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Anarchism and Geography

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When the students took control of Tiananmen Square in Peking in 1989, it was common to hear Western reporters and commentators referring to a situation of 'anarchy'. The term was frequently used to describe (apparent) disorganisation and the fact that the students did not readily elect leaders. But more often than not its usage was incorrect and had negative connotations. Anarchy does not mean chaos and lack of organisation, nor does it necessarily mean violence. And if the student movement was indeed anarchic, this was most likely a good thing - they were ruling and organising themselves rather than being manipulated, say, by military leaders or party cadres.

But these and other negative images of anarchism are perpetuated in our society: so much so that, we imagine, very few teachers would want to bother about exploring anarchism with their classes, perhaps thinking it even improper or irresponsible so to do.

This issue of CIGE will dispel the myths surrounding anarchism. And we hope that it will show anarchism's exciting potential as an area of study in the classroom, to stimulate critical and lively discussion about the nature of existing hierarchical power relationships in our society - and to encourage the imagination of young people to think about radically different ways of social organisation which might eliminate such relationships.

First, Ian Cook describes what anarchism is, and he summarises for us the categories of anarchism recognised by George Woodcock, the most well known academic writer on the subject. Ian's introduction shows us that anarachism is not just an ideology of opposition - there are many principles that it stands for. It has weaknesses: for example some, but not all, anarchist traditions see a positive role for

violence in social change; they perhaps over-emphasise the role of the individual in such change rather than collective political action; and, by definition, there is no political party to direct the revolutionary transformation of society. But its strengths are many, and they are particularly appealing to teachers who want to explore new ways of classroom organisation and practical approaches to learning which are part of a broader thrust towards radically different social organisation. The strengths include the spontaneity of anarchist activity, the communal nature of many anarchist concerns, and the role of mutual aid in anarchist society.

Anarchism and geography have very close links. If we were to create an anarchist society in Britain, or anywhere else, then by definition there would be huge changes in the social and economic and political geography of the country, while an anarchist world would involve greatly changed geographical relations between nations. Furthermore, much anarchism has been infused by the life and work of Peter Kropotkin - the turn-of-the-century geographer, biologist and revolutionary whose work has been 'rediscovered' by geographers and town planners, and by the green movement in the 1970s.

Another, more recent, influence is the prolific writer and anarchist Colin Ward; whose works include The Child in the City, Tenants Take Over Housing: an Anarchist Approach, and many others. We are fortunate that he has contributed to this issue. We asked him to tell us about some of the influences on himself and his life and work. Many readers of CIGE will no doubt know of him through his work on environmental education and via the founding of BEE (the Bulletin of Environmental Education, but he also edited the journals Freedom and Anarchy. Colin Ward hates the formalisation of the education process because it stifles true learning through experience, via the emphasis on paper qualifications and hierarchy and other rituals. Anarchistic education is perhaps a truer form of education than that found in most of the education system - it starts from the experience of the children; not regarding any particular forms of experience as innately more significant or educationally valuable than any other forms, and it eliminates hierarchies and emphasises self-learning. Dartington School embodies many anarchistic educational principles, and the 'Dartington experiment' is fittingly described by Michael Duane. Fitting, because Michael was once headmaster of a comprehensive in London. He ran it along anarchist lines - lines that gave the school a meaning and significance that it had previously lacked in the lives of many of the pupils. Like Dartington, it proved too much for the educational establishment, and was subjected to many misguided attacks.

Colin Ward is a follower of Elisee Reclus the geographer and Patrick Geddes the planner, and he pulls their influences together with reference to the theme of urban planning, linking Third World shanty towns and modern Western urban life to argue for the imperative need for people to be involved in creating their own urban environments. Myrna Breitbart is another who has done much to disseminate anarchist ideas, particularly within geography. She follows up on Kropotkin and on Colin Ward's ideas on urban environmental education. She links them to Giroux's concept of the school as a 'contested terrain' of struggle against capitalism by the oppositional culture based in the community and the home, in which it is essential that pupils are introduced to the values and collective beliefs of the latter. Mryna presents innovative case studies and examples from the United States, and shows how, despite the problems posed by the wider social context beyond the school, urban environmental education can be an enriching and liberating experience for the pupil.

David Pepper suggests a different route to anarchist themes, through stimulating children's imagination via the visions of a future Britain presented by Peter Kropotkin in Fields, Factories and Workshops and also by the creative socialist William Morris in News from Nowhere. David presents key themes in these texts, and suggests that pupils could be invited to consider such questions as: how realistic are such anarchist scenarios; can or should cities disappear; is self-sufficiency achievable; and how can we create a society which values people, places and environments more highly than the present one? In considering these and other questions, pupils would be considering the concept of 'humans making their own history', and this should be a core element in geographical education.

Many might feel that anarchist visions of education and of society are utopian and thus unrealisable. The last group of articles suggests that, although difficult to achieve, anarchist ideals can usefully inform communal developments in society, especially if they are linked to other contemporary social movements. Nickie Hallam and David Pepper explore the links between feminism, anarchism, and ecology, to show the central role of personal experience in the education process, and the need to achieve balance between the male and female within all of us, and also between the self and others. Anarchism has been mainly a male-dominated movement (although Janis Newman, in her biographical piece, illustrates the vibrant contribution made by Emma Goldman), and it can learn much from feminist and green philosophy and action. Nickie and David pull out common features, such as the holistic

perspective, and resistance to hierarchy, to outline the fruitful possibilities arising from exploring the interface between these ideas.

Anarchism is a philosophy of action. Dennis Hardy, author of the fascinating book on Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England, draws on the practical tradition describing community experiments in Britain, from those of Winstanley and the Diggers through a number of nineteenth century communities, especially Whiteway in the Cotswolds, and on to the 1960s and after, when a new wave of 'alternative' lifestyles and social groupings came into being. Dennis argues that, although fragile, such communities pose fundamental questions and issues for geographers and others to consider and study.

Living in them can be difficult, not least because conventional norms have so structured our thinking and behaviour. The anarchist can recognise the defects of conventional society, but cannot readily free her or himself from them. Andrew Rigby, author of a seminal book on communes in the late 1960s (Alternative Realities), describes the lessons to be learned from constructing these different social forms, and the tensions which have to be resolved within them. These tensions include that of trying to practice according to one's principles, reconciling the needs of the individual with those of the group, the influence of traditional gender roles, and of the tradition by which we are socialised into caring for property. Andrew shows that, despite such tensions, the often painful processes of social interaction in an anarchistic community lead to deeper self-knowledge and deeper social bonds. As he puts it, 'the struggle to reconstruct our institutions cannot be separated from the struggle to transform ourselves'. In so doing, he reiterates a major anarchist (and feminist) belief that 'the personal is political'. This means that in everything we do we are making political statements. By changing how we think and live our lifestyles we can, in theory, change the very nature of society. And the responsibility for initiating change starts with the individual - you and us. This issue of CIGE comes at a time when radical social change in the West seems unlikely, yet the challenges of our environmental predicament, of social injustice and of exploitation in the Third World all seem to demand radical social change. In this context the message of the personal and the political is profoundly relevant: an educational message of the greatest importance.

Anarchistic Alternatives: an introduction

Ian Cook

This article is about some basic categories of anarchism, the main principles of anarchist thought, and some of the main strengths and weaknesses of anarchist theory and practice.

Preamble:

My first encounter with anarchist ideas was in late 1977, when Raechel Dixey,then a final year student at Liverpool Polytechnic, wrote an essay on Kropotkin. I remember writing a lengthy critique of the ideas expressed in the essay (but still gave the essay the high mark it warranted!) and was generally scornful of the unrealistic nature of such ideas. I mention this for two reasons, firstly because of my gratitude to Ms Dixey for alerting me to the potential of anarchist perspectives, and secondly because I am sure that many of you will be, as I was myself, initially scornful of many of the elements of anarchist thought shown in this article and in this issue generally. If I can reassure at least some of you that anarchist alternatives have a worthy intellectual pedigree and are still viable in contemporary society then what follows will be worthwhile; if not, then at least you may have a clearer impression of the peculiar creature that is anarchism.

Exploring Anarchism: Types and Principles

The very word 'anarchism' strikes, if not terror, then at least upset in the hearts and minds of 'respectable' people in many parts of the globe. The word is often employed in a negative, pejorative sense, and 'anarchy' seems to imply nihilism, chaos and destruction. Although there is a dark, violent, anti-social side to anarchism, much of the negative imagery associated with it is largely mythical, based either on outdated nineteenth century stereotypes and the black-beared, long-cloaked bomb-thrower, hell-bent on death and revolution, or on inaccurate associations with the

shaven-haired, leather-jacketed, chain-wielding punk. It is true that groups such as Baader-Meinhof, the Red Army Faction, the Angry Brigade or Class War either claim to be, or are portrayed as, anarchist, and via their actions they contribute to the negative press which anarchism receives. But I would argue that these groups are either completely non-anarchist in their ideology, or represent only a minority of anarchists and anarchism generally. As this issue of CIGE shows, anarchistic alternatives provide fertile breeding grounds for experimental ideas and practice in social and sociable behaviour, and they deserve to be taken seriously. Many, if not most, strands of anarchist thinking adhere to non-violence as a modus operandi, though as we shall see there does remain a certain ambivalence regarding the role of violence in social change and of the relative autonomy of the individual in the social nexus.

In a very real sense, anarchism defies definition. In common with many other philosophies, particularly Marxism, it is a fluid, perennially changing set of ideas and practices which are difficult to pin down. George Woodcock, one of the foremost anarchist authors, lists six varieties of anarchism, for example, as follows:

> Individual anarchism; Mutualism; Collectivism; Anarchist Communism; Anarch-syndicalism; Pacifist Anarchism
>
> (Woodcock, 1975, pp17-18)

These branches of anarchism (with the exception of pacifist anarchism which is in a separate category) can be differentiated principally by how much they emphasise the individual as opposed to the institutionalised social group or collective. They can be briefly summarised as follows:

1 Individualist anarchism

This category of anarchism is most associated in the popular consciousness with what can be called the demonology of anarchism noted above. Themes of chaos, disorder, brutalism, violence and 'anything goes' revolve around this perspective. Max Stirner ('Max Highbrow') - in real life a mild-mannered teacher called Johann Schmidt - popularised this approach in the 1840s, in a book entitled The Ego and His Own. According to Woodcock, Stirner:

> sets forth as his ideal the egoist, the man who realises himself in conflict with the collectivey and with other individuals, who does not shrink from the use of any means in 'the war of each against all' ... (and who) may then enter ... into a 'union of egoists', without rules or regulations, for the arrangement of matters of common convenience Woodcock, 1975, 87-88).

One can imagine the conflict and tensions within such a 'union of egoists' if this could ever cohere for a sufficient length of time to attain semi-permanent existence! And yet such an individualist creed has appeal for some, not least perhaps for those who wish to push their egoism to the limit. To my mind the ideas in this branch of anarchism can be dangerously anti-social and deserving of the criticism which is wrongly given of anarchism as a whole.

2 Mutualism

The egoism of individualist anarchism is much removed from the reality of the other five branches of anarchism noted here, which stress mutuality, co-operation and social harmony, although, as will be examined below, many of them remain ambivalent as regards violence ('for the cause'). Mutualism was stimulated initially by the Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, in the 1840s and after. As the word suggests, it is based on social effort and association (Proudhon himself was the first person willingly to accept the label 'anarchist' and he is associated with the famous but often misinterpreted phrase 'property is theft'). Mutualism allows possession of property, but not exploitation of others, therefore work is to be based on a system of mutual credits organised through people's banks. A federal system of local communities and industrial associations would be built up, bound not by laws but by a 'social contract' and mutual interest. In large part, therefore, this approach forms a working-class anarchistic alternative centred on workers' management.

3 Collectivism

This approach, stimulated by Proudhon and later by Bakunin, takes the ideas of mutualism further by envisaging collective rather than individual possession of goods, with people grouping together voluntarily into larger social units of a dozen or more adults. The individual member would still have certain rights to the products of his or her labour, however, for society exists in a delicate balance between the individual desires and the collective wishes. Collectivism shades into the next category, which increasingly emphasises equalisation of the situation of each member of the social unit.

4 Anarchist Communism

My own preference is for this approach (also termed anarch-communism, communal anarchism and communist anarchism), which I regard as the most socially positive of the six categories. It is also perhaps the most difficult to realise in practice. Developed by Kropotkin in the late nineteenth century, this approach centres on the slogan 'From each according to his means, to each according to his needs'). It advocates a voluntary federation of communes each containing up to 200 families, with property collectively owned and food and other social products allocated not on the basis of prior wealth or differential abilities to produce, but simply in terms of individual needs as decided by the commune. Brought up as we are in a capitalist society which emphasises competition and being first, this approach will be anathema to many, but Kropotkin and others believed firmly that we are essentially co-operative rather than competitive creatures and that such an alternative society is not only desirable but is also feasible.

5 Anarch-syndicalism

Sometimes termed revolutionary syndicalism, this is the most institutionalised form of anarchism (and hence closest to conventional forms of socialism, and possibly, therefore not strictly anarchism at all), being based on the philosophy of 'direct action' via trade unions. This approach grew in France then spread to Spain, Italy and parts of Latin America in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The concept of the 'general strike' is important (the revolution of folding arms), with the workers taking over factories and utilities to establish an alternative society run by the unions, but in practice this part of the movement became largely a conventional trade union movement fighting peacefully for members' rights. An International Workingmen's Association was eventually formed to to link mutualist and syndicalist ideas, and this still exists with headquarters in Stockholm.

Further evidence of the vitality of this part of anarchism was provided in July 1988 when candidates of Spain's anarchist trade union movement (CNT, the National Workers' Confederation) topped the poll in elections in the important SEAT plant in Barcelona's Zona Franca. A newspaper report called this event the Spanish anarchists'

> most important victory since the death of General Franco and the restoration of democracy more than 10 years ago (Hooper, 88).

6 Pacifist anarchism

This is the explicitly non-violent form of anarchism, sometimes known as Tolstoyanism or, to some at least, Ghandhiism (Ostergaard, 1971), after the approach adopted by the master of non-violence for peaceful change, Mahatma Ghandhi. This category can involve small groups or large masses of people in peaceful social change. Tolstoy's writings, for example, influenced the setting up of small communities in Britain and elsewhere, devoted generally to rural self-subsistence in harmony with nature and with other members of the community (Hardy, 1979). Ghandhi was influenced by Tolstoy, among others, and he developed such ideas in his sarvoday movement. 'Sarvoday' means 'welfare of all' and Ghandhi advocated that this notion should be applied at the village scale via a return to a simpler economic system free of external control and with fairer distribution of the fruits of the villagers' labours. This village industry would be encouraged in swaraj or self-rule, in a decentralised and localised fashion. 'Passive resistance' was encouraged against British rule and the expansion of large-scale industrial enterprises. The emphasis on village regeneration proved to be fairly successful, not solving India's massive problems but nonetheless having a considerable positive impact in the 1930s when the movement was at its strongest, and in the modern era via the bhoodan or land redistribution movement.

Whichever branch of anarchism is followed, the common starting point for each is a rejection of any higher form of rule authority government. An=without, archon=ruler, hence:

> anarchism is the doctrine which contends that government is the source of most of our social troubles and that there are viable alternative forms of voluntary organisation (Woodcock, 1977, p11).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was more scathing:

> To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated at, regulated, docketed, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, weighed, censored, ordered about, by men(sic) who have neither the right nor the knowledge nor the virtue. To be governed is to be, on the pretext of the general interest, taxed, drilled, held to ransom, exploited, monopolised, extorted, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed, then at the least resistance, at the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, abused, annoyed, followed, bullied, beaten, disarmed, garotted, imprisoned, machine-gunned, judged, condemned, deported, flayed, sold, betrayed, and finally mocked, ridiculed, insulted, dishonoured. That's government, that's its justice, that's its morality! (quoted in Joll, 1979, p62).

Strong sentiments! But they provide just the starting point for the anarchist critique of the existing order. Giver that government is, mainly, embodied in the state, the anarchist is, consequently, strongly anti-state and believes that it should be abolished or overthrown. Because many people associate government with laws and order and upholding of 'civilised' values, this starting point clearly worries them and turns them away from anarchist ideas. But I suggest that a society without government as we know it is not only feasible, but also is increasingly necessary given the alienation from government which is increasingly evident in contemporary society.

Be that as it may, anarchism has other principles also. The social features which anarchism is against include:

1 capitalism

2 giantism

3 hierarchy

4 centralism

5 urbanism

6 specialism

7 competitiveness

Taking each in turn, anarchists are, in the main, anti-capitalist, for they regard capitalism as being a form of rule as well as a creator of inequality and poverty for

the majority. This viewpoint distinguishes them from those (mainly right-wing) libertarians who believe in individual liberty and the free-market economy. The other basic principles tend to flow from opposition to the state and capitalism. Thus, anarchists oppose giantism, whether expressed in the form of a large organisation or corporation, or in the physical form of a motorway or monolithic tower block. The giant corporate structure is regarded as remote from the individual employee or consumer, the second, physical, structure as being beyond the 'human scale' and potentially dehumanising in its impact. Large organisations, both public and private, are also viewed as hierarchical in their decision-making with 'ordinary' employees and consumers being cut off, by the many layers in the hierarchy, from the powerful decision-makers at the top. In this journal we have consistently highlighted the dangers in this remoteness and the need for the powerless to act to overcome this problem (Gill and Cook, 1984, Sinclair and Simpson, 1984).

Hierarchies also have a spatial dimension in that they are controlled from central places where a remote elite takes decisions which are out of tune with the needs and wishes of those in peripheral localities, if not directly opposed to the interests of such people. Consequently, anarchists are opposed to centralisation of control whether in government in capitalist or socialist enterprises. Many anarchists are also anti-urban, clinging often to romantic notions of rural life in which people engage more intimately with nature and less anonymously with each other. In part, the city or town is the location of specialised activities which anarchists oppose, because they direct us into specialised roles and a compartmentalised form of existence. We become teachers, social workers, commuters, unemployed, businessmen, etc., rather than whole women and men who teach, care, travel, rest or work depending on the needs of the community at the time. And, finally, anarchists are against competitivenes, which is seen as being intrinsically anti-social in the widest sense and opposed to the co-operative instinct which underpins human progress, as Kropotkin for example showed many years ago (Kropotkin, 1902).

Those features of social life which anarchists favour include:

1 individualism or collectivism

2 egalitarianism

3 voluntarism

4 federalism

5 decentralism

6 ruralism

7 altruism/mutual aid

The first of these presents a key issue for anarchism and indeed other 'isms' such as liberalism, socialism or communism: namely, to what extent does or should the individual submerge his or her individuality within the wider social group? There is a tension here which is difficult to resolve. Some anarchists will follow the individualist path outlined by Stirner and thus may not adhere to the remaining principles; many, probably most, will follow the writings of Kropotkin and others to support the remainder. Thus, most anarchists believe that some form of collective society should replace current local and central government, and that this should be run in a egalitarian and voluntary manner without force or coercion being applied. A federation of such collectives or communes (the latter involves a greater degree of pooling of the individual's resources, wants and needs into the communality) would be built up in order to co-ordinate matters of common concern such as inter-communal trade, transport, water and energy provision. Delegates would be sent to the federal meetings on an ad-hoc basis rather than as professional representatives such as MPs to prevent power and authority being concentrated into too few hands. As far as possible, power and control would be decentralised to the collective, which would administer the local area in its entirety - for local people by local people. Cities would either be dismantled or, at least, confederated at the local or neighbour level (i.e. the city would become a federation of neighbourhoods or the equivalent). Society would return to 'traditional' brutal values of respect for the rhythms and sanctity of the environment and to mutual aid amongst neighbours and other members of the collective. Anarchists believe that people are essentially social or even altruistic beings and are corrupted at present by rule from above, whether by government or capital. Abolition of such rule will, therefore, encourage the redevelopment of innate co-operative tendencies which are often buried deep within us in contemporary society or are 'inward-directed' towards family or friends.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Anarchism

Anarchist ideas have recurrent appeal. Both Joll and Woodcock, for example, regard the peasant movements of the Middle Ages as anarchist, while Joll suggests that William Godwin elaborated:

> the most complete and worked-out statement of rational anarchist belief ever attempted (Joll, op. cit. p16).

Anarchists were identified during the French revolution, but it was Proudhon who first voluntarily welcomed the label of 'anarchist'. Proudhon's ideas were to have lasting appeal, especially in France, Spain and Italy, but they provoked a strong negative response from Marx, as did the ideas of Bakunin who followed him. The Marx/Bakunin split divided and contributed to the demise of the First International and Marxists came increasingly to view anarchists as self-indulgent woolly-minded idealists at best, or as reactionary and counter-revolutionary elements at worst.

To some extent it was the late nineteenth century emphasis among anarchists on 'propaganda by the deed' which led to the Marxist rejection of anarchism. Whereas Proudhon's motto was destruam et aedificabo (I destroy and I build up), Bakunin and his followers became associated with the destruction side of the equation and in the latter years of the century anarchists turned increasingly to individual acts of terrorism again the established order. It is this era and the images associated with it which have done most to weaken anarchism's popular appeal. Those anarchists who rejected violence as a means to an end were few in number, ever Kropotkin with his gentle personality remained ambivalent about violence and lost much credibility when he supported the First World War with Germany. Conversely, and perhaps paradoxically, pacifist anarchism is also the subject of fierce criticism from those who see non-violence as an inadequate means of attaining revolutionary objectives. Instead, Marxists and others argue that some form of revolutionary organisation is necessary, one which has a clear theoretical analysis and practical strategy for overthrowing the dominant system. Therefore, they view anarchism as impractical in its rejection of a party structure and clear-cut programme for change. To anarchists, for example:

> an anarchist revolution is one of generalised rebellion, without leaders and masses. Each social unit shakes off the fetters and mechanism imposed on it by political and economic powers (Baldelli, 1971, p24).

To Engels, in contrast:

> A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will on the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon - authoritarian means if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not wish to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries (Quoted in Joll, op. cit. p92).

The anarchist emphasis on the spontaneity of social rebellion leaves it open to charges of naivete, idealism and utopianism, but anarchists counter with the charge that revolution led by a party leads to the dictatorship of that party rather than the proletariat or masses, and that the takeover of the state apparatus leads to the continuation of the state rather than the withering away of the state as predicted by Marx. As noted elsewhere (Cook, 1982), many neomarxists accept that such states as the Soviet Union have evolved into a force of state capitalism rather than a true system of soviets, while recent changes in the People's Republic of China have abolished the commune form of organisation. Rigid control led by a party can encourage orthodoxy, dogma and inflexibility whereas anarchist spontaneity offers flexibility and creativity, presenting guidelines rather than blueprints for future action.

One of the most inspirational sources of anarchist ideas is the life and work of Prince Peter Kropotkin, the Anarchist Prince (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1971). Kropotkin became one of the foremost geographers of his generation by undertaking major expeditions in Asia and establishing a new theory of the orography of Asia. He was offered the prestigious post of Secretary to the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in 1871, leading to the famous rejection of this offer with his response:

> What right had I to these higher joys when all around me was nothing but misery and struggle for a mouldy bit of bread? (Quoted in Woodcock, 1975, op. cit., p179).

Kropotkin continued his interest in geography (for example he published an article in the Nineteenth Century which is still a good guide to 'What geography ought to be' (Kropotkin, 1885) but the discipline chose to ignore him until recently (Breitbart, 1981; Fielding, 1983; Galois, 1976; Peet, 1975; Stoddart, 1975 and see also Miller, 1983). Instead it is as an anarchist activist and writer that Kropotkin is remembered, for he endured prison and exile to become the main proponent of anarchism after Bakunin's death in 1876. He

wrote widely and well and his works include The Conquest of Bread, Memoirs of a Revolutionist, Fields, Factories and Workshops, and Mutual Aid which are probably those texts of greatest contemporary relevance.

For myself and others (as shown in this issue, for example) it is Kropotkin's concept of mutual aid and his related ideas of anarchist communism which are among the greatest strengths of the anarchist literature. In Mutual Aid, for example, Kropotkin argued, counter to the prevailing distortions of Darwinian ideas via Social Darwinism, that survival of the species depends, not upon competition between members of the species but rather upon co-operation within the species in order to withstand external threats. Further, in the human species co-operation is essential in the development of all the artifacts of modern society. He drew upon his fieldwork in Siberia to present examples of co-operation within animal and human species and to argue that Darwin's approach had been narrowed, wrongly, by the Social Darwinists, for:

> sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle (Kropotkin, 1902, p6).

In this work he anticipated the recent science of sociobiology which has taken a similar view of Darwinian concepts (Galois, 1975; Miller, 1983). Thus, for Kropotkin:

> intelligence is an eminently social faculty. Language, initiation and accumulated experience are so many elements of growing intelligence of which the unsociable animal is deprived (Kropotkin, op. cit., p58).

Armed with this optimistic view of humanity, Kropotkin believed in the group rather than the individual and that the state could be replaced by a network of voluntary associations within which free distribution of the products of the commune would occur on the basis of need rather than wants.

To conclude this section I suggest that whatever weaknesses anarchism has in terms of a lack of theoretical sophistication, idealist tendencies and even, at times, downright impracticality, it is nonetheless strong in that it takes such an optimistic view of society. It dares to dream, and its thought appeals because of visions and dynamism. As Miller puts it:

> It is a virtue of anarchist theories that they remind us of social options which we had thought were closed off for good, but which are only closed because of other choices that were have already made (Miller, 1983, p338).

Although such movements as the Makhnovists in the Ukraine or the anarchists in Barcelona were eventually defeated (Joll, op. cit., Woodcock 1975, 1977, of. cit) anarchist tendencies reassert themselves continually. We noted the Spanish trade union example above, but in Britain, too, anarchism is once again on the increase, as noted in a recent article (Lashman and Harris, 1988), and although it will no doubt continue to be vilified in the media, it will continue to appeal, not least because anarchism:

> is tune with many of the people who are struggling throughout the world against the forces of remote and unresponsive authority and power (Cook, 1978, op. cit., p9).

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Portraits of some Anarchists

Kropotkin: Prince of Geographers

Ian Cook

Many of the contributors to this issue, including myself, have referred to the work of Prince Peter Alexeivich Kropotkin, the anarchist and geographer who has had such a major impact on the development of anarchist thought. Here is a brief biography of this heroic and romantic figure whose life and writings still retain their contemporary appeal.

Kropotkin was born into the highest levels of Russian aristocracy in 1842, into a society whose feudal and oppressive nature was typified by his father, an autocratic landowner and general who had seen little military action but nonetheless had progressed steadily up the military hierarchy. Peter received little from his father but was fortunate in his relationships with his serfs and tutors, who broadened his view of the world and provided him with a critical perspective on Russian society. By the age of twelve he ceased to use his title and I employ it here only in the 'prince among men' meaning. Paradoxically, however, despite his growing awareness of the inequalities in Russia, circumstances brought him to the attention of Tsar Nicholas I, who ordered that he should be enrolled in the elite Corps of Pages, to the delight of his family.

From the start Kropotkin rebelled against the absurdly strict discipline of the Corps but despite this he proved to be an able and enthusiastic student, and this period provided him with the basis for many of his subsequent studies. His radicalism was enhanced by his reading and he circulated a clandestine paper among his colleagues. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 seemed at first to give a considerable boost to liberal ideas, and although it ultimately turned out to be a false dawn which failed to herald sufficient reform throughout Russia, his interest in social change was further stimulated to the extent that he applied for a commission with the Cossacks of the Amur in Siberia rather than with a

select regiment. His reasoning was that he would be able to participate in the reforms to be carried out in that region, and despite his father's opposition he set off for Siberia in 1862. At this time Siberia was largely unexplored and provided a vast 'laboratory' for comparison of his theoretical views with the reality of the place.

It was during this period that Kropotkin first encountered anarchist ideas via the exiled poet Mikhailov who introduced him to Proudhon's work. Proudhon's ideas were given increased impact through the inability or unwilingness of the government to undertake essential reforms of the exile system, reforms which Kropotkin had recommended as the chair of the investigatory committee. State inefficiency contrasted sharply with the labour of the colonists and exiles themselves, who were beginning to transform this hostile landscape, and this increased his belief that people should best govern themselves rather than be governed by remote authority. His extensive travels throughout East Asia, allied to his growing powers of observation, provided many practical examples of the co-operative nature of animal and human species and confirmed him in the view that people could organise themselves in a voluntary and co-operative manner. This exciting and instructive period also established his reputation as a geographer, for he undertook major geographical expenditions, mapped new terrain and established a new theory of the orography (layout and alignment of the mountain ranges) of Asia. His increasing interest in such scientific matters, combined with the intellectual remoteness of Siberia, plus the brutal executions of some Polish prisoners who had attempted to escape, persuaded him to resign his commission and return to St Petersburg in 1867.
In St Petersburg Kropotkin received the gold medal of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society for his paper on the Vitim expedition and he accepted the part-time post of secretary to the physical geography section, for he received no money from either his family or from the titular civil service appointments which he received. In 1871 he was offered the full-time secretaryship of the Society, but he rejected this due to his awareness that the intelligentsia was living on the backs of the workers. Kropotkin also felt the need to know more about the revolutionary and socialist movements of Western Europe, therefore he spent some months in Switzerland in 1872, and visited the Jura watchmakers, who had developed a communal form of organisation. Thus he completed his conversion to anarchism. After his return to Russia he became a revolutionary activist involved in clandestine propaganda activities and the growing narodnik tendency among the intellectuals: those who wished to work with and learn from the mass of the people. In 1874 he was offered the presidency of the physical geography branch of

the Imperial Russian Geographical Society but by this time the police had discovered that he was the agitator 'Borodin' and he was arrested. His arrest caused something of a sensation due to his high connections and academic standing, but the only concession to his background came via the Emperor's agreement to his friend's and colleagues' request that he should be allowed the books and writing materials to complete his report on the glaciation of Europe.

After some ill-health caused by the appalling prison conditions, Kropotkin was transferred to a small prison adjacent to the St Petersburg military hospital. There he recovered and laid plans to escape, with the help of his friends 'on the outside'. His escape was made in exciting and dramatic fashion in 1876 and he entered the life of the exile, escaping via Scandinavia and landing in Hull in August 1876, whence he made his way to Edinburgh and later to London, He began to earn his living via the pen, writing for Nature and The Times and developed contacts with various anarchist and other revolutionary groups. He travelled to continental Europe, renewing his links with Swiss and Italian anarchists in the main and attending various congresses of socialists and anarchists. Returning to London he began to use, as Marx had done, the reading Room of the British Museum to develop his researches, but he chafed at the lack of revolutionary action and returned once more to the continent, in 1878. He visited Spain which was, as now, a country in which anarchist ideas had widespread popularity, and introduced the concept of the commune in a speech to a subsequent congress in Switzerland. He was involved in the founding of Le Revolte, a revolutionary journal. He married, was expelled from Switzerland, returned to London, continued his writings and was then arrested in France in 1882 after a series of bombings in which he had had no part at all. Imprisoned, he continued his writings, which became increasingly social scientific analyses and included the text of the article 'What Geography Ought To Be' (published in The Nineteenth Century in 1885). Many scholars contributed to petitions for his release, including 15 British professors, Oxford fellows, the secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, William Morris and Patrick Geddes, and he was eventually released and returned to Britain in 1886.

For many years after, Peter Kropotkin led an increasingly quiet and scholarly life in which he was revered as an heroic and romantic figure. Every description of him which I have read refers to his personal qualities - he was modest, had great personal warmth, a saintly nature and a sincerity which endeared him to those whom he encountered via his writings, lectures, discussions and friendships. The key texts mentioned by the authors in this issue were published during

this year, and he helped to found Freedom in October 1886. He retained links with many political activists, such as Keir Hardie, and also with Keltie and other geographers and scholars. It seems that moves were made to establish him as professor of geography at Cambridge but he declined for reasons similar to those behind his rejection of the Russian secretaryship in 1871. His travels continued, although he was prevented until 1905 from re-entering France, and he visited Canada and the United States in 1897 and 1901, lecturing widely and helping the journal Solidarity to be founded in New York, and leading to his autobiographical series of articles, Memoirs of a Revolutionist to be published in Atlantic Monthly. Over the years he had built up a strong friendship with his fellow anarchist and geographer Elisee Reclus, whose death in 1905 deeply moved him and led to his writing Reclus' obituaries for both the Geographical Journal and Freedom.

During these years the only negative features of Kropotkin's life were his battles with ill-health, the legacy of his imprisonments and his increasing awareness of, and warnings about, the growing threat of German expansionism. The first was overcome mainly through recuperative trips to the continent funded through his royalties, the second proved more problematic, for he developed a militant (and militarist) anti-German attitude which was at odds with the strong pacifist theme of his writings and his influence among anarchists, and this led him to lose standing amount anarchist and other such groups. When the First World War actually began, his militarist line increased to the horror of many of his friends, and it eventually led to a major split in the anarchist movement, with Kropotkin and his allies, who were few, becoming increasingly isolated from the mainstream of the movement.

Kropotkin was rescued from a rather dismal situation when the (February) Russian revolution took place in 1917, after which he was able to return to his homeland following his lengthy exile of 41 years. When his train pulled into Petrograd an estimated 60,000 had come to greet him even though it was 2 a.m., and the strains of the Marseillaise lauded his homecoming. His pro-war attitude again isolated him, however, for most Russians had suffered enough, and his later support for the foundation of a republican government similar to that of the United States also told against him. The success of the October Bolshevik revolution and the peace treaty with Germany fortunately removed these thorny issues and his last years were spent in the encouragement of the increasingly persecuted Russian anarchists and others who sought a decentralised and co-operative system of social organisation. While others who followed his writings were persecuted he was

not, given his age and high national and international standing. He met Lenin and tried to encourage him to reduce state control, and he also tried to encourage the Western Allies to end their counter-revolutionary interference in Russian affairs. His last, unfinished, work was Ethics and his last days were spent in writing this and in protesting against the increasingly authoritarian nature of the revolution. He died in February 1921 and his funeral was the last public appearance of the anarchist flag and of anarchists in the USSR until very recently in the Gorbachev era. 100,000 people were in attendance in Moscow to bear witness to the enormous influence of Peter Alexeivich Kropotkin – Prince of Geographers.

Emma Goldman: Anarchist Feminist 1869-1940

Janis Newman

Who was Emma Goldman? Her biographers tell us Emma Goldman was an anarchist, labour agitator, pacifist, advocate of political violence, feminist, proponent of free love and birth control, communist and influential force in contemporary political thought. A genuinely radical thinker, she offered an extra feminist dimension to social analysis.

Born a Russian Jew in 1869, she migrated to the United States in 1886, when she was seventeen. Here she married unhappily and joined the many Jewish immigrants who worked in the garment makers sweatshops in New York.

American society was in upheaval, with waves of European immigrants arriving amidst the revolution which was taking place in industrial organisation. This was a time of great social and political unrest as American capitalism struggled to establish a new production-line-based industrial order. In the immigrant quarters of the big cities labour conditions were appalling. Goldman's Russian upbringing had already left her with a rich awareness of oppression, anti-semitism and revolutionary thinking. Life in New York contrasted sharply with that of St Petersburg, but was still conditioned by violet oppression. Emma moved into the bewildering intellectual and activist chaos that was characteristic of American social evolution around the turn of the century.

In 1886, the year of Goldman's arrival, workers in Chicago struck against the Harvester Company. The company hired private 'police' to protect strike breakers. The mood of violence culminated in the 'Haymarket bombing', when seven police officers were killed, and strikers were then massacred indiscriminately in retaliation. The subsequent Haymarket trial was of prime significance for anarchism in America. All radicals became the target of a virtual reign of terror for the police, press and public. Immigrants were particularly

vulnerable to persecution. Goldman followed the trial closely. Three labour leaders were hung even though the person who actually threw the bomb was never identified. Goldman is said to have realised at this point that no mercy could be expected from the ruling class. The American plutocracy had a capacity for violence equal to that of the Tzarist state in Russia. The brutal response rather backfired on the state, causing the executed labour leaders to become martyrs. Goldman, too, became committed to anarchism by this act of violence by the state.

Goldman offered a distinctive version of anarchism, organising from a feminist perspective. She was almost alone in trying to resist narrow economic interpretations of social injustice, constantly offering cultural, psychological and gender-based alternatives to the dominant explanation rooted in a deterministic formulation of class relations. She insisted that the power constituted in 'private' patriarchal relationships was equally as real as that found in the 'public' economic sphere. For example, in her analysis of marriage she notes:

> Marriage condemns women to life-long dependency, to patriarchy, to complete uselessness, individual as well as social. Men too pay their toll but marriage does not limit him as much as women, he feels his chains more in an economic sense (Goldman 1917 p228).

Goldman differed from most of the left, anarchists and socialists who argued that the emancipation of women would occur automatically when capitalism was defeated. She argued then, as feminists argue now, that the issue of women cannot be postponed to a hypothetical future. Such issues must be addressed now. She was also scornful of her male comrades' sexual conservatism.

Hence Goldman was a controversial figure even with in the anarchist and early feminist movements. Take, for example, the suffragist cause. Goldman argued that having the vote does not change the status quo or further the emancipation of women. This inflexible stance appears somewhat contradictory at first sight. However Goldman here is offering a radical critique of the liberal democratic model. She calls universal suffrage a 'modern fetish' and insists that women are made to be slavish to the home, church and the state by the unquestioning belief that sacrifice is the way to achieve Christian happiness. She points out that the campaign for women's suffrage follows from the belief that it ...'will make her a better christian and home keeper, a staunch citizen of the state' (Goldman 1917 p197).

For Goldman this spells the strengthening of the very structures that keep women oppressed. She argued that voting hinders the ability of the oppressed to recognise their true passage to freedom, which for her was the anarchist vision. Women must be able to realise and appreciate what true equality actually means. She exposed the ballot as a futile pathway for change. Workers cannot benefit from the vote until they receive their full share and entitlement of what they produce. The ballot is a mechanism which keeps the superior economic class dominant (Goldman 1917).

Goldman would not advocate the vote for women, yet was unable to urge Marxist class revolution. She perceived that contemporary radicals were not offering a solution to the problem of personal liberation for women. Her formula for freedom is quite simple. It is through the 'self' that freedom, independence and development comes. Women must refuse anyone the right to control their bodies and minds. A women must shun public opinion and the teachings of the church, the state, her husband, and simply be just herself. Only when women have freedom of thought and expression will they be free. Goldman also recognised that this is easier said than done. In her private life she lived as she preached. This landed her in prison on numerous occasions and frustrated he immensely. Her ideas about the capacity of the human being to be able to accept the true values of freedom and equality are central to her vision of anarchism. True equality for Goldman was not just an economic state but a state of mind where freedom becomes a reality. Freedom to live how one wants, and having the capacity to apply one's principles to the actuality of living - making the political personal. This is the central core of the anarcho-feminist message.

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The Anarchist Lifestyle

Colin Ward

Colin Ward, one of the best known of contemporary anarchists, tells us a little about his life as a writer and publisher.

We have a habit of seeing political movements not in terms of their anonymous supporters but through their 'great men' and much less frequently their 'great women.' In these terms anarchism can be presented as an alliance of radical aristocrats (Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tolstoy) and peasants (Proudhon, Makhno, Zapata). But in practice the anarchist propaganda of the last century has been conducted by people belonging to the urban working class and most often, to the lower middle class. One of my closest friends in the world of anarchist publishing always threatens to write his memoirs and to begin with the sentence 'I too was a grocer's child'.

My father was an elementary school teacher in what we now call Docklands, and it must have been sad for my parents to have my school report that said 'He lives in a world of his own in which school has no part." I left school in July 1939, a month before my 15 birthday, and was employed for 40 years, except for 5 years in the army, and that made me anarchist.

For most of my adult life I have been associated with the anarchist publishers Freedom Press, which was started by Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin in 1886. I was one of the editors of the anarchist journal Freedom (then a weekly) from 1947 to 1960, and edited the anarchist monthly Anarchy from 1961 to 1970.[1] The only time I was ever paid to edit a journal was when I worked at the Town & Country Planning Association and started and edited there for most of the 1970s, the monthly BEE (Bulletin of Environmental Education).[2]

I am a typical anarchist in that I have had a life-long interest in printing, and consequently in publishing (and of course am totally bemused by the incredible changes in print technology) and I am also typical in that I drifted into a series of interesting (and conceivably socially useful) jobs, each of them a 'learning experience' for me, for which I had either no qualifications at all, or the minimal certification, like the one-year teacher's certificate I got from Garnett College in 1965 and which enabled me to become the lecturer in charge of liberal studies at Wandsworth Technical College.

Several of my anarchist friends have been for more resourceful than me in finding ways of scraping a living while doing their own thing. One of them, for example, has been civil engineer, professional photographer, shopkeeper, linguist and travel courier, and for 20 years a market gardener supporting 2 people on 2½ acres, something that every small-holder knows is impossible, all in order to live his own life as an anarchist propogandist.

I am regarded as an authority on topics like architecture, housing and planning with not the slightest qualification in these fields, simply because I insist on looking at them through anarchist eyes, and observing that the emperor hasn't actually got any clothes. And needless to say, like everyone else, I have opinions about schooling: 'I reverse education. I just can't stomach the dreadful pretensions of the education industry, especially when compared with the results'[3]. My most serious worry about the education system is not that it brainwashes or indoctrinates anyone (I know how hard it is to teach people anything) but that it has become the passport to every kind of job and the barrier that prevents any modern equivalent of me from being considered eligible for most of the jobs through which I have flitted.

My last employed work was as director of the Schools Council curriculum development project, Art and the Built Environment, which was concerned with the role of art as a school subject in environmental education, and which incidentally brought some fruitful links between art and geography teachers.[4] Then at 55 I became a self-employed author and moved to the country just in order to have the

time to write the dozen or so books I never had the opportunity to write in years 1947 to 1979 when I was always working on some journal or other.

They tend to be explorations of popular, unofficial uses of the environment, and there are more to come. As an unashamed propagandist I will list some of them.[5] My experience is that the income from writing books of this kind is pathetically small, which is why, contrary to my intention, I spend a lot of time on journalism and book-reviewing. On the other hand, together with my collaborators, I have been very fortunate in picking up research fellowships for the writing of several books.

FOOTNOTES

1 See Colin Ward (ed) A Decade of Anarchy 1961-1970 (Freedom Press, 84B Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX, 1987)

2 BEE is now published by Streetwork, c/o Notting Dale Urban Studies Centre, 189 Freston Road, London, W10 6TH

3 Colin Ward Anarchy in Action 2nd edition (Freedom Press 1982)

4 See Eileen Adams and Colin Ward Art and the Built Environment (Longman 1982)

5 Colin Ward (ed) Vandalism (Architectural Press 1973)
Colin Ward Tenants Take Over (Architectural Press 1974)
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Colin Ward The Child in the Country (Robert Hale 1988)

The Anarchistic Alternative:

a history of community experiments in Britain

Dennis Hardy

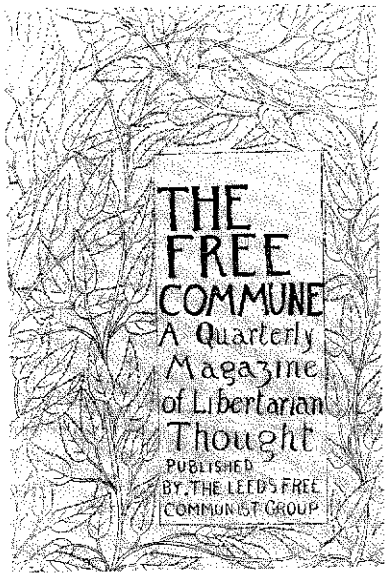
Conurbations, market towns and villages have rightly attracted a major share of interest amongst geographers, on account of the centrality of these settlements in the life of the nation. At the same time, there is a case for acknowledging the existence of a very different kind of settlement - that of anarchist communities - in every sense on the margins of society.

By their very nature, small in population, few in number, and usually shortlived, these communities offer their own source of interest to the geographer. In a formal sense, they mark a particular form of landscape development, and their occurrence over time can be recorded. More than this, though, an anarchist community is an expression of a distinctive ideology, with its own patterns of economic production and social relations.

As an educational exercise, to examine an anarchist community will be to encourage students to ask awkward questions about the kind of society from which those who join such communities seek to escape. Marginal though they are, then, a study of anarchist communities can offer an interesting way of prising open issues that are at the very heart of an understanding of the kind of society in which most of us continue to live. For students, the rewards of the search for where and when anarchist communities flourished will be much richer than the meagre records might at first suggest.(1)

The World Turned Upside Down

One way into the topic (particularly for students familiar with Cromwell and the events of the English Revolution) is to discuss the ideas and exploits of Gerrard Winstanley and the



Coverpage of anarchist periodical circulating in the North of England at the end of last century.

Diggers.(2) Although the anarchist tradition runs deeper in the currents of English peasant culture, the episode of the Diggers represents what is arguably the first systematic attempt to establish a network of anarchist communities in this country.

Radical alternatives themselves stem not only from a deep sense of dissatisfaction with what is already in being, but also from events which provide an opportunity to promote the cause. Thus, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the execution of Charles I marked the end of absolute monarchy and encouraged a questioning as to what system should best replace it. Cromwell and his new constitution provided one answer, but for Gerrard Winstanley and others the gains for the people were not enough. His question, 'Why may we not have our Heaven here (that is, a comfortable livelihood in the Earth) and Heaven hereafter too?', was unsettling for political and religious leaders alike.

Winstanley's was a philosophical quest for freedom, but one with its roots firmly implanted in the soil. The land - and more particularly, its appropriation for the common good - was at the heart of his quest and the associated attempts to found communities. Illustrating an essential quality of the

anarchist tradition - that of direct action - Winstanley was inspired to venture on to common land at St George's Hill in Weybridge, Surrey, and to begin the revolutionary process. 'I took my spade and went and broke the ground upon George Hill in Surrey, thereby declaring freedom to the creation, and that the earth must be set free from the entanglements of lords and landlords, and that it shall become a common treasury to all, as it was first made and given to the sons of men.'

Like so many comparable experiments to follow, the history of the Surrey community, subjected to harassment and persecution from the authorities, was short and turbulent. With his Diggers (or 'True Levellers', in contrast to the reformist Levellers in Cromwell's New Model Army), Winstanley sought not only to cultivate a few acres of common land but also to set an example that others might follow elsewhere. England would not be free until 'not only this common or heath should be taken in and manured by the people, but all the commons and waste ground in England and in the whole world shall be taken in by the people in righteousness, not owning any property; but taking the earth to be a common treasury, as it was first made for all'.

As a consequence of his actions, other Digger colonies were established at Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, Cox Hall in Kent, Iver in Buckinghamshire, Barnet in Hertfordshire, Bosworth in Leicestershire, and at other sites in Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire. Local searches might reveal a little about these ventures, but it is unlikely that any survived for more than a year or two. A visit, however, to St George's Hill, is revealing. Now a private estate of unusual quality, with large houses in well-wooded grounds replete with tennis courts and swimming pools, it is hard to imagine a scene in greater contrast with that encountered three centuries ago by the English anarchists. All that the Diggers worked for would seem to have been lost in this twentieth century capitalist arcadia, a point that no student (already briefed as to the origins of the site) can possibly miss.

Fields, Factories and Workshops

Another way into the topic is to follow the thoughts and eventful life of the best-known anarchist geographer, the Russian, Peter Kropotkin.(3) Born into an aristocratic Moscow household in 1842, the young prince was soon to forsake the comforts of his childhood (with an education in the privileged Corps de Pages, amongst the glittering palaces of St Petersburg) for the desolate wastes of Siberia. With the pick of any one of Russia's elite regiments, he chose,

instead, to join the unfashionable Amur Cossacks, 'escaping a life of parades and court balls'. It was in Siberia, amongst the peasants of the Amur, that Kropotkin discovered how well people managed without the State administration, and 'how little man really needs as soon as he comes out of the enchanted circle of conventional civilisation'. It was there, too, that Kropotkin observed the 'semi-communistic' communities of the Dukhobors (some of whom came to England, with most subsequently settling in Canada), comparing the relative success of their colonisation in the difficult conditions with the failures of the State in promoting its own frontier development. When his term of service ended at the age of twenty-five, he could conclude that he had 'lost in Siberia whatever faith in state discipline I had cherished before. I was prepared to become an anarchist'.

It was in Siberia, too, attracted to the area by its unexplored qualities and, in turn, fascinated by the huge landforms and sweeping rivers, that Kropotkin the geographer recounted his experiences (notably, in the 700-page Report on the Olekminsk-Vitimsk Expedition), and developed his own theory of the origins of the great mountain systems. This latter (replacing the incorrect speculations of Alexander von Humboldt) ranked as his chief contribution to science. Yet, in spite of this, and his work as sectretary of the physical geography section of the Russian Geographical Society, it is for his development of anarchist theory that Kropotkin is best known. Indeed, it was because of his political views and the iminence of imprisonment that Kropotkin had to settle for the production of a map and paper to explain his theory of the mountains, rather than the bulky volume he had intended. A geographical career gave way to the life of a revolutionary.

In the years that followed (most of which were spent in exile outside Russia, including a long spell in England) a constant flow of writings added up to a coherent exposition, not simply of anarchism, but of that particular brand of the doctrine known as anarchist communism. On some things, all anarchists are agreed - notably, on the common idea that society can be organised without the oppressive mantle of the State. The ideal is one of decentralisation, with power diffused and with people pursuing their own lives free of an overriding authority. At the same time, there are points of disagreement about, for instance, the form of political revolution that will herald the new society, and about where to draw the line between private and communal property.

For Kropotkin, the goal to aim for was one with the 'free commune' as the basic unit of production and distribution in society, and with people giving according to their means and taking according to their needs. In various writings,

Kropotkin sought to show that co-operation rather than competition was a perfectly natural and plausible basis for re-organising society, and that small communities without state control were not only morally preferable to the existing order but also that they could be economically viable. On this last point, in Fields, Factories and Workshops, Kropotkin the geographer demonstrated the practicability of his anarchist beliefs with detailed evidence and arguments to show that small communities could flourish with a healthy mix of intensive cultivation and local industry. With considerable foresight, electricity is seen as a major source of decentralisation, freeing industry from the coalfields and enabling a more even distribution of population.

It all added up to a blueprint for community formation, though Kropotkin, a strategist more than a tactician - and with doubts that much could be achieved before a political revolution - left others to put it into practice. While he was in England, at least two communities were founded on anarchist communist principles, the Clousden Hill Free Communist and Co-operative Colony at Forest Hall, Newcastle, and the Norton Colony on the outskirts of Sheffield. Each of the communities lasted for only a few years, but each reflected many of the hopes and disappointments of anarchism in the 1890s.

Of the two, Clousden Hill was the community most directly associated with Kropotkin's ideas. Originating in 1895, on a site of some twenty acres of poor quality land, it advertised itself as 'a free communist and co-operative colony to demonstrate the superiority of free communist association, over the competitive production of today'. About twenty colonists gathered, coming from various countries, and in spite of the poor quality of the land they attempted to survive on the basis of agriculture. Reports tell of a mixed farming economy, including some intensive cultivation for the Newcastle market. Kropotkin was amongst the visitors who came to see how the community was faring, and there was close contact with co-operative societies in the North East. But the odds were always stacked against the experiment - a communist utopia in a capitalist world - and before the end of the century the Newcastle anarchists had left to go their separate ways.

It was a similar story at Norton, where, a year after the start of the Clousden Hill Venture, another group of anarchists leased a cottage and some land in the grounds of Norton Hall, Sheffield. Kropotkin visited this, too, though

the anarchists drew more immediate support from the socialist, Edward Carpenter, who lived locally. One of the founders wrote:

> Our little beginning here is strictly on communistic lines; we have no rules, all business is discussed and work arranged over the communal breakfast table. We commenced business about two years ago with two members; others have joined from time-to-time, bringing our number to seven at the present time. Our holding consists of a large garden, five greenhouses and a cottage. Our drawbacks were heavy rent, small capital and inexperience in practical horticulture.

It was these drawbacks (typifying the marginal conditions under which anarchist experiments were invariably conducted) which eventually tipped the balance, and by early 1900 this community too had to be disbanded.

A New Spirituality

For all the limitations of the Kropotkin-inspired communities, the 1890s proved to be a significant decade for anarchist experiments generally. Against a backcloth of growing centralisation in urban and economic life, coupled with political unrest (expressed not only through parliamentary political parties and the rise of trade unions, but also through a wide circulation of revoluntionary tracts) anarchism enjoyed a rare flowering in English life. In addition to Kropotkin, it was to be another Russian aristocrat, Leo Tolstoy, who captured a popular following.(4) Indeed, as a direct influence on the community movement, Tolstoy's doctine proved to be the more immediately applicable, with experiments in various parts of the country. The Purleigh Colony (1896) and the Ashingdon Colony (1897), both in Essex, the Brotherhood Workshop in Leeds (1897), the Wickford Colony, also in Essex (1898), the Whiteway Colony in the Cotswolds (1898), the Blackburn Brotherhood (1899), and the Christchurch Colony in Hampshire (1890), were all practical attempts to organise life along Tolstoyan lines.

Tolystoy, the great Russian writer, made his own distinctive contribution to anarchist theory. Having undergone an intensive period of religious writing and thought (between 1879 and 1882), his subsequent anarchist works reflect a deep sense of spirituality. One thread that runs through his ideas is that the revolution that was needed to purge the world of its corrupt ways had to be one of changing moral consciousness rather than simply one of changing political systems. The simplicity and purity of life as expressed in

the biblical Sermon on the Mount offered the kind of model that Tolstoy thought society should adopt. He rejected capitalism from a spiritual standpoint, and offered to his followers the prospect of achieving immediate change through a purification of their own lives.

This spiritual message was, in itself, an important source of encouragement to would-be communitarians, who, in advance of a wider political revolution, could immediately join together to till the promised land. Moreover, the message from Tolstoy was not simply spiritual, and some of his later writings are quite explicit in anticipating the attractions of society without the state - a world where private property is abolished, where there is no money, where no-one is exploited, and where the principle of non-resistance in human relations replaces violence.

Tolstoy's visition was, from the start, too utopian for some - who could not accept that the state could be defeated by simply withdrawing from its institutions - but for others the peaceful route to revolution was appealing. Magazines, such as Seed Time and The New Order circulated with articles on Tolstoyan theory and news of meetings and of groups formed to advance the cause. One such group, the Croydon Brotherhood, experimented with its own publishing enterprise and a co-operative to make and sell dresses. It was, in fact, from the Croydon group that the first of the Tolstoyan communities originates, when, in the winter of 1896, some of the more active members decided that it was time to try and buy some land and revolutionise their lives.

The small group that left Croydon first settled on some ten acres near Purleigh in Essex. A local newspaper reporter who visited the colony discovered that it was:

> composed chiefly of men who have spent a city life, and a few Russians who find life in England more desirable than in their own country. One of the colonists is a Russian princess. One of the men held a good position in a London bank, and another was connected with a business firm.

For all their mixed origins, they shared a fervent belief in Tolstoyan doctrine, and a commitment to leading 'simpler and more useful lives' than they had been able to do before. They worked together to dig the land, they grew tomatoes under glass, and learnt how to make their own bricks. And when the work was done, they had their tea together and spent the evenings making music, reading or discussing. On Sundays they met to seek spiritual help from each other.

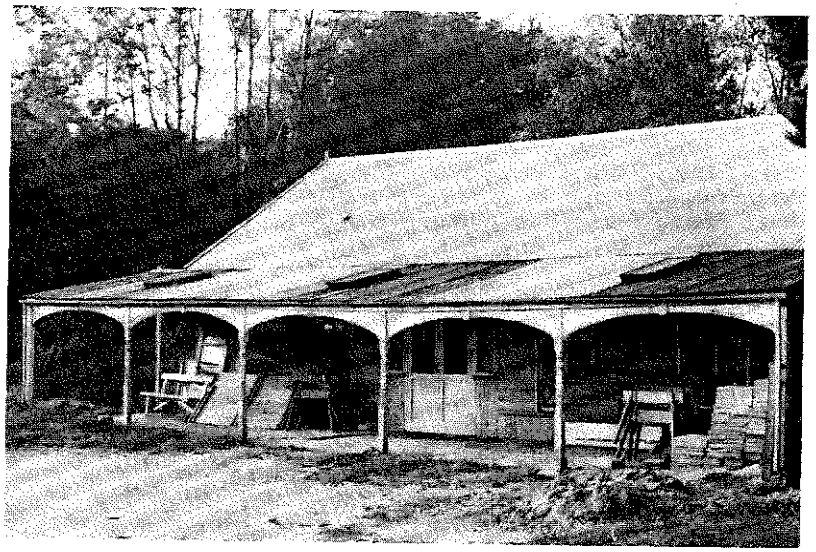
There were as many as ninety colonists at one point (with some twenty or so Russian exiles, including members of the Dukhobor sect that Kropotkin had admired in Siberia), and the local newspaper reporter returned to find a 'forest of sunflowers', a 'goodly store of potatoes', and a 'gay array of ripening tomatoes'. It was an encouraging start, but the anarchist utopia is not so easily reached. Apart from insanities and eccentricities amongst the colonists, disagreements opened around points of principle. How, for instance, should the colony handle the sale of its products, with the attendant risk of being drawn into the commercial world from which they had consciously withdrawn? With a real irony, this issue came to a head over the question of how to market the Tolstoy translations which were made at Purleigh and printed on its own press. The poor colonists were also taken to task for advertising in The New Order – seen by one reader as indulging in pure competition:

> Why not wait till orders come by recommendation, which God will surely see to?

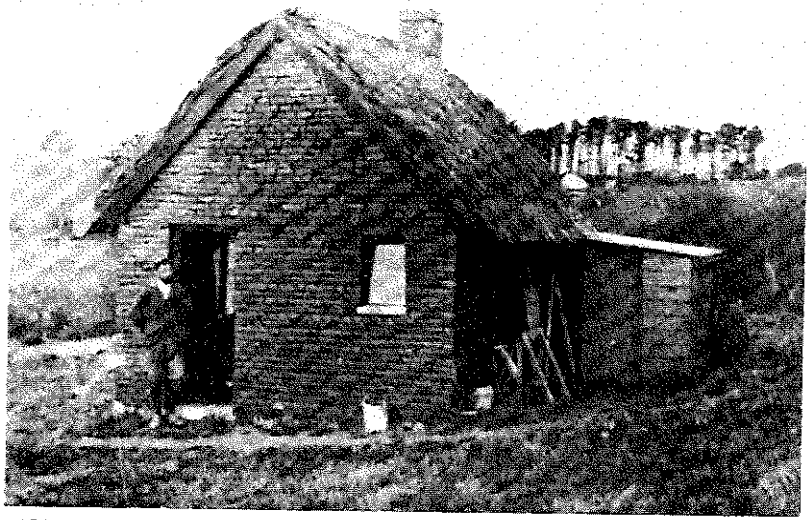
The issue, though, which really divided the colony was that of whether or not there should be restrictions on who could join and stay in the community. Some thought that new members should be vetted, and that those who did not play their part should be asked to leave. Others thought that restrictions of this sort were wrong in principle, and that they would have the effect of discriminating against working-class entrants who lacked capital. Such was the strength of feeling on this issue that it led to a small group leaving Purleigh to start their own settlement at Whiteway in Gloucestershire.

A Colony in the Cotswolds

The Whiteway experience offers a rich illustration of anarchist life in the 1890s. For a start, those who went there were turning their backs on a more comfortable existence. Although not exactly like the Russian aristocrats, Kropotkin and Tolstoy, at least three of the Whiteway pioneers, including Arnold Eiloart, had inherited 'large sums of money' which they each felt should be put to good use for a common purpose, and there are various references to mispent lives working in the city. Another of the founder members, Nellie Shaw, describes her background as being in business as a draper. She goes on to explain how 'it became a positive nightmare to sell the things so produced by sweated labour', and how she longed to produce something useful. After a spell of making dresses 'on advanced lines and under improved conditions', she despaired of producing for people who



Recent view of the community hall at Whiteway, built by the colonists in the 1920's.



William Sinclair, one of the founder-members of Whiteway colony, in front of the house be built.

already had more than they needed, 'so I "chucked" the dressmaking to join a colony where, at any rate, I could produce potatoes'.

Whiteway was to last longer than other communities, and was from the start a spirited attempt to put anarchist principles into practice. The colonists who arrived at the Cotswold site in August 1898 were steeped in Tolstoyan doctrine. They shared a rejection of urban life in favour of the country, they opposed any form of private property (some of them refusing to use money at all times), they were pacifist and practiced non-resistance in their own lives, they worked towards equality for women in the community, they favoured free union rather than state marriage, they looked for more liberating forms of clothing for both men and women, and (like so many of their predecessors) their pacifist philosophy was matched with a vegetarian diet.

True to their principles, the Whiteway colonists established a system where the land was worked communally on the basis of voluntary co-operation, meals were prepared and eaten together, and there was a common laundry. Their belief in common property was demonstrated symbolically through the burning of the deeds of property, and a proclamation claimed that the land would never again be held privately. There was no formal organisation and no leaders. Possessions in the community were freely available to all, including outsiders, on the principle that things should belong to those who need them most. Abuse of what many saw as their bountiful behaviour was met with non-resistance.

The women in the community enjoyed more freedom than they had previously experienced in mainstream Victorian society. Nellie Shaw (who was one of those who came from Croydon) told a young women's class that 'the women do exactly the same kind of work as the men, and do not find it too tiring'. Shaw was also an advocate of 'rational dress', which took the form of a freer, more practical style of clothing than convention normally permitted. There was freedom to choose whether to marry or not, but free union was generally favoured. And a strict vegetarian diet was a conscious attempt to live in harmony with nature.

It was a simple life, and it was this that was appreciated by the colonists.

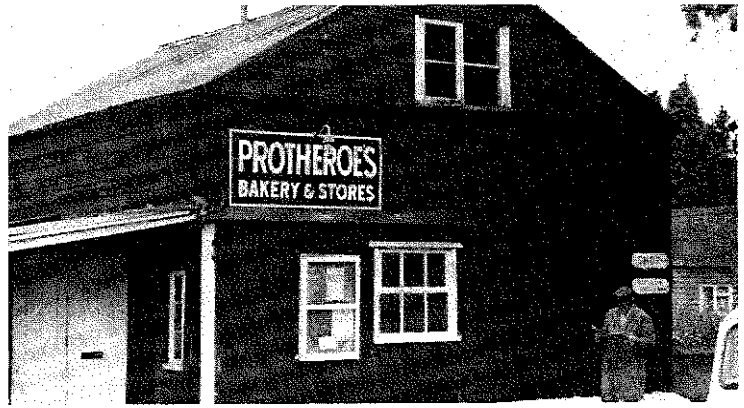
> Perfect weather, agreeable companionship, raking, turning the sweet-smelling hay, then piling it into heaps, taking our refreshment and rest in the shade of the haycocks, working on even until the moon rose in the sky, going home at night tired and happy, feeling that at last we had done some <u>real work</u>.'

In that first year, it was if the long utopian search for the perfect society was finally over. All too soon, however, the fragile shell of perfection began to crack.

Harvesting sufficient produce to maintain the community through a long, cold winter proved to be more difficult than anticipated, so that survival itself became a key consideration. Moreover, the original colonists were exploited by some who took advantage of the policy of free entry which allowed anyone to join, regardless of their ability or commitment. The main problem, though, was the sheer difficulty of leading one's life according to such unblemished principles. As one of the pioneers later explained:

> Free harmonious communism is possible only among those who have the utmost consideration for each other and who are ready at all times to be as exacting with themselves as any employer could possibly be.

As a result, the original system was replaced with a form of individualism, though one based on possession rather than legal ownership. It was agreed that each of the colonists should take responsibility for as much land as they could reasonably work – in practice, generally amounting to two or three acres. Other changes were made, too, which shifted the community away from the kind of world about which Tolstoy (far from the hard realities of it all, on his estate of



Sub Protheroe was one of the founder-members of Whiteway Colony: he baked for the colonists and gained a reputation as for a field as Chelterham. (Recent photograph of stone that evolved from the original bakery.)

Yasnaya Polyana) could write and idealise. In its modified form, the colony survived into the twentieth century, and even received a new lease of life with the arrival of a group of refugee anarchists from the Continent during the First World War. Since then, however - although even today some remaining wooden houses and the community hall which the colonists built in the 1920s provide a visible link with the past - the pattern of settlement has been far removed from its anarchist origins.

The Anarchist Legacy

Whiteway bridged the gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, having been conceived in the heady years of the 1890s, and then surviving only by adapting to a more pragmatic approach. There was nothing to compare with the wave of experiments fired by the theories of Kropotkin and Tolstoy until well into the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, here and there small groups of anarchists kept the black flag fluttering, as, for instance, in the 1930s when pacifists withdrew from the mainstream of political life, some to live together in community. But it was not until the 1960s that anarchist principles underpinned a new wave of community settlement.

This time the formation of communes was linked less directly to a particular set of writings, as was the case in the day of Kropotkin and Tolstoy. Through their actions, however, the new communitarians expressed a common ideology: 'a Fourth World of decentralised, small-scale forms of organisation, structured organically rather than mechanically and directed towards the fulfilment of human values rather than materialist objectives'. It amounted to a rejection of the excesses of modern life, and communes - established in the inner city as well as remote countryside - sought, as Winstanley had done some three hundred years before, to 'turn the world upside down'.

The record since the 1960s has been two-fold.(5) On the one hand, the decentralist ideas which underpinned the formation of communes have spread outwards to embrace a widening circle of activities, from food co-operatives to green politics. Thus, just beneath the surface of society in Britain today is evolving a whole new fabric that makes up the Alternative Movement. Ideas (to do, for instance, with the role of women, appropriate technology, and healthy diets) considered marginal if not irrelevant to the interests of mainstream society have now been incorporated in conventional thinking and social behaviour. At the same time, there have been changes within the commune movement itself. Rejection for its own sake has been replaced by a new philosophy, geared to

hard work for useful ends, and positive in their approach to new forms of technology and human relationships. 'The 1980s movement is tougher, more disciplined, structured and organised, and more survivalist than its counterpart of the early 1970s. . .' (Osmond and Graham 1984.) Right through to the present day, attempts to form new communities can be seen as yet one more link in what is a surprisingly long chain of events. The anarchist community has deep roots.

But, says the geography teacher, what is there of interest to me, and, more significantly, of interest to a class of students for whom anarchism has only a vague meaning of chaos? Most of the anarchist experiments have disappeared without trace, so what can one do to excite interest? These are fair doubts but there are various things that can be done. Below are just four possibilities:

Mapping the Anarchist Landscape: The record of anarchist communities is undoubtedly incomplete, but we know enough to provide a base of information that can be mapped. Apart from the above historical examples, modern experiments are listed in a useful source.(6) Simply locating these on a map - ideally, with different symbols for different periods, if not for different ideologies - can itself make the point that the settlement pattern in this country reflects rebellion as well as conformity.

A World of Imperfections: What is it that anarchists are seeking to leave behind? What is so wrong about mainstream society that impels them to form alternatives? Students can be encouraged to discuss and list features both now and in the past that anarchists have sought to replace. Discussion will invariably include common features like the degree of centralisation in society, the constraints imposed on individuals, the problems raised by private property, the loss of contact with nature, and so on. This very process of discussion calls for more than a shopping list of grumbles, as students must recognise that points such as the above have their virtues as well as their problems.

The Anarchist Alternative: Having established that anarchists are dissatisfied with things as they are, what is it they can offer as a viable alternative? What are some of the common features in the anarchist community over time? Again, some points will immediately be raised for discussion - small communities seeking the simple life, a traditional preference for rural locations, experiments with various aspects of social

organisation, including the place of women, diet, dress, and so on. Particularly challenging would be for a group of students to devise their own ideal community, resolving differences between each other along the way.

Current Alternatives: There is even scope for some interesting fieldwork (perhaps a day or so as part of a week in mid-Wales, say, or the South West). Currently, there are various parts of the country where refugees from mainstream society have gathered - not all living in fully-fledged communes, but sometimes small groups sharing a farm cottage, or running an alternative shop on co-operative lines. Students will find great interest in interviewing some of these new society settlers, to discover what motivated them to make the move, how their alternative network operates, and what contacts are forged within the neighbourhood.

In educational terms, exercises such as the above can be used to develop specific geographical skills, like mapping and questionnaires. Perhaps a greater value, though, is that an exploration of alternative ways of organising society can arouse the imagination and lead students to see things in ways which they might not previously have considered.

Notes

1 For a general coverage of anarchist communities (each in a wider context of utopianism) see W. H. G. Armytage (1961) Heavens Below, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; D. Hardy (1979) Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England, London: Longman; I. Todd and M. Wheeler Utopia, London: Orbis.

2 The best overview of Winstanley's ideas and the Digger episode, in the context of the English Revolution, remains C. Hill (1975) The World Turned Upside Down, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

3 Kropotkin's autobiography provides a fascinating account of his interest in geography and the development of his anarchist ideas; see, for instance, the edition edited and introduced by Colin Ward (1978) - Memoirs of a Revolutionist, London: Folio Society. For the practicalities of how a decentralised society might be organised, see P. Kropotkin (1974) Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow, London: Allen and Unwin.

4 A relevant and unique account of Tolstoyan doctrine, and what it meant to his followers in England from the end of the last century, is Nellie Shaw's (1935) book

Whiteway: A Colony in the Cotswolds, London: C. W. Daniels and Co. It is about the single colony, but it is also about much more than that, setting the community experiments in context.

5 An accessible source on recent changes in communes and associated movements is John Osmond and Angela Graham (1984) Alternatives: New Approaches to Health, Education, Energy, the Family and the Aquarian Age, Wellingborough: Thorsons.

6 The directory of modern communes which might form the basis for such an exercise is that produced periodically by a group (itself a commune), known as The Teachers, and published as Alternative Communities: Directory for the British Isles. (A new one is being planned for 1989, by members of other communes: further information from Redfield, Winslow, Buckinghamshire.)

GERRARD WINSTANLEY ( )

'In the beginning of time the great creator, Reason, made the earth to be a common treasury, to preserve beasts, birds, fishes and man. . . Not one word was spoken in the beginning that one branch of mankind should rule over another.'

'True freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth. . .'

'The earth is to be planted, and the fruits reaped, and carried into barns and store-houses by the assistance of every family, and if any man or family want corn, or other provision, they may go into the store-houses, and fetch without money. . . And the reason why all the riches of the earth are a common stock is this, because the earth, and the labours thereupon, are managed by common assistance of every family, without buying and selling. . .'

LEO TOLSTOY (1828-1910)

'. . .every man in these days knows that in the matter of life and worldly goods all men have equal rights; that no man is either better or worse than his fellow men, but that all men are born free and equal. Every man has an instinctive assurance of this fact, and yet he sees his fellow beings divided into two classes, the one in poverty and distress, which labours and is oppressed, the other idle, tyrannical, luxurious; and not only does he see all this, but, whether volutarily or otherwise, he falls in line with one or other

of these divisions – a course repugnant to his own reason. Hence he must suffer from both his sense of the incongruity and his own share in it.'

'Since the end of the eighteenth century almost every step made in advance by humanity has been hindered rather than encouraged by governments.'

PETER KROPOTKIN (1842–1921)

'(The society of the future) will be composed of a number of societies banded together for everything that demands a common effort: federations of producers for all kinds of production; of societies for consumption; federations of such societies alone and federations of societies and production groups; finally, more extensive groups embracing a whole country or even several countries and composed of persons who will work in common for the satisfaction of those economic, spiritual and artistic need which are not limited to a definite territory. All these groups will unite their efforts through mutual agreement. . . Personal initiative will be encouraged and centralisation combatted. Moreover this society will not ossify into fixed and immovable forms, it will transform itself incessantly, for it will be a living organism continually in development.'

'(The free commune) is a natural development, belonging, just as did the tribe and the village community, to a certain phase in human evolution, and not to any particular nation or region.'

WHITEWAY COLONISTS

'But what are we here for? To live a happy, idyllic life, free from carping care and the responsibility of property? Yes, and something more. We do not set ourselves up as reformers of society, but try to reform ourselves. If we cannot be actively useful and good we can at least cease doing evil by competing with others, or spending our energies in some useless way.' (Nellie Shaw)

'Wearing reformed dress, and educating public opinion in that way is better than making other people semi-reformed dress; and growing potatoes and cabbages, or building, is better than adding up people's banking accounts. To live as far as possible up to our ideals is what we are striving for.' (Nellie Shaw)

'Free harmonious communism is possible only among people who have the utmost consideration for each other and who are ready at all times to be as exacting with themselves as any employer could possibly be. . .' (Nellie Shaw)

'As one who lived at Whiteway Colony during its first year, I can testify to its joyful inception and the harmony in which its inner circle of associates lived. . . If our feet were down in the potato trenches, our heads were up with the stars. We felt we were gods.' (Joseph Burtt)

'Materially, Whiteway failed, as it was bound to do, but it can only be rightly judged by the ideals which brought it into being.' (Joseph Burtt)

Lessons from Anarchistic Communes

Andrew Rigby

(author of Alternative Realities, 1974)

Anarchists dream of a society without a state. A society where social order is maintained without a concentration of the means of physical violence and coercion in the hands of a political elite, a society where the means to enforce collective decisions is not the monopoly of a specialised group. Consequently, a major problem for anarchists centres around the question of order: how to maintain some kind of social order in society without the concentration of control of organised force and the specialised division of political labour that are the hallmarks of the state. Anarchists have typically approached this question by advocating the twin practices of devolution and federation. Devolution embodies the principle of diversity, the idea that every decision should be taken in the smallest possible grouping. Federation is the necessary complement to devolution and decentralisation, embodying the principle of cohesion and unity, the idea that the diverse groupings in society should consult together on issues of common concern.

Of course, one can imaginatively construct all kinds of structural plans about how collective life might be organised after the revolution - but would any scheme have a chance of working without a fundamental transformation of human character and interpersonal relationships? Many would argue that belief in some kind of total transformation of life after The Revolution is the worst kind of utopics. They have argued for an essential continuity between revolutionary means and ends, affirming that a society without exploitation and domination of humans by humans, and of nature by humans,

can only grow from the bottom upwards. It must grow from the seeds that we sow in our everyday lives and actions. To quote a recent writer:

> Direct action, so integral to the management of a future society, has its parallel in the use of direct action to change society. Communal forms, so integral to the structure of a future society, have their parallel in the use of communal forms - collectives, affinity groups, and the like - to change society.

For me, this perspective was best expressed by Gustav Landauer, a German anarcho-pacifist who was murdered in Munich in 1918. According to Landauer the roots of such oppressive institutions as the state lay in the human spirit, in our habits of obedience, dependence, routine and inertia and our consequent belief in the need for leadership. He wrote:

> The state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.

In other words, so long as we confront each other as separate individuals, we make the coercive state and its associated insitutions necessary. To the extent that we get together to fashion new, non-coercive relationships (attempting to counter our own 'inner statehood') we begin to render the state unnecessary and superfluous. From this point of view we are always helping to undermine and destroy systems of oppression to the extent that we forge new relationships of mutual aid and co-operation. The real revolutionary project entails the construction of a non-oppressive social order in the here-and-now, and takes place through education and practice in self-reliance and mutual aid, through the construction of co-operative organisations that can become the organs of the new society. In Landauer's words, the struggle for social transformation can only bear fruit when 'we are seized by the spirit, not of revolution, but of regeneration. . . Anarchy is not a thing of the future, but of the present; not a matter of demands but of living'.

From this point of view, then, the anarchist revolution is not so much an event as a process, a process of undermining all existing institutions and relationships: how we live, how we learn, how we dress, how we think. Everything. As such, living an alternative lifestyle is not just about having a good time, but trying to create 'the good life' in the

here-and-now – exercising choice, claiming autonomy, practising mutual aid – as part of the process of undermining the state and its related institutions and practices.

The record of this tradition of seeking social change through the establishment of cells of a new, non-exploitative society, is, in fact, pretty dismal if we judge by such conventional criteria as the longevity of life enjoyed by the projects and the numbers of people moved to follow their example.(1) Despite this, the tradition continues into the present day. Communes and related enterprises constitute lived experiments in creating new ways of individual and collective life, and as such they offer many lessons for those who share the dream and the vision of a future commonwealth of freedom and fellowship.

At one level, of course, these lessons might appear rather 'negative' – illustrating as they do the manifold problems of organising collective life based on the values of individual freedom, co-operation, economic equality, and participatory democracy. They show that the path to true community is not an easy one. Let us imagine a couple of anarchists have obtained some property and they advertise in the anarchist press for people of kindred spirit to join them in establishing an anarchist commune. People respond and they set up a shared life together. The odds are that the project will collapse in a matter of months rather than years. Why?

Singular People

Anarchists are disaffected from the conventional way of life. As such they are frequently people of independent spirit: rebels, people who are prepared to struggle against any externally imposed discipline. Singular individuals who are often ill-suited to making the kinds of compromises required of those who are attempting to share life together. As one observer has commented, 'Community demands of each member a constant outgiving of the self, a humility before the needs of others and of the group as a whole. . . .' This kind of willingness, let alone ability, to sacrifice the self, to submerge one's ego within the identity of the group as a whole, is not a characteristic typical of anarchists. They are more often than not 'troublesome people' – not only to the state but often to those amongst whom they live. As some cynics might remark: 'The only obstacle to successful communal living is the sort of people who want to live communally'. The fierce individualism necessary to confront the old world is not necessarily the best material with which to build the new one.

Principled People

Anarchists who are attracted to living communally are invariably highly principled people who seek to live their lives, right down to the minutiae of everyday life, in accordance with their beliefs. They refuse to compromise their morality to accommodate to the dictates of conventional society – hence the attraction of withdrawing from the sick, evil and corrupt society and entering an alternative society, however small. There they can live a life of moral, purity and cleanliness. The problem here is that when people come together who seek to live their lives according to some deeply held principles, almost any dispute can become a 'matter of principle' that brooks no compromise, however inconsequential the issue might appear to an outsider.

Whole People

Related to this phenomenon is the commitment of many commune-dwellers to living together and relating to each other as 'whole persons', rather than as players or performers of particular roles or holders of specific social identities (e.g., employer-employee; work-mates; teacher-pupil, etc.). The problem with this approach to living together is, of course, that the more people attempt to relate to each other as 'whole persons', the greater is the risk that disputes and disagreements over quite specific, and perhaps superficially trivial, issues will engage the 'whole person' and rapidly develop into a crisis.

The Problem of Couples

It is not infrequent that when a couple join a commune, one of the partners is far more enthusiastic about the new life than the other. The phenomenon of the 'reluctant partner' who has joined the venture out of a sense of loyalty, love and support for the other partner can be a source of continuing tension not just between the couple themselves: it can also be a source of friction throughout the commune. The conflict between loyalty to one's partner and loyalty to one's fellow commune-dwellers can be painful. How does one respond to the ultimatum, however reluctantly it might be delivered: 'I've given the life here a fair try. I am still unhappy. I am leaving. Are you coming with me or are you staying?'

Associated with this kind of problem, mention should also be made of all the problems associated with sexual relationships: sexual jealousy; the attempts of some members to impose their sexual norms and mores on other members; the debilitating impact on communal life of a couple breaking up;

the problems related to the igrained habits and customs associated with the sexual division of labour, and the frequent reluctance of many men who espouse the values of sexual equality to translate their utterances into daily practice.

The Problem of 'Looping'

Communes are social institutions within which the whole range of daily activities is performed. People don't 'go home' at the end of the day's work. Consequently, you invariably get a 'looping' phenomenon when disputes and disagreements in one sphere of life (e.g., whose turn is it to get up early to milk the goats, or whose turn is it to wash the dishes, or cook the evening meal, etc.) spill over into other spheres of life (e.g., the argument about work rotas is continued over the dinner table, etc).

The Tyranny of Structurelessness

In rejecting any externally-imposed discipline, anarchists can be intolerant of authority in general and of formal rules in particular. This can extend to a dismissal of the need for any formalised decision-making procedure and structure within a commune. The refusal to countenance any specialised division of authority and power amongst the membership invariably results in the establishment of regular commune meetings as the sovereign decision-making arena in which all members are allowed their say. Anarchists are prone to dismiss conventional democratic procedures as devices that legitimate the tyranny of the majority over the minority. Consequently a not infrequent practice has been to insist upon unanimity before any decision can be taken that is considered binding on all the membership. The problem with this kind of arrangement is that the tyranny of the majority (or of the office-holders) can be replaced by the 'tyranny of structurelessness' - where power accrues to the strongest personality, the most articulate members, people who are often more skilled at 'talking' rather than 'doing'. Where people feel pressure not to register their dissent by voting with their hands (and one should not under estimate the power of group pressure to achieve unanimity), they will frequently end up voting with their feet - leaving the commune.

Individual Freedom versus Communal Responsibility

Decision-making procedures within a commune invariably highlight the tensions involved in reconciling the often conflicting values of respect for individual freedom and

communal responsibility. Such tensions often come to the fore with regard to a number of key dilemmas that are typically encountered within communal life.

The problem of the 'free rider'

Free riders are those who fail to pull their weight within the community; those who consume the benefits of the 'good life' without contributing their fair share to its production costs. They are the ones who exercise their individual autonomy by staying in bed, by 'forgetting' their turn on the work rosta and the like.

The problems of property

In a situation where, for example, tools and implements are considered to belong to the community as a whole, then frequently the responsibility for caring for them belongs to no-one in particular, with the result that they can be easily mislaid, allowed to degenerate into disrepair, etc. Linked to this problem is the belief of many anarchists that attachment to possessions is symptomatic of the corrupt, materialistic, selfish society that they are seeking to undermine - unfortunately the laudable principle of non-attachment to possessions can, in practice, lead to carelessness towards them. The 'problem of property' is not confined to communal property. It is perhaps something of a paradox that to the extent that communes approach the ideal of common ownership and the pooling of goods, so one can find a heightened possessiveness on the part of the membership with regard to those few items that remain 'private' and 'personal'.

The problem of privacy

Communal living can be an extremely intensive experience; a 'hot-house' of human interaction. There are few commune-dwellers who do not yearn at times for the freedom to enjoy some private space and private time. Unless this need is acknowledged and catered for, then tensions are likely to increase within the community. As one nineteenth century observer remarked:[2]

> Some things the communist must surrender; and the most precious of these is solitude. The man to whom at intervals the faces and voices of his kind become hateful, whose bitterest need it is to be sometimes alone - this man need not try communism.

The problem of new recruits

If one values individual freedom and autonomy, if one rejects the imposition of formal rules, if one also has a belief in the potential perfectability of all people - then what right has one, living in a commune, to restrict the right of others to become members who profess to share this commitment to a new way of life? Others might argue that without some form of selection procedure, then a commune is bound to fall victim to those oddballs and eccentrics, free riders and misfits, who are more concerned to escape the constraints of the old world than to work selflessly for the creation of a new one; people who have perhaps had a vision of the 'Promised Land' but who are singularly ill-equipped to make the journey. Disputes about recruitment procedures and policies can be a major source of tension and conflict within a commune.

The Problem of the 'Outside World'

Radical groups of the past that have sought to establish their microcosm of a new society have often experienced conflict with the 'outside world' in the guise of hostile neighbours and a suspicious state. One might be trying to live one's life so as to take away the need for state regulation and intervention in the affairs of people, but the state can be extremely reluctant to acknowledge the legitimacy of such an enterprise. Traditionally conflict has arisen over such issues as taking oaths, conscription and bearing arms on behalf of the state, the registration of births and deaths and marriages, educating children, compliance with public health and building regulations, and so on. My impression is that contemporary communes experience relatively little overt conflict with the state, other than the occasional intrusion of the police searching for drugs, missing persons and the like. Likewise, the hostility of people inhabiting the area surrounding a commune has been a problem that has confronted many communes of the past. Once again, this does not seem to be a major issue of concern to the contemporary generation, except insofar as one source of dispute within communes can revolve around the degree to which the commune should be 'internally-oriented' (focussing primarily on the relationships between the members themselves and upon their personal growth and development) as opposed to 'externally-oriented' (engaging in active propaganda and action directed at the 'outside world' and its inhabitants).

The Problems of Everyday Life

Whilst matters relating to 'grand principles' and 'articles of faith' can cause the collapse of a commune, more often than not the most consuming of problems within a commune

centre around the tensions and stresses of everyday living that result from a group of people spending their time in close physical and social proximity to each other. Things like people holding to different standards of cleanliness and tidiness, and competing definitions of 'squalor' can assume major information. One commune-dweller in the nineteenth century observed:(3) 'That which produces in the world only common-place jealousies and every-day squabbles is sufficient to destroy a community.' The same could be said about the contemporary period.

Earlier I referred to the 'negative' lessons to be learnt from an examination of the pitfalls of communal living. I am all too aware that after such a review, the reader might feel that the path towards a new age, a new ordering of human relationships, through the establishment of communal ventures, is far more likely to resemble a nightmare than a dream. To jump to this conclusion would, I believe, to be a mistake. All of these problems have their solutions. Thus, one can create clear recruitment procedures, and ensure that new recruits experience some probationary period during which they undergo some form of socialisation process such that, when the time comes for them to make a full commitment to the commune, they know what they are letting themselves in for, as do the existing members! It is not beyond the ingenuity of people to devise procedures to ensure a fair and acceptable division of labour and to deal with the problem of the 'free-rider'. Likewise, achieving an agreed and workable balance between common and personal ownership of goods, open decision-making structures and processes that facilitate the full and informed participation of all those who wish to be involved - all these things are within the scope of human creativity.

But to achieve any of the possible structures and ingenious processes that can be devised, there is a fundamental pre-requisite. This pertains to the quality of the relationships between the people living and sharing their lives together. (This brings us back to the question posed at the beginning. To be solved, problems need to be recognised and confronted openly and honestly. Thus, a necessary condition for successful communal living is the existence of open and honest relationships between the members. However, open and honest 'truth-speaking' can damage and destroy human relationships, unless it is complemented by another dimension - the full commitment to, and acceptance of, each other as unique individuals and fellow members of the commune and, on a far wider scale, of the human race. Without the assuredness that one is <u>accepted</u> as a human being, warts and all, then it is difficult to cope with the criticisms and barbed comments that accompany open and honest relationships. None of us

enjoy being criticised, enjoined to mend our ways, and confronted with the harsh truth about ourselves - it is a painful and fundamentally threatening experience. But we can cope with it if we are confident in our belief that our critics are, despite occasional appearances to the contrary, fundamentally 'for' us.

What this means is that each member of the commune recognises themselves in each other, feels a part of each other, recognises the deep affinity that exists between them. What I am trying to describe is a sense of kinship, an experience of friendship - a bonding that goes beyond ties of blood and nuclear family networks.(4) Such an awareness - such a fundamental commitment to each other as people - does not come naturally to many of us raised in contemporary society. Indeed, so much of our socialisation and education seems to be oriented to strengthening our sense of separateness, as atomised individuals who must make it on their own in competition (and conflict) with others. It is, I believe, in this sphere of education - construed in its widest sense - that the true significance of attempts to create new forms of communal life in our society lies.

Commenting on William Morris's novel News from Nowhere, Michel Abensour observed that the true function of such utopian literature was the education of desire, to 'teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way'.(5) Now, if it is true that a single picture is worth a thousand words, then how much more effective 'lived experiments' must be - actual human attempts to create a 'utopia', on however small a scale. Such ventures can act as a challenge to our imaginations, help us to escape from the confines of our habitual 'common-sense' ways of perceiving the world, encourage us to aspire after a new vision of alternative modes of life, liberate our atrophied imaginative faculties so that we can dream of new possibilities for the future.

There are, of course, disciplined and undisciplined ways of envisioning the future. The review presented above, of just some of the problems one can expect to encounter in the struggle to create pockets of freedom alongside mainstream society, should serve to remind us that the enterprise requires stamina and determination, as well as imagination and ingenuity. But in that struggle to establish small arenas within which new ways of life and new forms of relationships can be created, communards and those involved in similar ventures also serve to remind us that the quest for a new social order needs to embrace and encompass the whole of our daily life. Exploitation and domination are not confined to the workplace, and the struggle for change cannot be confined

to that sphere alone - we need to focus not just upon the relationships between classes, but upon relationships within classrooms, not just on material conditions but on the spiritual condition of the individual psyche.

Moreover, in focussing upon the quality of relationships between men and women, young and old, humans and nature, commune dwellers serve to remind us of another lesson. If 'the personal is political', then we need to examine the ways in which we, in our everyday lives, contribute to the exploitation of people, animals and nature. We need to acknowledge, with Gandhi, that 'all exploitation is based on the co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. . . there would be no exploitation if people refused to obey the exploiters'. We need to examine the ways in which we contribute to the persistence of patterns of domination and exploitation - not only through our active and conscious participation, but also through our passive and unthinking acquiescence.

The traditional anarchist vision is of a society of small societies, where people deal with each other face-to-face, where decisions are arrived at through the direct involvement of all those who wish to participate, where work is experienced as a realm of freedom to create, where the opposition between town and country is transcended, where narrow egotism gives way to true individuality, and rampant competitiveness is replaced by practices of co-operative endeavour, mutual aid and community. Such an 'organic' society, combining unity and diversity, can only grow, organically, from the grass-roots upwards. It must grow from the seeds that we sow in our everyday lives and actions. Anarchist communes can remind us not only of the anarchist vision, but of the importance of educating ourselves in the here-and-now for the role of active, self-governing citizens, capable of co-operating with others to create and sustain self-managed communities and institutions. As such, anarchist communes fall clearly within the anarchist tradition of direct action - the determination to act according to one's beliefs; the active expression of our claim to be autonomous citizens. In so doing, they offer us perhaps the most crucial lesson of all - the struggle to reconstruct our institutions cannot be separated from the struggle to transform ourselves.

Footnotes

1 The criteria by which one should judge the 'success' or 'failure' of a communal venture is not a simple matter. Longevity of life and other such 'quantitative' measuring devices ignore a whole range of criteria that could also be applied - particularly those related to

the quality of relationships established within the commune, the long-term influence of the experience upon the members and others, etc.

2 C. Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States, New York: Dover, 1966, p.410.

3 Frances Wright, quoted in A. Rigby, Alternative Realities, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p.287.

4 Once again, structures and procedures can be devised to facilitate and promote such a commitment on the part of members. For instance, one might require of new members such a level of investment (not necessarily confined to economic investments) that would powerfully reinforce their desire to continue as participants in the venture - the costs of leaving would be of such an order to outweigh the costs of remaining.

5 See E. P. Thompson, William Morris, London: Merlin, 1977, p.791.

Geography and Landscapes of Anarchistic Visions of Britain:

the examples of Morris and Kropotkin

David Pepper

This is how we stand. England was once a country of clearings amongst the woods and wastes, with a few towns interspersed, which were fortresses for the feudal army, markets for the folk, gathering places for the craftsmen. It then became a country of huge and foul workshops and fouler gambling dens, surrounded by an ill-kept, poverty stricken farm, pillaged by the masters of the workshops. It is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty. For, indeed, we should be too much ashamed of ourselves if we allowed the making of goods, even on a large scale, to carry with it the appearance, even, of desolation and misery.

William Morris: News from Nowhere, chapter 10

Teaching about Anarchism

The idea of introducing the subject of anarchism into geography classrooms may seem at first exciting. But after pupils have come to realise that the heart of anarchism lies far from popular images - bomb-throwing, or the seige of Sidney Street - one wonders if their interest would be maintained by what could be rather dry abstract issues, such as individualism versus collectivism, the role of the state in present society, and so forth. Teachers must somehow make the subject come alive and appeal to the imagination. One way of doing this might be to evoke what probably most interests children about geography in the first place: that is a curiosity about different places and landscapes; what they look like and how they are organised. Some absorbing classroom exercises could perhaps be constructed around the idea that the geography of an anarchist Britain would differ significantly from the geography of today's Britain. Geography is here defined as the relationship between society

and the environment, as manifested in spatial patterns on and near the earth's surface, and expressed particularly in the visible landscape.

There might be two ways of approaching this. First, pupils could be informed of some of the principles underlying various forms of anarchism (e.g., decentralism, self-reliance, anti-specialism, anti-urban/pro-rural, egalitarianism), and asked to speculate on what changes would occur in Britain's geography if these principles were applied. This approach would assume a good working knowledge of Britain's present economic, social, political, urban and transport geography: hence it might appeal particularly to sixth-formers. Once the initial conceptual leap has been made - from themes like decentralism, anti-urbanism and self-reliance, to specific landscape features like expanded villages, dispersed small-scale settlements, industry scattered through the countryside - then the exercise can become steadily more detailed. As with crossword puzzles, a particular kind of lateral thinking mentality needs first to be assumed and cultivated; then there is a progressive call on geographical imagination and on powers of ingenuity.

The second approach is the reverse of the first. It may therefore particularly appeal to classes below sixth-form level. Here one starts with a picture of an anarchist Britain, analyses the elements in the landscape, and asks why they are as they are.

In what follows, I take two works; Peter Kropotkin's Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow, edited by Colin Ward, and William Morris' News from Nowhere, and I attempt to draw from them a picture of the geography and landscapes of the Britain which they depict.

The Context

I have chosen these works because they seem to be very visual - they stimulate the mind to draw mental pictures. Kropotkin's approach is mainly to discuss anarchistic principles, which he relates to what he believes to be already coming about in Britain in 1890, and to the future. Hence, he refers to elements of existing and would-be landscapes, and the reader is readily drawn into this process and into extending it. (In commentaries on each chapter, the editor does this as well, relating Kropotkin's work to Britain in 1974.) William Morris' more utopian visition of England (first published in 1890) is full of landscape descriptions; particularly of London and the Thames Valley.

One can pull out from these, and the conversations between the characters, the underlying reasons for why things are as they are.

Some other anarchist work which may be suitable for this kind of exercise may be found partly reproduced in part seven of Woodcock (1986) The Anarchist Reader, 'Glimpses of a New World', while Hardy (1979) describes in some detail actual anarchist and utopian socialist communities in nineteenth century Britain, and LeGuin (1987) portrays an anarchist planet of the future.

Both Morris' and Kropotkin's works are imbued with socialist, or, more accurately, anarcho-communist principles. And, although Kropotkin argued that his vision was already becoming reality for Britain, both he and Morris clearly paint utopian scenes. This, despite the anarchist's traditional distaste for utopianism (see Rigby 1974). The idea of utopia, says Woodcock (1979), suggests a 'rigid mental construction which, successfully imposed, would prove as stultifying as any existing state to the free development of those subjected to it'. Nevertheless, this 'has not prevented the anarchists from adopting some ideas contained within utopias', and 'The only complete utopian vision that has ever appealed generally to anarchists is News from Nowhere, in which William Morris, who came remarkably near to Kropotkin in his ideas, presented a vision - charmingly devoid of any suspicion of compulsion - of the kind of world that might appear if all the anarchist dreams of building harmony on the ruins of authority had the chance to come true'.

A significant difference between Kropotkin and Morris, which to an extent affects their visions of Britain, lies in their attitudes to technology. Morris' picture of Britain's future draws heavily on a prediliction for an imagined fourteenth century feudal Golden Age. So, in his classless, police-less and poverty-less society, where communities are organically bound to the earth, there is a general dearth of machines. In voicing the view that machines are the tools of slavery rather than liberation, and therefore inappropriate in a society of true equals, Morris aligns himself with romantics like Thomas More, William Blake and John Ruskin, rather than utopian socialists like Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Henry de Saint Simon, who saw technology as vital to wealth-creation and the liberation of the masses (Redmond 1983). Kropotkin, by contrast, placed considerable faith in technological progress - not least in agriculture, where he imagined that such progress would render Malthus' principles null and void.

Morris is regarded as a socialist - albeit a romantic one - considerably informed by Marxist analysis: and although his vision is widely acceptable to anarchists, his News from Nowhere was written while in dispute with the anarchists who had pushed him out of the editorship of Commonweal, the Socialist League newspaper. But the dispute was about tactics and means rather than ends. The vision of communal Britain in the 21st century, where the state had withered away after a revolution, is one which anarchists and Marxists would not dispute as part of the goal of true commune-ism. Though it is doubtful whether either would, on principle, want to deal in rigid blueprints for the future, it is fun to dream, and geography pupils ought to be encouraged to join in the fun.

Principles

The principles of anarchism have been outlined in the introduction to this issue of CIGE. Those which particularly underlie Fields, Factories and Workshops stem, says Colin Ward, from Kropotkin's concern to rehumanise work, from its present dehumanised state under capitalism: with division of labour (physical/intellectual and consumer/producer), no realisation by the worker of the end-product of his/her labour, little element of craft - the labourer being the servant of the machine - and no intercourse with nature. The economic-geographical consequences of rehumanisation were already becoming apparent, he thought, as society evolved and natural anarchistic trends asserted themselves. (To argue in this way - that 'natural' trends were inevitably re-asserting themselves with the demise of capitalism - meant that centralised planning would not be necessary to achieve an anarchist world - neither could it be suggested that Kropotkin was being 'utopian' if these things were actually happening.)

Due to technological advancement, manufacturing industry was decentralising as it spread throughout the world, so that production for a local market was becoming more rational and desirable. As this happened, then each nation would have increasingly to feed itself, being less able to buy food from outside with the profits of manufacturing specialisation. The same trends were apparent within nations, and small-scale localised industry would spread. Regional self-sufficiency in agriculture was desirable and could be met by intensification of farming (labour, rather than capital intensive, however, in opposition to the actual trend since the 1960s). The best means of combining industry with agriculture within regions would be in small-scale decentralised communities; and the smallness of scale would allow work to become more creative and geared to local needs.

Morris was even more concerned to see work made satisfying and fulfulling, and his utopia strongly featured crafts and artisanship. In it, the redistribution of wealth had abolished poverty, there was no unnecessary production (as in profit-oriented capitalism) and what was made was made with great skill. So human dignity came from work, which meant that payment was unnecessary. Fruitful leisure, conversation and physical activity also made for fulfilled lives - bodies were healthy, strong, and beautiful, through a combination of happiness, simple food and exercise. This classless society was based not on the fruits of industrialisation but on feudal lifestyles combined with distinctly un-feudal relations of production.

Both Britains had escaped from nineteenth centry industrialism. Morris is vaguer than Kropotkin about some of the details of how his society obtained its material existence: perhaps because in romantic fashion he believed that the human soul needed beauty more than bread, and equated technological advance merely with spiritual decline.

Work, Industry and the Distribution of Settlement

When Morris' hero wakes up in the 21st century (having gone to sleep in the nineteenth), his first impressions of the banks of the Thames in Chiswick register an absence of the familiar soapworks with their smoke-vomiting chimneys. There are no engineering shops or lead works, and no sounds of riveting and hammering. We learn that such factories which do exist are called banded workshops, where those who still want to work together in large-scale production (for example, making pottery and glass in big ovens) can do so. But on the whole, production is small-scale and for local use rather than for distant and 'artificial' markets.

Colin Ward notes that Kropotkin's view of work and production was very close to that advocated by E. F. Schumacher (especially for the Third World) in the 1970s. Small workplaces should be created where people already live (in rural areas in the Third World): they must be inexpensive enough for there to be many of them: production methods would be simple, minimising the demand for high skills (and, therefore, into the bargain, the organisation of production could be more democratic - not revolving around 'expert' elites): and, once again, production would be locally-based for local use. Rather like Schumacher, Kropotkin did not eschew the use of machines to save labour. They were welcome, if small and uncomplex. But handwork would extend its domain, particularly in applying artistic finishes to products. Morris, too, wrote of machinery replacing irksome work, but not the creative work so needed for fulfilling mind and body.

In Nowhere, the machines have been 'quietly' done away with and handicrafts re-discovered to a far greater extent, one imagines, than in Kropotkin's Britain. For there is much mention of craft workers - weaver, thatcher, printer, boatworker - as well as the administrator and organiser, whose job it is to eliminate waste. Morris' characters do not do just one job, but, in accordance with eliminating over-specialism, they will leave their boat duties to go haymaking, or their weaving to have a break by rowing the ferry. Kropotkin's workers, similarly, spend part of each day in the factories and workshops, and part in the fields, in 'integrated labour'.

To combine work in this way, and also avoid the social and moral excesses of centralised urban-based capitalism - 'masses in misery' in Dickensian squalour - agriculture and industry are reintegrated. Kropotkin and Morris are very close on this. Capitalist industrialisation drew people from the land, and in the resultant cities people forgot the bonds attaching them to the soil; these bonds are to be re-established.

Given all this, and their principle of local production, both writers envisage the 'scattering' of industry over the world, and over the territory of each country. Kropotkin demands a transformation in the relations between labour and capital: 'a thorough remodelling of the whole of our industrial organisation has become unavoidable. The industrial nations are bound to revert to agriculture, they are compelled to find the best way of combining it with industry, and they must do so without loss of time'. He tried to show that in the 1890s, already, most of British industry was in small factories of between 20 and 50 workers, or workshops (defined as without electric or steam power) of less than 20, and that petty trades and rural industries and crafts abounded. This kind of organisation was natural and desirable - and concentration into large-scale enterprise was not an economic necessity. However, to compete with what large-scale industry did exist smaller enterprises would need to federate and co-operate.

Hence, Kropotkin's landscapes feature the small factory amidst the fields, where industry has come to the village - not in capitalist form but as community-organised production. This way, the workers regain possession of the soil around them (there is to be a multitude of small landowners - implying a multitude of field boundaries?) and they cultivate it.

This scattering gives a very dispersed settlement pattern, as is evident in Nowhere. City suburbs 'have melted into the general country' although small towns have not been cleared. (They have, however, been substantially rebuilt, and most have become nearly as beautiful as Oxford.) People have 'flung themselves' on freed land, and the villages have become more populated that they were in the fourteenth century (reversing the rural depopulation of Morris' day). After the predicted revolution, the town had invaded the country - 'the difference between town and country grew less' - but the invaders 'yielded to the influence of their surroundings and became country people', while the world of the country is vivified by the 'thought and briskness of town-bred folk'.

In Nowhere's Britain, it is therefore virtually impossible to be out of sight of scattered country houses. The houses are generally small. Large 'cockney villas' of the type that once lined the banks of the Upper Thames, and were lived in by the rich, are gone. Houses might be occupied by separate families, but the door is not shut to the 'good-tempered person content to live as other housemates do'. And there is some multi-occupancy, symbolically of Windsor Castle! But Fourierist-style 'phalangsteries' are ruled out, for these large units of communal living are seen as a response to poverty, and poverty is now extinct. However, the unit of management of an area is the commune, ward or parish, which is run by meetings that reach decisions by a mix of absolute consensus and majority voting. The meeting house, with the theatre and market (where, as in all shops, no such thing as money exchanges hands and people simply take what they need), form prominent buildings in most villages.

The City: Greened, Decentralised, or Gone

Just as capitalism led to the agglomeration of people and production in industrial cities, anarchism would lead to the reverse. Kropotkin envisaged that the city would not last, and Morris' England has duly lost, completely, Manchester and most other cities except London:

> As to the big murky places which were once, as we know, the centres of manufacture, they have, like the brick and mortar desert of London, disappeared: only, since they were centres of nothing but 'manufacture', and served no purpose but that of the gambling market, they have left less signs of their existence than London.

The elimination of poverty leads, in Morris' mind, to the elimination of slums, which he appears to regard as synonymous with high-density living. That sense of community which we frequently associate with dense (inner city) housing

in manufacturing areas of Britain is not acknowledged. For Morris it comes only with proximity to the countryside.

Appalling manufacturing places and practices need no longer be tolerated: 'Whatever coal or mineral we need is brought to grass and sent whither it is needed with as little as possible of dirt, confusion and the distressing of quiet people's lives'. Morris gives no details of how this is to be done: the fact that it is done will, however, please readers with a 'green' consciousness, as will the images of London. This city has been thoroughly 'greened' in accordance with the best uptopian visions of environmentalists (see the descriptions of San Francisco in Callenbach's (1978) Ecotopia).

Twenty-first century outer London is a mix of 'villages' separated by blocks of woodland. From Chiswick to Putney there is thick forest. Hammersmith features 'sunny meadows and garden-like tillage': the Broadway is a mass of beautiful buildings rising up from the meadows. Hammersmith and Kensington are but two of the component London villages, set in the countryside and separated from each other by bands of woodland that run all over the old city.

And the nineteenth century sprawl of houses built during Morris' day around Epping Forest, Walthamstow and Woodford, has been cleared in 1955. Beyond Aldgate the houses are dispersed in meadows, and the banks of the River Lea are again beautiful. East of the docks is flat pasture and a few houses set in 'the wide green sea of the Essex marshland. . . there is a place called Canning's Town, and further out, Silvertown, where the pleasant meadows are their pleasantest: doubtless they were once slums, and wretched enough'.

Central London is scarcely less idyllic. In Piccadilly, big houses stand in their own gardens; there are many fruit trees, orchards and tree-lined streets. Trafalgar Square, which has lost Nelson's Column and the rest of its concrete, is a big open orchard. While all the slums have been cleared from the inner city, some areas of dense housing are left in the business quarter; largely because they were so solidly built, and are roomy. The 'disadvantages' of dense living are here off-set by splendid architecture - adornments and improvements having been added to the houses. The docklands are still in business, but not as intensively as in the nineteenth century. 'We have long ago dropped the pretension to be the market of the world. . .' and 'we discourage centralisation all we can'.

Where have all the People Gone?

This question must nag at the mind of the socialist-inclined reader throughout such descriptions. There is more than a hint, in Morris, of the kind of elitism associated with the traditional romantic, who, while professing love of humankind, does not care to be surrounded by too many of them at any one time: derogatory references to the 'cockney' abound. We find some re-assurance: the population of Britain in Nowhere is at the same level as the nineteenth century. 'We have spread, however', and helped to populate other countries 'where we were wanted and called for'! So, as with all Golden Ages, Morris' Britain is static, and although no birth control is discussed, the Malthusian potential for humans to increase their numbers geometrically - which was apparent in Victorian Britain - is not confronted. Neither, however, is any concept of a demographic transition, through universal affluence, discussed.

Kropotkin, by contrast, does take on, and repudiate, Malthus. In the tradition of eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophers of progress through science and technology, he thinks that no limits to population growth are foreseeable, and densities of 600 people per square mile are quite possible. Through agricultural intensification, via a combination of technological advancement, labour intensive cultivation and collectivisation, he believed that 200 families could be supported on 1000 acres. Britain could grow food for 90 million people, he argued (with an optimism which later on he came to moderate).

Agriculture, Nature and Beauty

The kind of collective farms which Kropotkin envisaged are mixed enterprises. His 1000-acre example is one-third in cereals and a little more in green crops and fodder, supporting 30-40 milch cows and 300 cattle for meat. There are twenty acres for vegetables and fruit (including two acres of glass) and half-an-acre of flowers, with 140 acres set aside for public gardens, squares and 'manufactures'. The contrast with today's specialised farms could hardly be greater. Norfolk's 1000-acre ranches are often run by two or three people each. Their fields are empty except for huge machines. When you look at English farmland today, you see few livestock and fewer people, but both of these elements abound in Kropotkin's and Morris' rural landscapes.

Because of increased rotations, and the full use of farm yard (and human) manure, the contemporary problem of artificial nitrates, with its corollary of eutrophication of the

waterways, would not apply. Perhaps this, and the loss of large-scale industry, is why the waters of Morris' Thames are clear, and abundant in salmon.

The mental picture of Kropotkin's fields is less romantic than Morris'. It is one of intensive horticulture and market-gardening, of the type which surrounded the nineteenth century cities. The small fields yield highly, through high labour and sewage inputs, liberal irrigation, cheap glasshouses (today's polytunnels?) and heated soil. There are plenty of trees and hedges to protect plants and the soil, and many fruit trees and vines. Selectively-bred plants are sown widely-spaced to maximise yields. Kropotkin gives lengthy descriptions, drawing on extant French communes which used labour co-operatively and were surrounded by areas of densely-cultivated fruit and vegetable plots.

By contrast, Morris' farmscapes appear more relaxed and Constable-like. There are numerous references to haymaking, using people rather than machines, but beyond this what happens in the country is rather vague. It is looked after with great care to enhance its beauty and variety, and it is tidy. But this is not the tidiness of uniformity - so although, for example, willows are pollarded, it is not done to a uniform height in order to create that diversity which anarchists so value. In Morris' pollution-less world, there is, predictably, much wildlife - an increase in bird species, for example, including birds of prey. The banks of the Upper Thames are forested, wild and beautiful, having lost their 'gamekeeperish trimness'. People have a 'passionate love of the earth' and do not see nature as separate from themselves.

This enhanced sense of beauty is reinforced in human-made things. Human craft is seen in most objects - from tobacco-pipes to bridges and buildings. Gothic cast-iron bridges have been replaced by oak and stone ones. Big buildings are quaint and fanciful, with painted and guilded vanes and spirelets. Houses are low, and frequently of red brick and tiles, or of timber and plaster. And tumble-down ruins are not appreciated: 'we like everything trim and clean. . . like the medievals. . . it shows we have architectural power and won't stand any nonsense from nature in our dealings with her'.

Energy and Transport

Neither author tells us much about the motive power for these quietly industrious societies. Morris simply informs us that power is available where people live, and it does not cause smoke. Windmills feature in Kropotkin's fields, to pump irrigation water. Morris' barges ply up and down the Thames

with no visible means of propulsion. They are known as 'force vehicles'. For the rest, water transport is by rowing boat and sail, roads are still traversed by horse and carriage, and there are no railways.

The reader's sense of disbelief could here be partly off-set by reference to the principle of local production for local needs. For the corollary of this is clearly that there will be less need for transport, apart from leisure and socially-motivated travel (where walking is a la mode for health reasons). The exchange of goods (frequently identical) from one region and country to another, which is such a prominent part of our own economy, should largely wither away.

Trade and International Relations

Morris and Kropotkin agree on the vital anarchist principle that the nation state is an artificial device, whereby people are coerced into patriotism. Along with Marx, they see that the spread of capitalist commercialism undermines national and regional cultural variety, and want such variety to be re-established. In Morris' world, the system of rival and contending nations has simply disappeared, with the concomitant removal of inequality between people.

To Kropotkin, such a system, superficially attractive, is really a nightmare, leading to war through battles for economic supremacy in a world market, and through the establishment of monopolies over trade, production and resources. But as each nation diversifies due to the spread of technology, and loses the advantages of commercial and manufacturing specialism, so self-sufficiency becomes essential and therefore large-scale international trade atrophies. Kropotkin accurately foresaw the 'de-industrialised' Britain which many would have us accept today as a fact of life - and indeed which liberal environmentalists welcome (see Porritt 1984; Ekins 1986). However, Kropotkin does not follow exactly the Marxist line of analysis as to why de-indistrialisation has happened. To him, it results from the 'inevitable' spread of technological knowledge, aided by modern communications: to the Marxist it specifically relates to the capitalist firm's search for cheap non-unionised labour (in Taiwan, Korea or Hong Kong, for example) and new markets, and is facilitated (rather than determined) by communications developments, particularly IT. The Marxist would see increased global exploitation from an ever-powerful centre (Western-based multi-nationals) as the major result. Kropotkin, however, envisages that 'Industries of all kind will decentralise and are scattered all over the globe, and everywhere (is) an integrated variety of trades instead of specialism'. Each area therefore manufactures most

of what it needs, and makes itself its market; this in turn leads to rising general levels of affluence, and greater material uniformity. It may be deduced from this that regional and national differences in landscape consequent on core-periphery economic contracts will be the thing of the past. The kind of polarisation that we witness today, between Britain's or Italy's north and south, or North America and 'black' Africa, would disappear, along with the concept of landscapes of affluence and landscapes of material want and spiritual despair. Certainly, no such regional differences are apparent in the visions of Kropotkin or Morris.

Conclusion

This last consideration suggests that if pupils are to contrast the economically and socially homogeneous (but culturally diverse) landscapes of anarchist Britain with today's economically and socially divided Britain, they must become aware of precisely what landscape elements constitute the visible expression of our current differences, and why they are there. So this suggested exercise does not function solely to develop powers of imagination, speculation and pipe-dreaming. It should make for a keener appreciation and understanding of the here-and-now: it should, in other words, develop what is supposed to be the traditional geographical skill of analytical observation and eye for detail.

In addition, it should wean pupils away from a-historicism: that is, the distressing tendency to see the future as inevitable, i.e., over-conditioned by the present - and only imaginable in terms of extrapolation from present assumptions (of giantism, capitalism, technological determinism, etc.). Usually, today's child's future visions are based on little more than the post-industrial theorising of futurologists like Alvin Tofler or John Martin, which is so intellectually, ideologically and spiritually sterile, deterministic and ultimately transparent. 'Utopian' though they may be, the anarchist scenarios do at least stimulate the senses to accept the possibility of something radically different, and better: they also place the concept of 'humans making their own history' squarely before their audience. For this reason, if no other, they should be part of the core element of geography teaching.

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Imagining an anarchist Britain: some principles which influence the geography and landscapes

DECENTRALISATION AND SMALLNESS OF SCALE

A key concept, because a centralised society takes political and economic power away from people. Truly democratic government, where people organise and control their own lives, can occur only in small-scale communities where people can relate directly to each other. And in small communities an enhanced sense of personal and collective fulfilment and belonging is possible, by comparison with today's large-scale and depersonalised society. Hence, settlements, political power and economic activity will be decentralised and based on small units (though federation into larger representative units - regions and countries - may be desirable for certain purposes (e.g., defence, trade)).

BLURRING TOWN AND COUNTRY DIFFERENCES

This follows as a consequence of decentralisation, given high population levels. And it is desirable, because where country and town mix the best elements of both can combine to produce the most fulfilled individuals. People can work in factories and fields, they can all enjoy fresh air and 'natural' beauty, but have access to the kind of economic, social and cultural opportunities which only towns and large villages can provide.

SELF-RELIANCE

Economic, social and cultural self-reliance is desirable, at local, regional and country-wide levels. The reverse of this, where people depend on global trade networks that they do not control, divests them of political and economic power. And it tends towards cultural homogeneity, whereas cultural variety is healthier and more natural, allowing people to express their own identities. Self-reliance has a large but incomplete element of self-sufficiency. The incompleteness is deliberate, so that large-scale mutual aid between communities, regions and countries is fostered. But self-reliance means that for the most part people can find their own ways of helping and developing themselves and the community, without depending on any state apparatus (the state takes power away from the people). Self-reliance gives people individual and collective political control over their own lives.

ANTI-SPECIALISM

This is a necessary component of self-reliance. It is an important part of individual personal, and collective, political autonomy. If you or your community can only produce certain sorts of things, then other people ('experts') and areas have power over you. You are over-dependent on them. And in any case, individuals who can do only physical or brain work are seldom fulfilled, rounded people. In today's society, specialisation is one of the bases for hierarchies (mental labour, for example, being often considered superior to physical), so to minimise the risk of hiearchical relationships emerging, specialisation should be reduced to a minimum. Anarchists often do not accept that specialisation is a necessary consequence of 'natural' inequalities between people. Specialisation as a 'natural' thing is an idea which has spread with capitalism, because this form of production needs it in order to maximise profits.

LABOUR INTENSIVE PRODUCTION

Anarchists believe that everyone wants and needs to work, to fulfil themselves and relate to the rest of the community (this does not necessarily mean paid employment, and anarchists would equate in importance work that is paid with that which today's society does not pay for - e.g., housework, voluntary services). Hence the purpose of anarchistic economics would not be to produce maximum profit for individuals. It would be to provide meaningful and useful work, producing things and services which people genuinely need. The price of labour in capitalism is regarded as a cost, so capitalism seeks to de-skill human labour and replace it by the work of (cheaper and more reliable) machines. While machines have a place in anarchist scenarios, they are not accepted without question. Their relationship to producing meaningful work must be carefully assessed.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Kropotkin and Morris were among many (but not all) anarchists who would accept the socialist dictum 'from each according to their means; to each according to their needs'. Hence anarcho-socialist, anarcho-communist or anarcho-syndicalist (based on trades unions) societies would be egalitarian. Equal access to power, to the fruits of labour, to cultural and social amenities, would be essential features of their geographies and landscapes.

IS BRITAIN'S GEOGRAPHY CHANGING TOWARDS ANARCHY?

Some writers (such as Colin Ward in his commentary on the 1974 edition of Kropotkin's Fields, Factories and Workshops) have argued that many of the trends in late twentieth century Britain are towards the kinds of landscapes and geographical organisation which anarchist writers would approve of, and regard as the 'natural' ways for societies to organise themselves. Some examples of these trends are given below. However, it is arguable (a) whether these trends are the predominant ones (i.e., decentralisation may be happening in some ways, but centralised control over people's lives seems to have increased in the past 100 years); (b) whether they are happening for reasons which the anarchist would approve of (i.e., agricultural intensification has happened, but not in order to increase production for local communities, or to maintain available physical work on the land for many people, or to produce for need rather than profit).

Trend	Example
Decentralisation of manufacturing industry	Government attempts to do this through regional aid
Decentralised service industry	Moving government departments from the south to the regions
Increased availability of work in the local community	Home working via computer link-ups. Voluntary community services
Decreased division of labour	Some firms (car manufacturing) have experimented with teams of workers to take the product through from early to final assembly stages
Intensified agricultural production	Huge increases in yields since World War Two
Blurring the town/country distinction	Wealthier people have moved from city to country (a) in suburbanisation since the late nineteenth century; (b) in the move to rural towns and villages since the 1960s. And there may be a reversal of the drift to the urban south with escalating house prices in the south
Spread of small-scale local craft industries	Printing, hand-made goods (pottery, knitwear, etc.), wholefood products in rural areas
Self-help/self-sufficiency	Spread of voluntary services with the decline of state provision in the 1980s
Concern for the whole person, and healthy and fulfilling lifestyles	Interest in wholefoods, exercise, spirituality, 'alternative' lifestyles
Small-scale appropriate technology which people can control	In less developed countries, through the work of aid agencies and the Intermediate Technology Development Group
Industry scattered all over the world	Most less industrialised countries areattempting to industrialise.Multi-nationals have extended industrial production world-wide

An Anarchist Looks at Urban Life

Colin Ward

In this article I have to combine two tasks. The first is to describe the links between anarchism and the world of geography and environmental education, and the second is to pick out those threads in anarchist thought that relate to urban life and the culture of cities. I will scatter footnotes around so that anyone wanting more information knows where to look.

Anarchism, Geography and Environmental Education

Anarchism is a social and political ideology that argues that we would be better off as a self-organising society without government. It is an idea so contrary to other political philosophies that it takes a little time to sink in. It implies, for example, that the minority that owns and controls most of the country's or the world's economic assets - land, buildings, industrial assets - would have to be content with their fair share since they could no longer rely on the state machinery - its law, its courts, its penal system, its police, and ultimately its army - to support the property-owning minority's claim. It also implies that the expert and professional wisdom employed by the state is simply a way of disguising from ordinary citizens the nature of the status quo.

This is why anarchism is unpopular. It threatens too many vested interests at the same time. But anarchists are often as realistic as anyone else. When asked what a century of anarchism has achieved, they tend to turn the question around to ask what a century of socialism has achieved.

It happens that two of the most celebrated anarchists of the 19th century, Peter Kropotkin and Elisee Reclus, were equally famous as geographers. A variety of geographical authors have sought to link the two aspects of their work.(1) Kropotkin

himself had firmly expressed ideas about the place of geography in education.(2) But to my mind the most complete integration of their ideas in both geography and anarchism came from a close friend of both of them, the Scottish biologist Patrick Geddes, who was neither a geographer nor an anarchist.

Geddes

I almost hestiate to recommend Geddes to readers because he seems to me to be one of those man-eating plants, swallowing students whole. I knew several who seem to have disappeared totally through getting involved in the mounds of paper he left behind in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Two modern biographies exist to save others from this fate.(3) All the same he is a most stimulating contributor to the geographical debate. My friend Keith Wheeler, formerly senior lecturer in geography at Leicester Polytechnic, sees Geddes as above all, the founder of the environmental education movement. 'He wanted teaching to be centred round, as he called it, 'heart, hand and head: the three H's;, and not the "three R's". He therefore developed an occupational approach to learning, not as vocational training, but to further the growth of the whole personality by taking part in the work of farming, fishing, exploring, and so on. He eschewed competitive learning which he believed only added fuel to the warring capitalist world. He wrote: 'Education must be transmuted into growth-helping, and all teaching must begin with: Look and see, and then go on to: find out and do.' Geddes insisted on the relationship between education and environment, not only because an understanding and sympathy for environment would lead to an improvement of the environment. Ultimately, hea argued, we are all involved in 'geotechnics', the applied science of making the earth more habitable, and in the long run the quality of the environment depends on the quality of the human being'.(4)

Kropotkin and Reclus were anarchist geographers, but as G. S. Dunbar puts it, 'Readers of their geographical works will be disappointed if they expect to find in them an explicit statement of their anarchism, for in practice these anarchist geographers were scarcely different from the mainstream geographers of their day'.(5) Geddes is different. His contribution to environmental education is full of anarchist assumptions, at least to the extent that he believed in direct, decentralist citizen action. Thus in 1912 he remarked that 'For fulfilment there must be a resorption of government into the body of the community. How? By cultivating the habit of direct action instead of waiting upon representative agencies'.(6) And in an oration at the end of the first World War, he declared, 'The central government says, "Homes

for heroes? We are prepared to supply all these things from Whitehall; at any rate to supervise them; to our minds much the same thing". But are they? Can they? With what results, what achievements? At present we have the provinces all bowing to Westminster, where they are granted doles; so the best people leave for London. They send their money to Westminster, which (after ample expenses have been deducted) is returned to some of them in the alluring form of a grant. But why not use this money themselves in the first place? Why not keep your money, your artists and your scientists, your orators and your planners - and do up your city yourselves?'(7)

Here he is touching upon a key contemporary political issue in the current drama of relations between central and local government.

It was Keith Wheeler who, in an extraordinarily stimulating lecture which I have often unavailingly urged him to expand into a book, invited us to pick up the links of an alternative tradition in geographical thought, declaring that 'It is possible to trace a line of descent from the morphological thinking of Goethe through Humboldt, Reclus and Haeckel to Geddes, which represents an alternative tradition in Western European thought deriving inspiration from the paradigm of plant geography and ecology. It also provided a holistic insight into the relationship between man and his environment. This tradition achieved its first practical application in the work of Geddes. Indeed, it can be said of him that he was the first of the human ecologists: the precursor of the movement today which sees an increasing social, political and educational involvement in the ecological understanding of man's environment'.(8)

Environmental Education

Now it so happened, in the mid-1960s, that the sort of localist, populist rhetoric of people like Geddes became fashionable. Dissatisfaction with the results of planning policies in Britain led to the slogan of 'public participation in planning', just as in the United States it led to ideas about 'advocacy planning'. The Government appointed a committee chaired by the late Arthur Skeffington to produce the report on People and Planning(9) which among other things recommended that education about town planning should be 'part of the way in which all secondary schools make children conscious of their future civic duties'.

This of course is the tired old jug-filling concept of education, but it did provide the opportunity for the Town and Country Planning Association, a veteran environmental

pressure group, to get grants from charitable trusts to set up its Education Unit. Anthony Fyson and I got the jobs of doing it and we started with certain assumptions. One was that our work should have an urban emphasis, not through any hostility to other concepts of environmental education: the environment is one, not a duality of urban and rural, but because of the need to put right the view, which I am afraid is still around, that 'the environment' doesn't include cities, towns and suburbs where the vast majority of people actually live. Another was that environmental education was not a subject, but an aspect of every subject on the timetable ('from RE to PE' as we used to say). Yet another was the need for Urban Studies Centres on the analogy of the rural centres whose very existence had succeeded in changing syllabuses to get pupils out of the classroom and into contact with the actual objects of study. Our advocacy of Urban Studies Centres was gratifyingly effective. Even in today's unpropitious climate there are over 30 in existence, and their work has achieved (as the ultimate accolade!) a very favourable report from the Inspectorate.(10)

But of course to me as an anarchist the most important of our assumptions was that our task was not to encourage teachers to instruct classes on the principles of town and country planning, or the legislative basis governing their application, but to encourage education for control of the environment, aiming at a situation where the skills to manipulate their environment are accessible to all the people and not merely to an articulate minority. If the aim of environmental education is not to give people control over their environment, what else can it be for?(11)

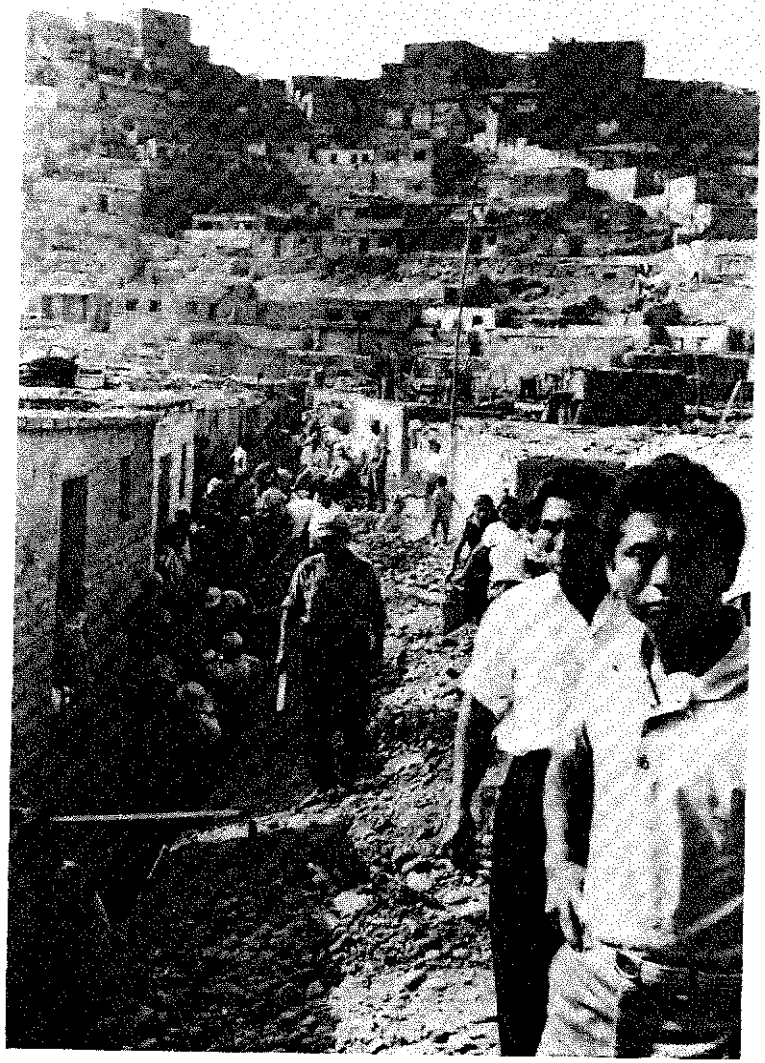
The most recent of the many critical examinations of the ideology of town and country planning, by Eric Reade, complains that planning disguises political issues as technical (and therefore expert) decisions. Referring to the enthusiasms of the 1970s, Reade says that in the hands of the planners, 'Public participation ceases to be an end in itself, valued as an essential feature of a democratic society, and becomes merely a means towards "better" decisions, thus enhancing the power of planners and the perceived legitimacy of planning. "Planning aid", originally a programme for enabling those affected by planning proposals to challenge them, and to put forward alternative proposals of their own, loses sight of the truth that any specific planning solution must inevitably promote specific material interests, and instead becomes merely a way of educating the public into the way in which the planning system works. "Environmental education", potentially a way of helping young people to understand that human exploitation can also be effected through the manipulation of spatial arrangements,

becomes merely a way of indoctrinating them into a belief in a need for planners and planning'.(12) I think this is a valid criticism of some of the activities that go on under the label of environmental education. But I blame it, not on the empire-building planners, but on the educational assumption that they have some special wisdom that we can't all gain for ourselves.

Anarchist Cities

Governments are invariably based in cities: whoever heard of a nation state ruled from a village? Such is the immense self-importance of governments that very often they actually build cities to house themselves: Washington, Ottawa, Canberra, New Delhi, Chandigarh and Brasilia are examples. And isn't it significant that visitors to such cities who want to sample the real life of a nation have to escape from the city of the politicians, technocrats and bureaucrats in order to do so? They have, if they want to taste what they see as Brazilian food or hear Brazilian music, to go ten miles from Brasilia to the Cidade Libre (the Free Town) where the building workers live. They built the 'City for the Year 2000', but are too poor to live there, and in their own home-made city, it used to be reported, 'a spontaneous wild west shanty-town life has arisen, which contrasts with the formality of the city itself, and which has become too valuable to be destroyed'. In Chandigarh, Madhu Sarin concluded that 'the framework of regulation and control of the city's plan excludes a wide range of activities which are nothing more than an expression of the socio-economic reality of India today. . . the result is the additional victimisation and harassment of the most under-privileged sections of the city's population who have little more than their labour to sell in a city where surplus labour is the rule. Even the limited potential for saving and accumulation is jeopardised through frequent eviction, re-settlement or other forms of disruption. All this is in direct contradiction to the state's own open commitment to removing poverty and reducing inequality'.(13)

Indeed, if you want to find examples of what are, in my terms, self-organising, anarchist cities, you would have to go to the squatter belt of African, Asian and Latin American cities. The official perception of these settlements for many decades was that they are the breeding-grounds for every kind of crime, disease, vice, social and family disorganisation. John Turner, an anarchist architect, who has done more than most people to change the way we perceive unofficial cities, remarks that 'Ten years of work in Peruvian barriadas indicates that such a view is grossly inaccurate: although it serves some vested political and bureaucratic interests, it



El Augustino (flat), Lima Street with El Augustino (hill) in the background. Crew digging a trench for utilities.

bears little relation to reality. . . . Instead of chaos and disorganisation, the evidence points to highly organised invasion of public land in the face of violent police opposition, internal political organisation with yearly local elections, thousands of people living together in an orderly fashion with no police protection or public services. The original straw houses constructed during the invasions are converted as rapidly as possible into brick and cement structures with an investment totalling millions of dollars in labour and materials. Employment rates, wages, literacy and educational levels are all higher than in central city slums (from which most barriada residents have escaped) and higher than the national average. Crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution and gambling are rare, except for petty thievery, the incidence of which is seemingly smaller than in other parts of the city'.(14)

Andrew Hake, after spending many years in Nairobi, reached similar conclusions. It is, he says, a two-faced city, with a modern face to the outside world, but a growing number of people in the backyard. And he argues that the backyard inhabitants are 'an immense potential for creative development which will determine the future shape of the city, and contribute enormously to the country's well-being'. The self-help city, he claims, 'provides income and a measure of status for hundreds of thousands who would otherwise be in even greater deprivation in over-populated rural areas'.(15) By 1971 a third of Nairobi's population was living in unauthorised housing. They had, says Hake, 'probably created by that time something over 50,000 jobs which did not appear in any official statistics. They had built many elements of an urban infrastructure and had created patterns of social organisation to maintain the fabric of the self-help society. . . . The self-help city is now building more houses, creating more jobs, absorbing more people, and growing faster, than the modern city'. And not only this, it is also less vulnerable to the fluctuations of the official capitalist economy, and, he says, 'it can expand without too much difficulty to absorb the casualties of the modern development process'.

What an extraordinary tribute to the capacity for self-help and mutual aid of poor people defying authority. Anyone who is familiar with Kropotkin's Mutual Aid, which is now in print again,(16) is bound to be reminded of his chapter in praise of the mediaeval city, where he observes that 'Wherever people had found, or expected to find, some protection behind their town walls, they instituted their co-jurations, their fraternities, their friendships, united in one common idea, and boldly marching towards a new life of mutual support and liberty. And they succeeded so well that

in three or four hundred years they had changed the very face of Europe'. Kropotkin is not a romantic adulator of the free cities of the middle ages. He knows what was wrong with them too. But modern scholarship tends to support his interpretation of their evolution. Walter Ullmann for example remarks that they 'represent a rather clear demonstration of entities governing themselves' and that 'In order to transact business, the community assembled in its entirety . . .the assembly was no 'representative' of the whole, but was the whole'.(17)

The Decline of Autonomy

Very recently an anarchist author Murray Bookchin has traced the decline of municipal autonomy, from the Greek polis to the American town meeting, arguing that the national state 'parasitizes the community, denuding it of its resources and its potential for development. It does this partly by draining the community of its material and spiritual resources; partly too, by steadily divesting it of its power. Indeed, of its legitimate right to shape its own destiny'.(18)

This implies certain assumptions about the size and scale of communities, and Kropotkin again, in his Fields, Factories and Workshops(19) argues on technical grounds for dispersal, for the integration of agriculture and industry, and for (as Lewis Mumford puts it) 'a more decentralised urban development in small units, responsive to direct human contact, and enjoying both urban and rural advantages'. Kropotkin's contemporary Ebenezer Howard, in Garden Cities of Tomorrow(20) asked himself two simple questions. How can we get rid of the grimness of the big city and the lack of opportunities in the country (which drove people to the cities)? How on the other hand can we keep the attractiveness of the country and the opportunities of the city? His answer was not only the garden city, but what he called the social city, the network of communities. The same message came much later from Paul and Percival Goodman in Communitas: means of livelihood and ways of life,(21) where the second of their three community paradigms, The New Commune, is what Professor Thomas Reiner calls 'a polynucleated city, mirroring its anarcho-syndicalist premises'. And the same message is to be found in Leopold Kohr's essay The City as Convivial Centre(22) where he finds the good metropolis to be 'a polynuclear federation of cities' just as his city is a federation of squares.

One of the strands of thought among these decentralist thinkers arose with the emergence of new movements arising

from the 'ecological', energy-conscious mood of the 1970s. Thus, like Kropotkin, the Blueprint for Survival, best-selling eco-volume of 1972, saw the goal as 'a decentralised society of small communities where industries are small enough to be responsive to each community's needs'. And long before the energy crisis hit people's consciousness, Murray Bookchin in his essay 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (which I published in Anarchy in 1967, and is now incorporated in his book Post-Scarcity Anarchism) argued the energy case for the polynuclear city:

> To maintain a large city requires immense quantities of coal and petroleum. By contrast, solar energy, wind power and tidal energy reach us mainly in small packets. Except for great dams and turbines, the new devices seldom provide more than a few thousand kilowatt-hours of electricity. It is hard to believe that we will ever be able to design solar collectors that can furnish us with the immense blocks of electric power produced by a giant steam plant; it is equally difficult to conceive of a battery of wind turbines that will provide us with enough electricity to illuminate Manhatten Island. If homes and factories are heavily concentrated, devices for using clean sources of energy will probably remain mere playthings; but if urban communities are reduced in size and widely spread over the land, there is no reason why these devices cannot be combined to provide us with all the amenities of an industrial civilisation. To use solar, wind and tidal power effectively, the giant city must be dispersed. A new type of community, carefully tailored to the nature and resources of a region, must replace the sprawling urban belts of today.(23)

There is thus a broad band of agreement on the desirable scale of urban settlements between anarchists of the Kropotkin - Goodman - Bookchin strain, and non-anarchist decentralist urban thinkers like Howard and Mumford and their successors.

Cities in Crisis

A quite different line of anarchist urban thinking is presented in Richard Sennett's The Uses of Disorder: personal identity and city life. Several threads of thought are woven together in this book. The first is a notion that the author derives from the psychologist Erik Erikson, that in adolescence people seek a 'purified identity' to escape from pain and uncertainty, and that true adulthood is found in the acceptance of diversity and disorder. The second is that modern American society freezes men in the adolescent posture - a gross simplification of urban life in which, when rich

enough, people escape from the complexity of the city to private family circles of security in the suburbs - the purified community.

The third is that city planning as it has been conceived in the past, with techniques like zoning and the elimination of 'non-conforming users', has abetted this process, especially by projecting trends into the future as a basis for present energy and expenditure. 'Professional planners of highways, of redevelopment housing, of inner-city renewal projects have treated challenges from displaced communities or community groups as a threat to the value of their plans rather than as a natural part of the effort at social reconstruction'. What this really means, says Sennett, is that planners have wanted to take the plan, the projection in advance, 'as more 'true' than the historical turns, the unforeseen movements in the real time of human lives'.(24)

His prescription for overcoming the crisis of the American cities is a reversal of these trends, for 'outgrowing a purified identity'. He wants cities where people are forced to confront each other: 'There would be no policing, nor any other form of central control, of schooling, zoning, renewal, or city activities that could not be performed through common community action, or, even more importantly through direct, non-violent conflict in the city itself'. Non-violent? Yes, because Sennett claims that the present modern affluent city is one in which aggression and conflict are denied outlets other than violence, precisely because of the lack of personal confrontation. (Cries for law and order are greatest when communities are most isolated from other people in the city.) The clearest example, he suggests, of the way this violence occurs is found in the pressures on the police in modern cities. Police are expected to be 'bureaucrats of hostility resolution', but 'a society that visualises the lawful response to disorder as an impersonal, passive coercion only invites terrifying outbreaks of police rioting'. Whereas the anarchist city that he envisages, 'pushing people to say what they think about each other in order to forge some mutual pattern of compatibility', is not a compromise between order and violence, but a wholly different way of living in which people wouldn't have to choose between the two.

And are cities going to change? They will have to, because they are collapsing, replies Murray Bookchin in his book The Limits of the City. The cities of the modern world are breaking down, he declares, under sheer excess of size and growth. 'They are disintegrating administratively, institutionally and logistically; they are increasingly unable to provide the minimal services for human habitation,

personal safety, and the means for transporting goods and people. . .' Even when cities have some semblance of formal democracy, 'almost every civic problem is resolved not by action that goes to its social roots, but by legislation that further restricts the rights of the citizen as an autonomous being and enhances the power of supra-individual agencies'.(25)

Nor can the professional help: 'Rarely could city planning transcend the destructive social conditions to which it was a response. To the degree that it turned in upon itself as a specialised profession - the activity of architects, engineers and sociologists - it too fell within the narrow division of labour of the very society it was meant to control. Not surprisingly', says Bookchin, 'some of the most humanistic notions of urbanism come from amateurs who retain contact with the authentic experiences of people and the mundane agonies of metropolitan life'.

I agree with him completely because I want planning to be an aspect of the activities of ordinary citizens, not of professional specialists. But the particular bunch of amateurs who, for Bookchin, pointed the way were the young members of the counter-culture in the USA. 'Much has been written', he says, 'about the retreat of drop-out youth to rural communes. Far less known is the extent to which ecologically-minded counter-cultural youth began to subject city planning to a devastating review, often advancing alternative proposals to dehumanising urban 'revitalisation' and 'rehabilitation' projects. . .'

For these counter-cultural planners, 'the point of departure was not the pleasing object or the 'efficiency' with which it expedited traffic, communications and economic activities. Rather, these new planners concerned themselves primarily with the relationship of design to the fostering of personal intimacy, many-sided social relationships, non-hierarchical modes of organisation, communistic living arrangements and material independence from the market economy. Design, here, took its point of departure not from abstract concepts of space or a functional endeavour to improve the status quo but from an explicit critique of the status quo and a conception of the free human relationships that were to replace it. The design elements of a plan followed from radically new social alternatives. The attempt was made to replace hierarchical space by liberated space'.

They were, in fact, re-discovering the polis, re-inventing the commune. Now Murray Bookchin knows that the counter-cultural movement in the US has long since subsided from its high point in the 1960s, and he inveighs against the

crude political rhetoric which was to be the next fashion. 'Far more than the flowers of the mid-sixties, the angry clenched fists of the late sixties were irrelevant in trying to reach an increasingly alarmed and uncomprehending public'. But he insists that certain demands and issues raised are imperishable. The call for 'new, decentralised communities based on an ecological outlook that unites the most advanced features of urban and rural life' is not going to die out again because of the harsh fact that 'few choices are left today for the existing society'.

But by the late 1980s our understanding of what these choices actually are has been confused by an avalanche of what can only be called spatial sloganising. I refer to our habit of indiscriminately using the phrase 'Inner City' as a euphemism for poverty. In vain the final report of the Social Science Research Council's Inner Cities Working Party (summarising eleven published volumes of research) quietly concluded that most inner city residents are not poor and secondly that most poor people live outside the inner city.(26) If I were an anarchist geographer I'd be writing a book called Welcome, Thinner City!

Footnotes

1 See D. R. Stoddart 'Kropotkin, Reclus, and "relevant" geography' Bulletin of Environmental Education No. 58, February 1976 (reprinted from Area 7, 1975); Bob Galois 'Ideology and the idea of nature: The case of Peter Kropotkin' in Richard Peet (ed) Radical Geography (Methuen and Co. 1977); Myrna Breitbart 'Peter Kropotkin, the anarchist geographer' and G. S. Dunbar 'Elisee Reclus, an anarchist in Geography' both in D. R. Stoddart (ed) Geography, Ideology and Social Concern (Basil Blackwell 1981).

2 Peter Kropotkin 'What geography ought to be' The Nineteenth Century December 1885, reprinted in Bulletin of Environmental Education No. 58, February 1976 and all over the world since then. As I write, I am pleased to see it re-emerge in the Italian anarchist quarterly Volonta (No. 2/3 1987) under the title 'Cosi si dovrebbe insegnare la geographia'.

3 Paddy Kitchen A Most Unsettling Person (Gollancz 1975); Philip Boardman The Worlds of Patrick Geddes (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978).

4 Keith Wheeler 'The outlook tower: birthplace of environmental education' Bulletin of the Society for Environmental Education Vol. 2, No. 2, 1970.

5 G. S. Dunbar op cit.

6 Patrick Geddes 'Co-operation versus socialism', Annual Report of the Co-operative Wholesale Society 1912.

7 cited by Philip Boardman op cit.

8 Keith Wheeler From Goethe to Geddes and the Search for Environmental Understanding (Fourth C. C. Fagg Memorial Lecture, published as a pamphlet in 1972 by the Croydon Natural History Society).

9 People and Planning (HMSO 1969).

10 Report by HM Inspectors on Urban Studies Centres (Department of Education and Science 1987).

11 Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson Streetwork: the Exploding School (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1973). This book is still available for £3.50 from Planning Bookshop, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AS.

12 Eric Reade British Town and Country Planning (Open University Press 1987).

13 Madhu Sarin 'Urban planning, petty trading, and squatter settlements in Chandigarh' in Bromley and Gerry (eds) Casual Work and Poverty in Third World Cities (John Wiley 1979). See also Madhu Sarin Urban Planning in the Third World (Mansell 1982).

14 William P. Mangin and John C. Turner 'Benavides and the Barriada Movement' in Paul Oliver (ed) Shelter and Society (Barrie and Rockliff 1969). See also John Turner Housing by People (Marion Boyars 1976).

15 Andrew Hake African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self-Help City (Sussex University press 1977).

16 Peter Kropotkin Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (1902) (Freedom Press 1987).

17 Walter Ullmann Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages (Longman 1961).

18 Murray Bookchin The Rise of Urbanisation and the Decline of Citizenship (Sierra Club Books, San Francisco 1987).

19 Peter Kropotkin Fields, Factories and Workshops (1899) new edition edited by Colin Ward (Freedom Press 1985).

20 Ebenezer Howard Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1898) new edition edited by F. J. Osborn (Faber 1945).

21 Paul and Percival Goodman Communities: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life (Chicago 1947) (Vintage Books 1960).

22 Leopold Kohr The City as Convivial Centre (Tract No. 12, Summer 1974).

23 Murray Bookchin Post-Scarcity Anarchism (Wildwood House 1974).

24 Richard Sennett The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life (Penguin 1971).

25 Murray Bookchin The Limits of the City (Harper Colophon Books 1974).

26 Peter Hall (ed) The Inner City in Context: Final SSRC Report (Heinemann 1981).

Calling up the Community :

exploring the subversive terrain of Urban Environmental Education

Myrna Breitbart

Help us turn a bunch of city kids back into children. . . Growing up is never easy. But it is even harder if you've never been a child. Unfortunately that's what happens to a lot of kids in this city when the streets are the only world they know.

Advertisement for the Fresh Air Fund, New York Times, 4 June 1979.

Give them a fresh outlook. Give them some fresh air.

Advertisement for the Fresh Air Fund, New York Times, 25 May 1980.

The Saturday Evening Post's Fresh Air Fund was set up over 100 years ago in New York City to fight youth crime by sending the children of the urban poor for two weeks a year to the 'reforming' countryside. The Fund's assumptions have always been political in nature and yet are rarely acknowledged. They include the beliefs that cities are somehow non-environments; that city children (depicted in the advertisements as black and hispanic) are non-children; that rural settings will keep them out of trouble and favourably mould character; that 'good' recreation means learning social graces, respectability and tools for social advancement; and, finally, that unorganised play, unmediated by adults, is dangerous.

One source of these beliefs is in the late nineteenth century, when urban public space in the US was often the site of struggle between working class immigrants, those with economic power, and social reformers who were convinced of the relationship between physical surroundings and social unrest. By the 1870s reform movements were thus focussed on creating alternative home and neighbourhood environments as a

means to exercise control over the lives of an increasing number of urban poor. Concrete was laid down to discourage impromptu political and social gatherings on street corners or in parks, and vigorous efforts were made to transform neighbourhood-based social functions, including street theatre and soap-boxing, into mass-produced commercial recreation enterprise, otherwise known as the 'organised play movement' (Ewen, 1976; Kassan, 1978; Goodman, 1979; Cranz, 1982; Rosenzweig, 1983).

Many of the conflicts that led to the creation of the Fresh Air Fund, and arose with fervour in cities at the turn of the century over who was going to colonise and control neighbourhood and street life, remain alive today. For children, the 'fresh air' concept also reflects the continuing focus of much environmental education on largely rural themes. Although few would question the desirability of providing youth with a wider range of environmental experiences and the opportunity to explore varied milieux, many would challenge the persistent view of cities as environments solely to be 'overcome' and of urban childhood as a time for restricting freedom and involvement in urban life. For example, British educator Colin Ward suggests the importance of re-valuing everyday occurances in the lives of young urban dwellers and of finding ways to enable them to acquire necessary survival and transormative skills through empowering activities and projects. Rather than encourage an escape from the urban cauldron, Ward would have us reintegrate children back into urban life – its problems and all (Ward, 1978a).

Several efforts are under way to devise innovative approaches to urban environmental education that give children a chance to think and act critically. This article explores some of these examples and explores a theoretical context for interpreting them as potentially liberating forms of education. Discussion begins by tracing contemporary concepts of a critical environmental pedagogy back to the late nineteenth century and the ideas of the anarchist geographer, Peter Kropotkin. Following this, a summary is provided of some contemporary theoretical perspectives and educational practices which share the goal of establishing contexts within which children might critically explore and re-appropriate urban life. Finally, the problems and potentials inherent in these efforts are discussed.

Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Environmental Education

Peter Kropotkin, the Anarchist Geographer

One hundred years ago Peter Kropotkin developed a unique concept of environmental learning and the revolutionary process. Like many contemporary educational critics, he believed in people's capacity to organise their lives without structures of domination and subordination - to coordinate everything from a family to an economy on a cooperative participatory basis. For him, freedom was the relationship of people to a total life process and the elimination of authoritarian relationships wherever they arose - in the workplace, the larger economy, the home, the school and the family. It followed from these beliefs that if people were to participate directly in decision making and to begin to control their environments, then education and grass-roots organising would have to help them to reject externally-imposed designs for living and to become active agents for change. Freedom to develop the self, while acknowledging the freedom of others; freedom to act independently while not damaging others; freedom to grow and continually renew oneself in a changing environment - these were Kropotkin's main concerns (Breitbart, 1978; Breitbart, 1981).

Kropotkin's goals for anarchist politics and geographical education emerged in part from empirical investigations of Russian peasant society. These field studies, and other cross-cultural studies to follow, sought to demonstrate scientifically the cooperative basis of human nature when set within a social environment which supported personal freedom and growth. Kropotkin believed that imbalances in nature reflected imbalances in human relationships, and that to harmonise the relationship between people and nature it was first necessary to create a human community which lived in harmony with itself - to re-establish community and a strong sense of place (Kropotkin, 1914, 1924, 1971). By thus establishing the links between the domination of nature by people and human domination of each other, he laid the foundations for a radical theory of human ecology.

This emphasis on 'place' and the encouragement of local ties plays an extremely important role today in much urban environmental education. It also came to underlie much of the nineteenth century social anarchist quest for decentralist alternatives in economic and social life, most notably, in Spain, where anarchism emerged as a powerful movement for social change before and during the Civil War in the 1930s (Breitbart, 1978; 1981).

For Kropotkin, decentralism was the revolutionary philosophy and kind of socio-spatial organisation which would comprise the backbone of a new co-operative mode of existence. It underlay both the geography and sociology of anarchism in a new free society (Breitbart, 1978). It would ultimately destroy centralised decision-making and create more diverse environments, a greater integration of economic and social life, and a form of regionalism which would promote the active interchange of information and products between diverse areas and people (Breitbart, 1978).

Kropotkin discussed in great detail the central role which education plays in fostering or inhibiting the development of this new society. As a social anarchist he especially criticised educational systems that spread imperialist ideologies, imposed values, generated disrespect or a lack of understanding for the complexities of other cultures, assigned prescribed roles in an economic hierarchy or encouraged the acceptance of authority and passivity in political and social life. Perceiving that the ultimate power of education may be its ability to effect feelings of self worth, he also saw a need to foster the type of learning process which would facilitate choice rather than mould character, and which would encourage people to question existing ideas and circumstances. The free participatory society which he envisaged simply could not function with adults who were open to manipulation or who deferred to experts for the answers to all of their complex questions (Kropotkin 1898; 1899).

Kropotkin thus defined a liberating education as one geared to helping individuals to perceive relationships between historical events and contemporary problems and to understand the causes of the larger socio-economic and political system (Kropotkin, 1885, p.954). Additional concerns which Kropotkin shared with many contemporary educational critics were how capitalism prevents people from perceiving these relationships and gaining control over their local environments, as well as the difficulties which educators are likely to face in trying to circumvent the effects of prior socialisation.

Kropotkin clearly believed that environmental or community study was a powerful means for transforming education into a critical and emancipatory process. Physical environments were seen to reflect and support the dominant social and economic interests of a society. The study of their current form and transformation over time might therefore provide one powerful synthesising tool for learning about the reaction between social and political forces. Since Kropotkin believed that imbalances in nature and problems within urban and rural

communities reflected imbalances and injustices in human relationships, he felt that the latter would be made more explicit through a study of the former. Through geographical exploration, he hoped that children would be inspired to challenge those forces which overtly dominated their lives or inadvertently atrophied their desire to mould their surroundings.

Kropotkin also believed that because of its capacity to capture the imaginations of children and to help adults to synthesise disparate facts and recognise common bonds between working people across regional and national boundaries, the discipline of geography could well foster in people an awareness of social forces and a desire to resist manipulation. Through local study, children could uncover the unique and important contributions of their families to the social history of places. Thus environmental education could be used to reclaim the lost cultures of sub-ordinate people, and to strengthen the bonds between them by encouraging the exchange of their ideas, common experiences and skills across regional and national boundaries.

To promote this spirit of inquiry and awaken popular thought, Kropotkin suggested that education should be 'merged with apprenticeship' - that ideas should be derived (as much as possible) from actual practice and that study should be based on direct community and workplace exploration. He saw libraries, factories and neighbourhoods as important potential arenas for fostering an educational method which would combine mental with manual labour and the conception of a project with its execution and local merchants and citizens as important 'educators' (Kropotkin 1898, p.406; 1899, p.117, 125). These people, as well as trained teachers, were to act as the 'midwives' to self-liberation. They were to communicate ideas, to promote a spirit of inquiry, help to establish clear goals and methods, to awaken initiative by relating local problems to a larger social and economic system, and to involve as many people as possible in thought processes and creative acts of change (Kropotkin 1893).

In this way, Kropotkin saw the creation of alternative institutions and modes of behaviour as the very essence of a social change process designed to encourage new egalitarian and participatory social forms.

Recent Theoretical Contributions

Henry Giroux's work helps us to put recent trends in urban environmental education in context, and to place the in an anarchist framework (Giroux, in 1983a). Critical of both conservative and radical discussions of education and

schooling, he argues against deterministic models of education to show that the school is a 'contested terrain' of struggle against the dominant, capitalist, culture by an oppositional culture located beyond the school in the street, neighbourhood, workplace and the home (Giroux, 1983a, 1983b). In this concern with the wider community, Giroux echoes the ideas of Kropotkin and other radical educators (Freire, 1970; Illich, 1970; Goodman, 1956) in the belief that education should assist pupils to develop and secure their oppositional culture by:

* allowing them to draw on the limited resources at their disposal to re-affirm the positive dimensions of their own cultures and histories;
* increasing their capacity for critical thought and action and their awareness of suppressed needs;
* helping them to explore their immediate needs and then situate these within a broader political and economic context;
* helping them to uncover which values are indispensable to the reproduction of human life (e.g., co-operation, mutual aid, etc.) and which threaten and constrict that life;
* enabling them to act collectively to define for themselves what they want out of life and then to experience the tensions which result from attempts to construct that future from the present.

(Giroux, 1983a, pp.115, 202-4, 239; Giroux 1983b, pp.286, 288, 292)

The central focus of this theoretical work on the role of oppositional behaviour and resistance is thus brought forth in a single question which Giroux asks: 'How do we make education meaningful by making it critical, and how do we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory?'

In the United Kingdom, the work of Colin Ward and Anthony Fyson translates such ideas into action via their founding of BEE (Bulletin of Environmental Education) and their emphasis on active urban exploration by children, using the cityscape as an educational resource in order to combat the passive top-down transfers of most knowledge in inner city schools,

and the continuing focus of environmental education on rural themes (Ward and Fyson, 1973; Ward, 1978b; Fyson, 1976). Their first book, Streetwork, was a book of ideas, ideas:

> of the environment as the educational resource, ideas of the enquiring school, the school without walls, the school as a vehicle of citizen participation in environmental decisions, ideas above all about a problem-oriented approach to environmental education.
>
> (Ward and Fyson, 1973, preface)

Often such educational activities are labelled as 'urban fieldwork', but Ward and Fyson argue that this term is simply inadequate to capture 'the emotional contact with poverty, unhappiness and general dissatisfaction' which urban students inevitably confront. Instead they coin the term streetwork to describe the kind of environmental interaction which starts with a child's real needs, interests and experiences, encourages probing and criticism as key methods of inquiry to achieve a critical understanding of real community problems, and accepts political conflict as an inevitable part of urban life. (Ward and Fyson, 1973)

These texts and others (such as Hart, 1979; McLaren, 1973) help us to theorise urban environmental education. The next section will present a range of examples to illustrate the viability of these ideas in practice.

Recent Urban Environmental Education Programmes

Invitations to Explore through Structured Projects

Several recent urban environmental education programmes in the US have aimed at increasing children's sense of control over their local environments through informing them about these places. One programme, called 'House Sense' is sponsored by New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. It focuses on various topics, including landlord-tenant relations, rodent and roach control, fire prevention, and racial discrimination in housing. The object is to provide students from kindergarten up through senior high school with information and skills related to housing. Lessons, including artistic exercises which encourage students to design alternative houses and neighbourhoods or to visually depict current housing problems, are geared to helping children to develop more control over their environments. By taking trips to the Housing Court, learning to read and write leases and repair malfunctioning heating or water systems, children learn about 'rights' and 'responsibilities'. Advocates of the project

also stress that homes are more than shelters and encompass feelings of love, family (of all kinds), and pride. While acknowledging the inadequacies of many children's existing shelters, emphasis is thus placed on transmitting information and skills for the dual purposes of survival and social change ('Students as Housing Experts', New York Times, 4 June 1987, p.C7).

This emphasis on gathering environmental information and then using it to produce change is reminiscent of Bunge's Detroit Geographical Expedition, detailed in an earlier issue of this journal (CIGE, 1, 2, 1984, p.11; Warren, 1984). The concern for the plight of local children led residents to gather information for a 'local atlas of human needs' focusing on such topics as 'toyless zones', 'rat bitten babies', 'skin lacerating soils' and a neighbourhood map entitled 'Where Commuters Run Over Black Children on the Pointes-Downtown Track'. The child's point of view was the starting point for these and other maps, attempting to map the city experience from the child's perspective, and before the Expedition ended in the early 1970s, it generated many useful and imaginative surveying techniques and a significant amount of information about Detroit neighbourhoods. Although geared to eliciting the active participation of teenage and adult residents rather than young children, it provided a focus around which community groups could form to initiate protest actions and challenge political power within the City on issues as far-ranging as urban renewal, public recreation, crime prevention, traffic, and the quality of life for children.

Similar goals characterise community-based, local government-supported urban studies centres, where children and adults can come to investigate and discuss changes in their communities, or where out-of-town school children can go to gather information on a city visit. Such centres appeared in many large British cities in the late 1970s (Bulletin of Environmental Education, Spring 1981, pp.16-18). Children with tape recorders, cameras, pencils and paper record conditions in the neighbourhoods surrounding each centre. Teachers assist in follow-up discussions. Surveys and news stories are put together by the children and added to the archives which are available for use by future adults and children with an interest in some community issue.

Foundation Roi Baudouin, in Belgium, has the slogan 'Notre quartier au jour le jour' (our neighbourhood day-to-day). It is a government-sponsored organisation which encourages children to observe specific problems of their communities. Actions to ameliorate these problems are then proposed. The broad purpose of these exercises for children aged 10-12, is to develop spatial imagination while at the same time linking

this to a solid understanding of political economics – of who controls space, makes, and implements plans for the neighbourhood. It is assumed that the knowledge acquired through these local explorations will also bolster the children's confidence to approach individuals and groups who may wield local power (Baldassari et. al., pp.36-37).

There are similar organisations in Naples, Paris and a few other large European cities (Baldassari et. al., 1981). One especially imaginative group, based in London and called Inter-Action, travels to several neighbourhoods providing projects for the mentally handicapped, disadvantaged children, the elderly, and deliquent and unemployed youth. These projects are designed to involve people in demystifying their environments by, for example, constructing model houses and communities from scrap materials; designing, manufacturing and marketing a product like a book; or developing views on current events through a variety of the media (Baldassari et. al., 1980, pp.44-46).

'Your City Has Been Kidnapped' (Norton, 1976) is another extremely innovative project. It is designed to encourage elementary school children to familiarise themselves with urban social problems and to become involved in the conflicts which arise over their interpretation and resolution. It begins:

> Tuesday, 5.00pm
>
> Your city has been kidnapped. If you want it returned to you intact, you must follow these instructions carefully.
>
> 1 It is entirely your own fault that it has been kidnapped. You have been lazy, apathetic and uninvolved, and while you weren't looking we just took it away. So the first thing you have to do is to take an active interest in what is happening.
>
> 2 Secondly, it is you who have to live in the city. You know how it works, what you like best, and what the problems are. You can't expect the Council to know all these things as well as you do. So you will have to make up your own mind about what you want changed, what you want improved, and what you want to stay just as it is.
>
> 3 Lastly, you will have to fight for what you want. We're not going to give it back to you just like that. You'll have to organise yourself into groups, write letters to the newspapers, lobby your councillors, sit in, and stand up for what you believe in. If you do all this by 6 o'clock tomorrow night, you will find your city waiting for you outside the Town Hall.
>
> Signed,
> The Kidnappers

The learning package goes on to attribute many existing social problems to the loss of popular control over decisions affecting both work and community life. The Introduction urges citizens to supplant the influence of so-called 'professionals' and elected representatives with their own experiences and knowledge. Projects give children ideas for exploring political, economic and social life in the city neighbourhood, for example: 'Who Owns Your Town?' an exercise to determine who owns local property and what condition it is in; 'What you like and what you don't like', the categorisation of local places to preserve and/or destroy with an action plan for implementation; 'Where is the humor in your town?', the search for and creation of amusing components of the local environment; 'Counting things', a neighbourhood inventory of resources (such as abandoned cars, ugly, beautiful or empty buildings, people over 65, etc.) for comparison with other areas, identification of local problems and prospects, etc.; 'Pollute this town', a diagram of the neighbourhood to be filled in with pollutants so they can be identified and removed'.

Students are given new ideas and methods of acquiring more knowledge of their surroundings. Yet, the end products – the information which they do uncover and the interpretations which they make of it – are controlled by the students themselves.

Child-led Exploration

In contrast to the pre-planned formats of the projects described above, environmental educators and community activists have designed methods for children to explore their neighbourhoods for themselves.

'How often', asks British educator Jeff Bishop, 'do we let the child lead us home from school instead of us leading the child?' (quoted in Ward, December 1978). Sensory Walks and Urban Trails are two innovative formats which invite children to experience their cities and to assess them critically. On the former, they experience a series of places in the urban landscape in a relatively unplanned way. In the classroom a discussion is then initiated on such questions as 'Where did you go?', 'What did you hear? taste? think? see? smell? touch?', 'What do you remember?', 'What made you wonder?'. In

contrast, urban trails are preplanned walks around the neighbourhood or city where children experience the environment as a basis for later descriptive and analytical work on themes such as the quality of housing, traffic, garbage collection, safety (Ferguson, 1978; 'Town Trails', 1978; Goodey, 1975). The purposes of both types of walks are to arouse the visual curiosity of participants and encourage them to look critically at their surroundings, appraising the quality and identifying issues of importance related to them. There is also an expectation that help will be elicited along the way from 'street teachers': elderly and unemployed residents, caretakers of young children and shopkeepers.

Another technique suggested in the Bulletin of Environmental Education centres on 'language' in the city. Children are sent on a Wordhunt through their neighbourhoods and are asked to observe and note down the kinds of words they see and their location (Boon, 1973). Designed to encourage observation, questionning, and discussion, the follow-up sessions can take several different forms and directions. They can examine advertising and analyse messages which shops are sending out to prospective customers - i.e., discuss perversion in the use and meaning of words. Another takes account of the foreign languages used and relates this to the population of the area or notes and studies street and house names which may have once reflected a different physical or economic character of the area. Or the language of an area may be classified by listing the form it takes (instruction, persuasion, warning, abbreviation, explanation announcement, etc.). In each case, the words themselves stimulate discussions around more encompassing social issues.

While on a sensory walk or town trail, students can also take photographs or slides of those items or places which interest them. In the classroom, they can then discuss why they took the pictures and pursue what was important about them. More structured alternatives to taking random photographs have teachers presenting children with a series of pre-chosen pictures that illustrate particular urban conflicts and problems when shown in sequence. These photos can be used to generate discussion around such issues as traffic control, housing racial discrimination.

On a trip with sixth grade students through a poor neighbourhood in Springfield, Massachusetts, we came up with photos of everything from cracks in the sidewalk to wall graffiti and tenants in the process of rehabilitating a building. This led the children to design a project around housing, in the process uncovering information about a Community Development Corporation, tenant organising and housing co-operatives. On another urban trail through a

transitional neighbourhood in the same city, ten-year-old students noted the different uses that park space was put to by girls and boys of varying age. The girls expressed their fears of teenage gangs and began to explore ways of regaining some control over play areas. When asked what should be done about the problems in parks, one indignant little girl replied matter-of-factly, 'We must call up the community!'. The lively discussion that followed centred on locating this responsible community and identifying some of the limited powers it had at its disposal. The conflicts related to race, class and gender, which arise in any city over planning priorities, were thus explored at an elementary level, along with some speculation about child-initiated projects that might begin to alter the current situation.

In a walk through an hispanic community, also in Springfield, Ma., students of mixed class and ethnic background expressed conflicting perceptions and cultural interpretations of neighbourhood life. Restrictions placed by the school system on the topics which can be broached with students by teachers (race and family background were two) unfortunately made it difficult to explore these differences in any depth. However, the interest that the children expressed in the history of the area did make it possible to alter somewhat the relationship between them and their teacher. The teacher, a white male ex-military officer with strong family ties to the area, noticeably looked upon his white and hispanic students differently. Yet, when the children expressed an interest in the fact that electric trolleys replaced horse-drawn carriages on neighbourhood streets, he vividly recounted a story about his father who, as a boy, earned money shovelling horse dung behind the carriages. Faced with the loss of a livelihood, his father and friends found it necessary to sabotage the new trolley lines when they were introduced. The children loved this tale of resistance, and both teacher and students began to view each other with greater interest and respect for difference.

The Environmental Education and Exchange Project (EEEP), begun in the 1980s, represents a more recent effort to involve children in the exploration of their neighbourhoods and the conflicts which arise among planners, politicians and residents of large urban areas. Children in the fourth to eighth grades attending public schools are asked to pick sites and issues within the local neighbourhood and to study and write about them in an environmental guidebook. The book is designed to contain a visual and written description of the site and the controversial local issues in that area. It is also meant to include a discussion of the changes which have occurred there as a result of political, economic and social forces. Children are then asked to devise a proposal

for future change on each site. Every classroom is matched with a classroom at the same grade level in a contrasting environment or cultural setting. Students from both environments are then encouraged to correspond with each other over the course of a year, sharing pieces of their guidebooks. Two or three visits between sites are also arranged. During these visits the host children lead the visiting children on a tour of their sites pointing out what is of special importance to them.

In one project, students from a school in Harlem identified a vacant lot as their site and, employing techniques of urban archeology, they proceeded to reconstruct its past. They built a small replica of the city block as it once looked using materials that remained behind. Alternatively, students in rural Vermont identified several nineteenth century mills as their focus and reconstructed local labour histories around these sites. The Harlem/Vermont exchange made the positive steps to reduce racism and inroads into breaking down prevalent urban/rural stereotypes (Hart and Chawla, 1980).

Urban Environmental Education: The Three Rs or Revolution?

To develop projects of the type noted above is difficult. Problems arise due to the innovative, interdisciplinary nature of such work, the traditional structure of the school, and the wider social environment and prior learning. School administrators are suspicious of what they perceive as a less rigorous and perhaps more critical form of learning which does not fit into the traditional subject and timetable compartments of school life. Teachers may feel that they lack the ability to cross traditional subject boundaries, therefore proponents of urban environmental education have sought to provide resource manuals which set out concrete methods for incorporating environmental exploration into existing disciplines, rather than setting up neighbourhood study as another, separate, discipline (Hart and Perez, 1981). Even with such aids, however, it can still be difficult to convince some teachers and school administrators to replace well-tried techniques with flexible, self-directed fieldwork projects whose results cannot be predicted in advance. Of course, as far as administrators at least are concerned, their reluctance will also reflect their particular role in providing education which maintains the status quo (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Sharp and Green, 1975; Freire, 1972).

Some schools, teachers and even pupils themselves may be reluctant to confront or be confronted by the often harsh realities of life in the city for fear of the tensions to

which this could give rise - within the group for example, or between pupil and teacher, or between teacher and school. The progressive teacher will also be forced to recognise the 'limitations within which teacher autonomy can operate' and the fact that 'what appears as the freedom and self-determination of a few (students) occurs within the context of its denial to the many' (Sharp and Green, 1975, x, lx). Thus, while a progressive environmental education programme may recognise the importance of child-directed exploration in providing the material necessary to understand how and why the social structure generates differential access to resources and power, it may fail to recognise how social stratification insinuates itself back into the educational process as an unintended consequence. To ensure the liberating potential of urban environmental education, it thus becomes necessary for the teacher or facilitator to do more than 'assert that the individual (student) matters' (Sharp and Green, 1975, p.226). (S)he must also help to transform the 'institutional framework which differentially stifles talent, dispels initiative and individuality and renders the vast majority of the population "reduced" and "alienated" ' (Sharp and Green, 1975, p.226).

The wider social environment can also constrict projects that run against the grain of traditional educational practice and which may be perceived as one-off by either teachers or students. If accumulated educational experience has taught a student to listen rather than speak, to accept rather than generate ideas, and to await 'facts' rather than search them out, one might well expect that student to be a confused or reluctant participant in an urban environmental education project which requires self-directed learning. The problem of having to face varying degrees of participation even in a participatory setting may also be due to prior disillusioning experiences of class, race or sex and the lack of time, money and confidence which these negative interactions generate. Overcoming these problems means giving more thought to preparing for participation through a variety of exercises. However, there is also the issue of trust. One can hardly blame a child for lacking interest in even a child-directed project if no evidence exists to suggest that ownership of the project really does rest with the children and that the future holds the possibility for extending rather than ending the projects.

All of these obstacles to a liberating and perhaps subversive application of urban environmental education relate to the larger and more complex issue of a supporting social environment. As Kropotkin observed, values which are learned in school programmes may be valuable only to the extent that they are also supported in the outside world. How does one

deal, therefore, with the contradictions which may arise from placing a non-hierarchical mode of study within a basically hierarchical institution, or from teaching the importance of active involvement in social and economic life within a larger society which educates its citizenry in the reverse way?

It is thus clear, even from this brief discussion, that potentially revolutionising educational practices such as UEE still cannot liberate a child from that child's experience in a larger environment. This is one reason why those concerned with social change must not become too fixated on a single site (the community, workplace, home, school, etc.) as the locus for extending self-expression and critical learning. Any and all sites are critical.

Despite these caveats, there can be little doubt that urban enviornmental education can increase the possibilities for self-directed critical learning and therefore enhance the prospects for social change.

For example, the focus on uncovering issues and problems of local concern directs youngsters to an appreciation of the uniqueness of residential and work environments and enhances their awareness of how larger issues of power, inequality, racism and sexism manifest themselves in these environments and in everyday life. By venturing into the street and then discussing the results in groups, children are able to test against reality their own opinions and the opinions of others acquired from the classroom, families, books or television (Hart and Chawla, 1980). Neighbourhood comparisons may contribute to children's ability to identify the causes of the social problems they encounter as well as strengthen their resolve to deal with them. Thus, whereas some can caution against immersion in contemporary urban life because it 'deprives children of a strong identification with animals and the natural world' (Condoret, 1973), proponents can counter by observing that urban exploration can develop a strong social conscience and identification with the needs of various people in social and economic circumstances.

From Kropotkin's perspective, social change and development of the consiousness necessary to seek it, depends on developing all possible arenas for self-expression. Seen in this light, recent trends in urban environmental education may be encouraging. Neighbourhood exploration can engage young participants with a number of important issues and raise a host of socially-charged questions. These questions may relate to who controls and shapes a particular environment, who owns property and has access to various services and amenities; how social forces impact on spatial

organisation; and how residents might make an inherited space distinctly their own. Although the physical environment can only provide a clue to those understandings, close observation of the urban landscape can encourage people to ask deeper questions about the social processes responsible for its formation.

Furthermore, content, although important, is only a part of a liberating education; the manner in which learning takes place and the degree of individual autonomy and free expression which it allows is of critical concern. Recent historians of youth have reflected this view by proclaiming children to be active and creative agents in their own lives, operating within constraints but nevertheless exercising free will (Gillis, 1981). If urban exploration is designed to encourage self-directed learning and allow children to define the topics and manner of study, then it may help to break vicious cycles of dominance behaviours that provide a barrier to creative expression (Boulding, 1979). Actively searching one's environment and becoming involved in personal experiences of choice and action at home, in the street, or in school may reduce feelings of powerlessness and stimulate reflection and encourage feelings of self-worth ultimately contributing to personal liberation. Certainly these are some of the hopes and expectations of proponents of urban environmental education.

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Education for What?

A guide to the Dartington Experiment

Michael Duane

LANGUAGE AND LOVE: VITAL ELEMENTS IN PROGRESSIVE ANARCHISTIC EDUCATION

I have very rarely found any teachers who were really indifferent to the quality of the relationship between themselves and those they were teaching. A very few - in the course of more than forty years probably no more than half a dozen - who absented themselves from work as often as possible short of incurring loss of salary; arrived at school at the last possible moment and left as early as they could, giving urgent domestic reasons or ill-health for so doing and for not attending staff meetings held after school hours; set and marked work of such a quality as just to escape trouble with the Head or Inspectors; wrote reports on children that were insensitive and minimal; never made contact with parents if they could avoid it; were rarely seen actually to teach. They mostly set work from text books. I sensed that they were actually terrified of children or found personal contact with them so distasteful that they avoided it.

It is teachers' feelings about children that dictate their relationship with them, irrespective of the rules that Heads and senior staff may make to regulate such relationships. Children are equipped by nature to detect the real feelings of adults about them, since no adult can mask those feelings however much they may cultivate facial expressions or voice quality to accord with what they believe to be expected of them.

Why are the relationships in school so important?

The view of the teacher as an expounder of knowledge and wisdom, to a passive audience of learners, is not only inadequate; it is false. Emphasis has swung from teaching to learning because we now see that the child, however young, is

an active exploring being, endowed by nature with unending curiosity and a need to investigate and manipulate the objects in the immediate vicinity.

The 1920s saw the start of a new era of enquiry into human conduct, associated with the names of Jean Piaget, Alexandr Luria, Lev Vygotsky, Edward Sapir, Ernst Cassirer, Suzanne Langer building on the work of Sigmund Freud, John Dewey and William James. It took fifty years for their work to start to be felt in the training of teachers in this country. We have still to see, outside of a few well-known progressive schools and a minority of state schools mostly in prosperous neighbourhoods, the universal acceptance of child-centred education. 'Child-centred' is still held to mean 'lax', 'do as you please' or 'irresponsible'. The Thatcher government's preoccupation with a 'national core curriculum' is simply the expression of that continued misunderstanding, and of the corruption of human relationships intrinsic to capitalism.

A system of education based on learning rather than teaching rests on a number of assumptions of which the main are:

(a) that by the time a child starts school or playgroup there has occurred for three years or more an intensive education into the culture of her or his parents, friends and neighbours;

(b) that for reasons of heredity and cultural education in the family every child is a distinct individual with an idiosyncratic pattern of skills, values and motivation;

(c) that the child will learn effectively only when in an environment not far removed in style, values and attitudes from what she or he has hitherto experienced;

(d) that any introduction to new materials and attitudes must arise out of pleasurable experience in the course of what is being learnt;

(e) that the size of the learning group must not overwhelm the newcomer and must enable a one-to-one interaction with other children or adults - to arise at need so that, for example, it should not be unusual for a teacher to read or tell a story with a child on her lap;

(f) that the materials used in school are the same as or close to those already experienced at home, and that their use springs naturally from what the child has already, at least in part, experienced.

Why are we so confident that the earliest stages of formal education should closely resemble what the child experiences in a good, loving home? For the obvious reason that the human family has evolved in such a way as to secure the survival of the infant, of the family group and, as a consequence, of the larger social group of which the family is the basic unit. The very powerful bonds that make humans the social animal that they are are rooted in the physical relationship between mother and infant that is not only essential for the survival of the infant, but emotionally satisfying for the mother. This relationship - usually called love - arises from the total dependency of the human infant; it is literally powerless and will die within days if not fed and caressed - as Spitz found. As other children arrive the older ones are drawn into the care of the younger ones by the example and encouragement of the parents while at the same time continuing to experience that care themselves. As they grow they observe the effects of co-operative work by men, women and older children and themselves experience the products of that work and the pleasures of work and play. And since the human brain has so evolved, the habits and experiences of childhood become deeply rooted in the psyche - the basis of tradition.

But the feature that makes humanity so qualitatively different from even the higher primates such as orang-utangs is language. Language makes possible memory, history and culture. Luria's discovery that human infants can hear before birth for at least two months solved the problem posed by William James: 'How is it possible for an infant, born into the great buzzing, blooming confusion, to distinguish those things and events that are good for him?' Luria showed that the children are conditioned - in the full Pavlovian sense - to their mothers voices because this voice is associated with the comfort and security of the womb: protection from undue noise and shock; feeding, through the blood stream, before demand is experienced; the gentle rocking as the mother moves about - why do adults almost instinctively rock restless babies?

Anyone can test this for themselves, as I did in the sixties when I first read an account of Luria's work, by placing an ear against a woman's belly at about the point where a baby's head would be during the last two months before birth, closing the other ear and getting the woman to speak quite softly. The ease with which it possible to hear comes from

the fact that the space between larynx and baby's head is largely filled with air in the lungs. The more surprising effect is one's reaction to the voice so heard. The listener experiences a feeling of calm and reassurance - as can be seen when restless babies are played a recording of the tranquil beating of a human heart - presumably coming from associations going back to the period within the womb.

So, in the new world outside the womb, the mother's voice is in effect saying to the infant, 'You're OK. I'm still here. Now try this.' In this way her voice provides the assurance necessary for the child to undergo all the new experiences essential for growth into full humanity. This is why the children of mute mothers, or children born congenitally deaf, show problems of learning and social contact much more often than children of mothers who speak normally and children who have normal hearing.

The acquisition of language, more than any other human skills, requires prolonged childhood and strong emotional bonds. The phrase 'the mother tongue', with all its associations of close familiarity, tenderness, deep feelings and a sense of belonging, indicates something of the importance of language. In his essay 'Language' Edward Sapir writes:

> It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language, because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behaviour that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behaviour in which language does not play its part

and again,

> Language is a great force of socialisation, probably the greatest that exists. By this is meant not merely the obvious fact that significant social intercourse is hardly possible without language but that the mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language.

Over thirty years ago Luria showed how language is vital in re-educating brain-damaged patients to recover the use and co-ordination of limbs and functions rendered useless by injury. Today the Centre for Conductive Education in Hungary is using methods that come from the work of Luria and his colleagues, in restoring bodily function to children and young people injured by disease or accident.

The nature of the responsibility of teachers towards pupils in Britain is embodied in the dictum 'in loco parentis', that is, that teachers should behave, during the period when the pupil is in his charge, as if they were the parent of that pupil; it being assumed that all parents are rational and of normal intelligence and foresight.

The Terrace - an experiment in progressive anarchistic education in a state school

In 1973 Dr Royston Lambert, then Head of Dartington Hall School, set up, in conjunction with Sir Alec Clegg, then Education Officer of the West Riding of Yorkshire, a scheme for applying progressive principles in education to the children of manual working class parents. In essence the scheme operated democratically - students and staff each had one vote: the work they did for part of the time was paid for and they decided what to do with whatever was left after paying their bills. They engaged in some social service and in cultural activities such as visits to art galleries, the theatre, welfare clubs, and discussed their impressions. They explored local and national social and political issues; they worked out their own types of work and social disciplines together with the staff.

The fifteen boys on the first scheme - ROSLA I - lived and worked in The Terrace, Conisbrough, a house bought by the Dartington Trustees for the scheme, rather than in the school itself. Work included decorating the interior of The Terrace under the guidance of a decorator and builder, running an allotment, turning part of The Terrace into a workshop, rebuilding heavy-duty trolleys for a local engineering firm and refurbishing old mahogany desks and selling them.

The boys had been selected for the scheme on the grounds that they were almost totally alienated from school, played truant far more than the average for the school, were all in trouble with the police and were academically at the bottom of the school. All had difficulty in reading and writing; one boy had been classified by the school as almost educationally sub-normal.

The staff included one young teacher from the school, Neal; one young man appointed by Dartington, Ken; and the two Wardens of The Terrace, Pat and her husband, Dick. Although Pat and Dick were also responsible for running courses for groups of students from Dartington, they were able to devote nearly all their time, certainly for the first ROSLA group, to the boys and to the work being done. They had been

appointed a year before the scheme started and used that time to get to know the people of the neighbourhood, the school and staff, and local social and welfare officers.

At the start of the course the boys were suspicious of the staff; they were, in the view of the staff surly, uncommunicative, sloppy and ill-mannered'. They smoked openly, wore their outdoor coats when working indoors as if to indicate their lack of commitment to the scheme, told bawdy jokes to one another and, in general, sought to 'put down' the adults'. The adults, however, continued to use argument to establish their points, refused to behave as the boys expected them to - i.e., as 'normal' teachers - and by getting a local man, a builder and decorator, to start the boys on decorating the rooms to be used as dormitories, got the scheme under way. At first the boys played the fool, scattered paint, arrived late, left early and had to be constantly persuaded and cajoled to get on with the work.

When, at last, the first room was completed, the local builder expressed himself as amazed with the quality of the work, although they had used far too much paint and had not cleaned up properly, and he recommended that they should be paid the full adult rate for the job. This was a turning point. From then on they gradually entered more fully into the work and the spirit of the scheme. From September 1973 to July 1974 the transformation in their attitudes, their self-discipline, their self-confidence and their self-respect was quite remarkable.

A very important part of the scheme was the daily and weekly meetings of the group - staff and boys - to discuss work, outings, accounts and general progress, but, in particular, to resolve the many differences that sprang up between members of the group. Whereas at first the response of the boys had been monosyllabic and only in reply to direct questions, as the scheme progressed they took over more and more of the initiative in discussion. From a 'couldn't care less' attitude, they became deeply committed to the scheme and developed such a strong group loyalty that those who acted against the interests of the group as a whole laid themselves open to very sharp criticism from the others. They criticised one another and members of staff for poor quality of work and, especially during 'the strike', for inconsistency between their claims and their actions.

For one week during the second term the boys had become bored with the work and wanted a change. The adults tried to insist that they stuck to the programme previously agreed but the boys decided to go on strike for a week 'to test them'. They were testing whether the adults were sincere in claiming that

all decisions should rest on majority decisions of the group. Although some of the adults were aggrieved by the decision they had to accept it.

As a result of the programme of visits, expeditions, visiting speakers and talks by interested visitors to The Terrace, the boys became more involved in events outside their immediate locality. They began to read newspapers for other than the football results and to ask questions about national and international events. As the scheme took place during the miners' 'go slow', they invited representatives of both the miners and the Coal Board to put their case. Their comments and questions to both showed that they were taking an intelligent interest in the reasons for the dispute.

The growth in their self-confidence led them to speak more openly and directly to anyone in authority without, apparently, the fear or dislike that had so often characterised their previous attitudes to authority. The care with which they listened to managers, although many of them were sons of miners, indicated a new openness and a new ability to accord respect to others. They realised themselves that changes were occurring. Typical comments were:

> 'I'm improving my speaking because of the meetings'
>
> 'My attitude to work has improved. I do things better because I want to'
>
> 'I've improved my attendance. I hardly ever went to school'
>
> 'I've improved my speech. I'm more confident. I'd never talk in a discussion at school. I would now'

Further, their increased self-confidence and self-respect led to a change in appearance. At first they looked scruffy, with untidy and not-too-clean hair. They dressed any old how. At weekends they dressed smartly, as other boys, when doing their own things at discos in Sheffield or visiting pubs, but as the scheme progressed they began to look cleaner; they wore more appropriate working clothes such as overalls or a boiler suit, and they kept their working clothes and boots cleaner.

Their habitual way of walking in the past had been to slouch or walk with something of a stoop and with hands in trouser pockets. Later their gait became more upright; they walked with more spring and as if with more purpose. Less often they kept their hands in their pockets and seem to gesticulate while talking more freely. As individuals they varied a good

deal, of course. Some, like Ian, appeared to make little progress and to maintain a more sceptical stance than the rest, but changed rapidly in the last few months. His change in his relationships with Pat - from morose and sullen lack of co-operation bordering on downright rudeness, to one of open friendliness, was the most obvious. Others changed slowly but steadily throughout the period.

In November 1987, some fourteen years after the first experiment, I met some of the staff and students who had taken part in the scheme to see how far they were conscious of long-term changes in themselves as a result of the scheme. All those I was able to make contact with during the few days I was in Yorkshire were enthusiastic about the virtues of the scheme. They spoke with affection and gratitude of the adults who had taken part and all stressed the growth in self-confidence and the power to express themselves even in public. All I spoke to were in responsible jobs - one is a manager, one very active in the NUM, one is a fitter and one a train driver.

Some of the comments were as follows:

Neal (a teacher from the local school who was one of the staff of The Terrace):

The effect on me, looking back after twelve years, was to alter my views on authority. I have come to realise that the less authoritarian I am the more effective I am in the classroom ... In terms of the materials and the provision it was exactly right for what we needed. The ratio of staff to students was right - and remember we had each group for only ten months. It altered my views completely, especially about how kids express themselves. These kids, before the experiment, were tongue-tied when talking to adults in the school. Tony, the Careers Officer, interviewed them all before the experiment and he interviewed them again towards the end. He was absolutely astounded at their confidence, in their bearing and in their powers to express themselves. He could hardly believe what he was hearing.

I am sure that it was the conditions: the good staff/pupil ratio; the personal attention that each one received; the constant encouragement to try things for themselves; the fact that the staff mucked in with the boys in all tasks however hard or dirty; and above all the daily and weekly meetings where we thrashed out the programmes of work and argued out all the problems and disputes between boys and staff. I simply could not go back into an ordinary classroom again and try to wield the kind of authority that seems, even now, to be expected in schools.

Duane:

Do you remember when you and Dick brought down five of the lads to Nottingham University where I was giving a course of lectures to experienced teachers taking higher degrees? I had told them about The Terrace and suggested that they talk to some of the boys themselves. For three hours, you remember, they quizzed those kids intensively.

Neal:

Aye, I remember the one who asked Ian whether he understood what he meant when he had said 'teacher/pupil ratio' and Ian made it clear to him that he had already realised that that was one of the important factors in the scheme.

Duane:

Well, the next time I met them I asked them whether they realised that these boys had been selected for the scheme because they were at the bottom of the academic pile, and asked them to say whether they thought the boys were of normal, below normal or above normal intelligence, on the basis of how they had responded. They wouldn't believe that they had been put in the lowest classes and said that not one of the boys was below average intelligence. Later one of my colleagues in London sent transcripts of my discussions with the boys after they had ended the scheme to twenty teachers in Colleges of FE and asked them to estimate the potential of the boys on the basis of their comments. Not one of the teachers placed any boy as below average intelligence - and remember one of them was Manix, the boy classified by the school as near educationally sub-normal - and several thought that at least three of the boys were capable of work in university or further education with a little preliminary preparation.

Neal:

I feel more and more that it was not that we taught the boys, in the usual sense of 'taught', to express themselves; it was more that the conditions at The Terrace released powers that were already there, whereas the conditions of school, with the stress on silence and not speaking until you are spoken to, and the rigid adherence to set programmes of work - all that, I think, bottles them up. They get frustrated and so their only outlet is to play up and make life as miserable as they can for the teachers they don't like.

Soon after that Nottingham discussion I was talking to them about the 'eleven plus'. I was an 'eleven plus' failure myself and I assumed that they would feel the same way about it as I did before I decided to do something about it, but they said, 'You're wrong. We don't feel that way about it. It doesn't matter at all to us.' And on reflection I realised that it didn't at all come into their thinking. What mattered to me was that they felt confident enough to tell me I was wrong in assuming they would think as I had done.

Gerry (a young teacher fresh from training when the second year at The Terrace started):

Looking back on The Terrace as a whole and how it affected me I feel that it was a unique experience. I had not been happy with the common assumptions about school and the new rigidities that were creeping in in the middle seventies. Neal was going abroad in the second year so I saw it as a chance to do something that was real education, especially as the general opinion in the school staffroom was that The Terrace would do nothing for promotion prospects.

The kind of control I felt comfortable with was where you talk through all problems, see the other person's point of view and work towards a solution that all can accept. I also prefer to live in the same community as the pupils. Teachers, on the whole, live apart, like doctors and other professionals. If you live among them you can't pretend to be a superior being. They know you for what you are because they are your neighbours. You are invited into their homes as a friend; you don't come in like a Social Worker or a Council official, with an aura of 'trouble'.

In that year at The Terrace the philosophy was still positive; although resources were being cut back at a fearsome rate you felt that the experiment was still legitimate. We had to meet the needs of individuals, but within the context of a group. The Terrace was about creating a small community, both within the school as a whole and within the local community of work and life. There developed a closeness that came from shared experiences and the discussions that arose from them.

In the early days of both groups the old macho attitudes persisted for a while in bullying, but gradually it began to be clear that this was not necessary. People were being seen for what they really were and the various poses began to drop away. The groups had begun to understand that real strength comes from self-confidence; that it is not a weakness to show a more gentle side.

Duane:

The speed of transition from that first period of answering only when spoken to and then in monosyllables; through the yelling, rough horseplay and sexual vulgarity; to a period when they were keeping closely to the matter of their discussions and accepting the discipline of keeping quiet while others were speaking, was, in my view, quite astonishing, seeing that they had nothing like the staff/pupil ratio of the first group, and particularly as you yourself had to deal with all the administrative arrangements which, without the minibus, were a burden and demanded your absence from the school very often. I began to realise that the very fact of their being on their own so much and having to decide what to do, without the pressure of school bells or a timetable that moved them from place to place like chess pieces irrespective of their feelings, was giving them more insight into themselves. They developed much more gentleness towards one another. They did seem to be more delicate – that's the only world I can find to express the change – towards others in the group.

Gerry:

There wasn't enough time at The Terrace to tackle many of the really important things in life. For instance, Alan came to me about four years after he had left to ask for advice. He had acquired a girlfriend who was more sexually mature than he was and who was pressurising him in a way he could not handle. I gave him contraceptive advice, of course, but had The Terrace begun earlier or lasted longer things like that could have arisen in a more natural way.

The relationships between the boys and girls had passed through the first, rather rough stage, but the course ended before different relationships could be established and when we might have begun to explore the differences between good and bad marriages, of which they were all too directly aware in many of their homes. So many of the kids have married and had up to three kids in the meantime and, sadly, at least four of them have parted.

Gerry then went on to discuss the devastating effect of mass unemployment on communities like Conisbrough and Sheffield, as he saw it in his work and in the community within which he lived.

Pat (Face worker, now retired, at a local pit and father of Graham):

The Terrace was a great thing in education. I only see the lads who were in the Dartington scheme occasionally, but they seem to have done very well for themselves, at least most of them. My own lad, Graham, was one of the group that went to Dartington full-time from the age of fourteen. He went on from there to train as a PE teacher and now has a specialist job near Nottingham.

When he had to go for his interview he had some exams on so he rang the Head who said, 'We think we've got just the right person for the job already, but if you like to come, please do.' Graham explained that he would like the chance of an interview anyway and went. After the interview the Head said, 'If you want the job, it's yours'. I'm sure that was due to his experience at Dartington; he can handle kids and gets on well with them. He's very happy in his school and the Head thinks highly of him. He's married now and has two children.

Dartington was good for Graham and I think it was good for most of the kids from Conisbrough; I don't think they could have done any better. As parents, of course, we missed him. From the age of fourteen to Dartington, then to training college, then to the job - we've not seen much of him. That was a real drawback because he's now nearly thirty. I used to think of those poor children with parents in Hong Kong or South America - they were like orphans. I never thought my own son would do exactly the same thing.

Royston had a big impact. When he left Dartington that's when things started to change. He was really asking, 'What's the good of progressive education if it doesn't provide something for all kids and not just for those whose parents can afford to send them to swish schools?' He set out to prove that if you give a working class kid the same kind of advantages then he'll do just as well. The success rate for the Conisbrough kids was very high, probably over ninety percent. There were very few dropouts, as I remember. I remember telling you about my own feelings on education; that people would not do dirty and dangerous work in the pits if schools had not kept them stupid. What a country we could have if all our kids were educated as Royston wanted. That's what Gorbachev wants, it seems to me, but the Americans prevent the Russians from spending money on things like education while they have to spend it on nuclear arms. We went to America when our niece was killed there in an accident. I was amazed at the attitudes of the Americans to the Russians. They don't believe Gorbachev; they seem to keep so much out of the papers. When I got back here I was astonished to see all that had been happening in the Gulf. We had seen nothing at all of that in the American papers.

I remember you talking once about A. S. Neill and Homer Lane. Then I read Summerhill, Neill's own book about Summerhill School and about the children, and I couldn't believe that a man could talk so straightforwardly to young children. Of course Neill got good results, but people still don't believe him. I think they don't want to believe him; it would upset all their ideas about education and everything that follows. Especially the people with money and power; they just want things to go on as they are - it suits them. But it must have been a wonderful experience for the children who went to Summerhill. It must be the same at Dartington. But how do they get such dedicated teachers? Of course the Trust has plenty of money, but it isn't just the money; it's the whole philosophy of the place that's so good for the kids. Besides, with one teacher to eight children they get all the personal attention they need. When I went to school we had forty to a class. It's better now - more like thirty, I believe - but nothing like Dartington.

The Press closed Dartington;[1] that I'm sure of. The trouble in the school that was supposed to be connected with drugs was nothing like the papers made out. They wanted a sensation and they sniffed around and pushed and pushed until they dug something they thought could be twisted into a scandal.

Mind you, some of the trouble had started long before with the collapse of the pound soon after Royston was appointed. Dartington, like everyone else, had to pull in their horns. Royston had less money to use. And of course, when Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst died there was no one on the Trustees with the same kind of vision about education. Perhaps some of the staff thought Royston was moving too quickly. Not all of them were as enthusiastic as those who came up here with the groups of Dartington children. I went to a general meeting of parents and heard one woman complain that she was having to pay high fees to keep pupils like my Graham at Dartington. I made the point that the Yorkshire children put a great deal into Dartington; several of the staff had told me how much good it had done the school to have them and they certainly wanted the scheme to go on.

The Trustees live in a different world, unfortunately. The only one who really had his feet on the ground was Alec Clegg, the West Riding Education Officer. He was a brilliant man; I met him here. The rest don't live in the real world as we know it. Maurice is a very nice man, but the kind of life he lives in that lovely place - Sharpham House - on top of the hill and surrounded by the river, keeps him detached from the world. Yet he really is the one person who could have kept the scheme going. We had him here one night to one of Cath's 'pea and pie' suppers. While he was here he

was really in it; he could talk with us as if he really understood our life. But back there he's under all the old influences. You told me once how you felt as head of a school with a ring of people round you – parents, staff, children, officials, governors, inspectors – each one pulling you towards their position and you trying to keep things more or less steady in the middle. I'm sure Maurice is in that kind of position – a bit like poor old Reagan!

But what makes me so fed up is that so many people are unwilling to change things, even when they can see they could be better. They want things to go on just as they've always done, and none are worse than working class people.

Duane:

You should read a book by Wilhelm Reich – The Mass Psychology of Fascism – to understand why that is so; or a book by Erich Fromm – The Fear of Freedom. They were psychoanalysts who studies that very problem – how was it possible that a whole nation of people could do what Hitler wanted. Dictators could not exist if we had anything like a real democracy. Those books tell you exactly how the living conditions under capitalist economies shape people into little robots. And breaking through this was what The Terrace was all about; letting kids have the experience of deciding things for themselves and learning how to shape their own lives..

Pat:

The Terrace was a good thing, no doubt about it. The kids I know have done far better than if they had stayed at Northcliffe. I don't want to discredit Northcliffe; it's a good school as far as it can be, but if it could have had eight kids to one teacher like Dartington, what couldn't they have done. But it's not in the interests of a Tory government to provide that kind of opportunity.

Some time ago I visited Arthur Young up at the school and he took me round to see what was going on. At the end I said to Arthur, 'But this is just like a factory. The old three-decker schools were designed like factories with a production line, divided into years, subjects and stages, and with tests and exams as a kind of quality control. What's different here in Northcliffe? You work on the same principle – specialists for the "good material" and any old person for the "rubbish"'. He didn't like it but he couldn't give me an answer. I said again, 'If The Terrace is so good that visitors have come even from abroad, and I know it's

good because I've seen its effects on the kids, why aren't you applying the same principles to the whole school?' No answer.

I remember when he told all the kids that they had to call their teachers by their first names. He caused an uproar in Conisbrough! The parents didn't want their kids calling Mr Young 'Arthur'! sath's sister has a daughter, Sharon, and when she cam home and told her Mum that she had to call her teacher 'Mary', her Mum said, 'You call her "Miss", and you call Mr Young, "Sir". Never mind what he tells you; you'll do what I tell you!' We had a fellow in the Club who was a right rough type; been a collier all his life and had brought up a big family, ten or twelve kids. He came into the Club and said, 'We must have discipline. I'm not going to tell my sons to call Mr Young "Arthur"!' And he was the kind you'd think would say, 'Good! We'll call him "Arthur".'

People are too idle to change things, or maybe they think a change would bring disaster. It's like when you stopped caning at Risinghill;[2] all the other Heads said you were undermining discipline. They realised that if you and your staff could manage it, it put them in a bad light.

Neil, Ian, Colin and Alan (who were members of the first ROSLA scheme that started in 1973):

Duane:

Looking back fourteen years since you were at The Terrace, what sticks out most in your mind about it as being different from school and as being something that you feel, even now, was really important.

Ian:

When I first came it was just a matter of getting out of school; getting away from school. When they came up to me and says, 'We're going to send you away for a year', well, I jumped for joy. I didn't like school for a start, so when they sent me down here – great stuff! Great for me. It were good stuff we did down here.

Duane:

How did you respond to Dick and Pat at first? They said that at first you sat around with your overcoats on as much as if to say, 'We're not staying here long', and that you smoked and so on.

Ian:

I don't think we were like that, were we?

Colin:

I didn't come down here at the same time as you lot. I came later.

Neil:

When we first come down I didn't have much time for Pat and Dick. To be honest with you I didn't have no time for Pat at all, but I liked Dick; he were a great bloke. I think it was because they were southerners. They didn't seem ... I don't think we trusted them like we did us own teachers at school, till we got to know them. Ken was alright. He'd just moved into his house and he asked me to do some painting for him and left me in the house with all their things. Not many people trusted me at that time.

Duane:

So was it this matter of being trusted that was so different at The Terrace?

Neil:

I think so, yea. And not being ignored. When you're at school you weren't in teachers' good books. If you weren't good at whatever lesson you happened to be in you were ignored. Down here everyone were treated the same; nobody were given preferential treatment. If you weren't picking up what you had to do, like concreting or owt like that, you got help. Ken or one of the lads would muck in with you.

Ian:

That's it. We all soon learned to work together as a group and I think that's summat that probably helped us in us first few years of us working career. Whereas, if we'd been sat in classroom for us last year at school, doing nothing - and I must admit I'd have been doing nothing except gawping out a windows.

Alan:

But the time we spent here <u>were</u> enjoyable, weren't it! I got more out of coming here for a year than if I had stopped on at school because I just wouldn't have learned an extra thing.

Colin:

Tell you what, coming down here, I just can't remember anyone having days off. Everybody used to turn up at school.

Ian:

I think they got formula right. Not pushing your work too much, and we used to go away on trips and things to give us a break and keep us interested.

Neil:

All the breaks were financed by ourselves, which I'd imagine you know anyway?

Duane:

Yes, and didn't you yourselves also decide what you were going to do? You explained all that to the teachers at Nottingham University when some of you came down with Dick and Neal and answered their questions for about three hours.

Ian:

This is the sort of thing I was trying to say. We all learned to express ourselves in an adult way a lot earlier than what we would have done if we'd been sat in classroom all day.

Duane:

It was as a result of discussion with those teachers and others about your ability to express yourselves that I started to wonder what is happening in school - that people with your abilities feel school is a waste of time.

Ian:

This is what the wife - my wife - says. She's a teacher and she knows what I did down here. She says there's no reason why, in the earlier years of your school life, you and kids like you couldn't have been picked up and helped more. But you get put into one class if you're supposed to be dim. If a teacher thinks you're dim he doesn't set you normal stuff; he sets you easy stuff, so he keeps you down. So you end up being good for nothing more than the pit.

Alan:

All you could see round here was people going to the pit, so kids said 'Why bother with all this stuff at school'. You don't have to be a genius to be a miner.

Ian:

It were even stronger with blokes ten years older than us. The blokes I work with said that themselves. Their teachers used to say, 'Don't worry lads, you're only going to end up down road anyway' They were taught just up the road from the pit and that's what happened to them. It was as if they were all just bred for that purpose in this area. People in the area were bred to go down pit or go into glassworks, or steel mills or whatever. You got the odd one or two who managed to get out of the system and get themselves to university or better themselves, but there weren't many.

Duane:

But when you get - as you do in this country - miners and steelmen living in one area, doctors, teachers and other professionals living in another and the really wealthy living in country estates or in very expensive areas like Dulwich in London, then you get children locked into the world of their parents. A miner's child hears nothing but talk about their kind of work, a doctor's or a teacher's child hears nothing but talk about their kind of work and so on. So there is built into the child the expectation that he will do the kind of work his father does, or something like it.

Ian:

Yea, when teachers at school would try to get you to think about something different - and some of them did, kids would say 'That's all very well, but how many of those kinds of job are there round here?'

Neil:

It gets said now. What they say now is, 'Why bother, I can't get any kind of job!'

Alan:

Pit's not a great life, but there's not even that now with all these closures. What is there for a kid in Denaby or Conisbrough to aim at now?

Colin:

Either YTS or Forces.

Ian:

I could have had a job as a direct result of coming here, but I left at Easter and went on a wholesale fruiterers wagon for a couple of weeks, but that was only as a stop gap because I knew I was going down pit. Dick knew I were interested in forestry or farming and tried to get me a job, but it didn't come off, then he tried with someone down Cheddar area, but I never went. Now I regret it.

Duane:

Do you find that your attitude to work in the pit is any different from that of your mates? About life in general and what they could do about themselves?

Ian:

Yea. I don't know whether it's a direct result of coming here, but my attitude towards life is a lot different to blokes I work with. I attend most of my union meetings. Alright, I'm a thorn in their side sometimes, because they're not doing the sort of things I think they should be doing - not that I'm in favour of the UDM - that's not why I disagree with them. Yes, I do have different views. But when you look at the papers, especially during the last strike, you see what lies they print. You don't get anything like a true picture of what's happening. You get what they want you to get. My sister's courting a lad down south - she's at Guy's Hospital - and they haven't got a clue about what life's like up here.

Duane:

Would you say that you find yourself more aware of issues like that, long term issues, than other people who were at school with you at the same time but who didn't come to The Terrace?

Ian:

They started us thinking about it earlier. I wouldn't say we were more politically minded than the next fellow. It certainly started me thinking about it earlier than if we had stayed at school. We got a head start on them who'd stopped at school. We could speak to adults a lot easier. At school

you have the same teacher hour after hour and day after day. You don't meet and talk to strangers. Down here we met loads of different people and talked to them.

Neil:

I think what helped us a lot down here was Neal Fitzgerald. I think they chose the perfect bloke in him. If they chose someone stricter like Phillips or somebody like that, it just wouldn't have worked. Neal were easy going when he needed to be easy going and firm when he needed to be firm. He could bridge the gap between pupil and teacher but still have the authority. He were great. When he had me down here at first he said, 'I don't want you down here and if you balls it up, I'll swing for you'. But after that we got on great. As soon as I got here I knew there were nowt like it in the world, great!

Ian:

What helped us more than anything to express ourselves was what we did every Friday afternoon. We used to argue about all the things that had happened, the rows and the disagreements and everything during the week.

Duane:

It was your ability to express yourselves that impressed the teachers at Nottingham, your intelligence.

Ian:

But don't it occur to you that everything that's set for schools and everything like this - I keep harping on about North and South - is set down there. Standards are set down south, aren't they? They don't apply to us. We're a different country. There's two different countries, North and South.

Footnotes

1 The decision to close Foxholes, the senior school at Dartington Hall, came long after, and had nothing to do with activities at The Terrace. Restriction of The Terrace activities followed from the economic constrictions placed on Dartington Hall's external activities following the crisis of the pound in the late seventies. The closure of Foxholes followed the accidental death of a girl while drowning. Certain sections of the press, always hostile to what Dartington had stood for, sought to blow up a 'drugs scandal'. This was the more effective because it followed close on staff disagreements with a new Head - not Royston Lambert - about his wishing to change policy in the school without consultation with the rest of the staff.

2 Risinghill School - a comprehensive school in North London. The book, Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive by Leila Berg, published by Penguin in 1966, tells the story of the school from its opening in 1960 to its closure amid public protest in 1965, by a Labour Inner London Education Authority and a Labour Government.

It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mostly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wreck and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty.

Albert Einstein

Anarchistic education does not devalue the personal experiences and feelings of children: rather it uses them as educational tools. It does not marginalise that part of life which lies outside the traditional classroom, but brings it into the centre of the curriculum.

Zvia

The girl shouted, 'Don't do that!' and gave the boy a stinging blow across the face. The class fell silent as Zvia looked up from showing a boy how to use a modelling tool.
'Why did you do that?' she asked the girl.
'He was putting his hand up my skirt.'
'Why?' said Zvia to the boy.
'I like it.' The boy was both embarrassed and defiant.
'Good! But be quite sure that the girl wants you to do it first. Such things are usually better done in private. Now get on with your work.'
The class resumed work without another word.

Maths

Henry felt his heart sink. His first two periods were with 5G for Maths. Some of them would leave at the end of term; all would have left by the end of the following term. The class was generally regarded as 'troublesome and thick'. 'Troublesome, yes, but thick, certainly not' Henry thought. They had a speed of repartee, a level of wit and a repertoire of 'in' jokes that kept the whole class in a ripple of laughter despite Henry's best efforts to get them to concentrate on simple equations and their practical applications.

Henry had not long finished his training. With most of his classes in English he enjoyed the work and was not too discouraged by the few 'disciplinary problems' he met. But he had been given Maths with 5G as one of those desperate hole-plugging devices that recur more and more often as the timetable nears completion.

'Do what you can with them' the Head had said, 'they'll be out of work as soon as they leave, almost certainly.'

Thinking that he should at least start with their own experience he asked them to work out how much their families had to spend each week on fares, with the thought in the back of his mind that he might be able to lead on in time, to their understanding some of the problems of transporting millions of Londoners to and from their work. He was not prepared to find that many of them rarely paid any fares. They had become adept at slipping past ticket collectors and speeding off before they could be caught.

On the following day on his way back to school from Court after giving evidence of good character for one of the girls in his House he passed the local betting shop and nearly bumped into Fred, one of the boys in 5G, counting money. 'How much did you win, Fred?' 'Nearly fifteen quid'
For the moment Henry said nothing about Fred being out of school to place his bet, but that afternoon, instead of pursuing the topic of London Transport and its costs he asked Fred to explain exactly how he had won fifteen pounds on his bets.

Fred began to explain in terms that the others obviously understood but that left Henry blank.

'Fred, I've never placed a bet in my life. Would you please show me on the blackboard exactly how you started, what the odds were on each horse, and so on. Imagine you were explaining it to your kid brother.'

Fred laughed.

'He's nearly as good as me already!'

He went to the board and began to explain the meaning of 'a place', 'evens', 'bar one' and the many other technical terms that were Greek to Henry. Within seconds there was a lively argument among the boys about how Fred would have done better by placing his bets in different ways. Henry, when he could get through the hubbub, asked the other boys to illustrate their ideas on the board. The lesson passed quickly and as the boys left they were still arguing.

Next day he asked them what was meant by 'form'. The led to a discussion of chance. Henry set up a set of experiments to get them to place token bets as he flipped a coin; then to bets on a particular number when he rolled a dice. They plotted the results on graph paper. At the end of that lesson he asked several of the boys to 'load' some dice by drilling small holes on one side and inserting a piece of lead. During the next lesson they rolled the loaded dice and plotted the results against the results of the 'clean' dice. As he stood back for a few moments to observe the class at work Henry realised that his difficulties with 5G were coming to an end. Their attitude to him had changed. Without realising it they were doing Maths!

The cistern

Ben entered John's room looking pale and depressed.
'What's the matter, lad?'
'I've broken a cistern, Sir.'
'What kind of cistern, where?'
'In the toilets, Sir.'
Ben led the way to the boys' toilets. There, in small pieces on the floor by the urinals was the earthenware cistern that automatically flushed the urinals at intervals, with water hissing from the end of the twisted pipe.
'How did it happen?'
John kept as cool as he could. The boy had at least come to tell him instead of sneaking off before the damage was found.
'I climbed up to see what made the water turn on and off, and as I pulled myself up by the pipe it came away from the wall and pulled the cistern off the brackets.'
'Why on earth didn't you get a ladder to climb up?'
John refrained from immediately sounding off at the boy because he recognised the intelligent curiosity behind Ben's action. At that moment the bell rang for the end of school. The couple of hundred children in this small school, housed in a converted old rectory, wandered out of the front door. John stopped them and explained what had happened.
'This was a brand new cistern. It will take at least twenty pounds to replace it. How can we raise the money? True it was an accident and Ben was right to be curious, but he could have got a ladder and not just climbed up the wall.'
'Make him pay for it' came from someone.
'OK. Put yourself in Ben's place next Monday morning. Your Dad gets a bill for twenty pounds for damage that you have caused. What will he say?' Some suggestions began to come forward. Ben was looking very unhappy. 'Let's all give something but make him pay the most! 'Well, we can't decide now. Go home and think about it during the weekend. We'll talk about it on Monday morning.'

On Monday morning three girls came to John's room with some bags full of old clothes and suggested a Jumble Sale. During the morning others came offering to give some of their pocket money or to bring toys for a sale. Ben offered to pay twenty pence a week from his earnings at weekends and in the evenings.

John wrote to Ben's mother explaining what had happened and telling her not to punish him as it was an accident and he had offered to pay something weekly out of his earnings. On reply he received a letter explaining her circumstances. The

boy's father had returned to America after serving in the war and had not been in touch with her again. She did some part-time work as a cleaner and offered to pay a small sum regularly. John saw at once that they were in real poverty. He visited her and assured her that she should think no more of the matter. With her permission he spoke to a senior social worker who looked into her circumstances and was then able to have a grant made for herself and the boy. The mother had been skimping herself of proper food so that the boy might have his fill. She herself had had too poor an education to know her rights under the law and in that part of Hertfordshire the reorganisation of education had not yet had time to make much difference.

Reviews

TRUE FREEDOM

The State: Its Historic Role
P. Kropotkin, Green Books

At a time when Thatcherism has hijacked the popular revulsion against gigantic institutions of all kinds, including the state, the decision to reprint Kropotkin's classic work is a timely one. Kropotkin of course would have regarded the New Right's attempts to resolve such questions as state versus individual or small versus large as a monstrous perversion, stemming from a complete misunderstanding of the very essence of humanity itself. In hitching its anti-statism to the weary old carthorse of individual capitalist enterprise, the assumption is that 'human nature' is somehow being set free – as if competition and the lust for material gain were the only normal human instincts.

According to Kropotkin, however, the urge to co-operate and to seek collective solutions to problems is just as much an intrinsic part of the human make-up as the need to compete. Paradoxically enough it is only through co-operation that true individual freedom can be realised, since individual success through competition can only be won at the expense of other individuals. In The State: Its Historic Role, Kropotkin seeks to justify these precepts by reference to periods and places where human society existed, indeed flourished, in the complete absence both of the state and of the capitalist economic order. Although making reference to 'primitive' society in which 'the point of departure for mankind was not the family but the clan or tribe', Kropotkin does not dwell for long on the virtues, real or alleged, of primitive communism. He is much more concerned with that period of European history following the break-up of the Roman Empire, an epoch generally dismissed by the pejorative label 'Dark Ages', but for Kropotkin embodying most of the virtues cherished by anarchists. He speaks of '.... the immense progress achieved by this double institution of village communities and freely sworn brotherhoods – outside any Roman, Christian or Statist influence ... the untamed forest

is conquered and colonised, villages cover the country and are surrounded by fields and hedges ...' In short, small-scale communal self-management works.

There is a widespread current tendency to dismiss such reasoning as pious and sentimental idealism on the grounds that it cannot work in a modern society infinitely more complex than that of the pre-capitalist, pre-industrial era. Yet this is surely the kind of fatalistic reasoning that accepts capital and the state as predetermined (rather than as human creations which are just as susceptible to abolition as to creation): and which similarly accepts technology as a controlling rather than a controllable force. In any case, Kropotkin's message should not be seen simply in pragmatic terms. Essentially he is making the point that there is no innate factor in the human make-up which makes it necessary for us to be enslaved by any authoritarian institution, be it a public bureaucracy or a giant corporation. Collectively – and this is the sine qua non – we have the capacity to control ourselves and to manage our own affairs.

It goes almost without saying that Peter Kropotkin was one of the leading anarchist theorists of modern times and that this book, for all its brevity, is one of his key texts. It accurately reflects the spirit of anarchism during the period following anarchism's split with Marxism at the First International. Though completely concurring with the Marxist belief in the overthrow of capitalism, anarchism saw the state as equally oppressive and exploitative. Consequently, anarchists did not wish to place the state under a dictatorship of the proletariat but to abolish it altogether and move straight on to the stage of pure communism itself. Anarchist writers like Emma Goldman in the 1920s saw the Russian Revolution as a failure precisely because it created a new state which almost immediately became an end in itself and hence a barrier to the attainment of genuine human liberty. It would be an understatement to say that subsequent events in the Soviet Union have confirmed this opinion.

In assessing the relevance of Kropotkin for the modern reader, we must immediately acknowledge that there are certain dated aspects of his style and content. Therefore there is no point in expecting a kind of potted handbook on Anarchism in the Modern World. For example there is virtually no feminist dimension (he refers to 'Mankind' and 'He' throughout), which is a very serious shortcoming in any attempt to theorise such crucial concepts as 'community'. Here the reader might be advised to read Kropotkin in conjunction with the modern feminist literature on the domestic mode of reproduction. Nor, quite understandably, is there much enlightenment on questions of race and ethnicity.

But there is an enormous range of challenging ideas which can be applied to the over-arching political context of our own times, the context in which processes like sexism and racism are encouraged to flourish, along with an entire range of other forms of oppression. Particularly striking are the insights which can be gained into such universal concepts as freedom - and the way such concepts are currently being distorted into hideous mutations of their true meaning.

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THE 'NEW AGE': IS IT GREEN ANARCHISM?

Anarchism and 'green' thinking and action have many things in common. They each emphasise small-scale decentralisation, non-hierarchical organisation, the importance of the individual, dislike of centralised government and a view of life which might be called 'wholistic' (combining hand and brain, seeing human society and nature as a unity). The green philosophy might be expected to be well-represented by the books coming from a new publishing house, GREEN BOOKS. Below Penny Newsome reviews the first three products of GREEN BOOKS. They lay down the principles and practical details of what might be a 'green anarchistic' society of the future. But whether they would find favour with more socialistically-included anarchists seems doubtful, as Penny reveals.

The New Renaissance. Essays in Search of Wholeness. Maurice Ash. 5.95 1986

People and Planet: Alternative Nobel Prize Speeches. ed. Tom Woodhouse. 6.50

Breaking Through: Theory and Practice of Wholistic Living. Walter & Dorothy Schwarz. 6.50 1987

All published by Green Books

The first of these books to come my way was The New Renaissance by Maurice Ash. Well, the title is off-putting for a start. In a world that has been visibly deteriorating, and more and more rapidly, since the day anyone alive today was born, such optimism looks a little suspicious. Maurice Ash does admit that it might perhaps be 'dangerously rhetorical ... to speak in terms of a new Renaissance', but

nonetheless he believes that 'Not only in Britain, but throughout Western Europe, people are responding less and less to hypnosis by the quantified allurements of the Industrial Era, and in a swelling flood are realizing Ruskin's dictum that "there is no wealth but life". The evidence for this appears to consist in 'for instance, the reversal of two hundred years of rural depopulation' (p.10) ... 'people want to escape from the anomie of urban life'. Unfortunately, as anyone who has investigated the possibility of moving to the country will know, this is actually an option open only to the already rich - those who not only have some capital, but also have no need to sell their labour. Such people, I have no doubt, will enjoy this book. For it is in fact a collection of Maurice Ash's articles, talks etc., over quite a few of the past years, many of which have appeared in Resurgence magazine. Green Books come from that very stable and bear the unmistakable trademarks - New Age, wordy, 'other worldly', waffly, irrelevant, elitist, patronising - well so it must seem to those of us who live in less green pastures.

As Scott Fitzgerald said 'the very rich are different from you and me'. For one thing they have a lot more time, not only to write books but to read them as well. Maurice Ash has directed various key New Age institutions like the Town and Country Planning Association and Dartington Hall for example, and you can read about his work experience, as well as some of the books he's read, in this book. But who, reading his book is going to have time to check up on the references to Wittgenstein (Ch.1, line 1) and are there any 'resonances aside for the cognoscenti of Godel's theorem'? (p.4) No, this collection of undated backnumbers, reading more like a textbook for mediaeval schoolmen, is definitely not for undergardeners. And if you hope this might be the quick guide to the undergraduate course in Philosophy, Politics and Economics which you weren't privileged to take, be wary. 'Ecosophy' sometimes looks like sophistry to me. Take this statement for example: 'socialism is in effect merely a function of capitalism ... socialism is simply not free to discuss alternative technology' (p.58). Well, socialism in, for example, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, has been discussing alternative technology for some time. So who is this kind of statement designed to mislead? If you feel you must read this book, keep all your most critical, even cynical, faculties about you.

Maurice Ash is modest enough to be searching only for 'Wholeness', but Walter and Dorothy Schwarz, coming along third in the series with Breaking Through - Theory and Practice of Wholistic Living, seem to think they have found it. Those of us who have read Walter Schwarz over the years

will recognise the zeal of the new convert. What is the motive for rushing into print? No doubt to proseletise. Again one must ask 'proseletise whom?'

'Breaking Through' is avowedly 'new-age' (Introduction), but I'm afraid I prefer to be green, and although the Schwarzes profess to be campaigning for a green future (Ch.14) their Green Future is not one that I would whole-heartedly welcome. I do think it's a bit cheeky of the Schwarzes, who do warn us (Introduction) that writing this book together is 'the most wholistic thing we have ever done' to tell us what it's all about.

This age is no newer than any other. All these ideas have been around for yonks. Better to my mind to read a few classics like Gaia by Kit Pedler than these new rehashes of other people's experiences. One of the most noticeable features of the Schwarzes book is their need to quote other people the whole time. In some chapters practically every paragraph begins with a new name and a footnote. I suppose this is because of a lifetime's training in journalism. The footnotes are of course welcome - there are none in Maurice Ash's book. But even more useful - and none of these three books has one - would have been an index. Quantification and measurement, fruits of reductionistic thinking, are already much derided by the New Renaissance: now apparently, not only indexes but perhaps even Chapters are unnecessary to wholistic books. The new paradigm looks like a recipe for just a different kind of confusion - a seamless web of confusion in which it's even more difficult to detect the logical fallacies than it was in the old specialised fields of knowledge. Of course, if you're New Age knowledge itself is the old, or rather present paradigm. Schumacher, who according to Maurice Ash, 'if anyone, was the prophet of the Alternative Movement' ... 'proclaimed in brief, the shift of the paradigm: from knowledge to meaning.' It looks as if the words of the Prophet and of course of his apostolic succession in the Schumacher Society (Green Books are published by the Schumacher Society) should have more significance that a Freedom of Information Act. Furthermore, as the Schwarzes admit: 'Even if a new paradigm emerges to replace the linear-scientific one, that may not suffice to change the way we live and act ... We will have replaced one set of lites (Lies??; typographical errors abound in these meaningful books) with another and will continue, as Berman warns, to be more interested in our explanations of reality than in reality itself.'

Exactly so, this precious new paradigm is not only not sufficient, it is not necessary either. In all recorded human history we have had the kind of practical anarchistic

projects which the Schwarzes have visited, and which they describe quite interestingly in their chapters on decolonised communities and sustainable this and that.

Such projects are the focus of the second of the books in the Green Books series, People and Planet, Alternative Nobel Prize speeches, editor Tom Woodhouse. All these projects have sown a few seeds, but we are not yet anywhere near the harvest which these New Age people seem to hope is imminent. Any why not? Because these projects have always been few and marginal and crushed sooner or later by those with the real power. This power operates more subtly today, than, say, when Cromwell's troops just slaughtered Winstanley and his fellows. There have been a few linear political victories since the seventeenth century - a few Reform Bills, thanks to the nineteenth century Liberal Party, urged on by the Chartists and other more 'marginal' anarchistic groups, and a bit of a Social Security thanks to the twentieth century Labour Party.

I was interested, and saddened by the account of the Easterhouse Festival Society (Breaking Through pp71-76). This project is foundering apparently because 'the drug culture is more prominent than we are'. Well - I really don't know quite what to say. Except that this seems much the same as the state of affairs around where I live too. The opium of the people and all that. I suppose the 'scientifically and ecologically aware religion' that Maurice Ash and the Schwarzes are searching for (p.249) could compete. Looks unlikely to me. What the people, especially young people, really want is freedom - freedom from any other people's ideas, especially any institutionalised ideas: new religion, old religion, it still isn't my, our, religion, is it?

I live in a fairly 'sought after area', but if I hadn't happened to know better things in my youth I would think the environment consisted of litter, dogshit and motorbikes. Better, to my mind, speak up against the particular abuses in question, plant some trees, ask why some kids have only this street to play in while others can luxuriate at Dartington Hall, than waste time on the armchair theory and practice of wholism. The environment is the totality of what there is, says Maurice Ash - well, some of it definitely isn't worth preserving then. The Alternative Nobel Prize is given to reward the virtue of 'Right Livelihood'. It is a 'self-financing' (how is not explained but the money was originally put up by one Jacob von Uexkull and some of it goes to Paul Ekins who holds a research fellowship endowed by J v U at the University of Bradford, presumably in order to decide who of the numerous deserving should actually get the lolly - not of course for personal use but for the project).

Further details of the award are given in the Foreword to this book of speeches. I won't burden readers of this review with the results of exercising my own cynical faculties.

On first reading I was favourably impressed. I thought that at least these are things that are really happening in the world itself. Amory Lovins, for instance, got an Award. His book Soft Energy Paths, 1977, was one of the original greats. My son asked me yesterday 'What is wrong with nuclear fusion, Mum?'. I am ashamed to say that I couldn't say off hand, other than it was a complete waste of money for jobs for the boys and did actually produce radioactive waste products, though they said it didn't. Oh for the days of 1977, I though, when we had this knowledge at our fingertips and had never heard of 'deep ecology' (deep ecology is meaningful rather than knowledgeable, see Maurice Ash chs 2 and 3 and Walter and Dorothy Schwarz Chapter 8). My son (aged nearly nineteen) isn't often asked to defend his position on deep ecology but having campaigned in 1977 against the JET project (aged nine) his inquisitive peers, with parents in the business, now want to know why he's not impressed by their high salaries, high esteem in society etc. I'm afraid whatever the importance to me of Amory Lovins 1977 book, his speech, reprinted in People and Planet, 1987, would not have been of much help to my son. My son knows that 'It matters that you care' (p.21); what he needs is hard facts to back him up.

But the new non-reductionist, non-compartmentalised paradigm is rather against facts. Maurice Ash, for example, is against environmental studies as a school subject, if this means supplying facts and figures (p.183). Why? Because the environment is a 'mystery' (p.75). Such 'incoherent talk' is, to my mind, extremely dangerous. It opens up the Green movement to manipulation by an order of witch doctors - experts on Wholeness, the spiritual dimension and so on - to replace the 'priests' who have failed us - scientists, doctors, economists, the Christian Church, Buddhists, all these are indicated. These new-age, purportedly Green, witch doctors (would) write books, pontificate on television, organise lecture series, teaching us all how to think in the new renaissance paradigm of wholeness. Who needs them? Are we never going to be able to think for ourselves? to look at the facts of life and to draw our own conclusions? And meanwhile the children are crying out for bread! Bread happens to be a physical entity that can be weighed and measured. I am sick and tired of the new-age anathema on quaification and measurement. They can stuff their sentimentality (Breaking Through, p.203); I'll settle for kilos of bread for the 850 million now starving in the world as it is. Possibly the publishing of People and Planet and the other Green Books

could do what the Christ and the Buddha failed to do, and change the paradigm of the rich and powerful.

A few interesting and useful facts can be gleaned from these three books, but you have to plough through a lot of verbiage. And what is worse is that some of the verbiage is itself ill-digested, inaccurate and misleading, and some of it is downright pernicious. What for example would you make of this?: in a chapter called 'The Feminine Principle', in Breaking Through, the Schwarzes, overcome with the enthusiasm from discovering such a principle, choose a man as representative 'of much of current green thinking on this issue' (this man happens to be Jonothan Porritt and private conversations with him are reported in other chapters as well, particularly the one on the Green Future. One concludes that he is the Schwarzes 'green guru'). But the Schwarzes (and perhaps Porritt too then?) have not understood green feminism at all. Consider the following statement (Breaking Through p.198): 'In the green movement, the most sympathetic political movement to feminine values, the positions high up in the hierarchy are still male-dominated.' The Schwarzes - how long have they been involved in the Green Party? - accuse Greens of paying lip service to feminine values and of still being dominated by patriarchal values! Yet their very talk about 'positions high up in the hierarchy' is basic to patriarchal thinking. How many women, one wonders, are high up in the hierarchy of the Schumacher Society? The Green Movement is, or ought to be, non-hierarchical, not simply non-sexist. Schumacher - who incidentally appeared late in the history of the Alternative movement - was also imbued with hierarchical thinking (see e.g., A Guide for the Perplexed. p.74 Abacus ed.). This is the kind of thinking in these Green Books which leads me to question whether they are in fact green at all.

Other sweeping statements reveal an ignorance and prejudice which should make one very wary of accepting these books as the new gospel of a New Renaissance. Having been in the Alternative movement since about 1964 myself, ten years before I ever heard of the prophet Schumacher, incidentally, and having worked in development economics and then been a hippie, I really must protest at this sort of throwaway remark at the beginning of Breaking Through: 'in the sixties the hippies were not concerned with famine in the third world: today many school children care and many try to help.' Maurice Ash has a go at the hippies too (New Renaissance p.22)' abandoned, as the hippies were, to an anti-social existence.' I suppose this comes of using the word 'hippy' or 'green' to describe anyone who is trying to break through the ruling paradigm of their age. Not only did most hippies care (of course it's the exceptions that are notorious - just wait

till greens become a real threat to the system, like the labour left is for instance, for the smear campaign to begin against the greens); but the paradigm of wholeness was exactly why they 'dropped out' – the linear one-dimensional life was what they were refusing, they wanted to think for themselves, not according to anybody else's '-ism'. The student rebellions of 1968 was their attempt, in alliance with the New Left to 'break through'. Unfortunately today's school children give charity to the third world because the capitalist world order that causes famine in the third world was not brought down by either Che Guevara or by flower power in the sixties. It is even less likely to be brought down by wholism in the nineties either.

I don't want to completely rubbish this New Age stuff. Who, calling themself a green could object to the search for whole-ness? It has been said that 'New Age and Green are compatible' – well, they could be – we have not yet defined 'green', indeed, we can't. But we can say what is not green. New Age people will have to enter into a much humbler dialogue with the grass roots of the green movement before they can call themselves green. I would suggest that a Green Party conference is a better education than any of the New Age conferences around – specially as you can read all these books about the latter. But a spell living in the inner city on the dole is the best education of all. It may be easy 'breaking through' down in Devon, walking away, building something new (Breaking Through conclusion). To restore the psychological damage done by eight years of Reagan/Thatcherism to a whole generation of the human race, most of whom live in cities, is probably impossible. And I'm afraid it'll take more than one Small School down in Hartland to save the next one. But we all have to do what we can do, and at least these three books are about people trying to do just that. I just beg them all to be a little more humble about it. As my father was wont to say: You can do anything you want to make the world a better place, just so long as you don't want to get the credit for it. But to pin your name to books with titles like the New Renaissance or Breaking Through when, in spite of all this wholism around, the real world is getting worse seems far more condemnable than the 'romantic enthusiasm' of a generation of, largely nameless, anarchistic, hippies who at least put an end to the Vietnam War. I'll be impressed if the 'wholies' can stop the Contras.

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Teaching Geography for a Better World
J. Fein and R. Gerber

Teaching Geography for a Better World edited by John Fien and Rod Gerber, Australian Geography Teachers' Association with the Jacaranda Press, Australia. 1986. ISBN 0 7016 2061 7.

The title Teaching Geography for a Better World is taken from the main theme of the Tenth National Conference of the Australian Geography Teachers Association held in 1986. The theme grew out of an increasing belief amongst many geographers that traditional ways of teaching about the world ignored the most important issues and in general gave pupils a large number of facts, so removed from reality that no true education was achieved: let alone any conscious belief developed in pupils that they themselves might take an active role in bringing about a 'better world'.

Teaching Geography for a Better World has three sections; the first comprises three keynote addresses which set the scene for the rest of the book. David Hicks of the Centre for Peace Studies, Lancaster, suggests that we must first try to define what we mean by 'a better world' and, having done this, examine those systems which influence the world we have and the one we wish to achieve.

This, he argues, requires action at personal, political and planetary levels.

Having examined the workings of the world economy and its link with the political system, John Huckle of Bedford College says that global problems have their origins in systems which work for the benefit of a few at the expense of the majority. He then addresses more specifically the role of geography teaching in achieving change, and while allowing that 'schools cannot, of themselves, produce a better world', he is sure that they can help to open future adults up to the possibility of transforming their physical and social environment.

The last keynote address comes from Rob Stowell of the Geography Teachers Association, Australia. His subject is the geography of unemployment. The current crisis is a direct result of global economic factors, particularly the activities of transnational corporations. He suggests how geography teachers can help their pupils towards a true understanding of the processes which have led to a situation which they must confront once they have left school. He also believes that schools should meet the current needs of these future adults so that they are not victims of the social, economic, and political systems which affect them.

The second section of Teaching Geography for a Better World forms the bulk of the book, being ten papers by different authors, and all, despite wide variety of subject matter, seriously concerned with encouraging a new approach to teaching geography in the classroom. This is an approach which will have as its underlying aims the development of pupils' perceptions of the processes at work in the global society and of the part they themselves might play in altering them. Included are such topics as human rights, sport, war and peace, political literacy, and hazards. Each chapter gives the authors ideas on the current approach to these issues, a possible future angle and practical suggestions for classroom activities. The third and last section of this book is a synthesis of the ideas presented in it, and written by the moderator of the Australian Conference which inspired it.

Teaching Geography for a Better World hopes to be a source of motivation, ideas and skills, and as such it does reward careful reading. It contains many clearly expressed thoughts and does not leave readers high and dry, wondering how they might put some of them into action. It is the book's treatment of specific school-based projects that makes it a very valuable addition to any teacher's reference collection, to be referred to often.

Jackie Lewis

Open Space

Feminism, Anarchism and Ecology: Some Connections

Nickie Hallam and David Pepper

The literature of modern environmentalism is charged with references to feminist and anarchist ideas. 'Greens' like Jonathan Porritt, Fritjof Capra and Theodore Roszak strongly maintain that feminine principles are essential to an ecological perspective. Roszak and Murray Bookchin are two authors who argue openly that an ecologically sound society would be an anarchist one - while other writers who envisage what an ecological society would be like, implicitly are drawing an anarchistic picture (compare, for example, Callenbach's Ecotopia with Kropotkin's Fields, Factories and Workshops).

In what follows we explore links between some environmentalist thought, and some anarchist and feminist perspectives. We put it this way because it is important to remember that while environmentalism, anarchism and feminism often converge, they also constitute diverse and many-facetted social and political movements. Not all anarchists, feminists and environmentalists would see eye-to-eye; a marxist feminist, for example, would repudiate much of what a liberal anarchist or a conservative green would say. We have written some notes as an appendix which, we hope, make clear whom we are and are not describing in this survey of the common ground.

Our approach also attempts to reflect the fact that eco-feminists and eco-anarchists value a strongly subjective and personal approach to knowledge, rather than striving for a detached and objective perspective. Hence we start with an uncompromisingly personal statement which, we think, typifies eco-feminism. Then we go on to comment more analytically on this statement in order to describe areas of congruence with eco-anarchist and green thinking.

AN ECO-FEMINIST'S VIEW

Here is how an eco-feminist might define his or her view of how feminism relates to anarchist and green perspectives:

Each of the concepts I later identify are central to my understanding of what is wrong with society and how, in a personal way, to change it. In thinking about the most important elements of feminism, I have discovered the value of learning and writing from my own experience rather than from second hand. We can sometimes learn as much or more about how the world works in this way, because our understanding is that much more profound when it is felt personally, and we are perhaps more likely to act upon it. This is important, because to the eco-feminist learning is primarily about raising consciousness of society's deficiencies so that we can act to remedy them.

To me, feminism involves an awareness of how men and women are conditioned to conform to gender stereotpyes that stifle their development as individuals, can make them feel frustrated and inadequate, and can contribute to wider social and environmental problems. It is also a commitment to resisting these roles. Men are conditioned to aspire towards an ideal - a culturally-constructed model male. He is independent and thoroughly self-assured. He rarely expresses doubts or fear. He is rational and efficient. He is always in control of what he is doing. Emotionally, he is reserved and uncommunicative. As a 1987 survey of social attitudes in eight European countries discovered, the role-model among the 'New Wave' younger generation (15-23 years old) displays 'a strand of neo-stoicism as if it is proof of adulthood to be able to take (almost) anything with coolness, from unemployment to street violence to personal relationships ... they are so pragmatic in the expression of emotion. They are wary, laid back, sceptical, restless, even lonely' (reported in The Guardian, 11 May 1989). Such a model is mediated through our families, contemporaries, the media and advertising, and our schools. I believe that the majority of men (and women) are unable to live up to the demands of this role-model because it does not recognise that every human being, male as well as female, needs to experience and to express emotion to the full. That men, particularly, are under social pressure not to do so puts them in a very contradictory and irresolvable position. It often leads to frustration, anger and despair, which might be released privately because it is not allowed open expression. Domestic violence is a common form of release, and women and children are the victims.

For women, gender role stereotyping often consolidates the patriarchal notion that their function is to support their male superiors. They are expected to be gentle, loving, caring and sensitive, and to pick up the pieces resulting from that emotional repression that is part and parcel of the harsh 'male' world. But they must also realise that their 'femininity' has no real value in its own right, in a world where to succeed requires emulating the 'masculine' model I have described - the antithesis of anything 'feminine'. Yet those women who do try to emulate this model - who attempt to be ambitious, unemotional, 'strong' and independent, may be viewed with some amusement or scorn, for playing around in the male realm. And those who strive to be paragons of 'womanliness', i.e., to be perceptive and sensitive and emotionally open: their feelings may be trivialised, and patronised by men who have been conditioned to marginalise the value of any qualities which are not central to earning status and a living. Furthermore, these women find themselves frustrated by the contradictory situation that all this stereotyping places them in. In the same way that men, as human beings with diverse needs, cannot be fulfilled by living exclusively on one side of an emotion/rationality dichotemy, women need to be concerned with feelings and emotions and to be intellectually stimulated in order to live as satisfied people.

I believe that these conditioning processes have contributed to our current environmental problems. The 'masculine' qualities that are neglectful of emotions, compassion, sensitivity and understanding underlie so many of the political and economic decisions that affect society's use of the natural environment. So, for example, the alleged 'rationality' of the profit maximisation principle, which relegates the importance of wider social and moral issues involving nature, results in the unbridled exploitation of the environment.

This is why, as an eco-feminist, I want to draw attention to the limitations which such conditioning places on individual growth and personal relationships. I want to stress that it has serious implications for the survival of the planet, which is why environmentalists must challenge gender role stereotyping.

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

As a feminist I believe I am also an anarchist. For I believe that we cannot just change economic and social structures in collective struggle, but must also work for this through personal change. I suppose it's a belief that our collective action is really effective only when it starts from a

complete personal willingness to work for it. So we need to feel the benefits of taking increased personal responsibility for our lives and those of others, through co-operation, so that our actions have a potential to be permanent.

This point arises out of a belief I share strongly with anarchists, that political power oppresses all people, but especially women, and that it oppresses nature – whether that power is expressed through the leadership of governments, through the family structure (men over women – economically speaking) or through personal relationships (the reinforced 'masculine' characters of calm and 'sense' overriding the under-valued emotional expression of women). Hence, both the feminism I have described, and anarchism, reject this notion of power in favour of the empowering of all individuals, through consciousness raising, to eliminate hierarchies of any sort, and to ensure that they do not get trodden on. For example, anarchists do not believe that the people with the 'right' ideas should gain political power: most feminists (except liberal feminists) do not hope that women will rise into the kind of positions of political power traditionally occupied by males. Instead they wish to replace patriarchy with a non-hierarchical, non-sexist society.

Yin and Yang

YIN	YANG
FEMININE	MASCULINE
CONTRACTIVE	DEMANDING
RESPONSIVE	AGGRESSIVE
COOPERATIVE	COMPETITIVE
INTUITIVE	RATIONAL
SYNTHESIZING	ANALYTIC

CONNECTIONS

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

The above passage takes a clearly personal approach to the analysis of society and feminism, which is somewhat alien to the supposed drive for objectivity sometimes implied in academic knowledge. It is based on a recognition that personal experience is a valid learning resource, which is accessible to everyone, not just intellectual elites. The consciousness-raising or the encounter group is an important feminist learning device, where women come together to exchange experiences and feelings in mutualism, in order to build their strength in terms of both theory and potential for action. Bookchin reminds us (1974) of the affinity groups in pre-Franco Spain, where anarchists met in autonomous, communal and directly democratic association to provide initiative and heightened consciousness through intimate personalised learning – they are clearly analogous to these feminist groups referred to above, as they are to many green groups.

Although green writers are often less specific about the form of learning which they desire (having more to say about educational content – see Porritt 1988), there is a tendency among activist members of the 'counter-culture', which is infused by green ideas, to 'learn by doing' and experience, and to build their own theory rather than apply existing theory. Hence, 'skills and knowledge sharing' events often come high on the agenda of green activists (see insert). In their study of communes, Abrams and McCulloch (1976) write of how the members of these counter-cultural groups regard academics and academicism as 'anti-life'. 'The aversion to theory in modern British communes is almost a matter of principle'. In a world where hierarchies are to be avoided at all costs, knowledge of academic theory as a prerequisite for education is regarded as a barrier to collective learning: those who know the theory might assume a superiority to those who do not, leading to hierarchies of teacher and taught, linked in one-way passive relationships, as is often the case in conventional education.

BALANCING YIN AND YANG

The eco-feminist, a form of 'cultural' feminist, writes of how, through cultural conditioning, men have been pressured to play down the emotional, intuitional and irrational side of their natures, in favour of rational, analytic and 'objective' thought and action. This is so marked in our society that gender roles have been adopted which allot such characteristics as being either masculine (yang) or feminine

(yin) (see insert from Capra 1984). And it is the 'masculine' characteristics which are said to be emphasised generally in society - through them both women and nature are tamed and marginalised, especially by the vehicle of science (Merchant 1982) which is largely the domain of men. Capra, a leading green, believes that an ecological crisis can be averted only by a general re-assertion of 'feminine' values in the West. In so doing he echoes a persistent theme in green writings (Schumacher 1973, Robertson 1983, Porritt 1984), which is encountered frequently in journals such as Green Line or Resurgence. Here is an area of major fusing between greens and feminists, who are frequently the same people. They articulate a basically romantic sentiment, whereby nature, as well as people, must be loved, spiritually and intuitively known, and revered instead of coldly and rationally exploited (this sentiment is called the 'bioethic' - see O'Riordan 1981). Furthermore, in any ecologically sound society, material standards of living in the industrialised world must fall, in accordance with a more frugal use of the planet's resources. As a form of 'compensation' to rich Westerners for material reductions in living standards, quality of life (a key phrase) must rise, and an important component of this is enhanced spirituality, emotional fulfilment and holistic thinking - and living in loving relationships with others and 'Mother Nature'. So the inhabitants of any ecological utopia (see Callenbach 1978, 1981) will revel in spirituality and sensuality, and will value emotions and intuitively-gained knowledge.

Many of these sentiments also tie in strongly with anarchism. Bookchin (1974a) describes how an anarchist, like an ecologist, wants to see diversity and balance in all spheres of life. In a properly rounded society, rounded people will embrace the physical and the mental, sensuality and spirituality, spontaneity and self-discipline. Like the cultural feminist, anarchists and greens believe that suppression of any side of our natures and the marginalisation of some of our instincts leads to actual and structural violence - it is not 'natural', and anarchists wish to see people in a more natural state. Both Roszak and Bookchin, who believe that anarchism is a 'precondition for the practice of ecological principles', regard natural behaviour as spontaneous, loyal, unhierarchical, egalitarian and co-operative (echoing Kropotkin's Mutual Aid).

THE VIEW OF SOCIAL CHANGE

An emphasis of reform on the values of the individual as the primary political route to radical social change is a cornerstone of green and eco-feminist thinking about how to do away with an ecologically harmful and patriarchal society.

The eco-feminist says that 'the personal is political', and emphasises individual personal change - in values and practices - as a precondition for collective struggle. Roszak's (1979) anarchist-ecological view says: 'Persons come first before all collective fictions'. There is no shelter in revolutionary mass movements, and the counter-culture's concern for the individual is 'beyond class struggle'. So what Roszak views as the conventional politics of socialism (extreme collectivism, where the individual is submerged and alienated) and conservatism (extreme individualism, where people's collective nature is ignored) are rejected.

This is a constant theme in British green politics (Porritt 1984, Green Party 1987), and it is doggedly adhered to. It puts little faith in eliminating hierarchies by political change at the top of a hierarchy, and marxists will say that it therefore ignores the 'material' factors which underpin economic and social structures. Instead, it puts its faith in the potency of ideas, and actions by individuals based on such ideas, to achieve social change. It is therefore idealist, as opposed to materialist, as are elements of eco-feminism and eco-anarchism. But, for such anarchists and feminists particularly, there is a compelling reason for not seeking change through political structures and action in order to change the material 'base' of society. This is that such a route is seen to perpetuate existing power structures, or to replace them with others in which there is still hierarchy, inequality and social imbalance. Violence, confrontation and political-economic power cannot be used to create a society in which none of these things exist - far better to 'sidestep' the power structures altogether and set up an alternative to which people might be naturally attracted.

Many greens have a rather stereotyped view of communism and marxism, and so to them the outcome of a socialist revolution would be a state-controlled society, in which alienation of people from each other and nature would persist.

INDIVIDUALS, THE COLLECTIVE AND THE STATE

However, in emphasising the liberal philosophy of individualism, neither greens, eco-feminists, nor mutualist or pacifist anarchists, reject the collective. As the cultural feminist puts it, when individuals are free from alienating power structures, they feel 'increased responsibility' for their lieves. This (apparently Thatcheresque) sentiment is also very anarchist and green. Roszak argues that 'personhood' (individualism) involves others, and that full realisation of the self can only come about through relating fully to others - in an extended

rather than a nuclear family, living and working together in mutual aid (c.f. Kropotkin, and Godwin and Proudhon – the last two emphasised that individual freedom, which was paramount, is something for people to shape for themselves but in association with their fellows).

Woodcock (1986) sums up the anarchist perspective on this when he says that in most modern societies responsibility is in 'urgent danger' of being strangled by paternalistic authority – and the feminist would add 'patriarchal' authority. The state is evil and community life should not be politically organised but should come about through free contractual agreements between individuals. Most greens do not intend to do away with the state entirely, but there is a strong emphasis on decentralisation in nearly all aspects of social and economic life, with the devolution of power to the regions, districts and communities (Ekins 1986, Green Party 1987). Here is a cautious form of anarchism. It is more spontaneously and fully expressed in that countercultural annexe to the green movement in Britain, the communes movement. Here, an extreme individualism is part of an overwhelming search for self-identity, but this is balanced by a strong sense that self-fulfilment comes only by relating to others in a context without leaders, hierarchy or state apparatus (Abrams and McCulloch 1976).

NATURE AND HOLISM

The eco-feminist expresses a love of, and an anxious concern for, all life on earth, and its beauty and miraculousness. The 'rape' of the planet by industrialism, capitalism and consumerism, facilitated by science and high technology, is a 'tearing apart of the life force' – a particularly debasing assault on Gaia or Mother Nature. It causes pain for those who want to cherish all life – and women's traditional nurturing role might make them particularly sensitive to the destruction of life: hence some feminists claim that women are inherently 'more concerned with ecology and peace and less with sexuality than men' (Echols 1984 – see also Merchant 1981).

Indeed, a sense of 'wholeness' or one-ness with the rest of nature, is often regarded as a 'feminine' characteristic by greens (Capra 1984). Just about all mainstream green philosophy emphasises the perceived interconnectedness of humans and the rest of nature. New Age mysticism, Eastern mysticism, romanticism, paganism, new physics, systems theory – all of these holistic ways of thinking are enthusiastically embraced by the green movement as ways to express its message that society must break with the world

view of classical science that puts 'man' as separate from 'nature'. It is a central tenet of most radical environmentalism, or ecocentrism.

And it is latent in anarchism. Woodcock's (1986) description of the anarchist's position on where humans belong in the scheme of things shows that this view is holistic too, and places humans firmly within nature. It is a 'modified version of the view of the natural world that was celebrated in the Renaissance and especially in the eighteenth century as the Great Chain of Being'. This chain was 'a continuity proceeding from the humblest form of life to the Godhead ... Everything ... had its place in the order of being, and if it followed its own nature, all would be well. But let any species break the chain by departing from nature, and disaster would ensue'. Woodcock adds: 'It was a doctrine that would appeal to a modern ecologist'. This is true, though it might be a conservative or liberal ecologist rather than a socialist 'red-green'. For the last shies away from the idea that nature, in some objective form, does and must form the model for human society (because, following marxist thought, red-greens see 'nature' as essentially socially constructed, so what it is varies from culture to culture and time to time).

So, like most greens, anarchists may believe in a natural order of society, of which humans are part. The essential conservatism of this is tempered by the anarchist's particular view of what this order is. There are two political interpretations of the Great Chain of Being. On the one hand it may be seen as a hierarchy, putting humans over and above the rest of nature. On the other, since it is a chain, then each link is of equal importance to the strength of the whole. The non-hierarchical view is decidely anarchistic, together with the idea that although human societies should be 'natural', nature is not competitive, aggressive and 'red in tooth and claw' – as social Darwinists would have us believe – but is co-operative and caring, where individuals and species exhibit strong mutualism (Kropotkin 1902).

NON HIERARCHICAL ORGANISATION

Eco-feminists and anarchists express a similar revulsion towards hierarchical relationships, personal or in the wider society, which are seen as relationships where power and control is exerted by some people over others. This is regarded as the basis of patriarchy, capitalism, state-dominated communism, conventional education and indeed all the institutions of 'advanced' societies, including that of the nuclear family. Removing or sidestepping hierarchy

therefore becomes the cornerstone of anarchism, as it is a key to cultural feminism (particularly in respect of patriarchal hierarchies). Similarly, greens may attack the notion of hierarchy, especially as expressed in our current relationship to nature.

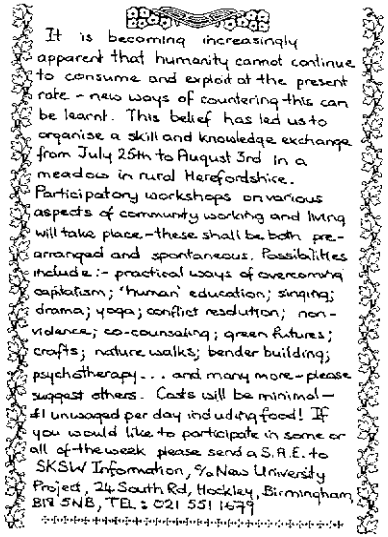
As indicated above, hierarchical relationships are seen to go deeper than capitalism, and the achievement of socialism is not of itself regarded as a remedy. The tendency to dominate and control others is thought to be a wider cultural phenomenon than would result specifically from political-economic structures. The manifestations of this anarchistic desire to replace patriarchy with a non-hierarchical, non-sexist society, and not to seek always to control situations and, in doing so, people, are seen in women's groups. The Greenham women have especially resisted the idea of leadership and led, elected or assumed spokeswomen, or 'specialists' to convey their message of peace and anti-militarism. Their anarchism also extends to a strong sense of mutualism.

Greens, by and large, have not been so conspicuously anarchic, except, perhaps, for those who are part of the communes movement. While Friends of the Earth do have a strong commitment to local group autonomy, local, democratically - organised, action and work through the local community, on the other hand both they and Greenpeace make a point of creating and cultivating hierarchies of expertise to combat the technocratic industrial society. There are unofficial media gurus like Porritt or Bellamy, and intellectual gurus galore - Arne Naess, Fritjof Capra and Paul Ehrlich for example. But both the British and German Green Parties have agonised over the contradiction between their professed beliefs on this and the necessity for political organisation, with experts, spokespeople and experienced leaders. In Germany, especially, a rift was created when, after an agreed period of a few years, the time came for leaders like Petra Kelly (a feminist green) to stand down and assume anonymity. Some argued that for them to do so would waste years of effort spent in creating people with charisma and savour-faire, which made them a powerful political influence outside the Green Party, and therefore more able to extend green ideas.

CONCLUSION: THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF MAKING CONNECTIONS

Clearly there are connections between anarchism and the feminist and ecology movements in the mainstream of cultural feminism and 'green' environmentalism. This is not to say that members of these modern movements always recognise their debt to anarchism or have a clear sense of what anarchism involves.

However, as teachers we are convinced that there is value in attempting to see the links and correlations between these movements - this value is educational among other things. For if they are regarded by school children and students as disparate and unconnected, and not facets of a wider movement for social change, then the potential to think holistically about society and history and to identify broader patterns of injustice and the quest to eliminate it, will have been passed by. Following from this, the true nature and extent of contemporary pressures for social change in a similar direction may go unappreciated, without conscious attempts by teachers to link apparently discrete pressure groups. If this is allowed to happen then the illusion created by a minority of Thatcherites - that their world view is a majority - will continue to be successfully transposed from the wider society to the classroom.



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OPEN SPACE

FEMINISM

LIBERAL FEMINISTS

Do not require any dissolution of the patriarchal society or seek a matriarchal one. They want women to play equal and similar roles to those of men in a society still dominated by values of aggression, competition and materialism. Want equal economic opportunity and social status within capitalism.

RADICAL FEMINISTS

Say men and women tend to adopt stereotyped gender roles in our society - psychological conditions which may owe something to both social and economic forces and to biological differences between the sexes. This leads to gender-based power relations, where men dominate women, leading to a patriarchal society. This goes further than class-based domination, and may lead to men being seen as the oppressors and to be excluded from radical feminist politics, in a society of complete gender separation (Bowlby, Foord and MacKenzie 1982, Millet 1969). This extreme is often demanded as necessary in achieving a non-sexist society where gender roles have been eliminated - at least until women learn to support each other and assert themselves.

CULTURAL FEMINISTS (ECO-FEMINISM CORRESPONDS MAINLY TO THIS)

According to Echols (1984) this is an offshoot of radical feminism. It holds that there are distinct 'masculine' and 'feminine' values, and that many of the world's problems stem from an over assertion of the former. Hence there should be a re-assertion of the 'female principle' through spreading the culture (or counter-culture) of 'feminine' values. This will be mainly by personal change in individuals - perhaps by working together, but collective political action is less important. While male and female values are substantially socially produced, they may also be regarded as partly inherent in biological differences between men and women. This latter element tends, according to Echols, to make men 'the enemy' - although cultural feminists think that through individual reform it is possible for men to achieve a greater balance between male and female 'principles' in themselves. Race and class oppression are seen as by-products of a world dominated by masculine values - patriarchal fallout - which will be swept away by a woman's revolution.

SOCIALIST FEMINISTS

Criticise the radical analysis and regard patriarchy as substantially part of class oppression resulting from capitalist relations of production. However patriarchy and differences in gender roles do not just result from this form of economic exploitation. The 'family mode of production' is also a tool of oppression. Hence females are exploited both as domestic and waged labour. As a strategy, women's - only groups may be useful (Bowlby, Foord and MacKenzie 1982), but on the whole men and women should work in collective political activity to change society. It is not men, as biological entities, who are the enemy, but the social and economic structures into which men and women are born.

ENVIRONMENTALISM

TECHNOCENTRICS

Recognise environmental problems but mostly believe they can be solved within the prevailing social-economic system through some planning and a wise managerial approach, combined with technological innovations to overcome pollution and deal with resource problems (some, however, may instead advocate a totally free-market capitalism to solve environmental problems).

ECOCENTRICS

Believe that there is an environmental crisis, which can only be dealt with through social change; a reform of economics and society involving a fundamental revision of attitudes towards nature and each other.

Mainstream ecocentrics - 'greens' usually embrace the ecofeminist perspective and often take on elements of anarchism. They are represented by the British Green Party, and individuals such as Porritt (1984), Capra (1984), Ash (1986) and Schwarz and Schwarz (1987). They do not put faith principally in science and technology, or (large-scale) capitalism to produce a 'SHE' society (sane, humane, ecological - Robertson 1983 - this acronym is not accidental). Their political philosophy is basically liberal (emphasising the individual as the key to total society). They differ from 'red greens' who adopt a marxist approach to social change. To red-greens an ecologically sound society equates ultimately with true communism, achieved through class struggle to change power relations that substantially reflect economic structures.

There are also more conservative greens, who call for a society founded on a supposedly 'natural' order, where people are 'organically' bound to each other and nature, in strong, perhaps hierarchical, relationships. They believe in the need for a common value system revolving around 'laws' of ecology. 'Nature knows best', so society must ape nature in all ways. And if people step outside these values - by, for example, procreating at a rate inconsistent with Malthusian laws of carrying capacity - they may have to be compelled or socially conditioned to fall into line (Goldsmith 1978, Hardin 1968). Yet their deterministic belief in binding natural laws is not so total as to suggest that society cannot change radically from what it is today.

ANARCHISM

The kinds of anarchism which most appear to link in with ecological and feminist thinking are mutualism and anarcho-pacifism. 'Proudhon's mutualism' (see Woodcock 1979 p.17) 'fiercely defends individual freedom (and possessions) but does so by advocating association between people'. The world would be a great federation of communes and worker co-operatives where individuals and small groups own the means of production and are bound only by contracts of exchange and mutual credit - freely entered into - which assure for people the products of their own labour. Pacifist anarchism opposes the state and other authoritative forms, but rejects any form of violence in so doing. It strives to create libertarian communes in present-day society as an example of how to live ('propaganda by deed'). It advocates either non-resistance by side-stepping the power structures of modern society, or resistance which is non-violent.

LONDON ECOLOGY CENTRE LAUNCHES SCHOOLS MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

The London Ecology Centre launched its new Primary Schools Membership Scheme on World Environment Day, 5 June 1989, which was also the Centre's fourth anniversay.

The aim of the scheme is to bring more schoolchildren into the Centre and to help teachers use the Centre's facilities.

The Centre has a year-round programme of events and exhibitions with environmental themes, and an information service covering topics ranging from recycling and wildlife, to acid rain and destruction of the earth's ozone layer.

'The scheme is a natural extention of the Centre's developing role in environmental education, and is the first step in

making contact with schools at all levels', says Elaine Sullivan, Chairman of the London Ecology Centre Trust, which runs the Centre.

It is anticipated that members will come mainly from the London area, as the emphasis will be on participation in events at the Centre in Covent Garden, but all member schools will receive regular information packs and be invited to contribute to the Centre's schools projects and exhibitions.

The launch takes place amidst the Ideal Green Home exhibition, a project by the Women's Environmental Network, and visiting schoolchildren will participate in a questionnaire aimed at heightening their awareness of how caring for the planet begins at home.

The Centre is planning a series of activity days and will be launching a newsletter, written for and by the schools themselves. Exhibitions of work done at school will be held at the Centre for others to visit, and classes will be invited to specially organised talks in association with other Centre events.

For further information please contact Paula Summerhayes at:
London Ecology Centre
45 Shelton Street
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Tel: 01-379 4324

Acid Rain

SECONDARY TEACHING PACK:

This Secondary Teaching Pack is intended as a source of information and ideas to help in teaching about acid rain. Acid rain studies are multi disciplinary and can be incorporated into subjects ranging from georgraphy and environmental studies to craft, design and technology.

The ideas and exercises can be adapted and extended to suit the teaching time and 'ability' of the pupils involved.

The exercises have been classified * for lower secondary, ** for upper seconary and *** for sixth form.

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