Bookchin Agonistes

how Murray Bookchin's attempts to "re-enchant humanity" become a pugilistic Bacchanal

Max Cafard

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a review of

Murray Bookchin, *Re-enchanting Humanity: A defense of the human spirit against anti-humanism, misanthropy, mysticism and Primitivism* (London: Cassell, 1995) 284 pp

In this book Murray Bookchin is out to clobber the competition. He's been in training for this one for decades. In his previous works, he explained the crucial importance of developing a "*muscularity* of thought," and revealed that his "ecological project" is a "social *gymnasium* for shedding the sense of powerlessness." After much working out in that gym, he's developed some enormous intellectual muscles, and is a powerful guy indeed. He's often told us of his contempt for those sissified Eastern philosophers and their weak, "passive receptive" outlooks. This philosophical Marlboro Man is firmly in the *Western* tradition, which is, he explains, "*sturdier in its thrust* than the Eastern." There will be no questions about the "sturdiness" of Murray Bookchin's "thrust"! He has passed through the steeling school of politics, which, he tells us, is concerned with "*forging a self*." Once out of the forge, the safely armored self will always be on its guard. For "the guarded mind," he says, is the only Guarantee that we will be "guided by the thin line of truth." This "guarded mind," rigidly following the correct "line" is, he concludes, nothing less than "a fortress," *Eine fest Burg is unser Geist*. When Murray Bookchin writes a book defending "the spirit," it's the spirit that comes out swinging.

Bookchin is convinced that the best defense of humanity or anything else is a good offense, and in this book we see him at his most aggressively offensive. Needless to say, such a muscle-bound thinker can "re-enchant humanity" only in the most ironic sense. And, indeed, his book is no breathless celebration of the wonders of humanity. Rather, it is a carping, acrimonious and often unscrupulous tirade against certain unfortunate humans who happen to disagree with Murray Bookchin's views about humanity. More appropriate titles for such a work might be *The Re-enchantment of the Kvetch, The Phenomenology of Spite*, or (après Jabès) *The Book of Complaints*.

Please do not think that I underestimate the contributions of Murray Bookchin to the history of philosophy. With the "muscularity of thought" of which he is so proud he could certainly have made his mark as a lightweight, welterweight or even middleweight philosopher. He could even have made a career of beating up on featherweight and flyweight philosophers-a ploy that he has in fact used to his philosophico-pugilistic advantage in recent years. In short, philosophically speaking, he coulda been a contenda.

But no! He was never satisfied with such modest success and aspired to the heavyweight championship. Tired of waiting for his shot at the title, he finally appointed himself referee and judge, and then declared himself undisputed champeen of the philosophical world by a yew-nanimous decision. He doesn't seem to realize that he's gotten way out of his class. At times he shadowboxes against real heavyweights and has serious trouble connecting. Or he spends his time stumbling around an imaginary ring, insulting the competition. Sometimes he comes across like a theoretical bum. Which brings us to this book.

Crimes against humanity

One of Bookchin's major targets in this "defense" of humanity is what he considers "anti-humanist" viewpoints, which he hastens to equate with "anti-human" and "misanthropic" ones. While he has recklessly leveled the charge of "anti-humanism" at numerous competing ecological thinkers, he now selects some for a more scathing indictment. Those who have any familiarity with the works of such amiable figures as E.F. Schumacher, William Irwin Thompson, Thomas Berry and Matthew Fox will be surprised by Bookchin's startling revelation that they are one and all card-carrying "anti-human misanthropes." But for Bookchin, slander has become, so to speak, "second nature."

While libelous charges should not be dignified with a lengthy rebuttal, some brief examples of his most outrageous distortions will demonstrate the lengths to which our enchanted humanist is willing to go. In *The Dream of the Earth* Thomas Berry describes humanity as "that being in whom the universe reflects on and celebrates itself." In a previous "analysis," Bookchin managed to dig up one carefully-selected passage from the same work and quote it out of context to create the absolutely false impression that Berry sees humanity as nothing more than "a demonic presence" on this planet. Having perpetrated such a deception, Bookchin now feels justified in dismissing Berry as a "misanthrope" without even a pretense of documentation.

Referring to Schumacher et al., Bookchin comments that the views of these "presumably sophisticated anti-humanists are often the stuff from which the crassest of vulgarities are written for consumption by the New Agers of California and, in recent years, nearly all other points of the compass." (p. 14) The result, he claims, is a "New Age mentality that demonizes human beings in whole or in part." (p. 3) It matters little to Bookchin that these thinkers have little in common with what is usually considered a "New Age" outlook. it matters little that actual New Age tendencies typically do not *demonize* humanity but rather project an unrealistic and simplistic image of human self-dtranscendence. Bookchin's single-minded (and often simple-minded) goal is to discredit the theoretical competition by any means possible. And since most of the readers of these theorists' works are presumably human beings, demonstrating his rivals' complete and utter hatred for anything human must seem quite a promising approach to him.

Bookchin's crusade against "anti-humanism" also focuses on thinkers like E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, who, despite their scientific training and semblance of intelligence, supposedly fail to recognize differences between *homo sapiens* and other species. Much of Bookchin's polemic takes on an inadvertently Swiftian quality as he launches into a heroic and bombastic defense of the proposition that there are indeed differences between man and beast. He wastes many pages marshaling empirical evidence and fulminating indignantly on behalf of the proposition that nothing from an ameba up to the best educated chimp could possibly write the collected works of Shakespeare. One can almost hear him remarking: "and frankly- call me anthropocentric if you will-they couldn't even come up with a good sonnet!" Lest the reader think that I unduly exaggerate, I must quote Bookchin himself, who hastens to assure us that "there is not a shred of evidence to support a belief that animals have faith in anything. Nor do we expect them to have faith, let alone act rationally, with respect to anything aside from their survival." (p. 19, emphasis added) Whoops! So the clever little critters sometimes do actually act rationally. At this point both we and the animals begin to lose whatever faith we may have had in Murray Bookchin's ability to write coherently, let alone think carefully.

As in so many of Bookchin's "analyses," he gives his opponent a less-than-gentle push down the slipperiest of slopes leading inevitably to fascism. "Many of Wilson's notions were previously advanced by the quasi-romantic biologistic movements of central Europe during the 1920s, movements that took an exceptionally reactionary form between 1914 and 1945, and that fed directly into National Socialist ideology." (p. 57) Lacking the scientific background to reply coherently to Wilson, Bookchin (the enraged autodidact with an axe to grind) produces his all-purpose ideological one.

It is not only intellectuals who incur his wrath for their "anti- human" activities and who find themselves implicated in fascism. Bookchin also targets Earth First! members and bioregionalists when he harshly attacks those dangerous individuals who engage in "childishly howling around campfires" (p. 23) or participate in "a juvenile 'Council of All Beings.'" (p. 23) What, one might wonder, is so objectionable about a bit of good-natured howling or pretending that one is a fish (if we may reasonably assume that participants in such councils do not get confused

and actually think they are fish)? Bookchin complains that such "antics" can "easily become sinister when they are used to create atavistic movements, socially reactionary impulses, and dangerous fantasies that obstruct attempts to change an irrational society into a rational one." By the end of the paragraph the unfortunate campers and fish-impersonators are found to exhibit "disturbing parallels to earlier movements" that helped "make the twentieth century one of the bloodiest in history." (p. 23)

Ignorance of the law of karma is no excuse

Topics on which Bookchin loves to make ex cathedra pronouncements based on the most patent ignorance are mysticism, "spiritual" phenomena, and Eastern philosophy and religion. In reality, he knows little if anything about the history, literature or phenomenology of mysticism. He has apparently met a few local mystics in Burlington, Vermont, heard about some in California (which he calls the "Mystical Zone"), and read a few popularized works. By Bookchinesque standards of scholarship this is a more than adequate basis for the most sweeping generalizations on the subject. Mysticism, he tells us, "makes its strongest appeal to the authority of belief over thought." (p. 86) But this is complete nonsense. One reason why so many mystics have gotten into trouble over the ages is that their outlook so often clashes with systems of belief, including the most orthodox ones, and because it typically privileges direct experience over any sort of authority. Nor would most mystics recognize the mysticism of Bookchin's parody, in which its salient characteristics are that it is "warm, subjective, caring, and feminine." (p. 86) He seems to have confused his mysticism polemic with his standard diatribe against ecofeminism, another outlook that he considers irredeemably "passive-receptive" and lacking in that crucial "muscularity of thought."

Bookchin is concerned with policing the ecology movement for the possible growth of such mystical tendencies. He grudgingly concedes that despite the dangers of mystico-misanthropy, not "all ecomystics are necessarily misanthropes." (p. 87) No doubt some of his best friends are ecomystics. But this is hardly a generous concession, since misanthropy is rather difficult to find among mystics, "eco-" or otherwise. In fact, the best known contemporary "ecomystic," Starhawk, has nothing but the most affirmative sentiments about humanity, as anyone who has read her books or heard her speak can testify. This has not deterred Bookchin from sarcastically labeling her "Starvulture" and dismissing her ideas with complete contempt.

What Bookchin seems to find particularly repellent is the tendency of mysticism and Eastern philosophy to produce "passive-receptive personalities." He has long propagated the view that Taoism has been historically nothing more than a means of keeping the peasants under control, and, when transplanted to North America, becomes a useful tool of capitalism. Such vulgar leftist platitudes continue in the present work. Indeed, they get worse. Returning to the topic of Eastern traditions near the end of the book, Bookchin sinks to a new level of ignorance and parochialism. Flippantly dismissing the charge that his view might appear "Eurocentric," he pronounces "the fatalistic religion of the East" not to be "on a level comparable to revolutionary Puritanism," and declares Taoism and Buddhism not to be "comparable to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and socialism in its various forms, let alone to such great social eruptions as the English, American, and French revolutions." (p. 257)

There is a great deal of nonsense in this statement, not the least of which is the idea that any single historical event, even an important revolution, could somehow be on a much higher "level" than Buddhism, the most significant cultural and philosophical force in Asia over a period of 2500 years. Nor is Bookchin qualified to make such authoritative pronouncements about where Taoism rates in his simplistic 1-to-10 scale of social phenomena. Although he has had this basic distinction patiently explained to him several times, he continually confuses ancient Taoist philosophy (the Tao Chia) with the often superstitious and hierarchical Taoist religious sect (the Tao Chiao). Their radically divergent principles are explained in any good introductory text in Chinese philosophy. Yet Mr. Rationality has continued, either deceptively or self- deceptively, to confound principles and practices when this is useful in his diatribes against Taoism and other spiritual traditions.

Shallow and rather anti-social. For ten years Bookchin has been obsessed with his vendetta against deep ecology. Despite his vague anti-corporate rhetoric, one will search Bookchin's work in vain for a detailed analysis of the social and ecological transgressions of a single transnational corporation. On the other hand, one will find excruciatingly detailed explanations of how various deep ecologists are a clear and present danger to planet earth.

But don't bother to look. His valid points have been stated better by less rabid and more coherent critics, while the vast majority of his remarks have consisted of hasty generalizations, ad hominem fallacies, flimsy slippery slope arguments, and outright nonsense.

Bookchin's comments on the influence of deep ecology illustrate his usual obliviousness to contemporary culture. He labors under the bizarre illusion that were it not for deep ecology and certain other cultural trends (including "lifestyle anarchism") that he imagines to have deluded the masses, American society would long ago have embraced radical politics, and specifically his radical politics, which he devoutly believes to have all the compelling qualities of revealed truth. For Bookchin, deep ecology has achieved its extraordinary success (which for him means that it has received considerably more attention than have his own ideas) because it "was an excellent analgesic for the intellectual headaches of a culture that felt more at home with Disneyland and Hollywood than with political radicalism." (p. 93) Bookchin must get all his news from *Green Perspectives*. [*Editor's note*: An obscure publication that publishes nothing but articles by Murray Bookchin and his faithful exegete Janet Biehl.] To the extent that the mainstream culture is even aware of deep ecology, it sees it more as a latter-day Communist plot rather than a cure for its headaches.

Let's be realistic. Had deep ecology never appeared, Bookchin's political ideas would have remained as socially insignificant as they are at present, and he would be attacking some other competing philosophy as the new opiate of the masses concocted by those sly counter-revolutionaries. The lack of appeal of Bookchinism is caused neither by deep ecology nor by "lifestyle anarchism," but rather by the fact that it is a narrow, culturally brain-dead dogmatism, enclosed within its own ideological universe and willfully out of touch with the messy realities of any world that might be vaguely familiar to actual people.

In a rather garbled statement, Bookchin notes that "not surprisingly, the phrase deep ecology first appeared as the title of a book which was in an anthology [sic] edited by Michael Tobias in 1984." (p. 96) He doesn't bother to explain what might be either surprising or unsurprising about this obscure fact. However, what many might find not only surprising but indeed astounding, in view of Bookchin's later indictment of anyone using the term "deep ecology" in an even vaguely positive sense, is the fact that he himself contributed an essay to the volume in question. In a footnote, he attempts to defend his decision to participate by hypocritically claiming that "at the time, I protested the use of this title for an anthology containing my article, 'Toward a Philosophy of Nature,' only to be reassured by Tobias that the anthology contained many people [sic] who were not deep ecologists, including Garrett Hardin!". (p. 117)

Bookchin is transparently engaged in rewriting history (as pathetically petty as the scale of this history may be). The fact is that Mr. Tobias solicited essays for a book entitled Deep Ecology and Prof. Bookchin voluntarily chose to contribute an article appearing under that rubric. If Bookchin did not want to include his essay in a work with that title, he was certainly free to exercise the great anarchist right of voluntary (non-)association and have nothing to do with the whole business. Furthermore, if Tobias actually presented to Bookchin the ridiculous argument that the latter recounts, this should have given him even more reason to reject the project. But no! Instead, he voluntarily agreed to the publication of his own article under the rubric of "deep ecology" and then went on to condemn others for using the same term in even the most generic sense, accusing them of everything from hatred of humanity to cryptofascism.

Let's look carefully at a bit of Bookchin's supposedly devastating critique of deep ecology. His arguments almost invariably reveal his ineptitude in philosophical analysis. This is illustrated well by his discussion of the concept of "biocentric equality" that is held by some (though not all) deep ecologists. In his view, "[if the self must merge—or dissolve, as I claim, into rain forests, ecosystems, mountains, rivers 'and so on,' these phenomena must share in the intellectuality, imagination, foresight, communicative abilities, and empathy that human beings possess, that is, if 'biocentric equality' is to have any meaning." (p. 100) In fact, "biocentric equality" is a rather confused concept that I have made good clean fun of elsewhere; however, one will not discover why by listening to Bookchin's superficial and unsupported "claims."

Bookchin once stated that "when a rational society is achieved, its citizens will at least be more rational than Max Cafard and his ilk." Admittedly, I (and perhaps even I and my entire ilk, taken collectively) have only a modest store of rationality. But let's talk reason.

Listen, Bookchin! Listen to reason: First, if one contends that a human being and a river, for instance, are both part of a larger "self," this in no way implies that the river possesses any capacity for "empathy," any more than it implies that the human being thereby possesses the capacity to be a home for fish. Rather, it only implies that the larger whole of which they are both a part (called the 'larger self' in this view) has both these capacities in some sense.

Secondly, the concept of "biocentric equality" has no implication of "equality of qualities" among those beings to whom (or to which) the equality is attributed. Indeed, this concept, like most concepts of moral equality, are significant precisely because they attribute such equality to beings that are in other important ways unequal. Deep ecologists and other ecophilosophers who employ concepts such as "equal intrinsic value" or "equal inherent worth" clearly mean that certain beings deserve equal consideration or equal treatment, not that they possess certain faculties or characteristics to an equal degree.

The fact that Bookchin takes as the only possible meaning for the concept of biocentric equality the one he can most easily attack betrays his habitual role of the amateur philosopher ineptly jousting with caricatures of his opponents' views.

Defies the laws of thought

Unfortunately, even my extraordinarily indulgent editors will not allow me the space to summarize the collection of logical fallacies and faulty analysis this book has provided. I will therefore limit myself to a few of the most flagrant examples of Bad Analysis.

Bookchin has always been confused on the relationship between nature and culture. His vague statements about "first" and "second nature" (nature and culture) and about things "grading" into one another now increasingly give way to more obvious confusion and self-contradiction. For example, he states that "[a]n institutionalized community, composed of structured family groups, constitutes the initial biological basis of second nature." (p. 29) He seems to mean by "second nature" something like human culture, and institutions and social structures are certainly cultural, not merely biological. How, then, can an institutionalized community, a product and constituent of culture, be the biological basis for culture?

Bookchin does introduce one new theoretical category into his discussion of this topic. While for twenty years he's been propounding the presumably illuminating theory that "first nature *grades* into second nature" we are now vouchsafed a new revelation: second nature "eases in a graded way out of first nature." (p. 30) Some may find the idea of sudden qualitative jumps and things emerging unsuspected out of other things highly disturbing. Fortunately, Bookchin has delivered us from such untoward dialectical movements. Things *just kind of ease into one another*.

Often Bookchin refutes his own arguments by unwisely quoting too much of his intended victim's text. For example, he attacks Richard Dawkins for both incoherence and anti-humanism. While he fails in his sketchy analysis to give any evidence of Dawkins' incoherence, he quotes that writer to the effect that humans are capable of "pure, disinterested altruism," a quality "that has never existed before in the whole history of the world," and that "we, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators." (pp. 40–41) Whether this view is correct or not, it is enough, by Bookchin's own standards, to acquit Dawkins of Bookchin's charge of anti- humanism. On the page after the quote, Bookchin comments that "antihumanist protocol insists that there is no objective basis for elevating humanity over the most elevated of apes in the primate world." (p. 42) Yet his own citations show that Dawkins, whom he is indicting for alleged anti-humanism, proposes precisely such a basis. This is not an isolated case of such incredibly sloppy argumentation. Only a few pages later, Bookchin attacks James Lovelock's "cosmic antihumanism" for its "strong theistic features," after which he quotes Lovelock's statement that "for the present, my belief in God rests at the stage of a positive agnosticism." (p. 56)

It is instructive to examine one of Bookchin's rare ventures into the field of American popular culture. He attempts to assess the state of the contemporary American psyche based on a reading of The Simpsons. And what does he find noteworthy about this popular cartoon series? Certainly not the fact that this more than vaguely anti-authoritarian series mocks politicians, religious leaders, parental authorities, and the local police, that its most

loathsome character is (of all things) a capitalist, that its favorite public menace is a nuclear power plant, and that its most heroic figure is a preadolescent, clear- thinking, compassionate, environmentalist, vegetarian feminist! Of course not! According to the sophisticated canons of Bookchinite cultural critique The Simpsons is nothing more than an expression of the infantile quality of American culture. "Like the new popularity of The Simpsons, a television cartoon series for adult audiences, the new infantilism seems to appeal to a still surviving sucking instinct in the psyche that is beyond the constraints of age and experience." (p. 114) One of the "constraints of age and experience" in Bookchin's case seems to be the complete obliteration of any sense of humor, irony or satire.

Bookchin's rantings about the noxious effects of post- structuralism on contemporary culture are reminiscent of Alan Bloom's ridiculous claim in *The Closing of the American Mind* that a major factor in the decline of American culture is "German philosophy." One major difference between Bloom and Bookchin (other than the latter's inclusion of dangerous French thinkers) is that Bookchin actually undertakes an explanation of the mechanism by which such an unlikely process takes place. He assures us that "Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida speak to millions of people today through the impresarios of widely viewed television documentaries, such as Bill Moyers, David Suzuki, and Desmond Morris." (p. 232) One must be particularly curious about Desmond Morris's concept of the influence of onto-theo-logo-phallo-centrism on the naked ape and how that glib commentator surreptitiously conveyed it to viewers of his TV series.

Bookchin's obliviousness to the discourse in contemporary political thought becomes quite evident in his musings on the concept of justice at the end of the book. Arguing rather pointlessly for the superiority of his conception of freedom over other theorists' conception of justice, he contends that "[unlike justice, which works with the pretensions that all are equal in theory, despite their many differences in fact, freedom makes no pretense that all are equal but tries to compensate for the inequalities that occur with age, physical infirmity, and different abilities." (p. 260) Interestingly, after attacking the idea of equality, he describes his own goal as an "equality of unequals." Bookchin becomes so lost in verbiage that he is unaware of the fact that both he and the theorists he attacks share the same general position: that people are equal in some respects (in deserving respect, consideration, attention to their needs, etc.) and unequal in others (in having different personal qualities, positions in existing society, etc.). But what is most ludicrous about Bookchin's self-congratulatory discussion is that he seems completely oblivious to the debate in political theory over "justice" for the past twenty years. While he seems to think his concept of "compensation for inequalities" to be a bold new advance over "theories of justice," the most famous theory of justice in the history of modern political thought (that of Rawls) embraces precisely such a principle.

Assaults the English language

An area in which one must certainly recognize Bookchin's revolutionary creativity is in his use of language. This self professed anarchist boldly defies the oppressive laws of grammar and linguistic usage. For example, one can be confident that whenever Bookchin refers to anything as being "literally" any particular way, it is most assuredly that way in a metaphorical sense only. For example, he reports that "the counterculture's mysticism literally exploded in California," (p. 92) which might cause one to wonder why he is still concerned about it. On the other hand, he seems to be literally referring to himself when he comments that "he may literally get lost in this ecomystical shuffle." (p. 87)

He is also a creative genius with figures of speech. He informs us, for instance, that "[coercive measures here or harsh demographic policies there do not usually come in bits and pieces, like candy bars from a slot machine." (p. 64) Bookchin's British editors probably thought that this meant something intelligible in ordinary American English. They should be informed that American slot machines do not ordinarily pay off in mangled candy bars. In referring to Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, Bookchin quips that it "found readers across political, social and cultural lines with the carelessness of an infant scrawling on a blank page." (p. 65) We can all agree that the book should certainly be more careful when it's out looking for readers.

Bookchin has long been a master of the mixed metaphor, and occasionally even manages a double mixed metaphor. In seeking to delineate deep ecologists Deval and Sessions' relationship to the previously-mentioned mystical detonation, he remarks that "their academic cloister did not render them immune to the mystical viruses

that were exploding." A moderately inept stylist might wonder at the fact that their academic cloister didn't protect them from mystical vices, or perhaps that their academic bomb shelter didn't protect them from exploding missiles of mysticism, but only in l'imaginaire Bookchinesque can one envision an academic cloister besieged by exploding mystical viruses.

As Bookchin's world has increasingly contracted into the sphere of his own polemics, his language has become progressively more Pickwickian. For example, he finds it important to point out that "[the majority of animals, moreover, merely dwell in their environment." (p. 17) Why, one might ask, would he consider it important to think of the majority of animals—all those little zooplankton, beetles, etc.—as "dwelling"? The secret is that he is annoyed that some deep ecologists and Heideggerians like to talk about human beings "dwelling." He's convinced that there's something "unsavory" about this concept, but he's not very clear about what it is. The convenient solution is to make "dwelling" something that mere animals do-so that the deep ecologists are once again trying to reduce us all to a sub-human state! The fact that hardly anyone who learned English as a first language would talk about animals "dwelling," much less think that it's what they habitually spend their time doing, makes no difference in the tin-eared world of Bookchinism.

Bookchin has always had a very ambiguous relationship with Webster's Dictionary of the English Language. He quotes it with the alacrity of an energetic undergraduate, when he thinks that it will buttress his argument, while he obliviously rewrites it when actual usage is an obstacle. For example, he boldly asserts that "*hierarchy* is in fact a social term-hierarchies are found nowhere in first nature." (p. 49) But in fact, the word "hierarchy" is used to refer not only to non-human organisms, but even to non-living entities that are arranged, as we say, in "hierarchical" order. While Bookchin intensely dislikes what he calls "mysticism," he often falls prey to what has aptly been described as *word-mysticism*, in which a term magically means just one thing.

In this case, that thing is whatever Swami Bookchin needs for it to mean for his polemical purposes.

Bookchin found not guilty of anthropocentrism—

Because he's guilty of egocentrism, and everything can't be in the center.

One of the most "repellent" (to use one of his favorite words) aspects of Bookchin's diatribes is his tendency to exaggerate absurdly his own importance in developing certain concepts, and to ignore or even denigrate others who made important contributions in the same area. His claims of originality go to bizarre lengths. He has seriously maintained that he was the first person ever to come up with the rather obvious observation that "the American Dream has turned into a nightmare"-though he forgot to say it in print-and it would not be surprising if he eventually claims credit for "it's not the heat, it's the humidity."

In the present work, Bookchin attacks Arne Naess's ideas "on local autonomy, decentralization, and 'soft technologies' as being "old hat" when Naess wrote about them in 1972. Bookchin points out that he himself mentioned some of these ideas as early as 1962. Why Naess should be criticized for supporting such ideas in 1972 is far from clear, since he made no claims of having invented them. Bookchin, on the other hand, claims for his own private party ideas that have a long history extending from ancient times to the work of one of his own recent libertarian predecessors such as Ralph Borgodi and Lewis Mumford. It is ironic that Bookchin refers to what he calls Arne Naess's "acolytes" no less than four times in the space of about a page, even though Naess has shown no interest in seeking followers, creating a rigid dogma, or founding a school. Bookchin, on the other hand, has always acted in a dogmatic and sectarian manner, treated his ideas as if they were copyrighted private property, and demanded of his followers the deferential attitude befitting an acolyte.

Other efforts at self-promotion are more amusing than annoying. He has always fantasized being at the center of a Great Revolution (of the authentic, First World type, rather than the second-rate, Third World variety, which interests him little). The best opportunity he's had was the 1968 events in Paris, and for many years he's told of hopping on a plane to make the revolutionary scene before Thermidor hit. If we read carefully, we now discover that his first-hand experience of May '68 came, unfortunately, in the month of July. He reveals that he made a "lengthy" visit to Paris "in mid-July [sic] 1968, when streetfighting occurred throughout the capital on the evening before Bastille Day." (p. 202) Bookchin is obviously trying to convey the impression that he was in the midst of

things during the historic "events" of 1968. But as one history summarizes the events after the June 23 elections: "France closes down for the summer holidays while some students organize a long march' and 'summer universities' open to all." [*Writing on the Wall: May 1968: A Documentary Anthology*, ed. Vladimir Fisera (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 40.] Apparently open to Bookchin, soixant-huitard manqué, who got a short course in insurrection during his "long visit" of mid-July. Most Parisians on the other hand, including the students, had already made their "long march" a la plage. When I was in Paris shortly after Bookchin, I found "the capital" to be unusually quiet and scrubbed by the counterrevolutionaries to a positively un-Gallic degree of cleanliness. The only writing I saw on the usually graffiti-laden Parisian walls was the ubiquitous *Déense d'Afficher*. Perhaps the non-Francophone Bookchin thought that this was a revolutionary slogan. A Parisian friend who was there when Bookchin passed through tells me that our traveling revolutionary philosopher must have taken some raucous 14 Juillet parties for street fights.

Am I guilty of residual Bookchinism?

Probably so. Some may suspect that in the spirit of the Master of Malice himself I have unjustly emphasized the negative aspects of his book, and neglected its strengths. I willingly concede that I would probably need a long stay in the Mystical Zone to be drained of all the spleen I no doubt absorbed by osmosis during the time of my misguided youth spent on the fringes of the Bookchin cult. Yet, I don't think that I have been unfair in my assessment of this abysmally awful book. Although I have focused on a few of its more glaring flaws, they typify the spitefulness and mediocrity of thought that pervade the entire work. It simply has no significant strengths, other than the fact that it illustrates so well certain qualities of Bookchin's character and thinking.

As Hegel quips in the preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, "the true is the Bacchanalian revel in which all the participants are drunk; yet because each participant collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose."

If the dialectic is indeed an orgy of drunken revelry, the old brawler Bookchin shows himself in this work to be a bit punch- drunk. He's obviously on the ropes, and should know when to drop out. Yet, in his own muscle-bound mind, he remains the heavyweight champion of the philosophical world, defending his crown against all takers. No repose for this slugger. Still in the ring, still fighting.

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