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live an anarchism that diminishes, indeed effaces the most important features that have distinguished anarchism, as a movement, practice, and program, from statist socialism. Anarchism today must resolutely retain its character as a social movement — a programmatic as well as activist social movement — a movement that melds its embattled vision of a libertarian communist society with its forthright critique of capitalism, unobscured by names like 'industrial society.'

In short, social anarchism must resolutely affirm its differences with lifestyle anarchism. If a social anarchist movement cannot translate its fourfold tenets — municipal confederalism, opposition to statism, direct democracy, and ultimately libertarian communism — into a lived practice in a new public sphere; if these tenets languish like its memories of past struggles in ceremonial pronouncements and meetings; worse still, if they are subverted by the 'libertarian' Ecstasy Industry and by quietistic Asian theisms, then its revolutionary socialistic core will have to be restored under a new name.

Certainly, it is already no longer possible, in my view, to call oneself an anarchist without adding a qualifying adjective to distinguish oneself from lifestyle anarchists. Minimally, social anarchism is radically at odds with anarchism focused on lifestyle, neo-Situationist paeans to ecstasy, and the sovereignty of the ever-shriveling petty-bourgeois ego. The two diverge completely in their defining principles — socialism or individualism. Between a committed revolutionary body of ideas and practice, on the one hand, and a vagrant yearning for privatistic ecstasy and self-realization on the other, there can be no commonality. Mere opposition to the state may well unite fascistic lumpens with Stirnerite lumpens, a phenomenon that is not without its historical precedents.

June 1, 1995

I would like to thank my colleague and companion, Janet Biehl, for her invaluable assistance in researching material for and editing this essay.

potential left-libertarian movement into an ever-contracting public sphere.

To its credit, anarchosyndicalism in its heyday tried to engage in a living practice and create an organized movement — so alien to lifestyle anarchism — within the working class. Its major problems lay not in its desire for structure and involvement, for program and social mobilization, but in the waning of the working class as a revolutionary subject, particularly after the Spanish Revolution. To say that anarchism lacked a politics, however, conceived in its original Greek meaning as the self-management of the community — the historic 'Commune of communes' — is to repudiate a historic and transformative practice that seeks to radicalize the democracy inherent in any republic and to create a municipalist confederal power to countervail the state.

The most creative feature of traditional anarchism is its commitment to four basic tenets: a confederation of decentralized municipalities; an unwavering opposition to statism; a belief in direct democracy; and a vision of a libertarian communist society. The most important issue that left-libertarianism — libertarian socialism no less than anarchism — faces today is: What will it do with these four powerful tenets? How will we give them social form and content? In what ways and by what means will we render them relevant to our time and bring them to the service of an organized popular movement for empowerment and freedom?

Anarchism must not be dissipated in self-indulgent behavior like that of the primitivistic Adamites of the sixteenth century, who 'wandered through the woods naked, singing and dancing,' as Kenneth Rexroth contemptuously observed, spending 'their time in a continuous sexual orgy' until they were hunted down by Jan Zizka and exterminated — much to the relief of a disgusted peasantry, whose lands they had plundered.[9] It must not retreat into the primitivistic demimonde of the John Zerzans and George Bradfords. I would be the last to contend that anarchists should not live their anarchism as much as possible on a day-to-day basis — personally as well as socially, aesthetically as well as pragmatically. But they should not

[9] Kenneth Rexroth, *Communalism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p.89.

Part 1

For some two centuries, anarchism — a very ecumenical body of anti-authoritarian ideas — developed in the tension between two basically contradictory tendencies: a personalistic commitment to individual autonomy and a collectivist commitment to social freedom. These tendencies have by no means been reconciled in the history of libertarian thought. Indeed, for much of the last century, they simply coexisted within anarchism as a minimalist credo of opposition to the State rather than as a maximalist credo that articulated the kind of new society that had to be created in its place.

Which is not to say that various schools of anarchism did not advocate very specific forms of social organization, albeit often markedly at variance with one another. Essentially, however, anarchism as a whole advanced what Isaiah Berlin has called 'negative freedom,' that is to say, a formal 'freedom from,' rather than a substantive 'freedom to.' Indeed, anarchism often celebrated its commitment to negative freedom as evidence of its own pluralism, ideological tolerance, or creativity — or even, as more than one recent postmodernist celebrant has argued, its incoherence.

Anarchism's failure to resolve this tension, to articulate the relationship of the individual to the collective, and to enunciate the historical circumstances that would make possible a stateless anarchic society produced problems in anarchist thought that remain unresolved to this day. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, more than many anarchists of his day, attempted to formulate a fairly concrete image of a libertarian society. Based on contracts, essentially between small producers, cooperatives, and communes, Proudhon's vision was redolent of the provincial craft world into which he was born. But his attempt to meld a patroniste, often patriarchal notion of liberty with contractual social arrangements was lacking in depth. The craftsman, cooperative, and commune, relating to one another on bourgeois contractual terms of equity or justice rather than on the communist terms of ability and needs, reflected the artisan's bias for personal autonomy, leaving any moral commitment to a collective undefined beyond the good intentions of its members.

Indeed, Proudhon's famous declaration that 'whoever puts his hand on me to govern me is an usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy' strongly tilts toward a personalistic, negative freedom

would 'imagination' come to 'power.' Power, which always exists, will belong either to the collective in a face-to-face and clearly institutionalized democracy, or to the egos of a few oligarchs who will produce a 'tyranny of structurelessness.'

Not unjustifiably, Kropotkin, in his Encyclopaedia Britannica article, regarded the Stirnerite ego as elitist and deprecated it as hierarchical. Approvingly, he cited V. Basch's criticism of Stirner's individual anarchism as a form of elitism, maintaining 'that the aim of all superior civilization is, not to permit all members of the community to develop in a normal way, but to permit certain better endowed individuals 'fully to develop,' even at the cost of the happiness and the very existence of the mass of mankind.' In anarchism, this produces, in effect, a regression toward the most common individualism, advocated by all the would-be superior minorities to which indeed man owes in his history precisely the State and the rest, which these individualists combat. Their individualism goes so far as to end in a negation of their own starting-point — to say nothing of the impossibility of the individual to attain a really full development in the conditions of oppression of the masses by the 'beautiful aristocracies.'[7] In its amoralism, this elitism easily lends itself to the unfreedom of the 'masses' by ultimately placing them in the custody of the 'unique ones,' a logic that may yield a leadership principle characteristic of fascist ideology.[8]

In the United States and much of Europe, precisely at a time when mass disillusionment with the state has reached unprecedented proportions, anarchism is in retreat. Dissatisfaction with government as such runs high on both sides of the Atlantic — and seldom in recent memory has there been a more compelling popular sentiment for a new politics, even a new social dispensation that can give to people a sense of direction that allows for security and ethical meaning. If the failure of anarchism to address this situation can be attributed to any single source, the insularity of lifestyle anarchism and its individualistic underpinnings must be singled out for aborting the entry of a

[7] Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, pp.287, 293.
[8] Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, pp.292–93.

describes the democratic dimension of anarchism as a majoritarian administration of the public sphere. Accordingly, Communalism seeks freedom rather than autonomy in the sense that I have counterposed them. It sharply breaks with the psycho-personal Stirnerite, liberal, and bohemian ego as a self-contained sovereign by asserting that individuality does not emerge ab novo, dressed at birth in 'natural rights,' but sees individuality in great part as the ever-changing work of historical and social development, a process of self-formation that can be neither petrified by biologism nor arrested by temporally limited dogmas.

The sovereign, self-sufficient 'individual' has always been a precarious basis upon which to anchor a left libertarian outlook. As Max Horkheimer once observed, 'individuality is impaired when each man decides to fend for himself . . . The absolutely isolated individual has always been an illusion. The most esteemed personal qualities, such as independence, will to freedom, sympathy, and the sense of justice, are social as well as individual virtues. The fully developed individual is the consummation of a fully developed society.'[6]

If a left-libertarian vision of a future society is not to disappear in a bohemian and lumpen demimonde, it must offer a resolution to social problems, not flit arrogantly from slogan to slogan, shielding itself from rationality with bad poetry and vulgar graphics. Democracy is not antithetical to anarchism; nor are majority rule and nonconsensual decisions incommensurable with a libertarian society.

That no society can exist without institutional structures is transparently clear to anyone who has not been stupefied by Stirner and his kind. By denying institutions and democracy, lifestyle anarchism insulates itself from social reality, so that it can fume all the more with futile rage, thereby remaining a subcultural caper for gullible youth and bored consumers of black garments and ecstasy posters. To argue that democracy and anarchism are incompatible because any impediment to the wishes of even 'a minority of one' constitutes a violation of personal autonomy is to advocate not a free society but Brown's 'collection of individuals' — in short, a herd. No longer

[6] Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p.135.

that overshadows his opposition to oppressive social institutions and the vision of an anarchist society that he projected. His statement easily blends into William Godwin's distinctly individualistic declaration: 'There is but one power to which I can yield a heartfelt obedience, the decision of my own understanding, the dictates of my own conscience.' Godwin's appeal to the 'authority' of his own understanding and conscience, like Proudhon's condemnation of the 'hand' that threatens to restrict his liberty, gave anarchism an immensely individualistic thrust.

Compelling as such declarations may be — and in the United States they have won considerable admiration from the so-called libertarian (more accurately, proprietarian) right, with its avowals of 'free' enterprise — they reveal an anarchism very much at odds with itself. By contrast, Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin held essentially collectivist views — in Kropotkin's case, explicitly communist ones. Bakunin emphatically prioritized the social over the individual. Society, he writes,

> antedates and at the same time survives every human individual, being in this respect like Nature itself. It is eternal like Nature, or rather, having been born upon our earth, it will last as long as the earth. A radical revolt against society would therefore be just as impossible for man as a revolt against Nature, human society being nothing else but the last great manifestation or creation of Nature upon this earth. And an individual who would want to rebel against society . . . would place himself beyond the pale of real existence.[1]

Bakunin often expressed his opposition to the individualistic trend in liberalism and anarchism with considerable polemical emphasis. Although society is 'indebted to individuals,' he wrote in a relatively mild statement, the formation of the individual is social:

> even the most wretched individual of our present society could not exist and develop without the cumulative social efforts of

[1] *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, G. P. Maximoff editor (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953), p.144.

> countless generations. Thus the individual, his freedom and reason, are the products of society, and not vice versa: society is not the product of individuals comprising it; and the higher, the more fully the individual is developed, the greater his freedom — and the more he is the product of society, the more does he receive from society and the greater his debt to it.[2]

Kropotkin, for his part, retained this collectivistic emphasis with remarkable consistency. In what was probably his most widely read work, his Encyclopaedia Britannica essay on 'Anarchism,' Kropotkin distinctly located the economic conceptions of anarchism on the 'left-wing' of 'all socialisms,' calling for the radical abolition of private property and the State in 'the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound, in lieu of the present hierarchy from the center to the periphery.' Kropotkin's works on ethics, in fact, include a sustained critique of liberalistic attempts to counterpose the individual to society, indeed to subordinate society to the individual or ego. He placed himself squarely in the socialist tradition. His anarchocommunism, predicated on advances in technology and increased productivity, became a prevailing libertarian ideology in the 1890s, steadily elbowing out collectivist notions of distribution based on equity. Anarchists, 'in common with most socialists,' Kropotkin emphasized, recognized the need for 'periods of accelerated evolution which are called revolutions,' ultimately yielding a society based on federations of 'every township or commune of the local groups of producers and consumers.[3]

With the emergence of anarchosyndicalism and anarcho-communism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the need to resolve the tension between the individualist and the collectivist tendencies essentially became moot. Anarcho-individualism was largely marginalized by mass socialistic workers' movements, of which most anarchists considered themselves the left wing. In an

[2] *Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, p.158.

[3] Peter Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' the Encyclopaedia Britannica article, in *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), pp.285–87.

be further from the ideals of freedom spelled out in ever-expansive forms by the great revolutions of the past. And nothing could be more unrelenting in its sheer obedience to biochemical imperatives such as DNA or more in contrast to the creativity, ethics, and mutuality opened by culture and struggles for a rational civilization. There is no freedom in 'wildness' if, by sheer ferality, we mean the dictates of inborn behavioral patterns that shape mere animality. To malign civilization without due recognition of its enormous potentialities for self-conscious freedom — a freedom conferred by reason as well as emotion, by insight as well as desire, by prose as well as poetry — is to retreat back into the shadowy world of brutishness, when thought was dim and intellectuation was only an evolutionary promise.

Toward a Democratic Communalism

My picture of lifestyle anarchism is far from complete; the personalistic thrust of this ideological clay allows it to be molded in many forms provided that words like imagination, sacred, intuitive, ecstasy, and primal embellish its surface.

Social anarchism, in my view, is made of fundamentally different stuff, heir to the Enlightenment tradition, with due regard to that tradition's limits and incompleteness. Depending upon how it defines reason, social anarchism celebrates the thinking human mind without in any way denying passion, ecstasy, imagination, play, and art. Yet rather than reify them into hazy categories, it tries to incorporate them into everyday life. It is committed to rationality while opposing the rationalization of experience; to technology, while opposing the 'megamachine'; to social institutionalization, while opposing class rule and hierarchy; to a genuine politics based on the confederal coordination of municipalities or communes by the people in direct face-to-face democracy, while opposing parliamentarism and the state.

This 'Commune of communes,' to use a traditional slogan of earlier revolutions, can be appropriately designated as Communalism. Opponents of democracy as 'rule' to the contrary notwithstanding, it

peoples' whose 'way of life fits into the pre-given natural world,' lamenting the Neolithic revolution, and identifying our 'primary task' as being to "unbuild' our civilization, and restore wilderness.' The magazine's artwork celebrates vulgarity — human skulls and images of ruins are very much in evidence. Its lengthiest contribution, 'Decadence,' reprinted from Black Eye, melds the romantic with the lumpen, exultantly concluding: 'It's time for a real Roman holiday, so bring on the barbarians!'

Alas, the barbarians are already here — and the 'Roman holiday' in today's American cities flourishes on crack, thuggery, insensitivity, stupidity, primitivism, anticivilizationism, antirationalism, and a sizable dose of 'anarchy' conceived as chaos. Lifestyle anarchism must be seen in the present social context not only of demoralized black ghettoes and reactionary white suburbs but even of Indian reservations, those ostensible centers of 'primality,' in which gangs of Indian youths now shoot at one another, drug dealing is rampant, and 'gang graffiti greets visitors even at the sacred Window Rock monument,' as Seth Mydans reports in The New York Times (March 3, 1995).

Thus, a widespread cultural decay has followed the degeneration of the 1960s New Left into postmodernism and of its counter-culture into New Age spiritualism. For timid lifestyle anarchists, Halloween artwork and incendiary articles push hope and an understanding of reality into the ever-receding distance. Torn by the lures of 'cultural terrorism' and Buddhist ashrams, lifestyle anarchists in fact find themselves in a crossfire between the barbarians at the top of society in Wall Street and the City, and those at its bottom, in the dismal urban ghettoes of Euro-America. Alas, the conflict in which they find themselves, for all their celebrations of lumpen lifeways (to which corporate barbarians are no strangers these days) has less to do with the need to create a free society than with a brutal war over who is to share in the in the available spoils from the sale of drugs, human bodies, exorbitant loans — and let us not forget junk bonds and international currencies.

A return to mere animality — or shall we call it 'decivilization'? — is a return not to freedom but to instinct, to the domain of 'authenticity' that is guided more by genes than by brains. Nothing could

era of stormy social upheaval, marked by the rise of a mass working-class movement that culminated in the 1930s and the Spanish Revolution, anarchosyndicalists and anarchocommunists, no less than Marxists, considered anarcho-individualism to be petty-bourgeois exotica. They often attacked it quite directly as a middle-class indulgence, rooted far more in liberalism than in anarchism.

The period hardly allowed individualists, in the name of their 'uniqueness,' to ignore the need for energetic revolutionary forms of organization with coherent and compelling programs. Far from indulging in Max Stirner's metaphysics of the ego and its 'uniqueness,' anarchist activists required a basic theoretical, discursive, and programmatically oriented literature, a need that was filled by, among others, Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (London, 1913), Diego Abad de Santillán's *El organismo económico de la revolución* (Barcelona, 1936), and G. P. Maximoff's *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (English publication in 1953, three years after Maximoff's death; the date of original compilation, not provided in the English translation, may have been years, even decades earlier). No Stirnerite 'Union of Egoists,' to my knowledge, ever rose to prominence — even assuming such a union could be established and survive the 'uniqueness' of its egocentric participants.

Individualist Anarchism and Reaction

To be sure, ideological individualism did not fade away altogether during this period of sweeping social unrest. A sizable reservoir of individualist anarchists, especially in the Anglo-American world, were nourished by the ideas of John Locke and John Stuart Mill, as well as Stirner himself. Home-grown individualists with varying degrees of commitment to libertarian views littered the anarchist horizon. In practice, anarcho-individualism attracted precisely individuals, from Benjamin Tucker in the United States, an adherent of a quaint version of free competition, to Federica Montseny in Spain, who often honored her Stirnerite beliefs in the breach. Despite their avowals of an anarchocommunist ideology, Nietzscheans like Emma Goldman remained cheek to jowl in spirit with individualists.

Hardly any anarcho-individualists exercised an influence on the emerging working class. They expressed their opposition in uniquely personal forms, especially in fiery tracts, outrageous behavior, and aberrant lifestyles in the cultural ghettos of *fin de siècle* New York, Paris, and London. As a credo, individualist anarchism remained largely a bohemian lifestyle, most conspicuous in its demands for sexual freedom ('free love') and enamored of innovations in art, behavior, and clothing.

It was in times of severe social repression and deadening social quiescence that individualist anarchists came to the foreground of libertarian activity — and then primarily as terrorists. In France, Spain, and the United States, individualistic anarchists committed acts of terrorism that gave anarchism its reputation as a violently sinister conspiracy. Those who became terrorists were less often libertarian socialists or communists than desperate men and women who used weapons and explosives to protest the injustices and philistinism of their time, putatively in the name of 'propaganda of the deed.' Most often, however, individualist anarchism expressed itself in culturally defiant behavior. It came to prominence in anarchism precisely to the degree that anarchists lost their connection with a viable public sphere.

Today's reactionary social context greatly explains the emergence of a phenomenon in Euro-American anarchism that cannot be ignored: the spread of individualist anarchism. In a time when even respectable forms of socialism are in pell-mell retreat from principles that might in any way be construed as radical, issues of lifestyle are once again supplanting social action and revolutionary politics in anarchism. In the traditionally individualist-liberal United States and Britain, the 1990s are awash in self-styled anarchists who — their flamboyant radical rhetoric aside — are cultivating a latter-day anarcho-individualism that I will call lifestyle anarchism. Its preoccupations with the ego and its uniqueness and its polymorphous concepts of resistance are steadily eroding the socialistic character of the libertarian tradition. No less than Marxism and other socialisms, anarchism can be profoundly influenced by the bourgeois environment it professes to oppose, with the result that the growing 'inwardness' and narcissism of the yuppie generation have left their

that distinguish them. Stirner's own project, in fact, emerged in a debate with the socialism of Wilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess, where he invoked egoism precisely to counterpose to socialism. 'Personal insurrection rather than general revolution was [Stirner's] message,' James J. Martin admiringly observes[5] — a counterposition that lives on today in lifestyle anarchism and its yuppie filiations, as distinguished from social anarchism with its roots in historicism, the social matrix of individuality, and its commitment to a rational society.

The very incongruity of these essentially mixed messages, which coexist on every page of the lifestyle 'zines,' reflects the feverish voice of the squirming petty bourgeois. If anarchism loses its socialist core and collectivist goal, if it drifts off into aestheticism, ecstasy, and desire, and, incongruously, into Taoist quietism and Buddhist self-effacement as a substitute for a libertarian program, politics, and organization, it will come to represent not social regeneration and a revolutionary vision but social decay and a petulant egoistic rebellion. Worse, it will feed the wave of mysticism that is already sweeping affluent members of the generation now in their teens and twenties. Lifestyle anarchism's exaltation of ecstasy, certainly laudable in a radical social matrix but here unabashedly intermingled with 'sorcery,' is producing a dreamlike absorption with spirits, ghosts, and Jungian archetypes rather than a rational and dialectical awareness of the world.

Characteristically, the cover of a recent issue of Alternative Press Review (Fall 1994), a widely read American feral anarchist periodical, is adorned with a three-headed Buddhist deity in serene nirvanic repose, against a presumably cosmic background of swirling galaxies and New Age paraphernalia — an image that could easily join Fifth Estate's 'Anarchy' poster in a New Age boutique. Inside the cover, a graphic cries out: 'Life Can Be Magic When We Start to Break Free' (the A in Magic is circled) — to which one is obliged to ask: How? With what? The magazine itself contains a deep ecology essay by Glenn Parton (drawn from David Foreman's periodical Wild Earth) titled: 'The Wild Self: Why I Am a Primitivist,' extolling 'primitive

[5] James J. Martin, editor's introduction to Stirner, *Ego and His Own*, p. xviii.

embellished poetically and rhetorically.'[3] With more forthrightness than Stirner, Nietzsche contended that facts are simply interpretations; indeed, he asked, 'is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretations?' Apparently not, for 'even this is invention, hypothesis.'[4] Following Nietzsche's unrelenting logic, we are left with a self that not only essentially creates it own reality but also must justify its own existence as more than a mere interpretation. Such egoism thus annihilates the ego itself, which vanishes into the mist of Stirner's own unstated premises.

Similarly divested of history, society, and facticity beyond its own 'metaphors,' lifestyle anarchism lives in an asocial domain in which the ego, with its cryptic desires, must evaporate into logical abstractions. But reducing the ego to intuitive immediacy — anchoring it in mere animality, in the 'bounds of nature,' or in 'natural law' — would amount to ignoring the fact that the ego is the product of an ever-formative history, indeed, a history that, if it is to consist of more than mere episodes, must avail itself of reason as a guide to standards of progress and regress, necessity and freedom, good and evil, and — yes! — civilization and barbarism. Indeed, an anarchism that seeks to avoid the shoals of sheer solipsism on the one hand and the loss of the 'self' as a mere 'interpretation' one the other must become explicitly socialist or collectivist. That is to say, it must be a social anarchism that seeks freedom through structure and mutual responsibility, not through a vaporous, nomadic ego that eschews the preconditions for social life.

Stated bluntly: Between the socialist pedigree of anarcho-syndicalism and anarchocommunism (which have never denied the importance of self-realization and the fulfillment of desire), and the basically liberal, individualistic pedigree of lifestyle anarchism (which fosters social ineffectuality, if not outright social negation), there exits a divide that cannot be bridged unless we completely disregard the profoundly different goals, methods, and underlying philosophy

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense' (1873; fragment), in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Portable Library, 1959), pp.46–47.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, fragment 481 (1883–1888), *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), p.267.

mark upon many avowed radicals. Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of postmodernism, celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades.

During the 1970s, writes Katinka Matson, the compiler of a compendium of techniques for personal psychological development, there occurred 'a remarkable change in the way we perceive ourselves in the world. The 1960s,' she continues, 'saw a preoccupation with political activism, Vietnam, ecology, be-ins, communes, drugs, etc.' Today we are turning inward: we are looking for personal definition, personal improvement, personal achievement, and personal enlightenment.[4] Matson's noxious little bestiary, compiled for *Psychology Today* magazine, covers every technique from acupuncture to the *I Ching*, from est to zone therapy. In retrospect, she might well have included lifestyle anarchism in her compendium of inward-looking soporifics, most of which foster ideas of individual autonomy rather than social freedom. Psychotherapy in all its mutations cultivates an inwardly directed 'self' that seeks autonomy in a quiescent psychological condition of emotional self-sufficiency — not the socially involved self denoted by freedom. In lifestyle anarchism as in psychotherapy, the ego is counterposed to the collective; the self, to society; the personal, to the communal.

The ego — more precisely, its incarnation in various lifestyles — has become an *idée fixe* for many post-1960s anarchists, who are losing contact with the need for an organized, collectivistic, programmatic opposition to the existing social order. Invertebrate 'protests,' directionless escapades, self-assertions, and a very personal 'recolonization' of everyday life parallel the psychotherapeutic, New Age, self-oriented lifestyles of bored baby boomers and members of Generation X. Today, what passes for anarchism in America and increasingly in Europe is little more than an introspective personalism that

[4] Katinka Matson, 'Preface,' *The Psychology Today Omnibook of Personal Development* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1977), n.p.

denigrates responsible social commitment; an encounter group variously renamed a 'collective' or an 'affinity group'; a state of mind that arrogantly derides structure, organization, and public involvement; and a playground for juvenile antics.

Consciously or not, many lifestyle anarchists articulate Michel Foucault's approach of 'personal insurrection' rather than social revolution, premised as it is on an ambiguous and cosmic critique of power as such rather than on a demand for the institutionalized empowerment of the oppressed in popular assemblies, councils, and/or confederations. To the extent that this trend rules out the real possibility of social revolution — either as an 'impossibility' or as an 'imaginary' — it vitiates socialistic or communistic anarchism in a fundamental sense. Indeed, Foucault fosters a perspective that 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power . . . Hence there is no single [read: universal] locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.' Caught as we all are in the ubiquitous embrace of a power so cosmic that, Foucault's overstatements and equivocations aside, resistance becomes entirely polymorphous, we drift futilely between the 'solitary' and the 'rampant.'[5] His meandering ideas come down to the notion that resistance must necessarily be a guerrilla war that is always present — and that is inevitably defeated.

Lifestyle, like individualist, anarchism bears a disdain for theory, with mystical, and primitivistic filiations that are generally too vague, intuitional, and even antirational to analyze directly. They are more properly symptoms than causes of the general drift toward a sanctification of the self as a refuge from the existing social malaise. Nonetheless, largely personalistic anarchisms still have certain muddy theoretical premises that lend themselves to critical examination.

[5] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp.95–96. Heavenly will be the day when one can get straightforward formulations from Foucault, interpretations of whose views are often contradictory.

the subterranean market forces that occupy all the allegedly 'free' terrains of modern social life, from food cooperatives to rural communes.

Capitalism swirls around us — not only materially but culturally. As John Zerzan so memorably put it to a puzzled interviewer who asked about the television set in the home of this foe of technology: 'Like all other people, I have to be narcotized.'[1]

That lifestyle anarchism itself is a 'narcotizing' self-deception can best be seen in Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own*, where the ego's claim to 'uniqueness' in the temple of the sacrosanct 'self' far outranks John Stuart Mill's liberal pieties. Indeed, with Stirner, egoism becomes a matter of epistemology. Cutting through the maze of contradictions and woefully incomplete statements that fill *The Ego and His Own*, one finds Stirner's 'unique' ego to be a myth because its roots lie in its seeming 'other' — society itself. Indeed: 'Truth cannot step forward as you do,' Stirner addresses the egoist, 'cannot move, change, develop; truth awaits and recruits everything from you, and itself is only through you; for it exists only — in your head.'[2] The Stirnerite egoist, in effect, bids farewell to objective reality, to the facticity of the social, and thereby to fundamental social change and all ethical criteria and ideals beyond personal satisfaction amidst the hidden demons of the bourgeois marketplace. This absence of mediation subverts the very existence of the concrete, not to speak of the authority of the Stirnerite ego itself — a claim so all-encompassing as to exclude the social roots of the self and its formation in history.

Nietzsche, quite independently of Stirner, carried this view of truth to its logical conclusion by erasing the facticity and reality of truth as such: 'What, then, is truth?' he asked. 'A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms — in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and

[1] Quoted in *The New York Times*, May 7, 1995. Less sanctimonious people than Zerzan have tried to escape the hold of television and take their pleasures with decent music, radio plays, books, and the like. They just don't buy them!

[2] Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, ed. James J. Martin, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963), part 2, chap.4, sec. C, 'My Self-Engagement,' p.352, emphasis added.

What is most troubling is that the self-indulgent aesthetic vagaries of lifestyle anarchism significantly erode the socialist core of a left-libertarian ideology that once could claim social relevance and weight precisely for its uncompromising commitment to emancipation — not outside of history, in the realm of the subjective, but within history, in the realm of the objective. The great cry of the First International — which anarcho-syndicalism and anarchocommunism retained after Marx and his supporters abandoned it — was the demand: 'No rights without duties, no duties without rights.' For generations, this slogan adorned the mastheads of what we must now retrospectively call social anarchist periodicals. Today, it stands radically at odds with the basically egocentric demand for 'desire armed,' and with Taoist contemplation and Buddhist nirvanas. Where social anarchism called upon people to rise in revolution and seek the reconstruction of society, the irate petty bourgeois who populate the subcultural world of lifestyle anarchism call for episodic rebellion and the satisfaction of their 'desiring machines,' to use the phraseology of Deleuze and Guattari.

The steady retreat from the historic commitment of classical anarchism to social struggle (without which self-realization and the fulfillment of desire in all its dimensions, not merely the instinctive, cannot be achieved) is inevitably accompanied by a disastrous mystification of experience and reality. The ego, identified almost fetishistically as the locus of emancipation, turns out to be identical to the 'sovereign individual' of laissez-faire individualism. Detached from its social moorings, it achieves not autonomy but the heteronomous 'selfhood' of petty-bourgeois enterprise.

Indeed, far from being free, the ego in its sovereign selfhood is bound hand and foot to the seemingly anonymous laws of the marketplace — the laws of competition and exploitation — which render the myth of individual freedom into another fetish concealing the implacable laws of capital accumulation. Lifestyle anarchism, in effect, turns out to be an additional mystifying bourgeois deception. Its acolytes are no more 'autonomous' than the movements of the stock market, than price fluctuations and the mundane facts of bourgeois commerce. All claims to autonomy notwithstanding, this middle-class 'rebel,' with or without a brick in hand, is entirely captive to

Their ideological pedigree is basically liberal, grounded in the myth of the fully autonomous individual whose claims to self-sovereignty are validated by axiomatic 'natural rights,' 'intrinsic worth,' or, on a more sophisticated level, an intuited Kantian transcendental ego that is generative of all knowable reality. These traditional views surface in Max Stirner's 'I' or ego, which shares with existentialism a tendency to absorb all of reality into itself, as if the universe turned on the choices of the self-oriented individual.

More recent works on lifestyle anarchism generally sidestep Stirner's sovereign, all-encompassing 'I,' albeit retaining its egocentric emphasis, and tend toward existentialism, recycled Situationism, Buddhism, Taoism, antirationalism, and primitivism — or, quite ecumenically, all of them in various permutations. Their commonalities, as we shall see, are redolent of a prelapsarian return to an original, often diffuse, and even petulantly infantile ego that ostensibly precedes history, civilization, and a sophisticated technology — possibly language itself — and they have nourished more than one reactionary political ideology over the past century.

a narcissism so all-embracing that it shrivels consociation to an infantilized ego that is little more than a bundle of shrieking demands and claims for its own satisfactions. Civilization merely obstructs the ecstatic self-realization of this ego's desires, reified as the ultimate fulfillment of emancipation, as though ecstasy and desire were not products of cultivation and historical development, but merely innate impulses that appear ab novo in a desocialized world.

Like the petty-bourgeois Stirnerite ego, primitivist lifestyle anarchism allows no room for social institutions, political organizations, and radical programs, still less a public sphere, which all the writers we have examined automatically identify with statecraft. The sporadic, the unsystematic, the incoherent, the discontinuous, and the intuitive supplant the consistent, purposive, organized, and rational, indeed any form of sustained and focused activity apart from publishing a 'zine' or pamphlet — or burning a garbage can. Imagination is counterposed to reason and desire to theoretical coherence, as though the two were in radical contradiction to each other. Goya's admonition that imagination without reason produces monsters is altered to leave the impression that imagination flourishes on an unmediated experience with an unnuanced 'oneness.' Thus is social nature essentially dissolved into biological nature; innovative humanity, into adaptive animality; temporality, into precivilizatory eternality; history, into an archaic cyclicity.

A bourgeois reality whose economic harshness grows starker and crasser with every passing day is shrewdly mutated by lifestyle anarchism into constellations of self-indulgence, inchoateness, indiscipline, and incoherence. In the 1960s, the Situationists, in the name of a 'theory of the spectacle,' in fact produced a reified spectacle of the theory, but they at least offered organizational correctives, such as workers' councils, that gave their aestheticism some ballast. Lifestyle anarchism, by assailing organization, programmatic commitment, and serious social analysis, apes the worst aspects of Situationist aestheticism without adhering to the project of building a movement. As the detritus of the 1960s, it wanders aimlessly within the bounds of the ego (renamed by Zerzan the 'bounds of nature') and makes a virtue of bohemian incoherence.

Evaluating Lifestyle Anarchism

What stands out most compellingly in today's lifestyle anarchism is its appetite for immediacy rather than reflection, for a naive one-to-one relationship between mind and reality. Not only does this immediacy immunize libertarian thinking from demands for nuanced and mediated reflection; it precludes rational analysis and, for that matter, rationality itself. Consigning humanity to the nontemporal, nonspatial, and nonhistorical — a 'primal' notion of temporality based on the 'eternal' cycles of 'Nature' — it thereby divests mind of its creative uniqueness and its freedom to intervene into the natural world.

From the standpoint of primitivist lifestyle anarchism, human beings are at their best when they adapt to nonhuman nature rather than intervene in it, or when, disencumbered of reason, technology, civilization, and even speech, they live in placid 'harmony' with existing reality, perhaps endowed with 'natural rights,' in a visceral and essentially mindless 'ecstatic' condition. T.A.Z., Fifth Estate, Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed, and lumpen 'zines' like Michael William's *Stirnerite Demolition Derby* — all focus on an unmediated, ahistorical, and anticivilizatory 'primality' from which we have 'fallen,' a state of perfection and 'authenticity' in which we were guided variously by the 'bounds of nature,' 'natural law,' or our devouring egos. History and civilization consist of nothing but a descent into the inauthenticity of 'industrial society.'

As I have already suggested, this mythos of a 'falling from authenticity' has its roots in reactionary romanticism, most recently in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose völkisch 'spiritualism,' latent in *Being and Time*, later emerged in his explicitly fascist works. This view now feeds on the quietistic mysticism that abounds in the antidemocratic writings of Rudolf Bahro, with its barely disguised appeal for 'salvation' by a 'Green Adolf,' and in the apolitical quest for ecological spiritualism and 'self-fulfillment' propounded by deep ecologists.

In the end, the individual ego becomes the supreme temple of reality, excluding history and becoming, democracy and responsibility. Indeed, lived contact with society as such is rendered tenuous by

Part 2

Autonomy or Freedom?

Without falling into the trap of social constructionism that sees every category as a product of a given social order, we are obliged to ask for a definition of the 'free individual.' How does individuality come into being, and under what circumstances is it free?

When lifestyle anarchists call for autonomy rather than freedom, they thereby forfeit the rich social connotations of freedom. Indeed, today's steady anarchist drumbeat for autonomy rather than social freedom cannot be dismissed as accidental, particularly in Anglo-American varieties of libertarian thought, where the notion of autonomy more closely corresponds to personal liberty. Its roots lie in the Roman imperial tradition of libertas, wherein the untrammeled ego is 'free' to own his personal property — and to gratify his personal lusts. Today, the individual endowed with 'sovereign rights' is seen by many lifestyle anarchists as antithetical not only to the State but to society as such. Strictly defined, the Greek word autonomia means 'independence,' connoting a self-managing ego, independent of any clientage or reliance on others for its maintenance. To my knowledge, it was not widely used by the Greek philosophers; indeed, it is not even mentioned in F. E. Peters's *historical lexicon of Greek Philosophical Terms.* Autonomy, like liberty, refers to the man (or woman) who Plato would have ironically called the 'master of himself,' a condition 'when the better principle of the human soul controls the worse.' Even for Plato, the attempt to achieve autonomy through mastery of oneself constituted a paradox, 'for the master is also the servant and the servant the master, and in all these modes of speaking the same person is predicated' (Republic, book 4, 431). Characteristically, Paul Goodman, an essentially individualistic anarchist, maintained that 'for me, the chief principle of anarchism is not freedom but autonomy, the ability to initiate a task and do it one's own way' — a view worthy of an aesthete but not of a social revolutionary.[1]

[1] Paul Goodman, 'Politics Within Limits,' in *Crazy Hope and Finite Experience: Final Essays of Paul Goodman*, ed. Taylor Stoehr (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p.56.

Part 6

While autonomy is associated with the presumably self-sovereign individual, freedom dialectically interweaves the individual with the collective. The word freedom has its analogue in the Greek eleutheria and derives from the German Freiheit, a term that still retains a gemeinsch'ftliche or communal ancestry in Teutonic tribal life and law. When applied to the individual, freedom thus preserves a social or collective interpretation of that individual's origins and development as a self. In 'freedom,' individual selfhood does not stand opposed to or apart from the collective but is significantly formed — and in a rational society, would be realized — by his or her own social existence. Freedom thus does not subsume the individual's liberty but denotes its actualization.

The confusion between autonomy and freedom is all too evident in L. Susan Brown's *The Politics of Individualism* (POI), a recent attempt to articulate and elaborate a basically individualist anarchism, yet retain some filiations with anarcho'communism.[2] If lifestyle anarchism needs an academic pedigree, it will find it in her attempt to meld Bakunin and Kropotkin with John Stuart Mill. Alas, herein lies a problem that is more than academic. Brown's work exhibits the extent to which concepts of personal autonomy stand at odds with concepts of social freedom. In essence, like Goodman she interprets anarchism as a philosophy not of social freedom but of personal autonomy. She then offers a notion of 'existential individualism' that she contrasts sharply both with 'instrumental individualism' (or C. B. Macpherson's 'possessive [bourgeois] individualism') and with 'collectivism' — leavened with extensive quotations from Emma Goldman, who was by no means the ablest thinker in the libertarian pantheon.

Brown's 'existential individualism' shares liberalism's 'commitment to individual autonomy and self-determination,' she writes (POI, p.2). 'While much of anarchist theory has been viewed as communist by anarchists and non-anarchists alike,' she observes, 'what

[2] L. Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993). Brown's hazy commitment to anarchocommunism seems to derive more from a visceral preference than from her analysis.

distinguishes anarchism from other communist philosophies is anarchism's uncompromising and relentless celebration of individual self-determination and autonomy. To be an anarchist — whether communist, individualist, mutualist, syndicalist, or feminist — is to affirm a commitment to the primacy of individual freedom' (POI, p.2) — and here she uses the word freedom in the sense of autonomy. Although anarchism's 'critique of private property and advocacy of free communal economic relations' (POI, p.2) move Brown's anarchism beyond liberalism, it nonetheless upholds individual rights over — and against — those of the collective.

'What distinguishes [existential individualism] from the collectivist point of view,' Brown goes on, 'is that individualists' — anarchists no less than liberals — 'believe in the existence of an internally motivated and authentic free will, while most collectivists understand the human individual as shaped externally by others — the individual for them is 'constructed' by the collective' (POI, p.12, emphasis added). Essentially, Brown dismisses collectivism — not just state socialism, but collectivism as such — with the liberal canard that a collectivist society entails the subordination of the individual to the group. Her extraordinary suggestion that 'most collectivists' have regarded individual people as 'simply human flotsam and jetsam swept along in the current of history' (POI, p.12) is a case in point. Stalin certainly held this view, and so did many Bolsheviks, with their hypostasization of social forces over individual desires and intentions. But collectivists as such? Are we to ignore the generous traditions of collectivism that sought a rational, democratic, and harmonious society — the visions of William Morris, say, or Gustav Landauer? What about Robert Owen, the Fourierists, democratic and libertarian socialists, Social Democrats of an earlier era, even Karl Marx and Peter Kropotkin? I am not sure that 'most collectivists,' even those who are anarchists, would accept the crude determinism that Brown attributes to Marx's social interpretations. By creating straw 'collectivists' who are hard-line mechanists, Brown rhetorically counterposes a mysteriously and autogenetically constituted individual, on the one hand, with an omnipresent, presumably oppressive, even totalitarian collective, on the other. Brown, in effect, overstates the contrast between 'existential individualism' and the

Ironically, the world idealized by primitivists would actually preclude the radical individualism celebrated by the individualist heirs of Max Stirner. Although contemporary 'primal' communities have produced strongly etched individuals, the power of custom and the high degree of group solidarity impelled by demanding conditions allow little leeway for expansively individualistic behavior, of the kind demanded by Stirnerite anarchists who celebrate the supremacy of the ego. Today, dabbling in primitivism is precisely the privilege of affluent urbanites who can afford to toy with fantasies denied not only to the hungry and poor and to the 'nomads' who by necessity inhabit urban streets but to the overworked employed. Modern working women with children could hardly do without washing machines to relieve them, however minimally, from their daily domestic labors — before going to work to earn what is often the greater part of their households' income. Ironically, even the collective that produces Fifth Estate found it could not do without a computer and was 'forced' to purchase one — issuing the disingenuous disclaimer, 'We hate it!'[21] Denouncing an advanced technology while using it to generate antitechnological literature is not only disingenuous but has sanctimonious dimensions: Such 'hatred' of computers seems more like the belch of the privileged, who, having overstuffed themselves with delicacies, extol the virtues of poverty during Sunday prayers.

[21] E. B. Maple, 'The Fifth Estate Enters the 20th Century. We Get a Computer and Hate It!' *The Fifth Estate*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp.6–7.

the product of human biological evolution — not simply a product of technology, rationality, and civilization. That people who call themselves anarchists should advance a primitivism that verges on the animalistic, with its barely concealed message of adaptiveness and passivity, sullies centuries of revolutionary thought, ideals, and practice, indeed defames the memorable efforts of humanity to free itself from parochialism, mysticism, and superstition and change the world.

For lifestyle anarchists, particularly of the anticivilizational and primitivistic genre, history itself becomes a degrading monolith that swallows up all distinctions, mediations, phases of development, and social specificities. Capitalism and its contradictions are reduced to epiphenomena of an all-devouring civilization and its technological 'imperatives' that lack nuance and differentiation. History, insofar as we conceive it as the unfolding of humanity's rational component — its developing potentiality for freedom, self-consciousness, and cooperation — is a complex account of the cultivation of human sensibilities, institutions, intellectuality, and knowledge, or what was once called 'the education of humanity.' To deal with history as a steady 'Fall' from an animalistic 'authenticity,' as Zerzan, Bradford, and their compatriots do in varying degrees in a fashion very similar to that of Martin Heidegger, is to ignore the expanding ideals of freedom, individuality, and self-consciousness that have marked epochs of human development — not to speak of the widening scope of the revolutionary struggles to achieve these ends.

Anticivilizational lifestyle anarchism is merely one aspect of the social regression that marks the closing decades of the twentieth century. Just as capitalism threatens to unravel natural history by bringing it back to a simpler, less differentiated geological and zoological era, so anticivilizational lifestyle anarchism is complicit with capitalism in bringing the human spirit and its history back to a less developed, less determinate, pre-lapsarian world — the supposedly 'innocent' pretechnological and precivilizatory society that existed before humanity's 'fall from grace.' Like the Lotus Eaters in *Homer's Odyssey*, humans are 'authentic' when they live in an eternal present, without past or future — untroubled by memory or ideation, free of tradition, and unchallenged by becoming.

beliefs of 'most collectivists' — to the point where her arguments seem misguided at best or disingenuous at worst.

It is elementary that, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ringing opening to the Social Contract notwithstanding, people are definitely not 'born free,' let alone autonomous. Indeed, quite to the contrary, they are born very unfree, highly dependent, and conspicuously heteronomous. What freedom, independence, and autonomy people have in a given historical period is the product of long social traditions and, yes, a collective development — which is not to deny that individuals play an important role in that development, indeed are ultimately obliged to do so if they wish to be free.

Brown's argument leads to a surprisingly simplistic conclusion. 'It is not the group that gives shape to the individual,' we are told, 'but rather individuals who give form and content to the group. A group is a collection of individuals, no more and no less; it has no life or consciousness of its own' (POI, p.12, emphasis added). Not only does this incredible formulation closely resemble Margaret Thatcher's notorious statement that there is no such thing as a society but only individuals; it attests to a positivistic, indeed naive social myopia in which the universal is wholly separated from the concrete. Aristotle, one would have thought, resolved this problem when he chided Plato for creating a realm of ineffable 'forms' that existed apart from their tangible and imperfect 'copies.'

It remains true that individuals never form mere 'collections' — except perhaps in cyberspace; quite to the contrary, even when they seem atomized and hermetic, they are immensely defined by the relationships they establish or are obliged to establish with each other, by virtue of their very real existence as social beings. The idea that a collective — and by extrapolation, society — is merely a 'collection of individuals, no more and no less' represents an 'insight' into the nature of human consociation that is hardly liberal but, today particularly, potentially reactionary.

By insistently identifying collectivism with an implacable social determinism, Brown herself creates an abstract 'individual,' one that is not even existential in the strictly conventional sense of the word. Minimally, human existence presupposes the social and material conditions necessary for the maintenance of life, sanity, intelligence,

and discourse; and the affective qualities Brown regards as essential for her voluntaristic form of communism: care, concern, and sharing. Lacking the rich articulation of social relationships in which people are embedded from birth through maturity to old age, a 'collection of individuals' such as Brown posits would be, to put it bluntly, not a society at all. It would be literally a 'collection' in Thatcher's sense of free-booting, self-seeking, egoistic monads. Presumably complete unto themselves, they are, by dialectical inversion, immensely de-individuated for want of any aim beyond the satisfaction of their own needs and pleasures — which are often socially engineered today in any case.

Acknowledging that individuals are self-motivated and possess free will does not require us to reject collectivism, given that they are also capable of developing an awareness of the social conditions under which these eminently human potentialities are exercised. The attainment of freedom rests partly on biological facts, as anyone who has raised a child knows; partly, on social facts, as anyone who lives in a community knows; and contrary to social constructionists, partly on the interaction of environment and inborn personal proclivities, as any thinking person knows. Individuality did not spring into being ab novo. Like the idea of freedom, it has a long social and psychological history.

Left to his or her own self, the individual loses the indispensable social moorings that make for what an anarchist might be expected to prize in individuality: reflective powers, which derive in great part from discourse; the emotional equipment that nourishes rage against unfreedom; the sociality that motivates the desire for radical change; and the sense of responsibility that engenders social action.

Indeed, Brown's thesis has disturbing implications for social action. If individual 'autonomy' overrides any commitment to a 'collectivity,' there is no basis whatever for social institutionalization, decision-making, or even administrative coordination. Each individual, self-contained in his or her 'autonomy,' is free to do whatever he or she wants — presumably, following the old liberal formula, if it does not impede the 'autonomy' of others. Even democratic decision-making is jettisoned as authoritarian. 'Democratic rule is still rule,' Brown warns. 'While it allows for more individual participation

— as witness the Anasazi and their neighbors in the Southwest, the tribes that were to finally make up the Iroquois Confederacy (the Confederacy itself was a matter of survival if they were not to all but exterminate one another), and the unrelenting conflict between Mohawks and Hurons, which led to the near extermination and flight of remanent Huron communities.

If the 'desires' of prehistoric peoples 'were easily met,' as Bradford alleges, it was precisely because their material conditions of life — and hence their desires — were very simple indeed. Such might be expected of any life-form that largely adapts rather than innovates, that conforms to its pregiven habitat rather than alters it to make that habitat conform with its own wants. To be sure, early peoples had a marvelous understanding of the habitat in which they lived; they were, after all, highly intelligent and imaginative beings. Yet their 'ecstatic' culture was unavoidably riddled not only by joy and 'singing . . . celebrating . . . dreaming,' but by superstition and easily 'manipulable fears.'

Neither our remote ancestors nor existing aborigines could have survived if they held the 'enchanted' Disneyland ideas imputed to them by present-day primitivists. Certainly, Europeans offered aboriginal peoples no magnificent social dispensation. Quite to the contrary: imperialists subjected native peoples to crass exploitation, outright genocide, diseases against which they had no immunity, and shameless plunder. No animistic conjurations did or could have prevented this onslaught, as at the tragedy of Wounded Knee in 1890, where the myth of ghost shirts impregnable to bullets was so painfully belied.

What is of crucial importance is that the regression to primitivism among lifestyle anarchists denies the most salient attributes of humanity as a species and the potentially emancipatory aspects of Euro-American civilization. Humans are vastly different from other animals in that they do more than merely adapt to the world around them; they innovate and create a new world, not only to discover their own powers as human beings but to make the world around them more suitable for their own development, both as individuals and as a species. Warped as this capacity is by the present irrational society, the ability to change the world is a natural endowment,

live off the land. But while many elements of their culture may have been lost, others were not. Slavery, evidently, was one of these.'[16]

Not only has the myth of the 'pristine' forager been shattered, but Richard Lee's own data on the caloric intake of 'affluent' foragers have been significantly challenged by Wilmsen and his associates.[17] !Kung people had average lifespans of about thirty years. Infant mortality was high, and according to Wilmsen (pace Bradford!), the people were subject to disease and hunger during lean seasons. (Lee himself has revised his views on this score since the 1960s.)

Correspondingly, the lives of our early ancestors were most certainly anything but blissful. In fact, life for them was actually quite harsh, generally short, and materially very demanding. Anatomical assays of their longevity show that about half died in childhood or before the age of twenty, and few lived beyond their fiftieth year. They were more likely scavengers than hunter-gatherers and were probably prey for leopards and hyenas.[18]

To members of their own bands, tribes, or clans, prehistoric and later foraging peoples were normally cooperative and peaceful; but toward members of other bands, tribes, or clans, they were often warlike, even sometimes genocidal in their efforts to dispossess them and appropriate their land. That most blissed-out of ancestral humans (if we are to believe the primitivists), Homo erectus, has left behind a bleak record of interhuman slaughter, according to data summarized by Paul Janssens.[19] It has been suggested that many individuals in China and Java were killed by volcanic eruptions, but the latter explanations loses a good deal of plausibility in the light of the remains of forty individuals whose mortally injured heads were decapitated — 'hardly the action of a volcano,' Corinne Shear Wood observes dryly.[20] As to modern foragers, the conflicts between Native American tribes are too numerous to cite at any great length

16 Stearman, *Yuqu'*, pp.80–81.

17 Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, pp.235–39 and 303–15.

18 See, for example, Robert J. Blumenschine and John A. Cavallo, 'Scavenging and Human Evolution,' *Scientific American* (October 1992), pp.90–96.

19 Paul A. Janssens, *Paleopathology: Diseases and Injuries of Prehistoric Man* (London: John Baker, 1970).

20 Wood, *Human Sickness*, p.20.

in government than monarchy or totalitarian dictatorship, it still inherently involves the repression of the wills of some people. This is obviously at odds with the existential individual, who must maintain the integrity of will in order to be existentially free' (POI, p.53). Indeed, so transcendentally sacrosanct is the autonomous individual will, in Brown's eyes, that she approvingly quotes Peter Marshall's claim that, according to anarchist principles, 'the majority has no more right to dictate to the minority, even a minority of one, than the minority to the majority' (POI, p.140, emphasis added).

Denigrating rational, discursive, and direct-democratic procedures for collective decision-making as 'dictating' and 'ruling' awards a minority of one sovereign ego the right to abort the decision of a majority. But the fact remains that a free society will either be democratic, or it will not be achieved at all. In the very existential situation, if you please, of an anarchist society — a direct libertarian democracy — decisions would most certainly be made following open discussion. Thereafter the outvoted minority — even a minority of one — would have every opportunity to present countervailing arguments to try to change that decision. Decision-making by consensus, on the other hand, precludes ongoing dissensus — the all-important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter'challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible.

If anything, functioning on the basis of consensus assures that important decision-making will be either manipulated by a minority or collapse completely. And the decisions that are made will embody the lowest common denominator of views and constitute the least creative level of agreement. I speak, here, from painful, years-long experience with the use of consensus in the Clamshell Alliance of the 1970s. Just at the moment when this quasi-anarchic antinuclear-power movement was at the peak of its struggle, with thousands of activists, it was destroyed through the manipulation of the consensus process by a minority. The 'tyranny of structurelessness' that consensus decision-making produced permitted a well-organized few to control the unwieldy, deinstitutionalized, and largely disorganized many within the movement.

Nor, amidst the hue and cry for consensus, was it possible for dissensus to exist and creatively stimulate discussion, fostering a creative development of ideas that could yield new and ever-expanding perspectives. In any community, dissensus — and dissident individuals — prevent the community from stagnating. Pejorative words like dictate and rule properly refer to the silencing of dissenters, not to the exercise of democracy; ironically, it is the consensual 'general will' that could well, in Rousseau's memorable phrase from the Social Contract, 'force men to be free.'

Far from being existential in any earthy sense of the word, Brown's 'existential individualism' deals with the individual ahistorically. She rarefies the individual as a transcendental category, much as, in the 1970s, Robert K. Wolff paraded Kantian concepts of the individual in his dubious Defense of Anarchism. The social factors that interact with the individual to make him or her a truly willful and creative being are subsumed under transcendental moral abstractions that, given a purely intellectual life of their own, 'exist' outside of history and praxis.

Alternating between moral transcendentalism and simplistic positivism in her approach to the individual's relationship with the collective, Brown's exposition fits together as clumsily as creationism with evolution. The rich dialectic and the ample history that shows how the individual was largely formed by and interacted with a social development is nearly absent from her work. Atomistic and narrowly analytic in many of her views, yet abstractly moral and even transcendental in her interpretations, Brown provides an excellent setting for a notion of autonomy that is antipodal to social freedom. With the 'existential individual' on one side, and a society that consists of a 'collection of individuals' and nothing more on the other, the chasm between autonomy and freedom becomes unbridgeable.

slaughter of their pachyderm 'brothers' with the great sensitivity that Zerzan attributes to them. The marginal foraging lifeways of the San that so entranced observers in the 1960s were actually the result of economic changes in the late nineteenth century, while 'the remoteness imagined by outside observers . . . was not indigenous but was created by the collapse of mercantile capital.'[13]

Thus, 'the current status of San-speaking peoples on the rural fringe of African economies,' Wilmsen notes, can be accounted for only in terms of the social policies and economies of the colonial era and its aftermath. Their appearance as foragers is a function of their relegation to an underclass in the playing out of historical processes that began before the current millennium and culminated in the early decades of this century.[14]

The Yuqu' of the Amazon, too, could easily have epitomized the pristine foraging society extolled in the 1960s. Unstudied by Europeans until the 1950s, this people had a tool kit that consisted of little more than a boar claw and bow-and-arrows: 'In addition to being unable to produce fire,' writes Allyn M. Stearman, who studied them, 'they had no watercraft, no domestic animals (not even the dog), no stone, no ritual specialists, and only a rudimentary cosmology. They lived out their lives as nomads, wandering the forests of lowland Bolivia in search of game and other foods provided by their foraging skills.'[15] They grew no crops at all and were unfamiliar with the use of the hook and line for fishing.

Yet far from being egalitarian, the Yuqu' maintained the institution of hereditary slavery, dividing their society into a privileged elite stratum and a scorned laboring slave group. This feature is now regarded as a vestige of former horticultural lifeways. The Yuqu', it appears, were descended from a slave-holding pre-Columbian society, and 'over time, they experienced deculturation, losing much of their cultural heritage as it became necessary to remain mobile and

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13 Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled With Flies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.127.

14 Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, p.3.

15 Allyn Maclean Stearman, *Yuqu': Forest Nomads in a Changing World* (Fort Worth and Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1989), p.23.

Western researchers. Indeed, as Clifford Geertz has observed rather acidly, there is little if anything pristine about the aboriginal cultures that modern primitivists associate with early humanity. 'The realization, grudging and belated, that [the pristine primality of existing aborigines] is not so, not even with the Pygmies, not even with the Eskimos,' Geertz observes, 'and that these people are in fact products of larger-scale processes of social change which have made them and continue to make them what they are — has come as something of a shock that has induced a virtual crisis in the field [of ethnography].'[11] Scores of 'primal' peoples, like the forests they inhabited, were no more 'virginal' at European contact than were the Lakota Indians at the time of the American Civil War, Dancing With Wolves to the contrary notwithstanding. Many of the much-touted 'primal' belief-systems of existing aborigines are clearly traceable to Christian influences. Black Elk, for example, was a zealous Catholic,[12] while the late-nineteenth-century Ghost Dance of the Paiute and Lakota was profoundly influenced by Christian evangelical millennarianism.

In serious anthropological research, the notion of an 'ecstatic,' pristine hunter has not survived the thirty years that have passed since the 'Man the Hunter' symposium. Most of the 'affluent hunter' societies cited by devotees of the myth of 'primitive affluence' literally devolved — probably very much against their desires — from horticultural social systems. The San people of the Kalahari are now known to have been gardeners before they were driven into the desert. Several hundred years ago, according to Edwin Wilmsen, San-speaking peoples were herding and farming, not to speak of trading with neighboring agricultural chiefdoms in a network that extended to the Indian Ocean. By the year 1000, excavations have shown, their area, Dobe, was populated by people who made ceramics, worked with iron, and herded cattle, exporting them to Europe by the 1840s together with massive amounts of ivory — much of it from elephants hunted by the San people themselves, who doubtless conducted this

11 Clifford Geertz, 'Life on the Edge,' *The New York Review of Books*, April 7, 1994, p.3.

12 As William Powers observes, the book *Black Elk Speaks* was published in 1932. There is no trace of Black Elk's Christian life in it.' For a thorough debunking of the current fascination with the Black Elk story, see William Powers, 'When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens,' *Social Text*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1991), pp.43–56.

Part 3

Anarchism as Chaos

Whatever Brown's own preferences may be, her book both reflects and provides the premises for the shift among Euro-American anarchists away from social anarchism and toward individualist or lifestyle anarchism. Indeed, lifestyle anarchism today is finding its principal expression in spray-can graffiti, post-modernist nihilism, antirationalism, neoprimitivism, anti-technologism, neo-Situationist 'cultural terrorism,' mysticism, and a 'practice' of staging Foucauldian 'personal insurrections.'

These trendy posturings, nearly all of which follow current yuppie fashions, are individualistic in the important sense that they are antithetical to the development of serious organizations, a radical politics, a committed social movement, theoretical coherence, and programmatic relevance. More oriented toward achieving one's own 'self-realization' than achieving basic social change, this trend among lifestyle anarchists is particularly noxious in that its 'turning inward,' as Katinka Matson called it, claims to be a politics — albeit one that resembles R. D. Laing's 'politics of experience.' The black flag, which revolutionary social anarchists raised in insurrectionary struggles in Ukraine and Spain, now becomes a fashionable sarong for the delectation of chic petty bourgeois.

One of the most unsavory examples of lifestyle anarchism is Hakim Bey's (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson's) *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism,* a jewel in the New Autonomy Series (no accidental word choice here), published by the heavily postmodernist Semiotext(e)/Autonomedia group in Brooklyn.[1] Amid paeans to 'Chaos,' 'Amour Fou,' 'Wild Children,' 'Paganism,' 'Art Sabotage,' 'Pirate Utopias,' 'Black Magic as Revolutionary Action,' 'Crime,' and 'Sorcery,' not to speak of commendations of 'Marxism-Stirnerism,' the call for autonomy is taken to lengths

[1] Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1985, 1991). Bey's individualism might easily resemble that of the late Fredy Perlman and his anticivilizational acolytes and primitivists in Detroit's Fifth Estate, except that T.A.Z. rather confusedly calls for 'a psychic paleolithism based on High-Tech' (p.44).

mammals of the last ice age (notably mammoths, mastodons, longhorn bison, horses, and camels) to extinction. Thickly accumulated bones of bison are still discernible in sites that suggest mass killings and 'assembly-line' butchering in a number of American arroyos.[8]

Nor, among those peoples who did have agriculture, was land use necessarily ecologically benign. Around Lake Pátzcuaro in the central Mexican highlands, before the Spanish conquest, 'prehistoric land use was not conservationist in practice,' writes Karl W. Butzer, but caused high rates of soil erosion. Indeed, aboriginal farming practices 'could be as damaging as any pre-industrial land-use in the Old World.'[9] Other studies have shown that forest overclearing and the failure of subsistence agriculture undermined Mayan society and contributed to its collapse.[10]

We will never have any way of knowing whether the lifeways of today's foraging cultures accurately mirror those of our ancestral past. Not only did modern aboriginal cultures develop over thousands of years, but they were significantly altered by the diffusion of countless traits from other cultures before they were studied by

[8] On the hotly debated issue of 'overkill' see *Pleistocene Extinctions: The Search for a Cause*, ed. P.S. Martin and H.E. Wright, Jr. The arguments around whether climatic factors and/or human 'overkilling' led to massive extinctions of some thirty-five genera of Pleistocene mammals are too complex to be dealt with here. See Paul S. Martin, 'Prehistoric Overkill,' in *Pleistocene Extinctions: The Search for a Cause*, ed. P. S. Martin and H. E. Wright, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967). I have explored some of the arguments in my introduction to the 1991 revised edition of *The Ecology of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose Books). The evidence is still under debate. Mastodons, who were once regarded as environmentally restricted animals, are now known to have been ecologically more flexible and might have been killed off by Paleoindian hunters, possibly with far less compunction than romantic environmentalists would like to believe. I do not contend that hunting alone pushed these large mammals to extermination — a considerable amount of killing would have been enough. A summary of arroyo drives of bison can be found in Brian Fagan, 'Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains,' *Archaeology* (May-June 1994), p.38.

[9] Karl W. Butzer, 'No Eden in the New World,' *Nature*, vol. 82 (March 4, 1993), pp.15–17.

[10] T. Patrick Cuthbert, 'The Collapse of Classic Maya Civilization,' in *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*, ed. Norman Yoffee and George L. Cowgill (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1988); and Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. chapter 5.

reflected a highly pragmatic concern for enhancing and controlling the food supply, not a love for animals, forests, mountains (which they may very well have feared as the lofty home of deities both demonic and benign).[5]

Nor does the 'love of nature' that Bradford attributes to 'primal society' accurately depict foraging peoples today, who often deal rather harshly with work and game animals; the Ituri forest Pygmies, for example, tormented ensnared game quite sadistically, and Eskimos commonly maltreated their huskies.[6] As for Native Americans before European contact, they vastly altered much of the continent by using fire to clear lands for horticulture and for better visibility in hunting, to the extent that the 'paradise' encountered by Europeans was 'clearly humanized.'[7]

Unavoidably, many Indian tribes seem to have exhausted local food animals and had to migrate to new territories to gain the material means of life. It would be surprising indeed if they did not engage in warfare to displace the original occupants. Their remote ancestors may well have pushed some of the great North American

[5] The literature on these aspects of prehistoric life is very large. Anthony Legge and Peter A. Rowly's 'Gazelle Killing in Stone Age Syria,' *Scientific American*, vol. 257 (Aug. 1987), pp.88–95, shows that migrating animals could have been slaughtered with devastating effectiveness by the use of corrals. The classical study of the pragmatic aspects of animism is Bronislaw Malinowski's *Myth, Science and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954). Manipulative anthropomorphization is evident in many accounts of transmigrations from the human to nonhuman realm claimed by shamans, as in the myths of the Makuna reported by Kaj'rhem, 'Dance of the Water People,' *Natural History* (Jan. 1992).

[6] On the pygmies, see Colin M. Turnbull, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo* (New York: Clarion/Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp.101–102. On the Eskimos, see Gontran de Montaigne Poncins's *Kabloona: A White Man in the Arctic Among the Eskimos* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), pp.208–9, as well as in many other works on traditional Eskimo culture.

[7] That many grasslands throughout the world were produced by fire, probably dating back to Homo erectus, is a hypothesis scattered throughout the anthropological literature. An excellent study is Stephen J. Pyne's *Fire in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). See also William M. Denevan, in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* (Sept. 1992), cited in William K. Stevens, 'An Eden in Ancient America? Not Really,' *The New York Times* (March 30, 1993), p. C1.

so absurd as to seemingly parody a self-absorbed and self-absorbing ideology.

T.A.Z. presents itself as a state of mind, an ardently antirational and anticivilizational mood, in which disorganization is conceived as an art form and graffiti supplants programs. The Bey (his pseudonym is the Turkish word for 'chief' or 'prince') minces no words about his disdain for social revolution: 'Why bother to confront a 'power' which has lost all meaning and become sheer Simulation? Such confrontations will only result in dangerous and ugly spasms of violence' (TAZ, p.128). Power in quotation marks? A mere 'Simulation'? If what is happening in Bosnia with firepower is a mere 'simulation,' we are living in a very safe and comfortable world indeed! The reader uneasy about the steadily multiplying social pathologies of modern life may be comforted by the Bey's Olympian thought that 'realism demands not only that we give up waiting for 'the Revolution,' but also that we give up wanting it' (TAZ, p.101). Does this passage beckon us to enjoy the serenity of Nirvana? Or a new Baudrillardian 'Simulation'? Or perhaps a new Castoriadian 'imaginary'?

Having eliminated the classical revolutionary aim of transforming society, the Bey patronizingly mocks those who once risked all for it: 'The democrat, the socialist, the rational ideology . . . are deaf to the music & lack all sense of rhythm' (TAZ, p.66). Really? Have the Bey and his acolytes themselves mastered the verses and music of the Marseillaise and danced ecstatically to the rhythms of Gliere's *Russian Sailor's Dance*? There is a wearisome arrogance in the Bey's dismissal of the rich culture that was created by revolutionaries over the past centuries, indeed by ordinary working people in the pre-rock-'n'-roll, pre-Woodstock era.

Verily, let anyone who enters the dreamworld of the Bey give up all nonsense about social commitment. 'A democratic dream? a socialist dream? Impossible,' intones the Bey with overbearing certainty. 'In dream we are never ruled except by love or sorcery' (TAZ, p.64). Thus are the dreams of a new world evoked by centuries of idealists in great revolutions magisterially reduced by the Bey to the wisdom of his febrile dream world.

As to an anarchism that is 'all cobwebby with Ethical Humanism, Free Thought, Muscular Atheism, & crude Fundamentalist Cartesian

Logic' (TAZ, p.52) — forget it! Not only does the Bey, with one fell swoop, dispose of the Enlightenment tradition in which anarchism, socialism, and the revolutionary movement were once rooted, he mixes apples like 'Fundamentalist Cartesian Logic' with oranges like 'Free Thought,' and 'Muscular Humanism' as though they were interchangeable or necessarily presuppose each other.

Although the Bey himself never hesitates to issue Olympian pronouncements and deliver petulant polemics, he has no patience with 'the squabbling ideologues of anarchism & libertarianism' (TAZ, p.46). Proclaiming that 'Anarchy knows no dogmas' (TAZ, p.52), the Bey nonetheless immerses his readers in a harsh dogma if there ever was one: 'Anarchism ultimately implies anarchy — & anarchy is chaos' (TAZ, p.64). So saith the Lord: 'I Am That I Am' — and Moses quaked before the pronouncement!

Indeed, in a fit of manic narcissism, the Bey ordains that it is the all-possessive self, the towering 'I,' the Big 'me' that is sovereign: 'each of us [is] the ruler of our own flesh, our own creations — and as much of everything else as we can grab & hold.' For the Bey, anarchists and kings — and beys — become indistinguishable, inasmuch as all are autarchs:

Our actions are justified by fiat & our relations are shaped by treaties with other autarchs. We make the law for our own domains & the chains of law have been broken. At present perhaps we survive as mere Pretenders — but even so we may seize a few instants, a few square feet of reality over which to impose our absolute will, our royaume. L'etat, c'est moi . . . If we are bound by any ethics or morality, it must be one which we ourselves have imagined. (TAZ, p.67)

L'état, c'est moi? Along with beys, I can think of at least two people in this century who did enjoy these sweeping prerogatives: Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Most of the rest of us mortals, rich and poor alike, share, as Anatole France once put it, the prohibition to sleep under the bridges of the Seine. Indeed, if Friedrich Engels's 'On Authority,' with its defense of hierarchy, represents a bourgeois form of socialism, T.A.Z. and its offshoots represent a bourgeois form of anarchism. 'There is no becoming,' the Bey tells us, 'no revolution, no struggle, no path; [if] already you're the monarch of

— particularly about the mutability of what is commonly called 'human nature.' Their spirit of in-group cooperation and, in the best of cases, egalitarian outlook are not only admirable — and socially necessary in view of the precarious world in which they lived — but provide compelling evidence of the malleability of human behavior in contrast to the myth that competition and greed are innate human attributes. Indeed, their practices of usufruct and the inequality of equals are of great relevance to an ecological society.

But that 'primal' or prehistoric peoples 'revered' nonhuman nature is at best specious and at worst completely disingenuous. In the absence of 'nonnatural' environments such as villages, towns, and cities, the very notion of 'Nature' as distinguished from habitat had yet to be conceptualized — a truly alienating experience, in Zerzan's view. Nor is it likely that our remote ancestors viewed the natural world in a manner any less instrumental than did people in historical cultures. With due regard for their own material interests — their survival and well-being — prehistoric peoples seem to have hunted down as much game as they could, and if they imaginatively peopled the animal world with anthropomorphic attributes, as they surely did, it would have been to communicate with it with an end toward manipulating it, not simply toward revering it.

Thus, with very instrumental ends in mind, they conjured 'talking' animals, animal 'tribes' (often patterned on their own social structures), and responsive animal 'spirits.' Understandably, given their limited knowledge, they believed in the reality of dreams, where humans might fly and animals might talk — in an inexplicable, often frightening dream world that they took for reality. To control game animals, to use a habitat for survival purposes, to deal with the vicissitudes of weather and the like, prehistoric peoples had to personify these phenomena and 'talk' to them, whether directly, ritualistically, or metaphorically.

In fact, prehistoric peoples seem to have intervened into their environment as resolutely as they could. As soon as Homo erectus or later human species learned to use fire, for example, they seem to have put it to work burning off forests, probably stampeding game animals over cliffs or into natural enclosures where they could be easily slaughtered. The 'reverence for life' of prehistoric peoples thus

Thus Zerzan eagerly agrees with an anthropologist who meditates that 'San/Bushman communion with nature' reached 'a level of experience that 'could almost be called mystical. For instance, they seemed to know what it actually felt like to be an elephant, a lion, an antelope" even a baobab tree (FP, pp.33–34).

The conscious 'decision' to refuse language, sophisticated tools, temporality, and a division of labor (presumably they tried and grunted, 'Bah!') was made, we are told, by Homo habilis, who, I should note, had roughly half the brain size of modern humans and probably lacked the anatomical capacity for syllabic speech. Yet we have it on Zerzan's sovereign authority that habilis (and possibly even Australopithecus afarensis, who may have been around some 'two million years ago') possessed 'an intelligence fully capable' — no less! — of these functions but refused to use them. In Zerzanian paleoanthropology, early hominids or humans could adopt or reject vital cultural traits like speech with sublime wisdom, the way monks take vows of silence.

But once the vow of silence was broken, everything went wrong! For reasons known only to God and Zerzan.

The emergence of symbolic culture, with its inherent will to manipulate and control, soon opened the door to the domestication of nature. After two million years of human life within the bounds of nature, in balance with other wild species, agriculture changed our lifestyle, our way of adapting, in an unprecedented way. Never before has such a radical change occurred in a species so utterly and so swiftly . . . Self-domestication through language, ritual, and art inspired the taming of plants and animals that followed. (FP, pp.27–28, emphasis added)

There is a certain splendor in this claptrap that is truly arresting. Significantly different epochs, hominid and/or human species, and ecological and technological situations are all swept up together into a shared life 'within the bounds of nature.' Zerzan's simplification of the highly complex dialectic between humans and nonhuman nature reveals a mentality so reductionist and simplistic that one is obliged to stand before it in awe.

To be sure, there is very much we can learn from preliterate cultures — organic societies, as I call them in *The Ecology of Freedom*

your own skin — your inviolable freedom awaits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs: a politics of dream, urgent as the blueness of sky' — words that could be inscribed on the New York Stock Exchange as a credo for egotism and social indifference (TAZ, p.4).

Certainly, this view will not repel the boutiques of capitalist 'culture' any more than long hair, beards, and jeans have repelled the entrepreneurial world of haute fashion. Unfortunately, far too many people in this world — no 'simulations' or 'dreams' — do not own even their own skins, as prisoners in chain gangs and jails can attest in the most concrete of terms. No one has ever floated out of the earthly realm of misery on 'a politics of dreams' except the privileged petty bourgeois, who may find the Bey's manifestoes amenable particularly in moments of boredom.

For the Bey, in fact, even classical revolutionary insurrections offer little more than a personal high, redolent of Foucault's 'limit experiences.' 'An uprising is like a 'peak experience," he assures us (TAZ, p.100). Historically, 'some anarchists . . took part in all sorts of uprisings and revolutions, even communist & socialist ones,' but that was 'because they found in the moment of insurrection itself the kind of freedom they sought. Thus while utopianism has so far always failed, the individualist or existentialist anarchists have succeeded inasmuch as they have attained (however briefly) the realization of their will to power in war' (TAZ, p.88). The Austrian workers' uprising of February 1934 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936, I can attest, were more than orgiastic 'moments of insurrection' but were bitter struggles carried on with desperate earnestness and magnificent 'lan, all aesthetic epiphanies notwithstanding.

Insurrection nonetheless becomes for the Bey little more than a psychedelic 'trip,' while the Nietzschean Overman, of whom the Bey approves, is a 'free spirit' who would 'disdain wasting time on agitation for reform, on protest, on visionary dreams, on all kinds of 'revolutionary martyrdom." Presumably dreams are okay as long as they are not 'visionary' (read: socially committed); rather, the Bey would 'drink wine' and have a 'private epiphany' (TAZ, p.88), which suggests little more than mental masturbation, freed to be sure from the constraints of Cartesian logic.

It should not surprise us to learn that the Bey favors the ideas of Max Stirner, who 'commits no metaphysics, yet bestows on the Unique [i.e, the Ego] a certain absoluteness' (TAZ, p.68). To be sure, the Bey finds that there is a 'missing ingredient in Stirner': 'a working concept of nonordinary consciousness' (TAZ, p.68). Apparently Stirner is too much the rationalist for the Bey. 'The orient, the occult, the tribal cultures possess techniques which can be 'appropriated' in true anarchist fashion . . . We need a practical kind of 'mystical anarchism' . . . a democratization of shamanism, intoxicated & serene' (TAZ, p.63). Hence the Bey summons his disciples to become 'sorcerers' and suggests that they use the 'Black Malay Djinn Curse.'

What, finally, is a 'temporary autonomous zone'? 'The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself, to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it' (TAZ, p.101). In a TAZ we can 'realize many of our true Desires, even if only for a season, a brief Pirate Utopia, a warped free-zone in the old Space/Time continuum)' (TAZ, p.62). 'Potential TAZs' include 'the sixties-style 'tribal gathering,' the forest conclave of eco-saboteurs, the idyllic Beltane of the neopagans, anarchist conferences, and gay faery circles,' not to speak of 'nightclubs, banquets,' and 'old-time libertarian picnics' — no less! (TAZ, p.100). Having been a member of the Libertarian League in the 1960s, I would love to see the Bey and his disciples surface at an 'old-time libertarian picnic'!

So transient, so evanescent, so ineffable is a TAZ in contrast to the formidably stable State and bourgeoisie that 'as soon as the TAZ is named . . . it must vanish, it will vanish . . . only to spring up again somewhere else' (TAZ, p.101). A TAZ, in effect, is not a revolt but precisely a simulation, an insurrection as lived in the imagination of a juvenile brain, a safe retreat into unreality. Indeed, declaims the Bey: 'We recommend [the TAZ] because it can provide the quality of enhancement without necessarily [!] leading to violence & martyrdom' (TAZ, p.101). More precisely, like an Andy Warhol 'happening,' a TAZ is a passing event, a momentary orgasm, a fleeting expression of the 'will to power' that is, in fact, conspicuously powerless in its

Which brings us, inevitably, to John Zerzan, the anti-civilizational primitivist *par excellence*. For Zerzan, one of the steady hands at *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, the absence of speech, language, and writing is a positive boon. Another denizen of the 'Man the Hunter' time warp, Zerzan maintains in his book Future Primitive (FP) that 'life before domestication/agriculture was in fact largely one of a leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality, and health'[4] — with the difference that Zerzan's vision of 'primality' more closely approximates four-legged animality. In fact, in Zerzanian paleoanthropology, the anatomical distinctions between Homo sapiens, on the one hand, and Homo habilis, Homo erectus, and the 'much-maligned' Neanderthals, on the other, are dubious; all early Homo species, in his view, were possessed of the mental and physical capacities of Homo sapiens and furthermore lived in primal bliss for more than two million years.

If these hominids were as intelligent as modern humans, we may be naively tempted to ask, why did they not innovate technological change? 'It strikes me as very plausible,' Zerzan brightly conjectures, 'that intelligence, informed by the success and satisfaction of a gatherer-hunter existence, is the very reason for the pronounced absence of 'progress.' Division of labor, domestication, symbolic culture — these were evidently [!] refused until very recently.' The Homo species 'long chose nature over culture,' and by culture here Zerzan means 'the manipulation of basic symbolic forms' (emphasis added) — an alienating encumbrance. Indeed, he continues, 'reified time, language (written, certainly, and probably spoken language for all or most of this period), number, and art had no place, despite an intelligence fully capable of them' (FP, pp.23, 24).

In short, hominids were capable of symbols, speech, and writing but deliberately rejected them, since they could understand one another and their environment instinctively, without recourse to them.

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[3] See particularly Paul Radin's *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), pp.139–150.

[4] John Zerzan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1994), p.16. The reader who has faith in Zerzan's research may try looking for important sources like 'Cohen (1974)' and 'Clark (1979)' (cited on pages 24 and 29, respectively) in his bibliography — they and others are entirely absent.

It is all too common for those who swoon over 'primal life' to lump together many millennia of prehistory, as if significantly different hominid and human species lived in one kind of social organization. The word prehistory is highly ambiguous. Inasmuch as the human genus included several different species, we can hardly equate the 'outlook' of Aurignacian and Magdalenian foragers (Homo sapiens sapiens) some 30,000 years ago, with that of Homo sapiens neanderthalensis or Homo erectus, whose tool kits, artistic abilities, and capacities for speech were strikingly different.

Another concern is the extent to which prehistoric hunter-gatherers or foragers at various times lived in nonhierarchical societies. If the burials at Sungir (in present Eastern Europe) some 25,000 years ago allow for any speculation (and there are no Paleolithic people around to tell us about their lives), the extraordinarily rich collection of jewelry, lances, ivory spears, and beaded clothing at the gravesites of two adolescents suggest the existence of high-status family lines long before human beings settled down to food cultivation. Most cultures in the Paleolithic were probably relatively egalitarian, but hierarchy seems to have existed even in the late Paleolithic, with marked variations in degree, type, and scope of domination that cannot be subsumed under rhetorical paeans to Paleolithic egalitarianism.

A further concern that arises is the variation — in early cases, the absence — of communicative ability in different epochs. Inasmuch as a written language did not appear until well into historical times, the languages even of early Homo sapiens sapiens were hardly 'conceptually profound.' The pictographs, glyphs, and, above all, memorized material upon which 'primal' peoples relied for knowledge of the past have obvious cultural limitations. Without a written literature that records the cumulative wisdom of generations, historical memory, let alone 'conceptually profound' thoughts, are difficult to retain; rather, they are lost over time or woefully distorted. Least of all is orally transmitted history subject to demanding critique but instead easily becomes a tool for elite 'seers' and shamans who, far from being 'protopoets,' as Bradford calls them, seem to have used their 'knowledge' to serve their own social interests.[3]

capacity to leave any imprint on the individual's personality, subjectivity, and even self-formation, still less on shaping events and reality.

Given the evanescent quality of a TAZ, the Bey's disciples can enjoy the fleeting privilege of living a 'nomadic existence,' for 'homelessness can in a sense be a virtue, an adventure' (TAZ, p.130). Alas, homelessness can be an 'adventure' when one has a comfortable home to return to, while nomadism is the distinct luxury of those who can afford to live without earning their livelihood. Most of the 'nomadic' hoboes I recall so vividly from the Great Depression era suffered desperate lives of hunger, disease, and indignity and usually died prematurely — as they still do, today, in the streets of urban America. The few gypsy-types who seemed to enjoy the 'life of the road' were idiosyncratic at best and tragically neurotic at worst. Nor can I ignore another 'insurrection' that the Bey advances: notably, 'voluntary illiteracy' (TAZ, p.129). Although he advances this as a revolt against the educational system, its more desirable effect might be to render the Bey's various ex cathedra injunctions inaccessible to his readers.

Perhaps no better description can be given of T.A.Z.'s message than the one that appeared in *Whole Earth Review*, whose reviewer emphasizes that the Bey's pamphlet is 'quickly becom[ing] the countercultural bible of the 1990s . . . While many of Bey's concepts share an affinity with the doctrines of anarchism,' the Review reassures its yuppie clientele that he pointedly departs from the usual rhetoric about overthrowing the government. Instead, he prefers the mercurial nature of 'uprisings,' which he believes provide 'moments of intensity [that can] give shape and meaning to the entirety of life.' These pockets of freedom, or temporary autonomous zones, enable the individual to elude the schematic grids of Big Government and to occasionally live within realms where he or she can briefly experience total freedom. (emphasis added)[2]

There is an untranslatable Yiddish word for all of this: nebbich! During the 1960s, the affinity group Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers spread similar confusion, disorganization, and 'cultural terrorism,'

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[2] 'T.A.Z.,' *The Whole Earth Review* (Spring 1994), p.61.

only to disappear from the political scene soon thereafter. Indeed, some of its members entered the commercial, professional, and middle-class world they had formerly professed to despise. Nor is such behavior uniquely American. As one French 'veteran' of May-June 1968 cynically put it: 'We had our fun in '68, and now it's time to grow up.' The same deadening cycle, with circled A's, was repeated during a highly individualistic youth revolt in Zurich in 1984, only to end in the creation of Needle Park, a notorious cocaine and crack hangout established by the city's officials to allow addicted young people to destroy themselves legally.

The bourgeoisie has nothing whatever to fear from such lifestyle declamations. With its aversion for institutions, mass-based organizations, its largely subcultural orientation, its moral decadence, its celebration of transience, and its rejection of programs, this kind of narcissistic anarchism is socially innocuous, often merely a safety valve for discontent toward the prevailing social order. With the Bey, lifestyle anarchism takes flight from all meaningful social activism and a steadfast commitment to lasting and creative projects by dissolving itself into kicks, postmodernist nihilism, and a dizzying Nietzschean sense of elitist superiority.

The price that anarchism will pay if it permits this swill to displace the libertarian ideals of an earlier period could be enormous. The Bey's egocentric anarchism, with its post-modernist withdrawal into individualistic 'autonomy,' Foucauldian 'limit experiences,' and neo-Situationist 'ecstasy,' threatens to render the very word anarchism politically and socially harmless — a mere fad for the titillation of the petty bourgeois of all ages.

Mystical and Irrationalist Anarchism

The Bey's T.A.Z. hardly stands alone in its appeal to sorcery, even mysticism. Given their prelapsarian mentality, many lifestyle anarchists readily take to antirationalism in its most atavistic forms. Consider 'The Appeal of Anarchy,' which occupies the entire back page of a recent issue of Fifth Estate (Summer 1989). 'Anarchy,' we read, recognizes 'the imminence of total liberation [nothing less!]

told, on 'greater access to the views of primal people and their native descendants' by 'a more critical . . . anthropology' (CIB, p.10). In fact, much of his 'critical anthropology' appears to derive from ideas propounded at the 'Man the Hunter' symposium, convened in April 1966 at the University of Chicago.[1] Although most of the papers contributed to this symposium were immensely valuable, a number of them conformed to the naive mystification of 'primitivity' that was percolating through the 1960s counterculture — and that lingers on to this day. The hippie culture, which influenced quite a few anthropologists of the time, averred that hunting-gathering peoples today had been bypassed by the social and economic forces at work in the rest of the world and still lived in a pristine state, as isolated remnants of Neolithic and Paleolithic lifeways. Further, as hunter-gatherers, their lives were notably healthy and peaceful, living then as now on an ample natural largess.

Thus, Richard B. Lee, coeditor of the collection of conference papers, estimated that the caloric intake of 'primitive' peoples was quite high and their food supply abundant, making for a kind of virginal 'affluence' in which people needed to forage only a few hours each day. 'Life in the state of nature is not necessarily nasty, brutish, and short,' wrote Lee. The habitat of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, for example, 'is abundant in naturally occurring foods.' The Bushmen of the Dobe area, who, Lee wrote, were still on the verge of entry into the Neolithic, live well today on wild plants and meat, in spite of the fact that they are confined to the least productive portion of the range in which Bushmen peoples were formerly found. It is likely that an even more substantial subsistence base would have been characteristic of these hunters and gatherers in the past, when they had the pick of African habitats to choose from.[2]

Not quite! — as we shall see shortly.

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[1] The conference papers were published in Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968).

[2] 'What Hunters Do for a Living, or, How to Make Out in Scarce Resources,' in Lee and Devore, *Man the Hunter*, p.43.

Mystifying the Primitive

The corollary of antitechnologism and anticivilizationism is primitivism, an edenic glorification of prehistory and the desire to somehow return to its putative innocence. Lifestyle anarchists like Bradford draw their inspiration from aboriginal peoples and myths of an edenic prehistory. Primal peoples, he says, 'refused technology' — they 'minimized the relative weight of instrumental or practical techniques and expanded the importance of . . . ecstatic techniques.' This was because aboriginal peoples, with their animistic beliefs, were saturated by a 'love' of animal life and wilderness — for them, 'animals, plants, and natural objects' were 'persons, even kin' (CIB, p.11).

Accordingly, Bradford objects to the 'official' view that designates the lifeways of prehistoric foraging cultures as 'terrible, brutish and nomadic, a bloody struggle for existence.' Rather, he apotheosizes 'the primal world' as what Marshall Sahlins called 'the original affluent society,' affluent because its needs are few, all its desires are easily met. Its tool kit is elegant and light-weight, its outlook linguistically complex and conceptually profound yet simple and accessible to all. Its culture is expansive and ecstatic. It is propertyless and communal, egalitarian and cooperative . . . It is anarchic . . . free of work . . . It is a dancing society, a singing society, a celebrating society, a dreaming society. (CIB, p.10)

Inhabitants of the 'primal world,' according to Bradford, lived in harmony with the natural world and enjoyed all the benefits of affluence, including much leisure time. Primal society, he emphasizes, was 'free of work' since hunting and gathering required much less effort than people today put in with the eight-hour day. He does compassionately concede that primal society was 'capable of experiencing occasional hunger.' This 'hunger,' however, was really symbolic and self-inflicted, you see, because primal peoples 'sometimes [chose] hunger to enhance interrelatedness, to play, or to see visions' (CIB, p.10).

It would take a full-sized essay in itself to unscramble, let alone refute, this absurd balderdash, in which a few truths are either mixed with or coated in sheer fantasy. Bradford bases his account, we are

and as a sign of your freedom, be naked in your rites.' Engage in 'dancing, singing, laughing, feasting, playing,' we are enjoined — and could anyone short of a mummified prig argue against these Rabelaisian delights?

But unfortunately, there is a hitch. Rabelais's *Abbey of Thélème*, which Fifth Estate seems to emulate, was replete with servants, cooks, grooms, and artisans, without whose hard labor the self-indulgent aristocrats of his distinctly upper-class utopia would have starved and huddled naked in the otherwise cold halls of the Abbey. To be sure, the Fifth Estate's 'Appeal of Anarchy' may well have in mind a materially simpler version of the *Abbey of Thélème*, and its 'feasting' may refer more to tofu and rice than to stuffed partridges and tasty truffles. But still — without major technological advances to free people from toil, even to get tofu and rice on the table, how could a society based on this version of anarchy hope to 'abolish all authority,' 'share all things in common,' feast, and run naked, dancing and singing?

This question is particularly relevant for the Fifth Estate group. What is arresting in the periodical is the primitivistic, prerational, antitechnological, and anticivilizational cult that lies at the core of its articles. Thus Fifth Estate's 'Appeal' invites anarchists to 'cast the magic circle, enter the trance of ecstasy, revel in sorcery which dispels all power' — precisely the magical techniques that shamans (who at least one of its writers celebrates) in tribal society, not to speak of priests in more developed societies, have used for ages to elevate their status as hierarchs and against which reason long had to battle to free the human mind from its own self-created mystifications. 'Dispel all power'? Again, there is a touch of Foucault here that as always denies the need for establishing distinctly empowered self-managing institutions against the very real power of capitalist and hierarchical institutions — indeed, for the actualization of a society in which desire and ecstasy can find genuine fulfillment in a truly libertarian communism.

Fifth Estate's beguilingly 'ecstatic' paean to 'anarchy,' so bereft of social content — all its rhetorical flourishes aside — could easily appear as a poster on the walls of a chic boutique, or on the back of a greeting card. Friends who recently visited New York City advise me,

in fact, that a restaurant with linen-covered tables, fairly expensive menus, and a yuppie clientele on St. Mark's Place in the Lower East Side — a battleground of the 1960s — is named Anarchy. This feedlot for the city's petty bourgeoisie sports a print of the famous Italian mural *The Fourth Estate*, which shows insurrectionary *fin de siècle* workers militantly marching against an undepicted boss or possibly a police station. Lifestyle anarchism, it would seem, can easily become a choice consumer delicacy. The restaurant, I am told, also has security guards, presumably to keep out the local canaille who figure in the mural.

Safe, privatistic, hedonistic, and even cozy, lifestyle anarchism may easily provide the ready verbiage to spice up the pedestrian bourgeois lifeways of timid Rabelaisians. Like the 'Situationist art' that MIT displayed for the delectation of the avant-garde petty bourgeoisie several years ago, it offers little more than a terribly 'wicked' anarchist image — dare I say, a simulacrum — like those that flourish all along the Pacific Rim of America and points eastward. The Ecstasy Industry, for its part, is doing only too well under contemporary capitalism and could easily absorb the techniques of lifestyle anarchists to enhance a marketably naughty image. The counterculture that once shocked the petty bourgeoisie with its long hair, beards, dress, sexual freedom, and art has long since been upstaged by bourgeois entrepreneurs whose boutiques, cafés, clubs, and even nudist camps are doing a flourishing business, as witness the many steamy advertisements for new 'ecstasies' in the Village Voice and similar periodicals.

Actually, Fifth Estate's blatantly antirationalistic sentiments have very troubling implications. Its visceral celebration of imagination, ecstasy, and 'primality' patently impugns not only rationalistic efficiency but reason as such. The cover of the Fall/Winter 1993 issue bears Francisco Goya's famously misunderstood Capriccio no. 43, 'Il sueno de la razon produce monstros' ('The sleep of reason produces monsters'). Goya's sleeping figure is shown slumped over his desk before an Apple computer. Fifth Estate's English translation of Goya's inscription reads, 'The dream of reason produces monsters,' implying that monsters are a product of reason itself. In point of

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fact, Goya avowedly meant, as his own notes indicate, that the monsters in the engraving are produced by the sleep, not the dream, of reason. As he wrote in his own commentary: 'Imagination, deserted by reason, begets impossible monsters. United with reason, she is the mother of all arts, and the source of their wonders.'[3] By deprecating reason, this on-again, off-again anarchist periodical enters into collusion with some of the most dismal aspects of today's neo-Heideggerian reaction.

[3] Cited by Jose Lopez-Rey, *Goya's Capriccios: Beauty, Reason and Caricature*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp.80–81.

to the appetites of their aristocratic 'betters' in Rabelais's *Abbey of Thélème*. Ironically, the anti-civilizational anarchists who denounce civilization today are among those who enjoy its cultural fruits and make expansive, highly individualistic professions of liberty, with no sense of the painstaking developments in European history that made them possible. Kropotkin, for one, significantly emphasized 'the progress of modern technics, which wonderfully simplifies the production of all the necessaries of life.'[5] To those who lack a sense of historical contextuality, arrogant hindsight comes cheaply.

[5] Kropotkin, 'Anarchism,' *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p.285.

— have been pernicious almost from their inception. But the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not require the steam engine, mass manufacture, or, for that matter, giant cities and far-reaching bureaucracies, to deforest huge areas of North America and virtually obliterate its aboriginal peoples, or erode the soil of entire regions. To the contrary, even before railroads reached out to all parts of the land, much of this devastation had already been wrought using simple axes, black-powder muskets, horse-driven wagons, and moldboard plows.

It was these simple technologies that bourgeois enterprise — the barbarous dimensions of civilization of the last century — used to carve much of the Ohio River valley into speculative real estate. In the South, plantation owners needed slave 'hands' in great part because the machinery to plant and pick cotton did not exist; indeed, American tenant farming has disappeared over the past two generations largely because new machinery was introduced to replace the labor of 'freed' black sharecroppers. In the nineteenth century peasants from semifeudal Europe, following river and canal routes, poured into the American wilderness and, with eminently unecological methods, began to produce the grains that eventually propelled American capitalism to economic hegemony in the world.

Bluntly put: it was capitalism — the commodity relationship expanded to its full historical proportions — that produced the explosive environmental crisis of modern times, beginning with early cottage-made commodities that were carried over the entire world in sailing vessels, powered by wind rather than engines. Apart from the textile villages and towns of Britain, where mass manufacture made its historic breakthrough, the machines that meet with the greatest opprobrium these days were created long after capitalism gained ascendancy in many parts of Europe and North America.

Despite the current swing of the pendulum from a glorification of European civilization to its wholesale denigration, however, we would do well to remember the significance of the rise of modern secularism, scientific knowledge, universalism, reason, and technologies that potentially offer the hope of a rational and emancipatory dispensation of social affairs, indeed, for the full realization of desire and ecstasy without the many servants and artisans who pandered

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Against Technology and Civilization

Even more troubling are the writings of George Bradford (aka David Watson), one of the major theorists at Fifth Estate, on the horrors of technology — apparently technology as such. Technology, it would seem, determines social relations rather than the opposite, a notion that more closely approximates vulgar Marxism than, say, social ecology. 'Technology is not an isolated project, or even an accumulation of technical knowledge,' Bradford tells us in 'Stopping the Industrial Hydra' (SIH), that is determined by a somehow separate and more fundamental sphere of 'social relations.' Mass technics have become, in the words of Langdon Winner, 'structures whose conditions of operation demand the restructuring of their environments,' and thus of the very social relations that brought them about. Mass technics — a product of earlier forms and archaic hierarchies — have now outgrown the conditions that engendered them, taking on an autonomous life . . . They furnish, or have become, a kind of total environment and social system, both in their general and individual, subjective aspects . . . In such a mechanized pyramid . . . instrumental and social relations are one and the same.[1]

This facile body of notions comfortably bypasses the capitalist relations that blatantly determine how technology will be used and focuses on what technology is presumed to be. By relegating social relations to something less than fundamental — instead of emphasizing the all-important productive process where technology is used — Bradford imparts to machines and 'mass technics' a mystical autonomy that, like the Stalinist hypostasization of technology, has served extremely reactionary ends. The idea that technology has a life of its own is deeply rooted in the conservative German romanticism of the last century and in the writings of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Georg Jünger, which fed into National Socialist ideology, however much the Nazis honored their antitechnological ideology in the breach.

[1] George Bradford, 'Stopping the Industrial Hydra: Revolution Against the Megamachine,' *The Fifth Estate*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Winter 1990), p.10.

competition in producing the crises of our times. To these mystifications, antitechnologists and anticivilizationists add the myth of technology and civilization as inherently oppressive, and they thus obscure the social relationships unique to capitalism — notably the use of things (commodities, exchange values, objects — employ what terms you choose) to mediate social relations and produce the techno-urban landscape of our time. Just as the substitution of the phrase 'industrial society' for capitalism obscures the specific and primary role of capital and commodity relationships in forming modern society, so the substitution of a techno-urban culture for social relations, in which Bradford overtly engages, conceals the primary role of the market and competition in forming modern culture.

Lifestyle anarchism, largely because it is concerned with a 'style' rather than a society, glosses over capitalist accumulation, with its roots in the competitive marketplace, as the source of ecological devastation, and gazes as if transfixed at the alleged break of humanity's 'sacred' or 'ecstatic' unity with 'Nature' and at the 'disenchantment of the world' by science, materialism, and 'logocentricity.'

Thus, instead of disclosing the sources of present-day social and personal pathologies, antitechnologism allows us to speciously replace capitalism with technology, which basically facilitates capital accumulation and the exploitation of labor, as the underlying cause of growth and of ecological destruction. Civilization, embodied in the city as a cultural center, is divested of its rational dimensions, as if the city were an unabated cancer rather than the potential sphere for universalizing human intercourse, in marked contrast to the parochial limitations of tribal and village life. The basic social relationships of capitalist exploitation and domination are overshadowed by metaphysical generalizations about the ego and la technique, blurring public insight into the basic causes of social and ecological crises — commodity relations that spawn the corporate brokers of power, industry, and wealth.

Which is not to deny that many technologies are inherently domineering and ecologically dangerous, or to assert that civilization has been an unmitigated blessing. Nuclear reactors, huge dams, highly centralized industrial complexes, the factory system, and the arms industry — like bureaucracy, urban blight, and contemporary media

the barbarian is his threat to turn off or divert the human motive power,' he observed in the sharpest of terms, 'discouraging the cooperative processes of thought and the disinterested research which are responsible for our major technical achievements' (TAC, p.302). And he enjoined: 'We must abandon our futile and lamentable dodges for resisting the machine by stultifying relapses into savagery' (TAC, p.319).

Nor do his later works reveal any evidence that he relented in this view. Ironically, he contemptuously designated the Living Theater's performances and visions of the 'Outlaw Territory' of motorcycle gangs as 'Barbarism,' and he deprecated Woodstock as the 'Mass Mobilization of Youth,' from which the 'present mass-minded, overregimented, depersonalized culture has nothing to fear.'

Mumford, for his own part, favored neither the megamachine nor primitivism (the 'organic') but rather the sophistication of technology along democratic and humanly scaled lines. 'Our capacity to go beyond the machine [to a new synthesis] rests upon our power to assimilate the machine,' he observed in Technics and Civilization. 'Until we have absorbed the lessons of objectivity, impersonality, neutrality, the lessons of the mechanical realm, we cannot go further in our development toward the more richly organic, the more profoundly human' (TAC, p.363, emphasis added).

Denouncing technology and civilization as inherently oppressive of humanity in fact serves to veil the specific social relations that privilege exploiters over the exploited and hierarchs over their subordinates. More than any oppressive society in the past, capitalism conceals its exploitation of humanity under a disguise of 'fetishes,' to use Marx's terminology in Capital, above all, the 'fetishism of commodities,' which has been variously — and superficially — embroidered by the Situa'tion'ists into 'spectacles' and by Baudrillard into 'simulacra.' Just as the bourgeoisie's acquisition of surplus value is hidden by a contractual exchange of wages for labor power that is only ostensibly equal, so the fetishization of the commodity and its movements conceals the sovereignty of capitalism's economic and social relations.

There is an important, indeed crucial, point to be made, here. Such concealment shields from public purview the causal role of capitalist

Viewed in terms of the contemporary ideology of our own times, this ideological baggage is typified by the claim, so common today, that newly developed automated machinery variously costs people their jobs or intensifies their exploitation — both of which are indubitable facts but are anchored precisely in social relations of capitalist exploitation, not in technological advances per se. Stated bluntly: 'downsizing' today is not being done by machines but by avaricious bourgeois who use machines to replace labor or exploit it more intensively. Indeed, the very machines that the bourgeois employs to reduce 'labor costs' could, in a rational society, free human beings from mindless toil for more creative and personally rewarding activities.

There is no evidence that Bradford is familiar with Heidegger or Jünger; rather, he seems to draw his inspiration from Langdon Winner and Jacques Ellul, the latter of whom Bradford quotes approvingly: 'It is the technological coherence that now makes up the social coherence . . . Technology is in itself not only a means, but a universe of means — in the original sense of Universum: both exclusive and total' (quoted in SIH, p.10).

In *The Technological Society*, his best-known book, Ellul advanced the dour thesis that the world and our ways of thinking about it are patterned on tools and machines (la technique). Lacking any social explanation of how this 'technological society' came about, Ellul's book concluded by offering no hope, still less any approach for redeeming humanity from its total absorption by la technique. Indeed, even a humanism that seeks to harness technology to meet human needs is reduced, in his view, into a 'pious hope with no chance whatsoever of influencing technological evolution.'[2] And rightly so, if so deterministic a worldview is followed to its logical conclusion.

Happily, however, Bradford provides us with a solution: 'to begin immediately to dismantle the machine altogether' (SIH, p.10). And he brooks no compromise with civilization but essentially repeats all the quasi-mystical, anticivilizational, and antitechnological clich's

[2] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p.430.

that appear in certain New Age environmental cults. Modern civilization, he tells us, is 'a matrix of forces,' including 'commodity relations, mass communications, urbanization and mass technics, along with . . . interlocking, rival nuclear-cybernetic states,' all of which converge into a 'global megamachine' (SIH, p.20). 'Commodity relations,' he notes in his essay 'Civilization in Bulk' (CIB), are merely part of this 'matrix of forces,' in which civilization is 'a machine' that has been a 'labor camp from its origins,' a 'rigid pyramid of crusting hierarchies,' 'a grid expanding the territory of the inorganic,' and 'a linear progression from Prometheus' theft of fire to the International Monetary Fund.'[3] Accordingly, Bradford reproves Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor's inane book, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* — not for its atavistic and regressive theism, but because the authors put the word civilization in quotation marks — a practice that 'reflects the tendency of this fascinating [!] book to posit an alternative or reverse perspective on civilization rather than to challenge its terms altogether' (CIB, footnote 23). Presumably, it is Prometheus who is to be reproved, not these two Earth Mothers, whose tract on chthonic deities, for all its compromises with civilization, is 'fascinating.'

No reference to the megamachine would be complete, to be sure, without quoting from Lewis Mumford's lament on its social effects. Indeed, it is worth noting that such comments have normally misconstrued Mumford's intentions. Mumford was not an antitechnologist, as Bradford and others would have us believe; nor was he in any sense of the word a mystic who would have found Bradford's anticivilizational primitivism to his taste. On this score, I can speak from direct personal knowledge of Mumford's views, when we conversed at some length as participants in a conference at the University of Pennsylvania around 1972.

But one need only turn to his writings, such as Technics and Civilization (TAC), from which Bradford himself quotes, to see that Mumford is at pains to favorably describe 'mechanical instruments'

[3] Bradford, 'Civilization in Bulk, *Fifth Estate* (Spring 1991), p.12.

as 'potentially a vehicle of rational human purposes.'[4] Repeatedly reminding his reader that machines come from human beings, Mumford emphasizes that the machine is 'the projection of one particular side of the human personality' (TAC, p.317). Indeed, one of its most important functions has been to dispel the impact of superstition on the human mind. Thus:

> In the past, the irrational and demonic aspects of life had invaded spheres where they did not belong. It was a step in advance to discover that bacteria, not brownies, were responsible for curdling milk, and that an air-cooled motor was more effective than a witch's broomstick for rapid long distance transportation . . . Science and technics stiffened our morale: by their very austerities and abnegations they . . . cast contempt on childish fears, childish guesses, equally childish assertions. (TAC, p.324)

This major theme in Mumford's writings has been blatantly neglected by the primitivists in our midst — notably, his belief that the machine has made the 'paramount contribution' of fostering 'the technique of cooperative thought and action.' Nor did Mumford hesitate to praise 'the esthetic excellence of the machine form . . . above all, perhaps, the more objective personality that has come into existence through a more sensitive and understanding intercourse with these new social instruments and through their deliberate cultural assimilation' (TAC, p.324). Indeed, 'the technique of creating a neutral world of fact as distinguished from the raw data of immediate experience was the great general contribution of modern analytic science' (TAC, p.361).

Far from sharing Bradford's explicit primitivism, Mumford sharply criticized those who reject the machine absolutely, and he regarded the 'return to the absolute primitive' as a 'neurotic adaptation' to the megamachine itself (TAC, p.302), indeed a catastrophe. 'More disastrous than any mere physical destruction of machines by

[4] Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt Brace & World, 1963), p.301. All page numbers herein refer to this edition.