in East and Southeast Asia. Or in not-so-fledgling democracies like the United States.

The spell of the concept of free autonomous individuals – once a needed bulwark perhaps against totalitarianism regimes – is not confined to the economic and political dimensions of our (increasingly disjointed) lives; it affects us metaphysically and spiritually as well. Aldous Huxley has well captured this view succinctly:

“We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone.”

Or as A.E. Housman put it:

“And here am I, alone and afraid
in a world I never made.”

Much as I admire Huxley and Housman, this is a frightening universalist view to foist on the global community and, as most US citizens and third-world peoples are beginning to understand, has the quality of being a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus it seems imperative to challenge US ideology at its moral, political and

metaphysical roots, both for the sake of its citizens and for the sake of the rest of the world, whose peoples share the burden of having to live with the untoward consequences of US foreign policies defended by reference to that ideology.

There are alternatives to the Western liberal tradition, alternative visions which just might be endorsed by all people of good will, no matter what their cultural background.

There is nothing wrong with seeking universalist values: indeed, that search must go forward if we are ever to see an end to the ethnic, racial, religious and sexual violence that has so thoroughly splattered the pages of human history with blood and gore since the Enlightenment. Rather does the wrongness lie in the belief that we – or any single culture – are already in possession of those values, and therefore feel justified, backed by superior economic and military threats, in foisting those values on everyone else.

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Merrick

There's a Riot Going On?

Having been in the riot at the demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill in Hyde Park, London, on 9th October 1994, the next day I bought a copy of every national newspaper I could find. Not only did none of them tell the truth, they all told different stories from one another. And yet people will just read one newspaper and believe they have been told the truth. Even 'our side' papers like *The Guardian* and *The Independent* (whose reporter Danny Penman was beaten up by three riot police), only got round to telling the truth later in the week. On the day after the demo, when it really counted, they were as bad as the rest.

Yesterday I went to Newbury for the rally marking the first anniversary of destruction work starting on the bypass road route. The rally was really good-natured and fluffy, and culminated in a mass invasion of the construction compound around the reprieved tree, Middle Oak. We ripped down some fence and occupied the area inside, and a lot of damage was done to contractor's property, but there was no real antagonism towards the police or the security guards. What we did was sabotage the machinery of death and destruction, and it mirrors the action of the Ploughshares women last year who broke into a British Aerospace factory in Lancashire and smashed up a Hawk jet being built for the repressive Indonesian government.

Today I bought all the national newspapers that reported the Newbury action. Again, not only did they not tell the truth (except maybe *The Observer*), they told different stories from one another. And they all pretend they are telling The Truth. Of course, my account is just one person's perspective. Like the journalists and everyone else there, I couldn't see everything that went on, but I don't pretend to. The reporting reminded me of the CJB riot stuff, so I got my shit together and dug out all the old clippings.

We all have a fairly solid conviction that the news is full of lies, but we know it in a vague and woolly way. Here was an example that shows specifics. Not only do the papers make clear measurable errors (like giving the police estimates of crowd sizes as facts), but there's something much subtler, yet far more important in the way the reports are written. It's difficult to pin down, it's in the choice of words used ('protesters', 'crowd', 'mob' or 'thugs?'), it's in the order

that the facts are given (how many start with descriptions of police injuries, yet none with those of protesters?), it's in the position within the newspaper (front page and the photo in *The Daily Mail*, five inches on page 7 of *The Sun*). These are all things that you can't quite make an official complaint about, but which give a real perceptible bias to the story.

The Newbury story was not as widely covered as the CJB riot. It involved less people, and it happened on a Saturday; Sunday papers are mostly written by Friday, leaving only a few small gaps for topical bits. Only one tabloid mentioned it (*The Mirror*, page 20), as Sunday tabloids carry almost no topical stuff at all. If you want press coverage for an action don't have it on a Saturday; the Sunday papers don't have room and it'll be stale and unusable by Monday. But this didn't matter at Newbury. Yesterday wasn't about press coverage, it was about us.

As always, the action at Newbury got blamed on a shady anonymous troublemaking few. This is bollocks. What happened yesterday was the will of everyone present. There were all kinds of people there, all cheering as the fence was torn down, the generators were trashed and the crane was climbed. Tess from Skyward Camp and a local retired woman were sitting together on the bonnet of a massive tipper truck when it was pointed out that the cab behind them was on fire. The woman next to me had two toddlers with her as we danced a giant hokey-cokey round Middle Oak. It was so beautiful milling around, with people hugging each other in reunion and triumph. It wasn't scary, it was fun. It wasn't volatile, it was purposeful. It wasn't a riot, it was a party.

Anyone brought up in a regimented hierarchical society is conditioned to have respect for the Powers That Be. With a mixture of the idea that They Wouldn't Make Laws For No Good Reason and a Fear Of Punishment, they give us a deference to authority, we are taught to obey the voice that wears a uniform.

This Fear Of Authority is the greatest force holding us back from realising our true power, our real capability for making things change. When a crowd realises there's a dozen of us for every one of them and decides to ignore the authority of the uniform, there's *nothing* they can do to stop us. This is what happened yesterday. We went for the fence and they couldn't stop us. We got to touch Middle Oak. Two hundred of us surrounded the tree singing 'Jerusalem', then did a massive celebratory hokey-cokey.

It was the most well focused and clear-thinking crowd I've ever known. Nobody held back; of the eight hundred or so people there,

only about thirty didn't come in to the compound. We moved almost as one from area to area, unafraid of security guards, unafraid of damaging the machinery, but with respect for people. I have no right to risk anyone's safety but my own. I have no interest in, desire for or tolerance of violence against people, and as far as I could see neither did the crowd. We went and sat on the diggers and tipper trucks. After a while we went for the giant crane. Security guards surrounded it, but there were so many more of us, we just prised them off, explaining that we'd won today and they should give up. A security guard next to me got knocked over, and protesters immediately helped him to his feet. I saw nobody antagonising the police or security. And the police, to their credit, didn't get scared and use truncheons. There were two injuries (both protesters), and police and protesters ensured that they got ambulances straight away. Despite the fact that one of the injured protesters had been deliberately trampled by a police horse, it was a peaceful gathering. It was a magnificent day.

One of the big lessons of the Newbury bypass campaign in 1996 has been to see the person inside the uniform. Security guards were quitting from Day Two, several coming to join the protest. At the Fairmile eviction in January '97, the last person down from the trees was Craig, a former Newbury security guard. Every security guard and every police officer is a potential protester. Individual police are not The Law, they are just its servants. As Lenny Bruce said back in the '60s, "that's another big problem, the people who can't separate the authority and the people who have the authority vested in them. You see that a lot on the demonstrations, they have the concept that The Law and Law Enforcement are one. They're demonstrating against the Police Department, actually against policemen". We know how ludicrous it is when people generalise about what protesters are like, and it is no less stupid for us to generalise about security guards and police. If we recognise their individuality, it makes it harder for them to deny ours. And so their team spirit, the Us Against Them thing, starts to crumble. They start to hear us.

I know human beings are individual, I know they can all shine and do the right thing given the chance. Antagonising, generalising and especially being violent all stifle that chance. A lot of people joined the police 'cos they thought it would help the community and the country. A lot joined out of the same feelings that makes us go on actions. You needn't have had too different a life for it to have been you in the blue jacket. In a very slightly different world in which we're all as well meaning as we are now, it might not have been Keith

Blakelock who died that night in Tottenham. It might have been my father. It might have been you. Shouting insults doesn't make them realise they're being used against the nation's interest. I find it strange how people can be all right-on and anti-war, saying that soldiers are just pitiable tools of a corrupt system and it should be remembered that they're all sons and fathers, but that the pigs are a bunch of bastards who deserve everything they get. Yes, they are used brutally against us, but the whole basis of our outrage is that we know such behaviour is wrong. We believe in better ways, and we act on our beliefs. We have to rise above. As Martin Luther King said, "the problem with an eye for an eye is that everyone ends up blind". Surely we are the people who see the bigger picture, who see ourselves as part of a bigger web of life.

The magnificence of yesterday's action is two-fold: Firstly that we were unafraid, and secondly that we were always focused against the road and the machines, not the people.

There was a lot of destruction of property, but no riot. The BBC television reporter said "this is not what the anti-roads movement needs". It was exactly what the anti-roads movement needs. It was spontaneous, it was decisive, it was effective. It was destructive, but think what it was destructive of. Think of the obscene, permanent damage that is being done by these machines. What we did was open and celebratory sabotage of what are quite literally instruments of death and destruction. Although perhaps on a smaller scale, it was as morally justified as disabling a Hawk jet, an apartheid riot police van or a train to Auschwitz. Standing outside the compound fence complaining makes no real difference. That's why the fence is there. Yes we were outside the law, but the law only allows protests that have no real effect. The people who make the laws are the same people who build the roads, hunt the foxes, sell the armaments, etc., so of course they won't allow effective protest. As soon as you start to affect anything you come up against armed policemen and razor wire. Asking nicely doesn't work. You have to shout loud or shut up. I can only live with myself doing one of these.

So we put sand in the fuel tanks of generators, took spanners to the motor of the crane. As we were leaving the site, a tipper truck on fire to my left and the crane on fire down to my right, there was one man standing straight in front of me, silhouetted against the bright billowing flames rolling up out of the portakabin. He stood in a X shape, his hands in victory V signs, shouting "YES!YES!YES!". It wasn't chaotic, there was a sense of purpose, of collective will, of carnival, celebration, strong magic, triumph of people power, of a

small but very real piece of justice being done.

The state gets very nervous if people start getting bothered about things that it hasn't prescribed as bothersome. When we start to set our own agenda instead of reacting to what we're given, when we start to see choices outside of the ones we're told about, and especially when we start to do rather than say these things, they get worried. And the more popular support we get, the more worried they get. This is why they've never bothered with the traditional 'revolutionary' groups, because there was never going to be any popular support for them. As long as they keep using their nineteenth century phraseology, idealising manual labourers as True Workers, yet vilifying white-collar workers (who often earn less) as Bourgeois Lackeys they are never going to win any popular support and can be safely left to bicker amongst themselves. But when there's a broad-based movement that is a growing threat to the orthodoxy they get edgy, and hence the police-orchestrated riots at most major demonstrations of recent years.

The pattern is alarmingly similar every time: near the end of a demonstration, the police change the plans (change the route of a march, close a sound system before time, lock the agreed exits), and seal off a portion of the dwindling crowd. Behind the normal uniformed officers, police in full riot gear seal off side streets and other exit routes. The crowd are hemmed in on three sides. Then the uniforms withdraw, leaving the advancing riot police to start a riot. At the march against the British National Party in Welling, they did it by beating a march organiser who was in the middle of a "don't be baited, keep calm" speech. At a Kurdish march in London they did it by shouting racist abuse. But far more disturbing than the violence of the individual officers involved is the marked similarity of the events. These tactics aren't decided by the officers we see, they are the orders from somewhere far higher up. This is the reason why, even ignoring the morality, violence against the police is stupid; they have better weapons, communications and armour, and they are a hierarchy, their orders come from people who never risk their own injury, and so no matter how many police get injured they'll send in squad after squad until they win.

And yet what kind of threat are we? We don't plant bombs, we don't kill anyone. It is only our ideas and our vision that we're putting forward, and so it must be this that scares them. Yes, there are occasional outbursts of individual violence, but these are very uncommon, and are certainly not a strategy. And yes, there are riots at some large gatherings, but these are invariably police provoked. As it says in the CJB riot eyewitness leaflet, "If you treated people in any

public gathering like that, at a football match or even in a shopping centre, if you locked the doors and rounded them up into a small space with no exit using riot police, some dickhead will throw something at them. If they then charged in and seriously injured the people who just happened to be at the front, the crowd would get outraged, angry and increasingly violent, and there would be a riot. You could do that in any public gathering, any time, anywhere”.

But if they're scared enough to round us up and beat us in the middle of London on national television, if they're scared enough to spend millions on surveillance and infiltration, we must be touching a raw nerve, we must be doing something right. And so we must carry on. Their greatest weapon is our Fear Of Authority. Once we lose that, the next greatest is our Paranoia. If we're too scared of infiltrators to talk each other, they've won. Always think, “what's the worst that could happen if They knew this?”, and usually you'll find it makes little difference. The depth of tunnels, positions of lock-ons, how many people are on site, it all makes no real difference, and they could find out a lot of that stuff by long-range surveillance anyway. Certain details need to be kept secret, but not many. Secrecy should be the exception rather than the rule. Our openness and trust of one another is one of the key things that sustains our energy and resilience, and is a clear sign of ‘us’ having a better way of living than ‘them’. Think back to not long ago when you first came on site and remember how important acceptance and trust are. We've enough to struggle against without everyone thinking that everyone else is a dodgy MI5 git. I know of one camp where someone new on site had seen a definite infiltrator on their way down, describing them as “a real dressing-up-box hippy, no-one would really dress like that”. It turned out to be an old friend and lovely fluffy activist.

And it's important to extend that openness to all but the most ridiculous of journalists. The reporters all have their biases, but don't forget that the same is true of the people who watch the television and read the articles. I remember as a kid seeing the Greenham Common women in unfavourable reports and thinking, ‘no, I like what they're doing’. I joined my local CND group, wrote to Greenham women in jail, and the seeds of my direct actioning were sown.

Last week I got a call from a friend at the A30 protest who'd been in the pub all evening with a bloke from Inverness. He'd been a radical theorist for years and had decided now was the time to do something. He saw an article in the paper about Fairmile and hitched down the next day.

Once we've won the battle to get coverage, the next problem is being taken seriously. We face this problem on many fronts: underestimates of our numbers, trivial 'lifestyle' questions, being portrayed as dangerous nutters, and belittling terminology (e.g. calling a tripod a 'makeshift wigwam'). Journalists have to go in to a place they know nothing about and get an idea of it very quickly and make an interesting report. So of course they never have time to know what it's really like, and of course they'll ask questions based on the first things that occur to someone the first time they come on site. How do you go to the toilet up a tree? Who decides who does the cooking? What does your mum think? It won't help us very much by only having these stupid issues in print, but if we don't get press coverage then the entire direct action movement is going to be just the same couple of thousand people and won't grow into something with mass support. And without the energy that comes from mass support and new people, we will at best be a minor nuisance and at worst locked up with no-one to give a toss.

Try to have a few handy phrases or snappy slogans ready that encapsulate the real issues in as concise and complete a way as possible. Never mind that it feels unimaginative saying more or less the same words to reporter after reporter, they don't know that and as far as they're concerned this is them getting a good quote. If you say something to a journalist that'll look great in print, they'll print it. The journalist as an individual may or may not be a dickhead and they will almost certainly have blinkered vision, but they are invariably a microphone by which we can speak to thousands, even millions, of people. So don't let them use us, let us use them. If we're enthusiastic, informed and full of great quotes, they won't feel manipulated, they'll feel good cos they've got an interesting story which will impress their editor.

Don't write any of them off – the BBC television reporter at Newbury was really anti-protest when the work started, but after a day talking to a load of us she was on our side from Day Two (although of course she insists that she has no bias and just reports the objective truth). The most honest writing about Newbury was in the sodding *Daily Telegraph*. Even the *Daily Mail* did some big positive articles on Newbury and Solsbury Hill once they were given an angle they thought nobody else had got. And yet Sky News, who are almost always really positive and give us loads of airtime, were turned away from a camp for not giving a donation. Yes, it'd be better if they did give something (and most will – after all, they're going to make money selling the story), but to turn down the chance of

talking to millions for the sake of a tenner is just daft.

The place most of us first hear about direct action is the mainstream media. They're going to report us whether we like it or not, so we have to find ways to use them well. We can't afford to ignore the mainstream media, but neither can we afford to just leave it to them. This is why small press is so important. With 'zines and *SchNEWS* and *Squall* and so on, there's no advertisers or bosses to please, no shareholders to pander to, no writing something to fill the space, it's real free speech. And the fact that there are thousands of small publications protects that freedom – if there were just one big counterculture 'zine, it could be compromised or crushed by commerce and laws, whereas a thousand little 'zines constantly springing up out of nowhere is uncensorable and uncontrollable. This stuff isn't written by writers who come to a protest, it's written by protesters who start to write. Even if we don't write in a technically clever way, it's authentic, it's real. It's coming from people who won't just tell you what it means, they tell you what it's like. So this doesn't just win people's minds, it wins their hearts too. And only by winning hearts as well as minds do we get real commitment. To put yourself on the line, you have to believe rationally and emotionally. By writing stuff from the heart about what we know, we do involve people both ways, so we do pull them in.

As my friend Guy says, the real reason why so few people get involved in activist stuff is not apathy, but a complete lack of cultural references to even the possibility of activism. People get their options for their lives from role models and cultural symbols that they see every day, in both real life and depiction. The activist role models they see (Ghandi, Mandela, Martin Luther King, etc.) may be praised, but they're all 'saints', impossible to emulate and so ultimately disempowering. By writing our own stuff, we show the link from person tutting at the television to Mighty Tarzan Eco-Warrior, and so we make it possible for people to come and join in.

The big corporate media do a job that we can't, but 'zine culture does a job that the mainstreamers can't. We have to use both to get fullest effect. We have to use them, and we have to make our own press to keep inspiring people and keep it growing. Think how much bigger this whole thing is compared with two years ago, and with two years before that. We're strong and we're getting stronger. The future is ours. We won't let it be anything else.

Ronald Creagh

Mutating Anarchism

Since the time when a few thinkers defined its broad outline about two centuries ago, the anarchist project has seemed absorbed by some essential concepts and essential practices. It defines itself by means of some basic principles: the refusal of all domination, the inalienable freedom and essential equality of all individuals. It seeks a radical transformation of society by means which are foreign to both the capitalist and state systems, questioning the representative character of both while advocating a federation of communities, freely formed, which have seized back the decision making process.

In order to explain this continuity a fair number of libertarian accounts do not hesitate to call on the earliest of philosophers to back them up or to evoke some unchanging human nature or some eternal spirit of revolt. Our planet has, however, changed markedly over this period: out of control population growth, cancerous growth of urban areas, the appearance of new demands, the resurgence of superstition and bellicose spectres of the past, the accelerated degradation of the environment, the robotisation of humans and the humanisation of robots, the end of an industrial era and, probably, of the era of generalised consumption. The redefining of economic empires brings with it an international of gangsters served by financial, banking, state and military structures, who have embarked upon a course of impoverishing the middle classes, building up the systematic surveillance of the excluded masses and the imposition of third world standards.

Inspired by the Enlightenment but also by Romanticism, anarchism is first and foremost – let us not forget – the child of the social movements of its age. How can it be that it does not change? The processions and the masses who group around the black flag are, above all, the harvest of a season. They carry the mark of its climate.

It would seem *a priori* that the anarchist doctrine should be unchanging and that it is rather its constituency base which has changed. An heroic past is evoked, one where the French working masses or the Russian, Mexican and Spanish peasants, constitute an anarchist people giving birth to a new society. These self-taught proletarians were poor: they did not have their own meeting places, and more often than not their bookstores were also their sleeping-

rooms. In comparison, today, many anarchist militants have a university education and the movement has been embourgeoisified even if only modestly so.

On the other hand the symptoms of a resurgence of the libertarian spirit signalled, for example, by the sudden interest of the mainstream press in France for such a current of thinking since December 1995, barely covers up weak organisations, sometimes made up of a few dedicated individuals grouped around a nucleus of organisers.

An unchanging doctrine with a mutating movement: does this picture, reproduced by many historians, conform to the reality? Would we find, alongside the 'guardians of the flame' locked into a forgotten past, new tendencies appearing? A glance at its social composition shows that, beyond specific organisations, the libertarian movement has changed profoundly up to the point where we can speak of a new kind of anarchism which is far more complex.

Heroic certainties have taken second place in the imagination giving rise to less dogmatic visions both fragmented and fluctuating. It is this double mutation, both sociological and intellectual, which I propose to look at here.

The two ages of anarchism

Without trying to draw up a balance sheet, even a brief one, of two centuries of change we can still define two great ages of anarchism which I will call respectively the 'classical' age and the age of alternatives.

The first – which goes from Godwin, Bakunin and Malatesta up to the First World War is characterised by its certainties and relative popularity.

On the one hand, militants and leaders have a unified understanding of the world founded on a conviction in the inevitability of revolution which is grounded in historical necessity. This faith is justified by a generalised conviction that the history of the world is that of scientific and moral development. This perspective leans heavily on modernist values: that of a belief in progress and of freedoms which, of necessity, will accompany the irresistible march of progress.

On the other hand militancy moves like a fish in water when in an environment which favours it: the workers movement in France, the peasantry in Spain or in Makhno's peasant groups, or even in difficult circumstances such as when the ideological inheritance of the Declaration of Independence and Abolitionism reappears in the

USA. Is not the oppressed class the expectant mother of these dreams and ideals? As all prophecies prove to be self-fulfilling and come to realise (at least for the believer) and as imagination lays down the rules according to which things stand, revolution broke out in Russia, Mexico and Spain and there were important social insurrections in Germany, Italy and elsewhere.

After the repression of the Spanish Revolution and in spite of those admirable militants who gave their lives in the service of their ideals, anarchism has experienced a lengthy crossing of the desert marked by profound isolation in most countries where groups were often no more than discussion circles. With the remarkable exception of Spain this long phase of isolation really began with the Russian Revolution; it was accompanied by defensive struggles but also a sense of hesitancy when faced with the predictable consequences of a direct and unequal confrontation with capitalism. The great world demonstrations which sprang up in 1927 in reaction to the condemnation of Sacco and Vanzetti for example, reflect a working class on the defensive.

The renunciation of direct struggle against the 'system' was, at times, systematised. For instance in the US, the anarcho-syndicalists of The Industrial Workers of the World came to the conclusion that there was little point in a frontal attack on capitalism. They thus took their struggle to other spheres. For example they refused to link themselves to employers by contract. When they wanted to establish an eight-hour day they alerted the foreman, and, when they felt their working day was over, they put down tools and left.

A few decades later, some of those involved in the events of the '60s concluded that there was no point in having a revolution in order to occupy soul-destroying factories and concrete, polluted towns. Rural America saw a mushrooming of lifestyle communities. Also, in France, former '68ers opted for the rural life whilst groups of leftists, far more significant in France, succeeded in establishing a foothold that eclipsed an anarchist movement which was still weakened but still orientated towards traditional struggles.

These years sounded the death knell of modernity. Hiroshima had shown the weaknesses and uncertainties of history and progress, concentration camps had given the lie to those so-called civilised societies who had acted with such cruelty. Revolution no longer seemed inevitable, it became indeed, for many, an impossible dream. Although few had noticed, the great Western faith in progress was crumbling and with it Promethean attitudes and imperial pride. In huge swathes the great certitudes were crumbling. If there was no

longer any historical necessity the arrow of time did an about turn losing all direction and the contradictory torrent of events pulled up all roots sending people into a great bereavement for the past.

Some didn't give up and pursued the so-called revolutionary struggle. Others abandoned a society which they felt was doomed to disappear and launched themselves into so-called alternative action. The two large groupings seemed to split the strength of a movement which already had low social visibility. All this seemed pretty derisory when compared to the TNCs who were mobilising the planet and planning its future.

New arenas of social struggle appeared from time to time. The rediscovery of the natural life and the refusal of car culture, the discrediting of all uniforms including the fashion world, the movement for free clinics, squatters, urban movements and alternative lifestyle centres, ecological currents, feminists, homosexuals, prisoners defence, critiques of paternalism and all form of representation, anti-fascist and anti-militarist struggles, all these combats brought up so many questions and gave rise to autonomous groups like punks.

By renouncing the traditional 'class struggle' or recognising the appearance of new objectives, either because of a defensive reflex or as a result of personal reflection, a multitude of groups began to hassle the system. Day to day guerrilla style action multiplied the harassment and sought to reveal the nudity of our kings.

New forms of expression came into play: rock music, alternative approaches to science-fiction, philosophy, or old fields such as social history which, by delivering us from pious celebration of national activity, at the same time attested to the multiple terrains open to the libertarian movement and also opened up new perspectives. It was a new phenomenon which went even so far as to call into question the essence of the whole movement. Since then contemporary anarchism seems to have fragmented.

In point of fact the self-confessed militants complain of a diffusion of strength. The frenetic unfolding of events and emotions transform lives into a terrible race against the clock. Here an imprisoned comrade, there a thundering declaration of some hot-headed leader, elsewhere the defence of an immigrant threatened with expulsion. On call everywhere they run from one emergency to another playing at firemen.

More recently, however, with the fall of the Iron Curtain and in the absence of a creditable alternative, anarchism has gained in substance and in credibility in some countries. It is, for sure, no great political machine like some party at its moment of glory and if some

of its demonstrations succeed in bringing together a respectable number of people it is, in general, only in a relative sense.

We are, incidentally, talking of a movement which, beyond the confines of its organised 'conventional' groups, has at its behest not only a fringe of sympathisers but also an underground base so well-inserted into society that when it flexes its muscles the ground may start to shake. This is therefore a new social base for recruitment which is different and appearing for the first time today.

The sociological composition is different because the impoverishment of the middle classes brings about influxes and could be of some significance if such a tendency prolongs itself into the long term future. But it is also the organisational character which has become far more complicated.

Firstly, there are the 'traditional' distinctions. We can see on the horizon 'official' organisations of a party type insofar as their members hold to a coherent ideology and their political objectives differ from and are opposed to those of other groups who have been elected by 'the people' or who look forward to that position.

On the periphery of these groups are sympathisers. They turn up for specific events; or we can speak of 'absent subscribers' – those who receive some libertarian journal but never make an appearance. But as Amedeo Bertolo has noted, the distinction between 'active' and 'passive' anarchists leads to confusion or perhaps simply fails to draw a full picture of the reality, since underneath the predominant and visible group there is a submerged anarchism.

This submerged anarchism is the libertarian sphere of influence. Sometimes it is more authentically anarchist and it includes active militants who are just as active and defend the same values but outside the 'canonical' norms, sometimes at the heart of other movements or even simply at the level of everyday life.

We should not try to set the one against the other; the former are often the living memory of the movement and assure its continuity in difficult times; the others are the expression of the creative dynamism of a social movement which is without Gods or Sects.

Wherever the patented anarchists are divorced from the rest of the movement it is reduced to a mere chagrin, a debating group or a get together for veterans. In contrast, when the old guard are absent, independent libertarians are destined to repeat the same mistakes or sink into some primary anarchism. But when both groups come together in the heat of social action the movement surges up in front of the eyes of all society, the cradle of visibility.

Libertarian currents are but tributaries of the social movements

which is another way of saying they are not cut off from them. What is better is that this wider current is less and less hostile to it: Indeed, other options have lost credibility and many movements on the left who harvest from the same vines find themselves shrugged off and thrown back into a ghetto.

Instead of being on manoeuvres, a new type of mass activity, based on coalitions, is now taking place. Anarchists must negotiate general platforms without sacrificing their distinctiveness nor attempting to annex other currents which intend to maintain their own features. Thus appears a fragile and mobile public space where, in temporary agoras, discourses emerge through which people, discovering themselves as autonomous citizens, endeavour to recapture a power of decision over their own destiny. Militants are still poorly prepared for these alliances; progressively, however, some discussion is appearing on these new approaches.

To be complete, the description of this landscape should include a short remark on the public image of anarchism. It has changed because the world has changed. There is no doubt that the media keeps alive the figure of the anarchist as an agent of subversion and a public enemy. However, it is not certain that they obtain the result they are looking for. On the one hand, political powers are losing their legitimacy whereas the anarchist appears as incorruptible. On the other hand, the fashion being now for a culture of catastrophe, the media are giving to the anarchist, in spite of themselves, an aura that can only attract all those people that society has excluded.

The end of epic culture

A rapid glance at the journals of various eras leaves one with the impression of always reading the same discourse. As with any cultural system anarchism has its own code, as strict as any other, even if the definitions are left open for others to elaborate on freely as they will.

Its central terms – state, hierarchy, domination, power, revolution – are all part of the same political register. Other words play the role of semantic oscillators. To use an expression of Jean-Pierre Fays, they serve to differentiate – even to oppose – one group when related to another. Say the word ‘anarcho-syndicalist’ or refer to ‘class struggle’ and you will see the movement split as it did in the past between communists and individualists.

On the other hand, and contrary to received wisdom, the anarchist movement which has engaged more actively with social organisations has always co-existed with those tendencies which have deliberately

broken away from existing institutions. In truth, these voluntary associations (which is what these free spaces are) predate, anticipate the movement itself. One needs only to speak of the Fourierist communities in the USA.

Finally many of today's battles were already being fought during the last century: pacifism, feminism, the struggle for decent shelter, birth control, defence of immigrants, the search for an anarchist art notably in poetry, theatre and painting. Naturists and vegetarian currents, for example, anticipate certain aspects of the contemporary environmental movement. The pedagogic experiences of the Ferrer schools or those of the free schools remain unequalled. These multiple tendencies have made use of journals and other organs which were their own and even in the age we have described as 'classical' one also finds militants who change their aims and zap from one group to another. Maybe this should please us because, before it can become an organised structure, anarchism is first and foremost a fluid process.

Unfortunately, the edifying hagiographies sometimes hide past practices which are deserving of criticism. Anarchism also has known leadership clashes, sectarian feuds which have caused people of goodwill to leave. Discourse and practice have not always been generous and idealistic as can be seen in the latent anti-Semitism of some or the sexism of a large number of militants. Cliche-ridden language, the denouncing of the existing order, the curses, the ritualised rhetoric have often replaced a creative imagination. The prophets of doom always chase away more positive and original minds. All this is far from being resolved.

A closer analysis, however, reveals two kinds of change: the emergence of new fields of thought has brought about a deepening of concepts, implying a challenge to some received ideas; and it seems we are witnessing change in the dynamics of the imagination.

The deepening of concepts

Let us take as examples two essential ideas, those of revolution and power.

The general term revolution which can be applied just as easily to astronomy and non-violent upheavals has only taken on the meaning we are using here since 1789.

Anarchists in the past looked upon revolution as inevitable; it is part of life and the order of things and Elisée Reclus for example used the word in its more general sense to show its 'natural' character. But if it is inescapable, these historic upheavals can also

be dangerous and even harmful. In our times there is a clash of ideas between those who invite us to prepare for inevitable violence while others only want to hear talk of the education of minds.

However, anarchism is not the necessary outcome of revolution and it was a long way from the crowds of the 1880s which heard the rumblings of the labour question or so was the disillusioned opinion of Alexander Berkman, unhappy witness of a Russian Revolution, which was to drown in blood the anarchism of the Kronstadt sailors and the Makhnovists. The revolution is no longer – if it ever was – an unconditional objective. And if it remains an historical necessity it is not imminent.

Despite all that, the discourse of anarchism seems to be unchanging. The idea of 'revolution' is there, always there, along with the notion of the state and other concepts: are libertarians trapped in a linguistic straight-jacket?

One should note, however, that the majority of today's anarchists reject propaganda by the deed, are mistrustful of violence and temper their hopes with an unlimited pessimism. Important social transformations have occurred without a revolutionary overthrow of political structures or indeed in spite of them, such as the feminist movement or ecological consciousness.

Proclaimed without qualification the word 'revolution' is equivocal. The ideologists have thus had to distinguish between a bourgeois and a popular revolution, a political and an economic revolution but there must first be a revolution of ideas. It is a question of carrying out educational acts rather than a military quest.

In reality the idea of revolution is no longer a rational, strategic concept because our fated times have renounced the idea of history having a direction. Teleologies have come unstuck and strategic thought has lost all credibility.

The strategic way of thinking is a form of reasoning which has been fully absorbed into one unique goal, a single analysis, a project considered to lie at the heart of the universe of politics. All projects derive from a unique problematic. Power comes from a central point. Hence the birth of the avant-garde.

Strategic thinking gives rise to a system of representation. Take a look at Hobbes: he draws a picture of an undifferentiated society, where everyone acts in the same way i.e. cruelly. And to protect us from this nightmare he proposes the Leviathan. Look at Marx: he offers a view of society founded on oneness, according to various economic stages and he puts forward the working class as a unique social type.

The system of representation is, today, in crisis. If anarchists reject it, this is another reason why others join them. Again we must look at the implications. Libertarian thought can no longer accept a unique focal point from which all power emanates. The new critique introduced by Michel Foucault and others shows that change at the top is no change. Libertarian thought doubts power can be brought to bear on the base it is also exercised in the base. As Colin Ward says:

“We have to build networks instead of pyramids. All authoritarian institutions are organised as pyramids: the State, the private or public corporation, the army, the police, the church, the university, the hospital: they are all pyramidal structures with a small group of decision makers at the top and a broad base of people whose decisions are *made for them* at the bottom. Anarchism does not demand the changing of the labels on the layers, it doesn't want different people on top, it wants us to clamber from underneath.”

The image of the pyramid is interesting but it needs correcting: domination does not only come in the form of a pyramid but also in the image of the network even if certain points and lines are stronger than others. There is no single source of domination because social space includes numerous religious, political, moral, economic, ethnic and cultural networks which reinforce each other. In addition there is no 'social space' we can fill up. A more evocative image is that of the tree which can grow in a wide variety of directions.

Naturally these networks cannot be assumed *a priori*; they must be sought out. In contrast to Marxists who seek the key to liberation in economic power and, firstly, in the power of the party, anarchists believe that the abolition of domination and tyranny depends essentially, at every stage, on research and the negation of every form of these; firstly in the way we think and then in the way we act.

Since it rejects domination but not power, because it seeks social metamorphosis rather than revolution, the current libertarian tendency has not and does not seek to concretise a strategy, but only tactics or rather to incite insubordination and creative thought freed from hierarchical perspectives, forms of deference, humiliating stereotypes of submission and domination. As Colin Ward writes, “there is no final struggle, only a series of partisan struggles on a multiplicity of fronts”. To renounce revolution is to renounce the apocalypse and also the Messiah. This demands a further leap into the secular, ‘Neither Jesus nor the Apocalypse’.

Strategic reason has given way to tactical consciousness. The goal of epic thought, celebrating heroism, cannot be achieved without

pain. It would seem today to be repressed in the imagination, where it is still the utopian reservoir of social vigour.

The shifting of the collective imagination

With the end of the nineteenth century and the Belle Époque, as was commented on by Pessim, the idea of the revolution went with the unconscious image of a dark, satanic anarchism which seemed far more threatening to the established order. The social storm, the oceanic tempest, the shadows of mystery, of the secret code, the crown of sacrifice, the secret humour of the 'minutious control of appearance' maintains the mirage of a force which a minority group can possess no other way.

The idea of revolution, which was also used to indicate the radical nature of change, carries with it images of violence. Now, today, we know that major upheavals can be achieved without blood. The fall of the Iron Curtain, the collapse of communism in certain Eastern countries show us that it would be better to speak of historic ruptures.

We might suppose that today the idea of the revolution suits more a certain left wing stance than libertarians who want neither a coup d'état nor any other seizure of power. The archetype which is more suited to the concerns of their educational propaganda would be rather that of social metamorphosis. Against the images of combat, more or less influenced by the discourse of the military, we can substitute the metaphors of life with probably more or less efficiency.

So many reasons then for dropping this register of discourse. Yet, one survey carried out on a group of, no doubt not very representative US and English militants, reveals that the idea of revolution persists but at a more or less suppressed level. It is hoped for but not believed to be imminent. Revolutionary hope is not founded on a scientific belief but rather on a fantastic vision of the world.

For the fantastic is not only made up of vampires and the metamorphosis of vixens into ghost women as in Chinese folk stories. It appears also in politics, when the words of the sovereign create the event, 'This country or this island is an integral part of our territory (or touches on our essential interests)'. When the leader becomes charismatic or when a social group believes that the victory of its candidate will bring back the nation's innocence.

More generally the fantastic is that function of thought which leads us to break the inflexibility of the laws of nature and, first and foremost, those of space, time and identity. The fantastic is an

integral part of our daily lives. It lies at the root of those intentions which direct our emotions and choices, it is the auxiliary of our actions and of our theories.

It shows itself when we see a car suddenly running over us whereas it is not yet so, when we make our own cinema whilst sat in the office, when we expect some extreme reaction from a loved one or when we perhaps parody some social leader.

In the same way as in the game of chess, the unexpected move breaks the predictable monotony of the game, the anticipatory revolutionary consciousness smashes the framework of profane time, regulated by a perception structured notably by the state and by capitalism. Revolutionary hope allows for some play in a life enslaved to punctuality and the rhythms of work, the race against the clock and the religious-state calendar. Urgency and pressure are suddenly short-circuited by the fascinating and sacred moment of the heroic, popular event. The future erupts into the present. It becomes the point of reference which gives both sense and direction, which shares both reformist and revolutionary acts and re-enchants the anodyne to bring it up to the level of the fantastic. The fantastic of the revolution functions as a kaleidoscope of images and feelings which express a perspective which goes beyond our trivial individual futures to encompass the future of humanity.

The horizon of everyday life

This influence of the imagination shifts our look to another aspect of change. Classical anarchism had concentrated on a global vision of history, rather than the everyday. If the ideal inspired everyday life it was more as a consequence of the application of general principles rather than thinking about the microscopic forms of domination. The immediate meanings of everyday life were to be deduced from ultimate universal meanings.

Now, today certainly, daily activities constitute an arena with relative autonomy with regard to the ultimate meanings of existence. Understanding the everyday is essential to survival and even the 'insane' find explanation for our banal gestures. Whatever, for example, the spiritual state of a given society, an atheist can give meaning to his or her actions in a circumscribed context. Cosmic meanings are only sought out when one is confronted with death or a serious crisis such as famine or an earthquake.

Classical anarchism has not waited for a revolution in order to only preach henceforth individual freedom. For the concept of alienation, as proposed by Marx, it often substituted two concepts: economic

exploitation and political domination. Individual emancipation would evolve from the struggle against the two forms of oppression, a struggle led by the light of reason. This was the negative side. On a positive note it leant heavily on reason to explain the world. It seems to have forgotten desire:

“Between tragic Past & impossible Future, anarchism seems to lack a Present—as if afraid to ask itself, here & now, WHAT ARE MY TRUE DESIRES? – what can I DO before it’s too late?...Yes, imagine yourself confronted by a sorcerer who stares you down balefully & demands, ‘What is your True Desire?’ Do you hem & haw, stammer, take refuge in ideological platitudes? Do you possess both Imagination & Will, can you both dream & dare – or are you the dupe of an impotent fantasy?”

The anarchist ‘movement’ today contains virtually no Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans or children ... even though in theory such genuinely oppressed groups stand to gain the most from any anti-authoritarian revolt. Might it be that anarchism offers no concrete program whereby the truly deprived might fulfill (or at least struggle realistically to fulfill) real needs and desires?

As Hakim Bey says in his essay ‘Post-Anarchism Anarchy’ demonstrations, strike pickets and the re-runs of the nineteenth century will not replace the liberation of one’s self.

It is, however, unclear that ideal individual emancipation suffices to attract the excluded, the pariahs, the societies of the third world including those who are already an integral part of those supposedly developed countries. Here there is a question mark that anarchism is still far from answering.

Other challenges await the movement. On an international level, the crisis of unemployment and the New World Order shake up received opinion. There is some irony when a current that has celebrated the right to be lazy today demands full employment. One must also wonder to what extent autonomous communities, decentralised and therefore relatively weak, can effectively threaten powerful multinationals, who are so good at profiting from governmental weaknesses. At the level of debate there is no longer ideological hegemony and social struggles have the choice of either isolation or entering some sort of coalition.

The libertarian movement today will not pick up these challenges until some egalitarian dialogue brings together both the ‘traditional’ groups and ‘independent’ libertarian militants. Organised groups, strong in their sense of history, must overcome on the one hand the paternalistic desire to play the role of teacher, handing out blame and admonishment, that is to say inquisitors, threatening prejudged

trials. The transformation of principles into petrified dogma is a betrayal of the actual realities of the contemporary world. And also of the spirit of the movement since creative, militant action manages to cut the umbilical cord which links it to its Pantheon. The guardians of the temple who offer demonstrators 'decisive struggles' are either the dupes of their enthusiasm or vulgar manipulators. Their objectives can only frighten some who see in them some new recuperation technique for aims and means to which they have not signed up.

It is therefore less the social revolution than its own revolution which awaits the movement: to send packing the simplistic political debates caricatured in the gesticulations of the elected; rediscover the plurality of lived experience and thence interpretations. Because there is a world of difference between a strike obeying orders which come from 'above' and the same struggle surging up from below and discussed at the grassroots. However humble the objective of some social struggle may seem it is, first and foremost, from the initiation into the wildly anti-hierarchical and joyously creative strategies that the movement matures.

Participating in coalitions with a real respect for the objectives of fellow travellers certainly does not exclude the necessity of a clear programme for anti-authoritarian struggle. Easy options only serve to get in the way for anarchists; for example it is only at a very last instance, when there is no alternative, that they will have recourse to those who have been elected or the representatives of justice. Other groups have no such reservations and these points of disagreement can undermine a coalition. Furthermore they have to endure the seductive overtures of a political left which, when it is losing speed, is ready to criminalise its most militant members and drain the movement by its hassling of justice and turning away potential sympathisers by inviting them to be respectable.

But beyond collaboration between common organisations and platforms it is the whole collective imagination which is being re-forged at the heart of the social movement. The anarchists of yesteryear would have used such moments to make of themselves the prophets of the revolutionary Apocalypse. More modestly, today's anarchists must carry on with this 'work which cannot be stopped because it loves success and not failure', an apprenticeship of hope which spans the lessons of social evolution.

The appearance of new libertarians opens up a new problematic which multiplies the fronts where the dominant system can be challenged. It can only succeed by mutating its social and

intellectual core, in particular its imagination, when, whilst still maintaining the intransigence of the rebel, the genius that is anarchism puts itself at the service of coalitions (but not parties), whilst refusing to become in its turn the dupe of history.

Wadjular Binna

Cultural Survival

Hello everyone. I wasn't sure what I had to say this morning and there are so many things I'd like to say. But, as usual, in the white man's world, we have to watch the time, and it really puts pressure on me straight away. But I'll try and give it my best shot.

First of all, I s'pose you're all wondering what gives me the right to speak. I was born in a tribal camp. My mother was raped so that I'm part white, like many other children up in the Gulf and around that area. Our people were subjected to shooting, and poisoning of food and waterholes but we went through that struggle: missionaries and government and mounted police three pronged attack on our people. They herded us in and put us on reserves, where I was taken from my parents, and educated by the missionaries. And then they arranged my marriage into a white family who owned cattle properties in the Northern Territory. So they were going to make me into a white person. And all of this was very very painful, I didn't have a choice in any of this. It's not very nice to be lifted out of your environment and put somewhere else. But with all of that said and the pain I went through, it has stood me in good stead. I now have a picture of both worlds.

I belong to the Indigenous world, and I have lived in the world of snobbery, in the white world. I've had white people working for me and I had to give orders to them. And when I hear the graziers saying, 'These blacks can't share the land with us', and all this stuff that's going on about the Wik decision, I know exactly what makes them tick. 'Cause everybody feels that this land is mine, and how dare these other people come on it, the fences go up, the gates are locked, and you think you own all this land. And I've played their game, I've played it for eighteen years, I was forced to. Then I came to my senses and decided I'd go back to where I belong. I live and work for my people, I'm a humble servant of my people. That's what I do, I travel around, I don't work for any organisation, I travel around on my pension and kind friends get me where I'm going, give me a meal and put a roof over my head. In the beginning it was really hard because it was like I saw more meal times than meals. But I've made a lot of friends travelling around, here in Victoria especially.

But struggles go on and it's taken on different forms, the genocide of my people I mean they gave us the right, citizen's right, which was

a big joke in our community: 'Oh they're telling us we can become citizens in our own land now, these screwy people'. The old people would sit around the campfire and laugh, it was one big joke. But the serious part about it was, they'd given us the right to vote for people who don't even see us as human beings. So we have to go to the polls, enter into that system, abide by it, and vote for people who don't give a hang about who we are, and what we're trying to say. Because we were governed by a system, a very complex one, and the foundation of it was that we're connected to land, sea and creation through a spiritual system that's very complex, above and beyond white man's comprehension. But we're still trying to get that through. They're still trying to say 'you will do as we say' instead of trying to find out what it is that kept us together, looking after the land and living in harmony with it.

Our problem is now, we vote in this system, we vote for them to destroy us, so we're all party to a genocide of the future generation. Blacks who don't stand up and say we're not voting in this system are also guilty of a genocide on the next generation. And the black people are going down, there's no doubt about it. We also have people, they decided they'd give people local councils and let black people run it, in at Domagee, and everybody said 'Oh, great, you know, they're letting the black people determine their own future now!' But they're really not, they're abiding within a system that says they have to do it the white man's way. So they become black people within this system. So these people at Dintji where I'm speaking from, where Dintji come from, and I'm sure the same effect is all over Australia, these black people are trying to determine their future with keeping in mind their system, and trying to abide by the white man's system. So when they keep the white man's system they're breaking the Aboriginal law, and when they keep the Aboriginal system and laws, they break the white man's laws. It's very very difficult.

So when you people hear and see my people fighting and disorderly and domestic violence and all of these things within the community, just think how you'd cope in a place where somebody had a system, and you belong to another system. And say the Asians came in here and took over and did just that to this country. It would be, it's a terrible way to live. And my mother said before she died, 'Bubba, it's best the white man take a gun and shoot us and put us out of our misery.'

'Cause people say the Aboriginal people are lazy, they're this and this and that. I know, I'm one of them. And it's really really hard, the struggle is hard, and it's going on. Now we have a system, the Wik

system, that says, 'these people can share the land with the graziers'. But the graziers don't want them. But again, we have known for thousands of years that Indigenous people have a right to their ancestral lands and that was fine for us going back thousands of years. Again they're trying to do for us, they're trying to put us under their system. And that system that thinks they're giving us the right to land is a system that sees the land as a commodity to be bought and sold. We're talking about a spiritual connection to land and all creation, that's the system we abide by.

And then we have the Noel Pearsons and the Mick Dodsons and the Pat Dodsons all working within the system and confusing non-indigenous Australians no end because they are not turning around and saying, 'Hey, hold on, this is the system we abide by and this is what we're saying, this is our land, let us abide by our system so that we can teach non-indigenous people good things about our culture'. 'Cause we're greenies in our own right, we're friends of the Earth in our own right. We're born within a system that says that's who we are, from the very first time you start to understand what's going on it's all mapped out for you. Even if you wanted to wriggle out of it, you couldn't, because it's a spiritual thing.

And we would like to hold on to that way of life, share it with white Australia, share the good things, because there's good and bad in all cultures. But as we look around we see that there are many white people who are looking for an alternative lifestyle, the hippies, the greenies, the Friends of the Earth, all of these people who have realised there's something more to this country than just money. And that's what we're trying to say, if we can share that with white Australia, hold on to our unique identity and our own land, and live apart from that system, but leave ourselves open, if ever we get the land back, leave the doors open for all nationalities to come and share with us and be one with us, that's the dream of many Indigenous people, the humble people at grass roots level, the people who don't get all caught up in the white system, and who are really struggling to survive.

About the mining company, we've fought them for six years and we're still struggling. We've kept them at bay. We're trying to say, 'Don't pollute the Gulf. We have religious and spiritual connections to all those creatures in the sea, and we're responsible for their well being, as we're responsible for our own. That's the law and the system in our culture.' But we can't make white people understand it.

We're confused and concerned about what's going on with the Hindmarsh Bridge as well, I just thought I'd mention that, because

they've been called fabricators. If they're fabricators then all other Aboriginal people, women, throughout this country are fabricators, our religious beliefs and system that connect us to all creation is all fabricated. Who gives anyone the right to make that judgement? They haven't lived in our world, they haven't abided by our law, they don't know what system we abide by. So really, white Australia, even Prime Ministers, don't have that right, to make judgements on these people. So if they go down, we go down. And it's a continual genocide, and it's a continual struggle for us to stay on top. And I know the Catholics and the Methodists and all of these people, the courts don't enter into their religious arena and start dictating to them. But ours is right in there and it's really really sad.

I'm asking you, the people here, to remember, and to try and understand what we're saying. We gotta try and get to black people who are caught up in the system, and there are many of them who have become greedy and forsaken their own way of life and their culture and they're turning everything around in this country and giving people the wrong idea, 'cause we're just very humble, simple people, and we can live, you know, in a humble way.

Before I close, I'd just like to say, my friend Lee Tan took me over to Canberra to meet with people about things I'm talking about, and when I walked into that Parliament House it made me sick, very sick to my stomach, to put my foot on the first step and walk in and see this grand building, all the marble and all of this stuff. And we had a white lady friend who said, 'Isn't this marvellous!', you know, and I looked at her and I thought, 'Marvellous???' I said, 'What are you talking about? My people are living in third world conditions.' And I said, 'There are people all over the world who are hungry. And, you know, there are many white people who are struggling too in this country, poor white people, and there's all this money put into this building.' It's a screwy society. And I think that we have to struggle on, and the more we talk and ask you people to support us, it's not asking for money, it's not asking for grand buildings, and it doesn't necessarily have to be jobs. But we would like to determine our own future in this country, and get back to our identity, and share with all peoples in this country the good things about our culture.

Thank you for listening.

Wadjular Binna is a Gun galidda elder from the Doomadgee community near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Her people are currently struggling to prevent Rio Tinto's Century Zinc Mine from being placed on their land.

David Koven

A Soliloquy on Anarchism and Culture

My understanding of the phenomenon we identify as culture, suggests that its essence is to be found in the preservation and transmission of our history, value systems and our communal cum familial connections from one generation to the next. Interest in the arts is only one aspect of the concept of culture. Besides the internal stimulation and healing qualities that involvement in the arts can offer one, the arts function as an important means of passing on our understanding of the natural world, and of the phenomena of human history and behaviour. However, we anarchists must search out and utilise all of the means consistent with our philosophy and our unique vision of human history and use these means to elucidate our perception of how human society can evolve and develop.

A living example

To this day in many African societies, societies without a written language, traditions are still being transmitted by the village *Griots*. Those poets, story tellers, actors and dancers who use their skills to keep alive the essence of their culture and their familial and tribal history. In an autobiographical note, Wole Soyinka the internationally published Nigerian poet and Oxford fellow now living in exile in Britain, spoke of the profound effect the Griots had upon him when he was a child growing up in a poverty stricken Nigerian village.

Historically, anarchists have been exemplary in their efforts to express, extend and transmit their vision of what human society might evolve to. If they've been remiss at all, it was in their conceptions of how societal changes might be achieved. In the past, too many anarchists sounded like members of a fundamentalist religious sect, avowing that only their version of Anarchy was the correct one, thus erecting barriers between themselves and other comrades who had a different view of how anarchy could be achieved.

Alas, with some exceptions, today much of our anarchist press reads as though we were still living in the halcyon days of the nineteenth century when Bakunin, Kropotkin, *et al*, were sure that 'The Revolution', (an armed uprising of the peoples of the world that would sweep capitalism into the dustbin of history) was not only attainable, but almost nigh. The story is told, that when young Errico Malatesta arrived in England for the first time as a refugee,

he went to visit Kropotkin who also was living in exile in England as a refugee from Tzarist Russia: Kropotkin remarking on Malatesta's state of sadness and depression said to Malatesta, "Don't despair young man, the revolution is coming". Helas, like Karl Marx, most of our nineteenth century progenitors viewed capitalism as a rigid structure bound to self destroy.

Capitalism, however, showed greater flexibility and adaptability than the revolutionary movements. Few of the nineteenth century revolutionary theoreticians were able to foresee the depersonalisation and internationalisation of capitalist control of society. They couldn't visualise the growth, bureaucratisation and strengthening of the capitalist controlled, engorged National States, a process made simpler by capital's investment in the development of and control over the means of mass communication.

There are times when reading the anarchist press, I think that some modern anarchists, like Aristophanes' character Hoopoe in his satirical play, *The Birds*, dwell in 'Cloud Cuckoo Land'. To this day, because of some inability to face the reality that our marvellous vision of anarchy will not be achieved in our, or our children's lifetime – and possibly because of the ongoing destruction of the natural world in Capital's pursuit of profit, not ever – some anarchists are reluctant to let go of the vision of an armed uprising bringing about revolutionary change. We still find repeated in some anarchist publications, romantic images such as that of the Spanish Revolutionary Warrior, holding his rifle high and urging his fellows on to an armed attack on the fascist defenders of Capitalism.

Too many anarchists forget what a tiny minority of the world's population we are. They still hove to this belief in a violent overthrow of capitalism, despite the fact that every revolutionary uprising in history has either been ruthlessly suppressed or resulted in bringing to power the very worst, dictatorial, inhumane individuals in their wake. In addition, those individuals advocating a violent uprising, ignore the fact that the radical workers' movement is at its lowest ebb since its inception and that modern weaponry in the hands of cynical, inhumane states are weapons so deadly that if they were used to suppress a revolutionary uprising, or if captured, used by armed revolutionaries against the capitalist forces, the resultant destruction could very well mean the end of human existence.

I think that we must abandon these violent images and address ourselves to those practical and most powerful strengths of our anarchist imagery. Our vision of communal connection and responsibility; the down playing of vulgar materialism; emphasis on

the decentralisation and reorganisation of human society by the development of educational systems and work and living environments counter to the capitalist modes. Environments where people will welcome each day rather than look upon their work life as a necessary evil. Environments where communal decision making will respect and reflect the needs and opinions of the entire community rather than that of a privileged few. We anarchists must always seek means of solving conflicts in a peaceful, non authoritarian manner. We must learn how to communicate with those people in our communities who hold different views than ours and convince them of the necessity and beauty of working together for our common human goals. Finally, in order to keep our anarchist vision alive we must extend contact with as many others we can reach in the communities in which we work and live, especially with young people. Remember, our visions of hope, peace, exploration, experimentation and mutual aid are unique. If anarchists speak only to other anarchists, our vision will disappear and with it our belief in what humankind can achieve.

The handful of individuals willing to expend their energy in trying to offset the vulgarisation and mis-information that the state and industry controlled media pass off as culture face great difficulty. Obviously, our philosophy of culture is in direct conflict with that of our modern institutions. We must compete with the dominant simplistic philosophy of our modern world, a philosophy that emphasises the accumulation of wealth and power and extols competition rather than cooperation. The media with its economic ties to the state and industry, is used to glorify violence, crass exploitative sexuality, militarism and gross materialism. (Our modern version of the Roman Circus.) It's difficult for local humanistic endeavours to counter this view. This power oriented philosophy has only the maintenance and extension of the status quo as its *raison d'être*; a philosophy that aims at distorting history; a philosophy that isolates people from each other; a violent, destructive philosophy that has been dominant for too many generations.

The effects of the immorality of this philosophy is seen in the ongoing erosion of ordinary people's living conditions, the denigration of humane values; the destruction of workers organisations, with the ensuing impoverishment of most of the population; the anger and cynicism expressed by young people in their drop out rate from school; the increase of violent crime; the disintegration of familial and communal bonding and greater emphasis on patriotism, which is used to rationalise militaristic adventurism spurred on by the

profiteering inherent in warfare.

Despite all the pontifications of the politicians whose cynical espousal of 'family values' is contradicted by the solutions they offer: *Their call for expanded police forces, the building of more and larger prisons, legal implementation of the death penalty and longer and more punitive jail sentences.* We see no attempt being made to counter the causes of the feelings of alienation and hopelessness that afflicts our youth, especially the young people of our ethnic and working class communities. Negative feelings generated by poverty and a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness. This phenomenon can't be ignored or hidden away for it threatens the very future of human society. There are days when the news reports seem to indicate that we're fast approaching the conditions of that prophetic novel of some years back, *Clockwork Orange*, which showed the super rich surrounded by private armed guards to protect them and their possessions, while the majority of humanity lived hopeless and helpless lives as victims.

When one recognises the erosion of humanistic values and the lack of satisfying work to look forward to; the endless images of expensive toys being shown on the television, (the only symbols of success in this world) it becomes easier to comprehend why so many of our young people turn to violence as a means of achieving their materialist ambitions. In truth, few of our young people have a satisfying future to look forward to. Their mind set too often results in a death struck dependency on booze, drugs and gang violence.

Another expression of this viewpoint

The late Dr Benjamin Spock, one of the most influential pediatricians in the world, expressed similar concerns in his last book, *A Better World For Our Children*.

This book is not another medical 'How To' book, but rather expresses his concern about the future of the present generation of young people. In his words, "the book is about the educational, ethical and spiritual poverty in which children are now being raised, and the awful legacy we are creating. A legacy of instability of the family, cruel competition in business, sports and education; racial and ethnic divisiveness; materialism running rampant with no ethical values to offset it; increasing violence; a coarsening of attitudes toward sexuality; lack of high quality day care; an educational system that spews out children with no skills, no goals and no preparation for productive, satisfying lives."

"Tot it up", he says, "and you have a picture of a society running

downhill". But, Spock believes, "...we can reverse it all if we now agree on a new set of values".

Spock says, "I'm not some old geezer advocating a return to the good old days, I like and embrace the progress I've seen during my long lifetime. At the same time while making enormous progress in the sciences and in our abilities to communicate etc, we have lost our sense of the dignity of each individual, our desire to treat each person as we want to be treated ourselves; our goal of raising children with the ideals of helpfulness, kindness and service to others".

"These days we teach children only to want to get ahead. We include nothing spiritual to sustain them while getting there, nothing so simple and profound as the fact that we are in this world to love and help each other. Partly because there are no such interior beacons to guide young people as they try to 'get ahead' in work or school, because we offer no sense of the dignity and importance of each individual person, rich or poor, we are seeing an increase in teenage suicide".

In his book, Spock, confesses that he has no immediate solutions to the problems he sees, but he is convinced that they can come about if people organise themselves into action groups and work for the necessary changes.

To return to the concept that the essence of culture is to be found in the reaching across the generations to transmit human history; to strengthen familial and communal bonding; to develop a profound respect for human life: to recognise our being part of the natural world, to acknowledge our debt to all who have preceded us and our connection to those who will follow; I believe that it is of most importance that we all become actively involved in the communities in which we reside. Somehow we must offset the fleshpots of materialism and power that have been inculcated as desirable goals in the minds of our young people by the money driven, controlled media.

What can we do now? Is there a role for the Arts?

In a society where the expressions of value systems (how we relate to each other and function as part of the groups, both intimate and general that give structure to our lives) have become increasingly vulgarised, banal and tawdry. In this money and power oriented society where all of the arts seem to become increasingly simplistic, anti-intellectual and spiritless under the pressure of commercialism, one becomes aware of the fact that the arts are under attack. Literature seems to be in the process of becoming transformed into Disneyish cartoons or simple minded sexual fantasies. In the theatre

arts, serious thought provoking films or theatrical productions are rarely produced, (with the exception of a few small independent groups of artists) replaced by films pimping for violent solutions to all problems, or light weight musical theatre productions (not to mention most of the garbage one finds on the television). In this society women are still the victims of choice in the films and the semi-literate literature, despite the growth of the Women's Movement. In this society, young people are increasingly divorced from the natural world from which they could draw peace and sustenance. In our present society, the visual arts are increasingly being taken over by tricksters; passionless mavens. Sadly under this attack by the purveyors of fantasies of materialism, wealth and power, the intrinsic power of familial and communal relationships seem to be increasingly weakening. All of this makes it difficult for me to understand what most people conceive of for the role culture plays in their lives. Certainly, it must be broader than visiting an occasional art show, musical or theatrical production, or reading the cheap novels and sensationalist magazines found next to the check-out stands in the supermarkets.

I believe that if our artists; the visual artists, ceramicists, dancers, musicians, dramaturges, poets and other practitioners of art forms, devote some of their creative energies to working with the young people who are most at risk in this society, we can turn around the destructive culture now extant and dramatically reduce the violence so rife in our societies. There are times when one comes across statements by people who don't think of themselves as anarchists, whose views are more realistically anarchic than much of what appears in our anarchist press.

For example, last year Danny Hoch, an actor appearing in a local (San Francisco) stage production, made the following statement to the drama critic of the local newspaper, *The San Francisco Chronicle*: "Look, I'm not a politician – I'm a griot, a storyteller, an actor ... But my job is to entertain you subversively, educate you, provoke you, make you uncomfortable, and cause some social cohesion among people who normally wouldn't be sitting together. I want to act in things I'm passionate about, things that respond to my generation and reflect it truthfully. And I don't ever want to forget from where I come".

Another example: In this year's 'Waterfront, Jazz, Art and Wine Festival' in the town in which I live, Jazzman Raymond Nat Turner and his partner in Poetry, 'Zigi' Lowenberg, whose Jazz and Poetry Group calls itself 'Upsurge', made the following statements

regarding their work. "We speak out against oppression and for community; about the ability of music to bring people together ... our music is multi-cultural, gender inclusive and inter-generational ... Inspired by, 'Just being part of society today', Turner composes his poetry on seeing what really needs to be done, and how people need to come together to overcome the artificial boundaries such as economics and appearances, etc., etc." Lowenberg says, "I'm inspired by live jazz, strong women and a yearning to bridge cultures". Turner, speaking about their connection said, "Our group is a healthy integration born out of respect for one another ... a celebration of our differences but also our common struggle for justice".

Another example: In the small, benighted, city in which I now dwell, a city that lives in the shadow of its military past, (Vallejo, California, has been a Naval base ever since 1852), the Vallejo Artist's Guild undertook to set up a program that will enable them to bring their creativity and artistic experience to some of the young people in our poverty afflicted population: they hope to reach those youths of Junior High School age and younger, youths to whom the deadly 'gang life' beckons. This effort was founded in the belief that creating Art touches the depths of one's human core and the recognition that historically, few artists became thieves or murderers. Even though artists like Samuel Coleridge, the renowned English poet, Modigliani the great French/Italian painter, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker two of our greatest jazz musicians, were men who were drug addicts, they used their energies to express their inner visions, rather than take to the streets to wreak violence on others.

Another down to earth example of communal involvement I offer in order to expand on my concept of acting locally, is an example of a meeting of The Vallejo Art Forum at Booklovers Haven (our local bookshop cum Cafe). We invited a woman who is one of the superb, artistic bakers in our area to demonstrate techniques of cookie decorating. She brought great quantities of cookies and the means of decorating them with her and after her demonstration invited the large audience which consisted of local artists, friends, neighbours and their children to create their own designs. The effect on the participants that night was remarkable. Her efforts had the result of creating an air of mutuality and bonhomie between all who were there. For many, connections that still continue.

Admittedly these activities are not great revolutionary endeavours, but activities such as these can have the effect of creating a greater bonding between the generations, a strengthening of communal feelings, feelings of mutual responsibility and not least of all a sense

of having some control over one's own life. All of which is inherent in our anarchist philosophy.

Recently I met a radical Afro-American woman who is endeavouring to establish an inter-racial theatre for young people. She believes we can inspire them to work with theatrical material developed out of their experiences in growing up in this society, she can effect a turn about of the value systems of the young people she is working with. She too, has anarchic views about the necessity for each of us to get involved in effecting changes at the human experiential level rather than depend upon politicians. In the past, anarchists have seen in the founding of libertarian schools, alternatives to state or church dominated education that would provide a positive means of perpetuating our anarchist ideals. Schools founded without a centralised authoritarian structure that could inculcate in the young people a sense of self worth, a sense of responsibility, a sense of mutuality and of course a sense of interdependence.

These are just a few ideas that have occurred to me in trying to conceive of ways to expand the role that caring anarchic people can explore, in trying to make more meaningful the role we play in the life of our community. Certainly, they're not grand 'revolutionary' actions, but they might result in helping to continue our anarchist visions into the future.

In conclusion, I'm sure that other members of our anarchist community are working on projects and planning actions and suggestions at least as cogent as those that I've described. It would be helpful if our press spent more time reporting on and supporting efforts like these than repeating stagnant, sloganeering, 'old hat' attacks on capitalism.

April 1998

Brian Morris

Buddhism, Anarchism and Ecology

Prologue

This article was rejected by the journal *Anarchist Studies* because although considered thought provoking it was said to be a one-sided polemic that did not fully explore the relationship between Buddhism and and anarchism (and ecology) as suggested by the likes of Watts, Synder and Marshall. In fact the aim was not to explore the relationship between Buddhism and anarchism but – as explicitly stated – to offer critical reflections on Buddhism from an anarchist perspective and thus counter the biased, misleading and one-sided presentation of Buddhism by these writers and by Eco-Buddhists, and to draw attention to the more negative aspects of Buddhism, particularly its symbiotic relationship with state structures.

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In recent decades Buddhism has become increasingly popular among people in both Europe and the United States and societies such as the 'Friends of the Western Buddhist Order' now have centres in all the major cities. On the surface, of all the major world religions Buddhism would seem to be the closest to the anarchist tradition, and in recent years there have been a spate of articles and books claiming that Buddhism entails an environmental ethic and is an eco-philosophy par excellence.¹ In this paper I offer some critical reflections on Buddhism from an anarchist perspective. The paper is in two parts In the first part I offer a brief overview of Buddhism as a religious philosophy, stressing that in essence Buddhism is a way of salvation, a radical form of mysticism that demands detachment from the empirical world. In the second part I note briefly some of the limitations of Buddhism, its symbiotic relationship with state power and the anti-ecological tenets of canonical Buddhism as a practice.²

1. The Dharma as understood by Buddhist Scholars

It is important to recognise that the Buddha, the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in the sixth century BC and who is seen as the founder of Buddhism, at no time claimed to be anything other than a human being. He claimed no divine inspiration, nor any revelation. What he did claim was to have become awakened or

enlightened. Buddha means one who has become enlightened – the ‘awakened one’.³

Buddhists are essentially those who follow the path of the historical Buddha, and his teachings or truths are known as the Dharma. The Dharma, the ‘way of enlightenment’ was compared by the Buddha to a raft, which should be discarded when the river was crossed.⁴

The dharma, as Sangharakshita (Dennis Lingwood)⁵ has insisted, consists of anything that is conducive to a person’s enlightenment. As the Buddha said: “Whosoever teachings conduce to dispassion, to detachment, to decrease in worldly gains, to frugality, to content, to solitude, to energy, to delight in good, of these teachings you can be certain that they are the teaching of the Buddha” (Sangharakitsha, 1980:27).

Buddhism is therefore a practical religion and in its canonical form is a religion of tolerance and emphasises the basic goodness of humans, unlike orthodox Christianity. There is no emphasis on faith and in no sense is the Buddha, or the scriptures, to be taken as an incontrovertible source of truth. On his death bed the Buddha is reported to have told his disciple Ananda that decay is inherent in all conditioned things, that he should not fret or weep at his passing and that his disciples should seek their own salvation. “Be a refuge unto yourselves”, he said.⁶ In this sense Buddha was an anarchist.

Buddhism is non-theistic, indeed it was often been described as atheism, for the belief in a divine creator or in a personal deity is seen as essentially a hindrance to the spiritual life (salvation). The Buddha also expressed a disinterest in philosophical speculation, or in obtaining occult powers. According to Walpola Rahula’s interpretation of canonical Buddhism the Buddha completely undermined two ideas that are deeply rooted in the human psyche – the need for self-protection and the need for self-preservation. For self-protection humans in their imagination create the idea of religion, of a god or spirits also will protect them and keep them well and secure. For self-preservation they conceive the idea of an immortal soul that survives death. Yet according to the Buddha these two ideas are false, empty, and give illusionary comfort. They are simply born out of ignorance and an unwillingness on the part of humans to face reality.⁷

The aim of life for a Buddhist is a spiritual one, to achieve enlightenment (nirvana).⁸ This is seen, in its simplest form, as the ‘extinction’ of desire (passion, craving, becoming), of aversion (hatred, anger) and of confusion (delusion, ignorance) In the Buddhist scriptures and iconography the three ‘mental poisons’ to be extinguished – desire, aversion, ignorance – are represented by

three animals respectively, the cock (a sexual symbol), the snake and the pig (wallowing ignorantly in the mud).

Buddhist cosmology, derived from early Hinduism suggests that the cosmos forms a 'wheel' of life, consisting of six realms of existence – the gods (devas), the spirits (asuras), ghosts of the dead (pretax) [relating to hot and cold realms], humans and animals. Together they constitute a cycle of rebirths (samsara). The 'wheel of life', in more metaphysical terms, can also be seen as a chain of 'dependent origination' (paticca samuppada), the notion that everything arises from causes and conditions, and, thus, that everything in the world is conditioned, relative, inter-dependent and in a state of flux.

Not being a revealed religion, not being, that is, a religion that is based on revelation or faith, in God or in some divine message – as with Judaism, Christianity, Islam and to some extent Hinduism – Buddhism puts a fundamental emphasis on human experience. It has often been described as a form of radical empiricism (Conze, 1951:20). It has thus, like Taoism, been characterised as a 'religion-of-discovery', a manifestation of the human spirit, truth being discovered by humans, by their own unaided effort (Sangharakshita, 1987, 148-50) The Buddha therefore is not conceived of as a prophet, still less as God incarnate, but simply as a teacher, guide or exemplar. He described himself, on this regard, as like the first chick to hatch from a batch of eggs (Conze, 1954:60, Sangharakshita 1980;25).

The four noble truths (arya satya) that the Buddha expounded in the deer park near Benares (Varanasi) (in around 531 BC), constitute the essence of the dharma and are as follows:

- 1) Everything is suffering (dukkha);
- 2) The origin of suffering is desire (tanha);
- 3) There exists an end to suffering; and
- 4) A path is suggested by the Buddha that leads to salvation (nirvana). The key idea in this is that the world is bound up with suffering. It is not a matter of original sin – life, existence is suffering. As the Buddha said in one of his discourses: "Birth is suffering; old age is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain grief and despair are suffering; not to get what are wishes is suffering; in short the five aggregates of clinging are suffering" (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962:127).

The Buddha, of course, did not deny the enjoyment and happiness, both material and spiritual, that there is in life, but stressed that these were transient and impermanent. Nor did this emphasis on the reality of suffering suggest a rejection of the world – a repugnant attitude towards the material world. Suffering for the Buddha was an

existential fact not an evil and there is nothing to be gained by expressing anger, gloom, or impatience about it. According to the Buddha one of the principal hindrances to salvation is repugnance or hatred. Thus what is necessary, according to the Buddha, is not anger or pessimism, but the understanding of suffering, how it comes about, and how to get rid of it. Rahula notes how significant it is that the Buddha is always depicted as a happy person, 'ever smiling', always serene, contented, tranquil and compassionate (1959; 27-28).

Most Buddhist scholars have suggested or implied that suffering is an intrinsic property of the world, that it thus has an ontological status. But David Shaner writes: "Suffering in the Buddhist sense is not a metaphysical or ontological declaration concerning a pessimistic human condition, it is rather an epistemological relevant term that defines the perspective of those whose perception of nature is clouded by desires, false images and the like" (1989;170). 'Suffering' is thus interpreted not as an existential fact, but as a mental disposition, an intentional condition due to excessive desire and covetousness.⁹ If suffering thus arises out of our desires and our craving for stability and permanence then, as the Buddha seems to suggest, extinguishing such desires will lead to salvation as he conceived it. This we discuss below. The concept of *dukkha* – a term which not only means pain and misery but also imperfection, disharmony and discontent – is intrinsically connected in Buddhist thought to two other ideas, or 'characteristics' (*lakṣanas*) of existence, that of impermanence (*anicca*) and that of 'no-self' (*anatta*). The former notion implies that everything is in flux, nothing is permanent or static. "The world is in continuous flux and is impermanent", the Buddha told his disciple Ratthapala. In the *Anguttara-nikaya* there is the passage: "Oh, Brahmana, it is just like a mountain river, flowing far and swift, taking everything along with it, there is no moment, no instant, no second when it stops flowing, but it goes on flowing and continuing. So Brahmana, is human life, like a mountain river" (Rahula 1959;25-26).

Many writers have noted the affinities between Buddha's stress on process and change and the philosophies of Heraclitus and Hegel. The pre-Buddhist philosophy of Kapila was a materialistic philosophy that also stressed that the world (*prakṛti*) was a dynamic, self-becoming process and it is of interest that two of Buddha's teachers were Samkhya philosophers. But Samkhya was a dualistic philosophy which bifurcated spirit (*purusa*) and matter. There is a sense in which early Buddhism took over the Samkhya doctrines, but discarded the permanent and unchanging self (*purusa*, *atman*).

For the Buddha, change and impermanence is the essential characteristic of all reality (Murti, 1955;62). The Buddha, as with Nagarjuna in a later period, was essentially a process or dialectical philosopher, in search of a psychological state that would give a person a sense of peace and tranquillity in an otherwise turbulent and changing world.

This brings us to the concept of no-self (anatta, Skanatma), which is somewhat unique to Buddhism, although there are echoes in both Taoism and Hume's philosophy. I have discussed the doctrine of 'no-self' (soul) elsewhere,¹⁰ but some brief comments may be made. Firstly, the doctrine can only be understood if set within the context of Hinduism, where the notion of the soul/self (atman) was taken to be an immutable eternal substance or entity within each person and a manifestation of the absolute spirit (Brahman). This identification of the self with the divine absolute went hand-in-hand with a denial of the reality of the world as it appeared (seen as maya, illusion). Salvation, in the Hindu context, consisted in removing this evil of ignorance and realising the oneness of the eternal atman (self) with Brahman, the union (moksha), being achieved through knowledge (or gnosis) (jnana), action (karma), devotion and ritual (bhakti) or through physical discipline and meditative states (yoga).

Buddha repudiated the concept of atman and all that it implied, whether in terms of an immortal soul, or in terms of a creator/absolute spirit. Thus although in Buddhism there is a notion of rebirth, of the continuity of causes and conditions, there is no concept of reincarnation, on the transformation of immortal souls (Saddhatissa, 1971, 41). The tendency of many Western Buddhist scholars to interpret salvation (nirvana) as implying some kind of union of the self with a transpersonal ultimate reality – described as a 'universal mind' or 'all self' – seems to me highly misleading. It is also problematic to equate the Buddhist concept of the 'void' (sunyata) with the Christian godhead or the Hindu Brahman.¹¹ There is also a common tendency among Western scholars to interpret Buddhist teachings as implying some form of subjective idealism. It is thus suggested that the Buddha saw the world, like the Hindu scholastics, as an illusion (maya), or that the mind is the 'first cause' and thus that reality is 'mind-only', or mind independent.¹² Although subjective idealism is an important school of philosophy within Buddhism, for the common doctrine of the Yogacarins was that of Citta-Matra – all that exists is mind or consciousness – most Buddhists tend to follow the philosophy of Nagarjuna (circa AD150 AD), known as Madhyamaka (the middle way). Nagarjuna affirmed

that the natural world has no inherent static existence 'out there', with each thing having an immutable essence or soul (eternalism). But this did not imply that the external world has no existence or reality and is merely a projection or creation of the mind (nihilism). Nagarjuna's concept of 'no-self', sunyata (void or emptiness), suggested that things do not have a 'soul' (essence) or independent existence; it does not imply that natural phenomena do not exist at all – and all is 'mind' (Tenzin Gyatso 1995;4146).

For the Buddha (and Nagarjuna) the external world has a reality, but this reality (including humans) is a process, inherently changing, nothing having any permanence. Thus the Buddha also implied that the empirical self (as distinct from the soul) had no permanency or inherent reality. The human person was conceived, in Buddhist psychology, as consisting empirically of five categories of phenomena, termed aggregates (skandhas).

These are matter or corporeality (rupa), sensation or feeling (vedana), perception (sanna), will or action (samskara) and consciousness (vinnan). For the Buddha, all these aspects of human life are constantly changing and there is no entity on self that can be described as having any permanency, other than as a convenient name or label for the unity of these five aggregates. There is no persistent self, for "life is a constant flux". Buddha likened the human self to a chariot, that could be known only from its various parts and that had no essential unity. What the self of mine is permanent, stable, eternal, Buddha remarked, is pure speculation. (Conze, 1954,74, 1959;148-49). But again, the Buddha was not suggesting a form of nihilism, the complete 'annihilation' of the self – this would make the idea of salvation incomprehensible – the truth is the 'middle way'.

Recognising the ubiquity of suffering, which is linked to the three 'fires' – hatred (anger), greed (craving), ignorance (delusion) – and the 'dependent origination' of all existents, the Buddha suggested a path of deliverance, a way of salvation. It implied a middle way, between on the one hand, a life given over to sensual pleasure and on the other, self-mortification and various forms of asceticism, which denies the senses and the body. The famous eightfold path consists essentially of three aspects; morality, meditation and wisdom.

The first, ethical conduct (sila) consists of five basic precepts, namely to refrain from taking life, stealing, misusing the senses, telling lies and becoming self-intoxicated through the taking of alcohol or drugs. The aim is to avoid any action that might harm others in any way and it involves compassion (karuna) and love for the world and all living creatures – 'sentient beings'. It advocates

attitudes and actions that promote love, harmony and happiness – and Buddhism is strongly opposed to any kind of war or the involvement in any kind of activity that entails suffering and harm to others. It also implies abstention from slanderous, idle and dishonest speech. Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, stressed that morality is the foundation of the Buddhist path.

The second aspect is meditation (*samadhi*), or training in higher concentration. *Samadhi* has been defined as ‘contemplation on reality’. In Buddhism there are many forms of meditation, all of which are designed to increase awareness and to counter the ‘poisons’ of craving, anger and ignorance. The emphasis is towards concentration and insight (*dhyana*). It is important to note that the Buddha emphasised ‘mindfulness, awareness, meditation that is contemplation and leads to insight: he does not advocate self-awareness, or going into trance states. The emphasis on insight is deemed to be quintessentially Buddhist (Rahula, 1959:68, Gombrich 1988:64). One well known Buddhist scholar suggests that the aim of meditation is to “generate genuine insight into the ultimate nature of reality” (Tenzin Gyatso 1995:20).¹³

The third aspect of the path to enlightenment is wisdom (*panna*), which demands a radically new way of looking at the world. It is described as the “ultimate and main element of the path” (Lamotte, 1984:53). Wisdom, or *gnosis*, entails the cultivation of a sense of detachment and the understanding of the true nature of reality, as embodied in the four noble truths. It implies an attempt, as Edward Conze put it, “to penetrate to the actual reality of things as they are in themselves” (1959; 145).

This is not knowledge in the ordinary sense, but a kind of intuitive understanding – Sangharakshita describes it as an “unmediated spiritual vision” (1980: 16) – that sees all things directly, vividly and truly and is free of misconceptions and prejudices. It is a philosophical outlook that has affinities with Spinoza, and his notion of *scientia intuitiva* and Husserl’s phenomenology.

The state of being known as *nirvana*, enlightenment, is described by the Buddha, often using images, in the following ways: It is like a lotus flower rising over of the water; It is like a mountain peak where seeds (passions) cannot grow; It is like space, or the wind, something unconditioned, but which can be experienced by the mind;

It is a state of ‘pure consciousness’ which entails freedom from becoming (the five aggregates) and thus the end of suffering; it is an awareness of things ‘as they really are’.¹⁴

To what extent this path involves the assumption of a monastic life

is none-too-clear, but Rahula suggests that the attainment of nirvana can be realised by men and women living ordinary lives (1959:77, see also Carrithers 1983;71-73). As indicated above, many Western scholars give a religious gloss to the concept of nirvana seeing it as a form of religious mysticism. But as Rahula stresses nirvana is a synonym of truth; it is a state of psychological awareness that is lived and experienced. It does not entail the annihilation of the self because there is no self to annihilate. It does not involve the merging or fusion of the individual self with some absolute spirit or 'universal self' because the Buddha considered such metaphysical ideas illusory. But the Buddha did insist that the attainment of *nirvana* gave the individual a sense of freedom, equanimity and joy, and that it could be attained in this life, or at least, it entailed no re-birth when this life comes to an end (Gombrich 1984:9).

2. The limitations of Buddhism

Although canonical Buddhism advocates the 'middle way', the social implications of the Buddhist approach to suffering is a radical *detachment* from the material world, and a repudiation of everything that constitutes or attracts the empirical self. The Buddha was positively hostile towards the enjoyment of the senses, especially relating to food and sex, and taking "delight in the senses and their objects" was inevitably seen as leading to desire, grasping, attachment, and thus to suffering (Conze, 1959;156).

Buddhism, in fact, with its emphasis on consciousness, not practical activity, on 'detachment' and the 'extinction' of desires, on being a 'refuge' and an 'island' to one-self presents, it seems a very one-sided view of human subjectivity. It is hardly surprising, then that the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks which along with the Buddha and the *dharma* is one of the 'three jewels' of Buddhism, and thus forms a central focus of Buddhist religion – should advocate celibacy, a vegetarian diet and repudiate any active involvement in the material world, even agricultural production. As Gombrich writes, Buddhism is not concerned with God or the world; it is focused on suffering humanity, on morality, meditation and gnosis. Buddha's teachings are not concerned with shaping human life in the world, but rather is focused on liberation, on 'deliverance', on 'release' from *the* world and its inherent suffering. "The Buddha urged those who wished to escape from suffering to follow his example and renounce the world" (1984:9). The care and the upbringing of children, and the production of food and the basic necessities of life, was left to others, mainly women and local communities.

It is however possible to go beyond the greed, conflict and 'egoism' that Buddha saw as a fetter and a delusion, without this involving detachment from the natural world, the body or society. These could and should to be *embraced* in a naturally satisfying manner, for detachment from the world is not an existential possibility except in thought. 'Starhawk' [Miriam Simos] repudiates the notion that "all life is suffering" and declares it to be a thing of wonder. Writing as a theist she declares that 'escape' from *samsara* the 'wheel of birth and death', is not a viable option (1979:42).¹⁵

Although Buddhism can be viewed as a form of radical humanism, it is not anthropocentric, for compassion, 'love without attachment', was not restricted to human but to all living beings. This has led many Western Buddhists to emphasise the notion that Buddhism is an 'ecological religion', a 'cosmic ecology' (Batchelor and Brown, 1992, viii). But Western Buddhists tend to interpret Buddhism, as a religious system that constitutes a *Dharma Gaia*, so that it accords with Western psychological, religious and ecological conceptions.¹⁶ A number of misleading interpretations may be noted about such eco-Buddhism. Firstly, as earlier indicated, Buddhism tends to be interpreted as a form of subjective idealism. It is thus suggested that in reality no distinction can be made between subject and object, or between things in the world, such that the "universe is a seamless undivided whole" (Batchelor, 1992; 33). This is somewhat misleading. If this were indeed the case, it would make nonsense of the doctrine important in Buddhism that all things and phenomena are inter-connected, inter-dependent and conditioned. That Buddhism views "humanity as an integral part of nature" only makes sense if a distinction not dualism can be made between humans and the world. The world for the Buddha is not 'illusory', nor an 'undifferentiated unity', nor mind-only (consciousness). What is illusory is a state of mind (ignorance), that fails to understand that everything in the world (events, things, mind, self) is conditioned, transitory and in process. It is important then to distinguish as many Buddhists and post-modernists fail to do between the nature of reality (ontology) and forms of consciousness or knowledge (epistemology). Wisdom for the Buddhist is also a state of mind, but it is not so much cognitive, as an experiential state of 'pure consciousness' that comes from non-attachment. It is this state of mind that is 'undifferentiated' and for the Buddha blissful and ecstatic. But it entails detachment not engagement with the material world. As one Tibetan monk of the eleventh century expresses it through a vision.

“If you have attachment to this life, you are not a religious person. If you have attachment to the world of existence you do not have renunciation. If you have attachment to your own purpose, you do not have the enlightenment thought” (Batchelor, 1987:212) The Buddha form of salvation thus advocates a radical *detachment* from the material world.

There is the famous story that when during a famine the local villagers refused to give food to the monks, one of the followers suggested that they should take up agriculture, for as the earth is “rich and as sweet as honey it would be good if I turned the earth over”. But the Buddha refused and rebuked the monk, as agriculture would harm the creatures of the earth (Batchelor and Brown, 1992:13). This may be seen as expressing a caring attitude towards living beings (insects, worms) but it also affirms the radical detachment from – not engagement with – the natural world that the Buddha advocates. Other less enlightened humans were left to produce the food that the Buddhist monks needed to sustain life. Some Buddhists have even suggested that there should be no intention in human life to live “at the expense of any other creature”, and to follow the precept “non-injury to life” is deemed to be the minimal code for every Buddhist” (de Silva, 1992: 23). But as we are intrinsically organic beings, human life is not possible without the taking of life, and thus other living beings. The Buddha however (like vegetarians) tended to put on emphasis only on sentient ‘beings’ (animals), and to completely ignore the fact that plants also are living beings.¹⁷ Humans are not like bees, who can obtain wealth like a bee collects nectar from a flower, harming neither the fragrance nor the beauty of the flower. They have to labour, that is interact with nature, and like other mammals their livelihood is always at the expense of other living creatures.¹⁸

Secondly, the Buddhist doctrine of ‘no-soul’ (*anatta*) is usually interpreted by eco-Buddhists as simply implying a rejection of the Cartesian subject – the self as an independent, autonomous, egocentric being, rather than a refutation of the ‘soul’ and the empirical self. Nobody in their social praxis has even conceived of the self as radically separate or autonomous, for we all recognise the need to eat and breathe and acknowledge our social existence. But interpreting the self in Cartesian fashion allows Western Buddhists to interpret Buddhism in Jungian terms as a kind of ‘transpersonal psychology’. They thus come to advocate the development of an ‘ecological self’ (Macy, 1990). Whether this accords with the radical nature of the Buddhist doctrine of ‘no-self’ (*anatta*) is, of course

highly debatable. As Timmerman suggests, for the Buddha it was the self and not the natural world, that was the problem (1992:69).¹⁹

Thirdly, it is I think misleading, as noted earlier, to equate the Buddhist doctrine of the void and *Nirvana*, with the Hindu conception of *Brahman* – as did many nineteenth century romantics and many Western Buddhist scholars, such as Conze and Humphreys.²⁰ *Nirvana* describes a psychological state of ‘pure consciousness’; it is not an ontological *reality* as is the Hindu brahman, the Christian God, the Islamic Allah or the neo-platonic one – however much these mystical traditions may share the idea of ‘gnosis’ – mystical contemplation. Nor, unlike Taoism and Spinoza’s pantheism, does Buddhism imply a “mystical identification with nature”. Buddhist ontology, like Taoism, implies an ecological perspective, but as a religious practice it is profoundly anti-ecological in that it advocates a radical detachment from the world. There is some truth in Timmerman’s suggestion that Buddhism is a kind of “mystical materialism” (1992,69). But Buddhism does not suggest that the ‘sacred’ or ‘divinity’ can be discovered in nature, as this is reflected in the writings of those scholars and naturalists who were deeply influenced by the transcendentalist (idealist) tradition – Thoreau, Muir and Aldo Leopold. Buddhism is neither a form of animism nor a spiritualist monism, as expressed in the religious philosophies of Advaita Vedanta and Neo-Platonism. *Nirvana*, for the Buddha, is a “state of the individual”, attained through “non-attachment” to the world via meditation practices (gnosis); it is not an “entity or being” (Smart, 1972, 23-24).²¹

Fourthly, it must be emphasised that many of the ‘ecological traditions’ that are to be found in Buddhist countries like Ladakh and Thailand – organic agriculture, herbalism, a sacred attitude to landscape, especially trees, soft-energy systems, economic systems based on sharing – are not specifically Buddhist. Indeed, have little to do with Buddhism. They are part of the organic traditions of the peasantry – aspects of which (like animism and agriculture) were repudiated by the Buddha. They are in fact, pre-Buddhist. Helena Norberg-Hodge’s (1992) panegyric on the ecological traditions of Ladakh (an old Himalayan Kingdom, now a part of India) not only ignores the fact that half the population of Ladakh are Muslims, but misleadingly conflates Buddhism with the ecocentric traditions of peasant communities. Such traditions are pre-Buddhist and Buddhism is parasitic upon them, even though Norberg-Hodge emphasises the benign influence of the monastic elite. Such traditions, of course, are found throughout the world, in the Andes

as well as in the Himalayas and among people who are not Buddhists. It expresses an ethos and way of life that Ladakhi peasants share with European and Andean peasants (who are nominally Christians) and the hill people of nearby Uttar Pradesh (who are nominally Hindus).

It has often been suggested that Buddhism is a pessimistic philosophy, that it is a 'world-denying' religion. Buddhism does not suggest a rejection or repudiation of the world, but rather detachment from it. Whether such a 'lack of attachment' then allows one to enjoy nature as an aesthetic experience, as many eco-Buddhists suggest, it is difficult to say. Lily de Silva writes "Buddha and his disciples regarded natural beauty as a source of great joy and aesthetic satisfaction" (1992:27), and there is no doubt that many Buddhists throughout history have expressed positive attitudes towards nature. The essence of compassion implies respect for sentient beings, as well as for the earth itself. One of the most famous Buddhists who expressed a nature-ethic was the Tibet monk Milarepa (1052-1135). A poet and a solitary, Milarepa is one of the most esteemed monks in Tibetan history and his songs are well known. The "natural existence of the phenomenal world", he sang, where his 'books' through which he sought understanding and enlightenment. But his essential aim was enlightenment, to become detached from the world, not to engage with the world, or to enjoy it – for delight could easily lead to attachment. In the scriptures it records that Milarepa sang songs for local hunters, extolling the virtues of the mountains and living creatures, in exchange for meat and barley which he gladly cooked and ate. Milarepa appears not to have been a vegetarian (Batchelor, 1987;109, Batchelor, 1992;13-14).²² Other Buddhists have been more negative towards the natural world, stressing the importance of liberation from a 'world of darkness' (O'Neill, 1995;195). Many scholars, in fact, have noted the similarities between Buddhism and gnosticism. It is important to note, however, that these two religious traditions are completely dissimilar in terms of their underlying ontology. What they have in common is the emphasis on gnosis, spiritual enlightenment through meditation and esoteric knowledge. This is clearly brought out in Edward Conze's famous essay *Buddhism and Gnosis*, originally published in 1930. The basic similarities include: salvation through gnosis (*Jnana*, contemplating knowledge); an elitist emphasis between the spiritually awakened (*Perfecti*, *Aryas*) and the ordinary people; a predilection for the esoteric and a mystical monism that puts an emphasis on light and the power of meditation states and sacred mantras or formulas. Conze, however, affirms that both

Buddhism and gnosticism share "a yearning for union with the one" (1995: 18), without recognising their very contrasting metaphysics. For Buddhism, as earlier discussed, is a form of mystical naturalism that repudiates both the "soul" and the "divinity" as illusions. In contrast, as a spiritual monism, gnosticism affirms both.²³ More important Buddhism advocates detachment from the world as a site of suffering, while Gnosticism repudiates the natural world entirely as the evil creation of the demiurge. Needless to say, neither gnosticism nor Buddhism are nihilistic, for while both stress the suffering and inherent 'unsatisfactory' nature of worldly existence, they both offer 'salvation' from this world of suffering and thus give meaning to human life.

I have stressed above that Buddhism, as it was expressed by the early Theravadins, suggested a path of spiritual enlightenment that entails a sense of detachment from everyday existence. This implies giving up sex, not eating meat (for animals embody life's most vibrant form) and not engaging in agriculture. Thus rather than indicating an ecological perspective (in its practices) or being an ecological life style (as most of its Western adherent claim) Buddhism from its inception was anti-ecological, or at least antithetical to the organic traditions of the peasantry. This may be justified by considering the following:

1) Buddhism denigrated the shamanistic way of life of early human communities, where the hunter expressed his affinity and reverence for the animal he hunted. It was hostile, too, towards animistic beliefs, in which natural phenomena, mountains, animals, trees, were seen as embodying spiritual beings or powers. In Tibet where the entire landscape is pervaded by associations with local deities and spirits, Buddhism is explicitly concerned with controlling and subduing these spiritual agencies. Although in Tibet a form of shamanistic Buddhism developed, (Samuel 1993) clerical Buddhism has historically always been antagonistic towards and has even attempted to suppress the spirit cults. With regard to Siberian shamanism, Ronald Hutton has noted that in terms of aggression and bigotry there was not much to choose between [Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, "for Buddhist monks wrecked pagan shrines and denounced shamanism with the same energy as adherents of the other two faiths" (1993;17).

2) Buddhism lauded meditative states in remote forests or closed single-sex monasteries, away from both subsistence agriculture (on which it is parasitic) and the bustle of family life and children. This

is one of the reasons, I suppose, that Buddhism always had a strong appeal to the deep ecologists, who appear to envisage nothing between an anthropocentric and exploitative attitude towards nature and the aesthetic enjoyment of nature in wilderness regions. Our dependence on a productive *relationship* with nature is ignored entirely by both the Buddhists and the deep ecologists.²⁴

3. Buddhism preached the path of *Nirvana*, non-attachment, the 'extinction' of desire. Of personality, rather than suggesting a sense of self which develops in a reciprocal relationship with both the natural world and other humans. It appears again that the Buddha saw nothing between the egocentrism, the greed, the hedonism and the ethic of dominance and power of the caste to which he belonged – the *Kshatsiya*²⁵ – and complete detachment from the world, including that of the family and the social and natural worlds of the peasant community. Of course, as we have continually stressed, complete non-attachment is not a living option and even the most spiritual of gnostic mystics had to eat locusts and wild honey, or like Milarepa, nettles, in order to survive.

Buddhism as a 'religion' emerged in the third century BC when the Manrya King Ashoka adapted and developed Buddhism as the state ideology of his expanding empire.²⁶ It provided the state with a 'binding factor' in a cultural sense, its nonviolent ethos suiting the rulers, as well as facilitating extensive trade connections through the monasteries. Buddhism has thus historically always been associated with the state, with men, with a literary tradition and it has been distinct from the organic agricultural traditions of the peasantry. To conflate Buddhism with organic agriculture, as does Norberg-Hodge, is highly misleading. No true (male) disciple of the Buddha – if he followed explicitly his teachings – would soil his hands in agricultural work (better to meditate in the forests), or have sexual relationships with a woman, or eat the flesh of animals. Peasants do all of these things. As a European peasant said when he was hauled before the Inquisition: "I am no heretic; for I have a wife and lie with her and have children and eat flesh". He would not have made an enlightened Buddhist.

Although it is somewhat misleading to equate the teachings of the Buddha with the Buddhist religion as it developed over the centuries (in the same way one must distinguish the teachings of Jesus from the doctrines of the Christian Church), nevertheless, incipient within the teachings of the Buddha is a hierarchical conception of the social order, with respect to both gender and 'class'. Buddha's

views on women are well known – although writers like Sangharakshita try to defend him – for the Buddha explicitly described them as the inferior sex, as well as seeing them as a source of anger, passion and sexuality that would inevitably lead men away from the path of enlightenment.

Mary Mellor (1992;45) notes that while Schumacher favours Buddhism as the basis of a green spirituality, it is quite explicit about the inferiority of women. The fact that Buddhism has a benign, a detached attitude towards nature is no guarantee, she writes, that it has a benign attitude towards women.²⁷

We have already noted that early Buddhism was antithetical to agriculture, and has thus always been exploitative of the peasant producers – and where Buddhism has developed the monks have always constituted a ruling elite. In places like Tibet the monasteries had a monopoly of literacy – and precious few people outside the ruling elite could read and write – and were the centres of pomp, wealth and power. They owned large acreages of land (usually in the most fertile valleys), worked of course by the peasants. Buddhist states often had much power, controlling trade (through the monasteries), and monks often formed their own military contingents – in spite of the Buddha's injunction against violence. Early Buddhist states in Tibet, as elsewhere, periodically had campaigns, as we have noted, to suppress local shamanistic cults. Tibet, before the Tibetan invasion, consisted of independent theocratic states, with essentially feudal relationships between the peasants and the monks and nobles.

Although we must deplore the military occupation of Tibet by Chinese troops and armed police, and the violation of human rights that still continues there and although one should support the right of Tibetan people to govern themselves as they wish, this ought not to blind us to the realities of the Buddhist state. Geoffrey Samuel stresses that the Tibetan states had limited coercive powers, only to highlight the fact that in other Buddhist countries – Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma – a symbiotic relationship existed between Buddhism and these Asian states. For the *Sangha*, the community of monks was under state control, indeed was the ideological wing of these Buddhist states and the suppression of the spirit cults or non-orthodox forms of Buddhism was a constant theme (Samuel 1993;27-29).

Moreover, when one observes contemporary Buddhism in practice, such as at the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, one realises how far it has diverged from Buddha's original teaching. For there is an emphasis on faith, on ritual oblations, on penance, on prostrating

oneself before the images of the 'Buddha' and his various incarnations and on the authority of the scriptures. The knowledge that Western Buddhists praise so highly, is largely encapsulated in chants and scriptures and although these are insightful and important regarding moral and psychological issues, they are little concerned with trying to understand the social and natural world in which we live. Such knowledge the Buddha always contemptuously dismissed as unfruitful in the quest for salvation.

In the above paragraphs I have tended to paint a less rosy picture of Buddhism than that normally portrayed by its Western adherents. But this is not to deny that Buddhism has a lot to offer anarchism. In its emphasis on non-violence, in expressing compassion and sympathy for all living creatures and in its ethical code, the Buddha's teachings still have a contemporary relevance. The Buddha stressed that generosity should replace greed, that compassion ought to take priority over hatred and contempt, and that wisdom – as a realistic awareness of the nature of phenomenal existence – is better than following delusions. And the delusions of which he spoke were those of religion – the belief in an all powerful God, in the spirit world, in an immortal soul that survived death.

Throughout the history of Buddhism individual monks – like Milarepa – have expressed in their writings and poetry an ecological perspective in their compassion for the natural world, in ways that are reminiscent of the early romantics in Europe – who also belonged to the literati. Many have seen the *Sangha*, the Buddhist order of monks, as an early form of communism, a democratic community which had renounced private property. But as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (1959) argued, the *Sangha* was simply an emulation of a clan based society – apart from the fact that it excluded women and children and was under the absolute authority of the abbot. The Western Buddhist order still advocates single-sex fraternities, seeing the association of people with the opposite sex as sullyng the purity of the Buddhist path to salvation.

It is perhaps appropriate that I should conclude with a quotation from the Buddha. "Do not be misled by proficiency in the scriptures, nor by mere logic and inference, nor after considering reasons, nor because the recluse is your teacher. But when you know for yourselves: These things are not good, these things are faulty, these things are contradicted by reason, these things when performed lead to loss and sorrow – then do you reject them" (Humphreys 1987;71).

Notes

1. See for example Badiner (1990), Batchelor and Brown (1992), Marshall (1992;41-53).
2. Given its long history and the fact that Buddhism is found among a wide range of different people and cultures, there are, as the saying goes, more than 57 varieties of Buddhism. I focus the discussion here mainly on the canonical or clerical Buddhism of early Theravadin societies. For useful general studies of Buddhism and its history see Ling 1973, Bechert and Gombrich 1984
3. Saddhatissa 1971:19. For a good short introduction to Buddha's life see Carrithers 1983.
4. Conze 1954;87 the text reads: "Monks, I will teach you the Dharma – the parable of the raft – for crossing over, not for retaining"
5. Dennis Lingwood (Sangharakshita) was born in 1925 in South London of working class parents. He spent more than a decade at Kalimpong in the Himalayas and became a Buddhist monk. In 1967 he founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and has since then written numerous books – both scholarly and readable – on the Buddhist tradition. An account of his work is given by Subhuti (1994).
6. Humphreys 1987; 93-94
7. Rahula 1959; 51-52 Walpola Rahula's text 'what the Buddha taught' is considered one of the best short introductions to Buddhism. Rahula was a controversial scholar-monk from Sri Lanka, who stressed that Buddhism entailed a radical politics. However such politics have been interpreted by other Buddhists as implying too close a link between Buddhism and Sinhalese ethnic-nationalism. (see Sangharakshita 1986; 69-91)
8. Anthropologists have long recognised that among Buddhist communities of South and South East-Asia, Buddhism often takes several forms and that most people are committed towards worldly concerns not enlightenment. Three general spheres of religious activity have been described, a *practical* orientation, which often involves spirit cults and shamanic practices; a *Karma* orientation that is concerned with the ideology of merit and attaining a better rebirth and finally, a *Bodhi* orientation which involves the pursuit of enlightenment, seen as an "escape" from the cycle of rebirth and thus worldly concerns Canonical Buddhism emphasises this Bodhi, salvation, orientation. (see Spiro 1971, Southwold 1983, Samuel 1993 for excellent studies of Burma, Sri Lanka and Tibet respectively).
9. John Snelling, significantly, implies that it has both ontological grounding, suffering (*Dukkha*) being the "flawed nature of all that exists" (1987:64) and that it is derived from our distorted "perceptions" of the world (85).
10. See my *Anthropology of the Self* 1994; 57-69 and my discussion of Samkhya philosophy, one of the six schools of Indian philosophy pages 73-75.
11. For examples of this tendency see Owens 1975; 165-75, Humphreys 1987; 15-19, Snelling 1987: 8. Important critiques of this tendency, which conflates the metaphysical doctrines of quite distinctive religious (mystical) traditions, are to be found in Katz 1983.
12. See, for example, Marshall 1992; 42, Batchelor and Brown 1992.
13. Important text on Buddhist meditation include Nyanaponika Thera 1962, Sangnarakshita 1980.
14. These extracts are taken from Conze 1959; 156-59, Lamotte 1984; 51-52, Sangnarakshita 1990; 209.

15. Of American Jewish background, Starhawk is one of the leading gurus of feminist witchcraft in the United States. She is an advocate of goddess spirituality, animism and spirit reincarnation, so, contradicting what she says, allows, after the dissolution of the body of death, the "spirit to prepare for a new life". Buddha thought such an idea an "illusion". Starhawk's electric spiritualism seems even less compatible with anarchism than is Buddhism.

16. See the studies of Ian Harris (1991, 1995) on this issue. Harris notes that the eco-Buddhism of many Western Buddhists represents a substantial shift away from traditional Buddhist cosmology and practices. He notes in particular how the Buddhist understanding of reality as indicated in the canonical texts, has been replaced by Western metaphysical notions drawn from process theology and the Christian stewardship tradition. Needless to say the adherents of every form of religion – paganism (animism, shamanism) Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism – now claim that their religion entails an environmental ethic which emphasises harmony between humans and nature.

17. The Buddha, of course, emphasising both compassion and non-attachment, also stressed that monks should refrain from harming plant life, see Harris 1991; 107-9.

18. A recognition of this fact, and the inter-dependence of all living beings and the world, is what constitutes an ecological outlook. The Buddhist emphasis on non-attachment denies this dependence and the intrinsic organic and inorganic links between humans and the material world – though this detachment can only be psychological.

19. I have discussed the limitations of interpreting Buddhism as a "psychology of self-realisation" elsewhere 1994; 66-67.

20. See note 11 above.

21. Succinct outlines of the Vedanta tradition in Hinduism (Sankara) and neo-Platonism (Plotinus) are given in Peter Marshall's *Nature's Web* 1992; 31-34, 84-87. On transcendentalism and ecology see Worster 1997.

22. It has to be noted that there is no intrinsic connection between Buddhism and vegetarianism. Buddha was a meat eater and as a coherent ethical doctrine vegetarianism was a late development in both Hinduism and Buddhism. Harris 1991: 106

23. For important studies of gnosticism see Jonas 1958, Pagels 1982.

24. It is of interest that one deep ecologist Dolores La Chappelle (1988) makes no mention of Buddhism, but like Starhawk combines pantheism (Spinoza, Taoism), animism and theism in an eclectic mix and advocates ritual ceremonial.

25. The *Kshatriya*, in early Hindu society, were a caste of aristocratic warriors, who, in contrast to the *Brahmin* (priests), *Vaisyas* (merchants) and *Shudras* (service castes), were responsible for upholding the *Dharma* (moral law). From this caste, the rulers of the petty states were drawn. Buddha belonged to this aristocratic ruling caste.

26. The Maurya dynasty, under Chandragupta, Ashoka's grandfather, united much of India as an imperial domain around 324 B. C. See the classic history by Romila Thapar 1963.

27. On Buddhist attitudes to women see Ling 1981; 193 and Subhuti 1994; 162-175. Sangharakshita has consistently expressed views that are anti-feminist and seems to regard sexual relationships and attachments as antithetical to the "spiritual life".

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