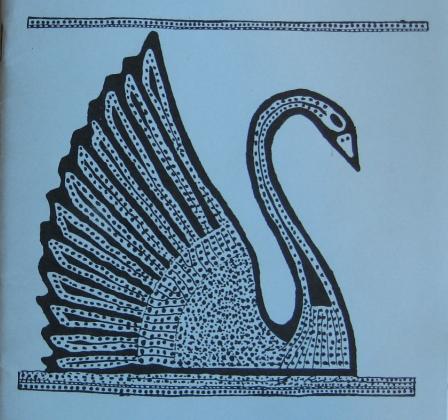# Anarchism & Ecology:
The Historical Relationship

by

Graham Purchase

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP OF ANARCHISM TO ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT

Part I. Anarchism, The State & Utopian Thought

Humankind has since it became aware of its ability to radically alter its natural and social environment, dreamt of ideal societies in which future generations of our species might live and evolve in radically different ways to that of the present day. Our philosophers, visionaries, writers, novelists and poets have continually placed before us visions of future words. Some are fantastic and far too fanciful and are later enjoyed for their artistic and literary value, whilst others are of a deeper, some might say, prophetic in nature, which carry important truths and insights concerning desirable social-evolutionary paths which our species might consciously choose in order that we might achieve the goal of creating a more harmonious and integrated social existence. When we examine the writings of past thinkers it does however immediately become apparent that there are those who when dreaming of an ideal world have placed their faith in ever larger and more efficient centralized power structures and the institutions of state as we now know them, whilst others have set before us alternative "non-statist" visions of an ideal society in which the state is reduced to NIL -- the human species having rather decided to live in self-regulating and self-sufficient cities of communes loosely federated with one another on the basis of trade, culture, location and ecology. The hopelessly utopian, Marxist-Leninist vision of a workers' state being perhaps the logical end-product of the first of these philosophical and literary traditions. A vision where everything -- education, housing, industry and the media -- is controlled and owned by the state -- the nightmarish social consequences of which are perhaps best seen in Stalin's purges or in contemporary China or as depicted in George Orwell's 1984 or Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (a totalitarianally organized governmental society that takes advantage of developments in reproductive technology).

In opposition to these statist visions of society there has throughout time been a history of anti-statist or anarchist thought

which has continually warned of the grave consequences for human liberty and freedom of placing our faith in ever larger centralized state power structures and faceless and ever-more efficient government beaurocracies. These anti-statist or anarchist conceptions of human existence have generally been of two types: individualist & communitarian. The first, derived from a Robinson Crusoe version of human social destiny -- and to some extent realized under the auspices of our present capitalist system, stresses that the ideal mode of human existence is where everyone is independent, self-sufficient, dependant upon no-body and controlled and regulated in the absence of the state by the dictates of capital and the market. Unfortunately the individualist -- capitalist utopia has historically proved to be only a little more successful in securing human freedom and liberty from the totalitarian state than its Marxist-Leninist counterparts. Apart from the obvious inequalities associated with such modes of existence, the individualist-capitalist notion of 'free' and 'unbridled' competition -- based as it is upon individual greed, material acquisition and self-aggrandizement represents a philosophy that is ill-equipped to cater to a species that has always, and will always, be required to live in society. Children and the sick cannot educate, care or cure themselves and the impoverished or unlucky, however hard-working they may be are not always able to make good by force of their health and muscles alone: Beyond this, it is obvious that the building of roads and sewers -- necessary to the health and prosperity of every member of our species alike, are unlikely to be adequately provided for by a social philosophy which seeks to deny the essentially social aspects of the human condition. However free and libertarian the individualist-capitalist utopia may have appeared on paper, in practice, the authoritarian state has come to play a significant role in the day to day organization of such societies. People forced to live an essentially isolated and socially alienated existence, have in order to prevent crime and provide socially necessary services -- welfare, education, sanitation etc., -- continually had to rely upon the state who through a system of taxation and state-enforcement agencies sought to administer those services, which were before the advent of the individualist-capitalist experiment, formerly provided by the independent community or city itself. The terrifyingly efficient methods of centralized social and information management (e.g. tax or social welfare computers) employed by the so called 'liberal democratic state' have proved a positive menace and but fragile guarantee of prolonged freedom and

continued progress for the broad masses of the human species. Beyond this it is apparent that capitalist-individualism -- nursing as it does many of the less admirable features of the human psyche -- especially those of egoism and vanity -- has consistently failed to prevent the usurpation of socially necessary economic and political structures -- controlled and regulated by the state -- by ruthless dictators and other mad people for the benefit of military cliques and the narrow interests of other powerful minorities and parties. The spectre of "Big Brother" whether the result of state-communism or the mis-begotten egoism of capitalist-individualism is ample reminder of the fact that we must have the courage to confront our social evolutionary, intellectual and literary past and find time to make the effort to build a society based upon alternative, communitarian and non-governmental visions of human co-existence historically represented in both theory and practice by the communalist or communitarian-anarchist traditions which seeks in its depiction of an ideal society to bypass the totalitarian consequences of Marxist-state-communism while at the same time avoiding the egoistical excesses of unbridled capitalist-individualism. The primary social unit within the communitarian anarchist vision being that of the commune rather than that of the nation-state or the isolated individual or family. In using the word 'commune' the communitarian-anarchist does not refer to isolated hippy retreatism or otherwise small and isolated communal experiments, but rather, to the possibility of allowing each city, town village or region full autonomy and independence in managing and resolving their conflicts and affairs without reference to distant state bureaucracies and in the absence of external government interference. The various villages, towns and city-communes themselves federating on the basis of location, culture and ecology with those goods and service unavailable at the level of the individual region or commune being provided by inter-communal associations of interest, trade and industry.

The three great currents of utopian and futurist thought; Totalitarianism, capitalist-individualism and communitarian anarchism, which we have briefly discussed in the for-going discussion, although partially or totally realised in various epochs and places throughout history do perhaps come most directly into conflict with one another during the drama of The Great French Revolution (1789-1793) during the final break-down of the feudal epoch. Revolutions are momentous periods of history when the

people themselves must decide, either by force of argument or arms the future course of social-evolution. In the act of destroying the political and social institution of the old-order the people are necessarily forced to build anew -- to choose, demand and fight for their conceptions and ideals. With the destruction of the aristocracy in the course of the French Revolution three quite distinct conceptions of the new social order were seen to emerge and do battle with one another. The ordinary peasants and townsfolk of the 36,000 communes of France representing the communitarian-anarchist tradition demanded nothing short of complete communal independence and asked that the communal lands enclosed since 1699 by the king be returned without condition to the individual village or town to be farmed collectively for the direct benefit of the community as a whole. Likewise those lands formally controlled by the clergy and the aristocracy should, if they were to be sold at all, be sold in small parcels (of not more than 120 acres) for the benefit of small farmers and individual peasants. In Paris, the various suburbs and sections likewise demanded their independence and autonomy and actively sought to resist the attempt to have Paris controlled by a single and centralized bureaucracy. Such conceptions were however in direct opposition to the interests of the newly emerging manufacturing and middle classes who representing the individualist -- capitalist tradition succeeded through legal trickery and force of arms in turning the French Revolution to their advantage. The authoritarian/totalitarian tradition which finally triumphed with the White Terror and the ascendancy of Napoleon Bonaparte insofar as it attempted to deny the independence of the individual commune, town or village and centralize all political power under a single totalitarian regime in Paris was supported and brought to power through the intrigues of the middle classes who rightly feared the power of the masses and who were determined to lay their hands on the communal wealth of the French peasantry. A similar story (with different actors) can be discerned in all the major European revolutions -- especially that of the Russian (1917-21) and Spanish (1936-39), which have all witnessed the triumph of dictatorship, the nation-state and large-scale capitalist exploitation at the expense of regional and communal autonomy and the personal liberty of the broad masses of the people. Communitarian anarchism, whose adherents regard their ideals as no more utopian than the goals of capitalist individualism and state-communist dictatorship abhor this social-evolutionary development and call for the complete

overthrow of capital and state and the reconstruction of social life along a communal and regionalistic basis.

Part II. Charles Fourier & The Russian Nihilists

The two features of Communitarian-Anarchism which differentiates it from its traditional social, philosophical & political rivals: State-Communism & Capitalist Individualism are firstly its hatred of the state, and secondly in its fostering and maintaining an understanding of what we would now call environmentalism or an ecological awareness or consciousness. Unlike the Marxists, the anarchist's rejection of capital and state has had a long and constant association with modern ecological issues and concerns. It is a unique aspect of the anarchists social vision which is unfortunately all too little known about by social and political historians and the general public alike. It is however an undoubted historical truth that a profound interest in ecological concerns can be clearly and easily discerned in the writings of some of the very earliest and most gifted anarchist and anti-statist philosophers and thinkers of the past.

Charles Fourier (1772-1837)

The collapse of the Great French Revolution into an orgy of capitalist speculation, militarism, centralism and state-sponsored terrorism witnessed a prolonged period of inflation, agro-industrial stagnation, famine and profiteering within revolutionary France. Similar developments in newly industrializing England resulted in a profound philosophical reaction and led many gifted thinkers on both sides of the English Channel to seriously challenge centralized control and chaos of capitalist-individualism and develop new models and schemes of social organization. One of the most original and gifted representatives of this new breed of philosophers and thinkers was the early anti-statist thinker Charles Fourier who came to consider that the remedy for many of the evils generated by the system of capitalist speculation and centralized state dictatorship might be obtained through establishing small, self-sustaining co-operative communities that would federate with one another by means of complex inter-communal networks or associations of producers and consumers interacting with one another on a non-capitalist basis.

Throughout his life-time Fourier produced a long series of hysterically funny and quite fantastic half mad/half serious blueprints of harmonious and balanced societies operating and co-operating peacefully with one another in the complete absence of any centralized state control whatsoever. A future social system consisting of a host of self-sufficient communal engroupments completely integrated with the surrounding ecology of their regions whose members exhibited a profound respect and interest in the land and its proper social-ecological management. Fourier rejected large scale agriculture and the various communities were to adopt smaller-scale (though equally if not more productive than factory farming) market-gardening style organic farming techniques utilizing where ever possible the benefits of "hot houses" and "conservatories", avoiding at all costs crop mono-culture:

"When the community farms its land under the combined system it begins by determining three or four uses suitable for each section. Crop-mixing is always advisable except in very valuable vineyards. Yet even these can bear fruit and vegetable as accessories to the main crop."[1]

The inhabitants of Fourier's Harmonioum would all be encouraged to devote at least part of their day to food cultivation in order that they might not become alienated from the land and the soil that provided life, sustenance and beauty. Fourier in his fantastically utopian and his characteristically tongue-in-cheek style goes on to describe a day in the life of a group of cherry pickers:

"A group of cherry-growers are having a large meeting in the main orchard about a quarter of a mile from the community. They make arrangements for the following groups to join them during the course of the afternoon."

(i)   A group from another community will come to help the cherry growers

(ii)   A group of lady florists from the district will plant a two-hundred yard row of hollyhocks and dahlias along a near-by road and around a field of vegetables in this field

(iii)   A group of vegetable growers will cultivate the vegetables in this field

(iv)   A group of young girl strawberry pickers will arrive during the session. They have been cultivating a strawberry ringed glade in a nearby forest

At the end of the afternoon a wagon is sent out from the community to bring food to these groups. The food is served in the castle of the cherry growers and afterwards the various groups disperse after having formed friendly ties and arranged industrial and other kinds of meeting in the following days."[2]

Here Fourier by imaginatively depicting an ideal or perfect society attempts to show us the value of involving the whole community in food cultivation and in treating the land in a mixed, ecologically diverse and self-sustaining manner.

Large and intensive concentrations of industry (and vis a vis population) were likewise to be avoided. Large scale industry and the over-crowded population centres it tended to create not only drew people away from the land but also created large scale pollution problems. Fourier whilst not rejecting technological innovation advocated that industrial life must be much smaller in scale, much more integrated with agriculture and the surrounding environment and that people in the course of their everyday working lives should be encouraged to work in both industry and agriculture, thereby creating a more balanced and ecologically integrated approach to the production of humankind's most basic articles of agro-industrial manufacture:

"As soon as the population of the globe has reached its full strength of about five billion, we will concern ourselves only with ensuring the happiness of its inhabitants rather than increasing their number. Now happiness would decline if we upset the equilibrium of attraction by taking time from agriculture in order to give more time to factories than nature intends. Nature seeks to reduce the time given to factory work as much as possible by organizing life in such a manner that all products are brought to perfection. According to this principle, factories will not be concentrated as they are today in cities choked with swarms of wretched creatures. Rather they will be scattered throughout all of the worlds rural areas and communities. Thus when a man engages in factory work in harmony he will never deviate from the principle of using factories as an auxiliary and as a complement to agriculture. Industry or agriculture should never be the principal occupation, either for a community or for any of its individual members"[3]

The Nihilists Of 19th Century Russia

Fourier's writings and ideas although containing many imaginative and suggestive insights into the means by which humanity might create a more cohesive and ecologically integrated form of social life, his schemes (although taken seriously by himself and his very small number of followers) were too fantastic, too utopian to be taken seriously. Besides humans have lived in cities for many centuries and are a natural product of human social evolution. The idea of returning to a society in which small-scale village life had come to predominate, although perhaps desirable from an ecological viewpoint, would, for a large number of very good reasons be both impractical and repugnant to the great mass of humanity. Beyond this, the attempt to construct 'ideal' communities within the existing system -- be it feudalism or capitalism -- although not entirely foolish has always resulted in failure.

Nonetheless in those parts of Europe which had not as yet developed a large urban population of industrial workers the ideas of Fourier and others like him were extremely influential. The agrarian idealism contained in Fourier's writing was particularly appealing to the youth of late 19th century Russia -- a country that by the mid-century boasted only a very small number of industrial workers, nine tenths of the population being peasants primarily engaged in agricultural production. The realization of a society composed of small-scale and ecologically integrated communes did not need to be built anew as Fourier suggested! The basis of such a society, the Nihilists believed, existed within the peasant village community in which by far the vast majority of the population still lived, as they had for many thousands of years. Although the agricultural serf was under certain obligations to his master, once the taxes had been paid to the lord both the life of the individual peasant, and indeed the village as a whole, was very much their own. The peasant had certain traditional rights and the day to day running of the village was organised by the villagers themselves. The individual peasant was a partner in the Mir -- a free association of all the peasants of the village in which he had automatic right to participate and in which communal land was periodically distributed. Such traditions came from a time before serfdom had been imposed from above -- and represented a social system to which the Russian peasant had never been reconciled. The peasant still regarded the land and the village as his own and was waiting patiently for the time when he would be

freed from obligation and the land returned. Beyond this, the peasant tied to the land which his village had farmed in common for millenia stood in a unique relationship to the land which he/she tilled and was naturally sensitive toward the long-term health and stability of his/her surrounding ecological region.

The Nihilists despite their agrarian idealism did not reject technological innovation and far from endorsing a backward-looking pre-industrial ideology enthusiastically welcomed science as a means of releasing our species from unnecessary and back-breaking toil to which the Russian peasant was all too well accustomed. The Nihilists understood that the rotovator was surely an improvement upon the hand plow and their idea was rather, to scale industry and technology to such a size that it could be utilized by the peasant and become integrated with village and small town life.

The Nihilists believed:

> "that the development of large-scale centralized industry was not 'natural' and therefore led inexorably to the degradation and dehumanization of all those who were caught in its tentacles. Capitalism was an appalling evil, destructive of body and soul, but it was not inescapable. They maintained rather, that the application of scientific truths, in which they passionately believed, to social and individual problems, although it might, and often did, lead to the growth of capitalism, could be realised without this fatal sacrifice. They believed that it was possible to improve life by scientific techniques without necessarily destroying the 'natural' life of the peasant village, or creating a vast, pauperized, faceless city proletariat. Capitalism seemed irresistible only because it had not been sufficiently resisted. However it might be in the west, in Russia 'the curse of bigness' could still be successfully fought. Russia could 'leap over' the capitalist stage of social development, and transform her village commune and free co-operative groups of craftsmen into agricultural and industrial associations of producers who would constitute the embryo of the new socialist society. Technological progress did not automatically break up the peasant commune. Factories could be grafted onto workers co-operatives without destroying them large-scale organization could eliminate exploitation and yet preserve the predominantly agricultural nature of the Russian economy. They argued that it was possible to avoid the despotism of a centralized economy or a centralized government by adopting a loose, federal structure composed of self-governing, socialized units of both producers and of consumers."[4]

Although a large urban population of industrial workers did in the course of time develop within Russia and the Nihilists vision

of an ecologically integrated society based upon the scientifically and technologically regenerated village and community life was never realised their ideas concerning the "scale" and "appropriateness" of technology with regard to village life and the ecological health of the land -- recently popularized by E.F. Schmacher in relation to third world development -- remain as relevant today as they did in the late nineteenth century Europe.

Part III. Elisee Reclus & Peter Kropotkin: The Development of Anarchist Bio-Geography

It is an interesting fact that the two most influential anarchist philosophers of the late 19th century were both professional geographers -- whose writings and discoveries in this field were acknowledged internationally and whose books and pamphlets were enjoyed by millions of people world-wide. The fact that anarchy & geography became intellectually intermixed in the late 19th century, is however, no chance or accidental happening. The 19th century was an era when the whole of Australia was considered by its state-capitalist oppressors as nothing more than a desert or a sheep pen and to believe in the basic concepts of evolutionary biology was to commit blasphemy. The new science of geography insofar as it attempted to study all cultures of the world upon a basis of equality in relation to changes in physiography, vegetation and climate -- represented a radical challenge to the age -- and attracted a large number of people who wished to combine their love of nature with radical social and political ideals.

Elisee Reclus (1830-1905)

Elisee Reclus excelled as both a geographer and an anarchist theoretician. He was one of the most respected geographers of the 19th century and was probably the most prolific of all time. Beginning his career by writing popular travel guides in his youth, Reclus was always able to make a good living from his pen, writing freely and at great length whenever he was able. His output was simply enormous. His New Universal Geography, but a small percentage of his total out, consisted of 19 huge volumes -- sold to the public in weekly booklets of 35,000 words over a period of 19 years. At the time of his death Reclus was attempting to complete the entirely practical geographical task of producing a world-wide

survey of volcanoes. Quality was however never sacrificed to quantity -- his works are always graceful, rich and suggestive -- and Reclus was undoubtedly a master of his art. His love of nature, art, geography, science and above all freedom and The Earth shine through his every word.

Reclus can be justly cited as being one of the founders of modern ecological geography and bio-regionalism. His early work "The Earth" (2 vols, published in English in U.S.A. Harper 1871-3) which is kind of 19th century "Gaia Hypothesis", quickly established him as a writer and a geographer. In the words of one of his contemporaries: "The Earth always appeared to him as a living being in its continuous variation, and the inhabitants of its different parts were intimately connected in his mind with the physical characters of that portion of the globe where they had developed"[5]

Reclus' vision of the Earth was an expansive and all-embracing vision of a future world harmony based upon the regional re-integration of humankind with nature. The Earth was composed of a globally integrated patchwork of distinct and self-organizing ecological regions and eco-systems and the only way for human kind to achieve lasting and endurable security was to adjust its activities; -- art, industry and culture towards the improvement and embellishment of nature and to the needs of their immediate surrounding natural environment.

In particular, Reclus was interested in the Earth as the home of the human species -- what they had done to both destroy and improve upon nature, throughout all time and in every geographical region of our planet. The title of his last great work "Mankind and the Earth" (6 vols, Paris; Librarie Universalle 1905-8) is indicative of his main field of concern; the harmony of the Earth and humankind's relationship with it. "Is the evolution of our species in perfect harmony with the laws of the Earth? This is what it concerns us to know!", is how Reclus introduced this monumental study of how the development and evolution of our species was to be studied in direct relationship to the natural environment.[6]

The following passages from the final chapter of his early work *The Earth* (1869) are illustrative of Reclus' thoroughly modern attitude and profound respect for the natural world which underlies much of his writing:

Camping, as a passer by, the barbarian has plundered the soil, exploited it with violence and, lacking culture and intelligence, has not

recompensated her for the richness he has seized from her. He completely devastated and made uninhabitable the country which had served him as a home. The surface of the earth witnesses many examples of these merciless devastations. In many places man has transformed his homeland into deserts and "grass does not grow any longer where he puts his feet". A great part of Persia, Mesopotamia, Idumaea and various countries of Asia Minor and Arabia where "milk and honey" used to flow, and which supported considerable populations, are quite unproductive now and are inhabited by destitute tribes living on pillage and rudimentary agriculture. Perhaps the climate has changed due to geological causes as M Oscar Fraas thinks, but man has to a great extent contributed to the transformation of the fields into deserts. We see in our days how the Turks, who own land and have leisure, know how to apply grace in their gardening whereas the Greeks, and other Christians of the Orient, being enslaved for a long time have not appreciated nature and have exploited it mercilessly. "Who kills a tree kills a Serb" used to say the proud Slavs along the Danube river, but they too are clearing the land.

When the power of Rome yielded to the barbarians, Italy and neighbouring provinces ruined by the <u>crude cultivation of the land by slaves</u>, had changed into a desert and even in these days, after nearly two thousand years of the land lying fallow, vast tracts of land the Etruscans and Sicules once cultivated are still barren or unhealthy marshes. Causes similar to those that led to the weakening and death of the Roman Empire are at work in the New World leading to the loss of a considerable part of its arable land - such as Carolina and Alabama created at the expense of virgin forests. In less than half a century the plantations of Carolina and Alabama have become unproductive and are now the domain of deer. In Brazil and Columbia, once among the most fertile countries in the world, it has taken only a few years to exhaust the soil - that is a real plunder. Trees are burnt in order to sow maize in the ashes, then the seed-bed is continually over-worked until a thicket of shrubs strangles it. Then they are burnt a second time to sow the maize again. Then bracken and a sticky, fetid grass, called <u>capim gordura</u>, takes over. The soil is lost.

What factors contributed to the beauty of degradation of nature, perhaps, is a futile question to the so-called unsentimental soul but, nonetheless, it is of prime importance. The development of humanity is intimately tied to the natural environment. A hidden harmony exists between the earth and the people it supports and when imprudent societies strike a blow at what is beautiful in their domain they have always been sorry for it. There, where the land turns to ugliness, where poetry - all poetry - disappears, imaginations are enslaved, the spirits impoverished and servility seizes upon the souls and predisposes them to torpor and death.

Among the causes in human history that have led to the disappearance of many civilizations we ought to mention the brutal violence with which the majority of people related to the land they lived on. They cut trees, dried up springs, flooded rivers, damaged the climate and surrounded the cities with swampy and pestilential zones; then when profaned nature became hostile to them they hated it and, not being able to retreat like the savages to the woods, they let themselves be more and more brutal in their despotism.

The masses of slaves who tilled the soil, under the rough hand of the conquerors of Rome and during the painful times of the Middle Ages, could not have understood the beauty of the earth where they were living their miserable lives and any sentiment they would have had in relation to the surrounding landscape would have been perverted. The bitterness of existence was too acute for people to be able to indulge in the pleasure of admiring clouds, rocks and trees. Everywhere there was strife, hate, subjection to fears, wars and famine. The master's whim and cruelty were the law for the enslaved; foreigner and enemy were synonymous. In such a society all that a brave man could do to fight against his destiny and preserve his awareness, was to be merry and ironic, to laugh at himself and above all at his master, but in no way could he be moved by the earth herself.

Even today in the most advanced countries many human activities have unfortunately resulted in the impoverishment of the soil and the ugliness of nature. Humanity as a whole has not yet emerged from its primitive barbarism. Taking into account the kind of cultures, varieties of climate, diversity of customs and national characteristics, the process of deterioration takes different aspects among different people. Arabs, Spaniards and American-Spaniards cut down trees and let the land dry and turn yellow in the sun; Italians and Germans mutilate shamelessly what trees are left and give them an appearance of stakes and brooms; the French divide their terrain into innumerable plots producing different crops which from a distance appear a multicoloured drapery on the land. In the United States the terrain is cut geometrically, all equally oriented and uniformed, despite the undulations and the projections of the surface. Finally, the owners of land, from the small holders to big landowners, surround their properties with defence walls and trenches as if they are threatened fortresses. Even the Irish, the poorest of all, fence their small gardens full of weeds with a high rampart of earth. In how many European countries, travelling for hours, can the glance of the artist rest with satisfaction?

Yet, a few trees and a little bit of taste in the arrangement of plants are sufficient for the beauty to reappear in the middle of this degraded nature.

And how is Great Nature perceived? Besides mountains such as Gibraltar, Lichtenstein and Feustrelle where, for military purposes, governments spend hundreds of millions to make them ugly, picturesque cliffs and charming beaches in many places are monopolized by greedy owners and speculators who appreciate natural beauty as much as money-changers evaluate an ingot of gold. In easily accessible mountainous places the same madness of appropriation seizes the inhabitants and the landscape is cut into squares and sold to the highest bidder; each natural curiosity: a crag, grotto, cascade, cleft of a glacier, everything including the sound of the echo can become private property. Contractors lease cascades, surround them by barricades to prevent the traveller who does not pay from enjoying the tumult of the waters, then, by dint of advertising, they transform into solid cash the light which dances in the shattered drops and the breath of the wind through the swirls of the spray.

This corruption of taste which has damaged the most beautiful landscape and whose origin is rooted in ignorance and vanity is henceforth condemned.

Man who loves the earth knows that the issue is to preserve it, also to increase its beauty and to give back what has been taken from it by sheer brutal exploitation. Aware that his own interest is blended with the interests of the others, he repairs the damages committed by his predecessors and he helps the earth, rather than brutally assaulting it, and works for the beautification as well as betterment of his environment. He knows, not only as an agriculturalist and industrialist, to make better use of the products and the forces of the globe but he also learns, as an artist, to give to the land that surrounds him more charm, grace and majesty; he knows to realize the landscapes suggested by the painters. Becoming 'the consciousness of the earth" man assumes, by the virtue of it, a responsibility to be in harmony with the surrounding nature.

The organic harmony of human pre-history -- where people had been organically linked to their immediate eco-regional surroundings had been defiled and perverted by Roman Imperialism and later by monarchism, capitalism and state. Forests had been destroyed and deserts created in their place; huge cities created in ecologically delicate and marginal areas; and traditions which had melded each human grouping to the ecological region lost forever in the genocide of colonial-state-imperialism.

Despite the somewhat negative account of Humankind's relationship expressed above, Reclus was never one to stress the

destructive aspects of the human/planet relationship. There had in the history of human social development been alternative paths of evolution -- towards that of the eco-regionally integrated and self-governing city -- which although impeded by Imperialism was still readily observable in the rural areas of Southern Europe. In a fascinating article entitled "The Evolution of Cities" (Contemporary review, 1895), Reclus, starting with the example of ancient Athens attempts to picture an alternative, eco-regionally integrated vision of human-city life which in comparison to the destructiveness and brutality of state-imperialism offered an account of how the self-governing city -- a natural product of the human species -- could with the elimination of centralized government - once again come to peaceably co-exist in harmony with itself and its surrounding ecological regions:

Never was the normal and spontaneous birth of cities more strikingly illustrated than in the Greek era, when Athens, Megara, Sicyon sprang up at the foot of their hills like flowers in the shade of the olive trees. The whole country - the fatherland of the citizen - was contained within a narrow space. From the heights of its acropolis he could follow with his eye the limits of the collective domain, now along the line of the sea-shore, traced by the while selvage of the waves, then across the distant blue of wooded hills, and past ravines and gorges to the crests of the shining rocks. The son of the soil could name every brooklet, every clump of trees, every little house in sight. He knew every family that sheltered under those thatched roofs, every spot made memorable by the exploits of his national heroes, or by the fallen thunderbolts of his gods. The peasants, on their part, regarded the city as peculiarly their own. They knew the beaten paths that had grown to be its streets, the broad roads and squares that still bore the names of the trees that used to grow there; they could remember playing round the springs which now mirrored the statues of the nymphs. High on the summit of the protecting hill rose the temple of the sculptured deity whom they invoked in hours of public danger, and behind its ramparts they all took refuge when the enemy was in possession of the open country. Nowhere did any other soil beget a patriotism of such intensity, a life of each so bound up with the prosperity of all. The political organism was as simple, as sharply defined, as one and indivisible, as that of the individual himself.

Far more complex to begin with was the commercial city of the Middle Ages, which lived by its industries or its foreign trade, and which was often surrounded only by a little belt of gardens. It saw around it in disturbing proximity the fortresses of its feudal friends or adversaries, clasping the wretched hovels of the villages between their feet, like eagles

planting their talons in their prey. In this medieval society the antagonism between town and country sprang up as the result of foreign conquest; reduced to mere serfdom under the baron, the labourer - a fixture of the soil, in the insulting language of the law - was flung like a weapon against the towns, by no will of his own; whether as workman or as armed retainer, he was forced into opposition again the borough with its rising industrial class.

Of all European countries, Sicily is the one in which the pristine harmony between town and country has most nearly survived. The open country is uninhabited except by day, during the hours of field-labour. There are no villages. In the evening labourers and herdsmen return to the city with their flocks; peasants in the daytime, they become citizens at night. There is no sweeter or more touching sight than that of the processions of toilers returning to the towns at the moment when the sun sinks behind the mountains, casting up the vast shadow of the earth against the eastern horizon. The unequal groups follow each other at intervals up the ascending road -- for, with the view to security, the towns are almost always perched on the summit of some cliff, where their white walls can be seen for ten leagues round. Families and friends join each other for the climb, and the children and the dogs run with joyous cries from group to group. The cattle pause from time to time to crop a bit of choice herbage by the roadside. The young girls sit astride on the beasts, while the lads help them over the difficult places, and sing and laugh and sometimes whisper softly with them.

But it is not only in Sicily -- the Sicily of Theocritus -- that one meets these gracious evening groups. Round the whole of the Mediterranean coast, from Asia Minor to Andalusia, the antique customs are partially retained, or at least have left their traces. All the little fortified towns that line the shores of Italy and Provence belong to the same type of miniature republic, the nightly resort of all the peasants of the agricultural outskirts.

Despite the somewhat romantic, pre-industrial and backward looking nature of the above quoted description of free-city life -- Reclus in advocating that the autonomous and eco-regionally integrated city as representing the primary unit of a future world-social-anarchist order -- completely rejected the notion that small-scale experimental communities, of which his fellow Frenchman, Charles Fourier had dreamt, provided anything approaching an adequate solution to the problems of human co-existence. Reclus who had rather half-heartedly attempted to create a self-sufficient, small-scale 'experimental' community in the virgin forests of South America in his youth later came to regard such ventures with disgust.

More importantly, Reclus was an active participant in the Paris Commune -- which developed from the spontaneous uprisings in Paris as well as other major cities in France during 1871. A popular movement whose fundamental aim was to create, by revolutionary means a rejuvenated French Republic freed from the centralized control of the Paris Bureaucracy and based upon a federation of autonomous and self-sufficient regions. Rather than looking backwards, Reclus' vision of a future world social-anarchist order represents a modern, scientifically informed and truly global conception of social-ecological harmony -- appealing to humankind to build their cities and industries in accordance with the natural and regional bio-geography of the Earth and work in unity towards a global federation of ecological regions.

Apart from social-revolutionary anarchism, Reclus foresaw that many and varied social and environmental influences would in the 20th century cause humankind to make a fundamental reassessment of its relationship to nature and singled out the effects of travel, education, technology and moral progress as being particularly important in this respect.

Nowadays, the intellectual emancipation that science provides us with, the spread of the love of freedom, the feeling of solidarity which penetrates us often without our knowledge and our understanding that the earth belongs to all, have particularly enlarged our horizons. At the same time travelling reveals more and more the beauty of the earth and the harmony of its forces. For some years now there appears to be an earnest feeling of love that binds men, of both science and arts, to nature. Travellers swarm in all countries that are of easy access and are remarkable for the beauty of their sites and the charm of their climates. Many painters, designers, cameramen traverse the world from the shore of Yang-Tse-Kiang to the rivers of the Amazon. They study the various aspects of the earth, the sea and the forest and reveal to us all the magnificence of the planet we live on and, by most intimate associations with nature and by artistic works due to these travellings, all cultured men come to realize the different features and physiognomy of the various countries of the world. Less numerous than the artists, but more useful in their work of exploration, are the scholars who have turned to nomadic life and for whom the earth is their laboratory. It was when travelling from the Andes to Altai that Humbold composed his admirable Tables of Nature, as he himself said: 'to those who for the love of liberty can tear themselves from the tempestuous waves of life.'

Henceforth, thanks to travelling, it will be the planet which will enable the tastes of its inhabitants and will provide an understanding of what is truly beautiful. Those who traverse the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Himalaya or only high cliffs along the oceans; those who visit the virgin forest or contemplate volcanic craters, learn by these magnificent pictures to grasp the true meaning of the beauty of less striking landscapes and may learn that if they have the power to modify such landscapes, to touch them respectfully should they do so. It is, therefore, with joy that we greet these generous passions which lead many men and, may we say, the best to travel in virgin forests, sea shores, mountain gorges and to visit many regions of the world where nature has preserved its primordial beauty. One knows that unless one is to risk intellectual and moral belittlement one must counter-balance at all cost, by keeping in sight the great stages of the earth, the vulgarity of the many ugly and mediocre things which narrow-minded spirits see as evidence of modern civilization. It is necessary that the direct study of nature and examination of its phenomena become one of the basic elements of education for all men of integrity: It is also necessary to develop in each individual the skill and physical strength to enable him to climb the summits with joy, to look at the abysses without fear and to preserve in all his being that equilibrium of forces without which he will never be able to perceive the most beautiful sites other than through the veil of sadness and melancholy. Modern man has to combine in his person all the virtues of those who have preceded him on the earth without giving up the immense privileges which civilization has conferred upon him. He should no longer lose any part of his ancient force and no longer let himself be bypassed by any savage in vigour, skill and understanding of natural phenomena.

In the great times of the Greek Republics the Hellenics aimed at making heroes of their children through grace, strength and courage; equally modern society, by fostering vigorous traits in its younger generations, by leading them back to nature and putting them in touch with it can regenerate the race itself and save modern society from decadence.
This worthy education will develop an awareness of nature and all its greatness. One is corrupted by routine and servitude, it is by knowledge and freedom that man will be regenerated.[7]

Apart from travel and education, Reclus, like many of his 19th century contemporaries regarded science and technological change as an antidote to dogma, superstition, hunger and need and was much more willing to enthusiastically endorse developments in technology than perhaps he might have been, had he been living today -- believing that the intelligent and ecologically informed use of science and technology could produce harmony, beauty and

abundance for all. But, warns Reclus, this cannot come about unless humanity embraces the principles of anarchism and creates a global federation of free peoples:

> Science, which is slowly transforming the planet into a boundless body working ceaselessly for the benefit of humanity by its winds, currents, water vapour, electric power such as dreamt by the poets of all ages. However, if science shows us a future image of a transfigured world it is not only science which can accomplish such a great work. To the progress of knowledge ought to correspond the moral progress. So long as men fight to remove hereditary boundaries and fictitious frontiers among people; so long as the nutritive soil is reddened by the blood of crazy wretches who fight ruthlessly for a strip of territory either for the sake of pretended honour or from pure rage as did the barbarians of old days; so long as the hungry search fruitlessly for their daily bread and spiritual food - the earth will never be the paradise already glimpsed by the visionary searcher. The features of the planet will never be in complete harmony if people are not basically united in a concert with justice and peace. To become truly beautiful the "Beneficient Mother" waits for her children to embrace one another and finally build the great federation of free people.

And, indeed, Reclus' life & works testify that his desire to see global environmental and social harmony was no idle rhetoric. He lived for the best half of his life on the proceeds of his 19 volume Universal Geography, which embraces all places and peoples of the world and in his twilight years squandered his last few cents in a singularly unsuccessful attempt to construct an absolutely enormous scale model of the Earth at the Paris Exposition of 1900 (the Eifel Tower was built instead).

Peter Kropotkin   (1842-1921)

Perhaps the most intellectually gifted of the Russian Nihilists was a professional geographer by the name of Peter Kropotkin, a close personal friend of Reclus, whose pioneering explorations of remote parts of North Eastern Asia gained him considerable fame within international geographical circles at a comparatively young age. Kropotkin although influenced by Fourier and the agrarian idealism of his fellow Nihilists did not regard the small commune or peasant village as representing the basis from which a new social-ecological order might emerge, choosing rather, to gain his inspiration from the free-city communes of early medieval Europe --

devoting many pages in his most famous and influential book, Mutual Aid (London, Hienman 1900) to a fundamental reassessment of this important and much neglected era of European history. The basis of the French Revolution, Kropotkin maintained, was the result of the periodic urge of the mass of the ordinary people to recover self-administration and civic vitality lost to them in the decline of the free medieval city. Revolutionary history the result of a recurring conflict between two mutually hostile and widely differing forms of social organization; the artificial, externally or centrally imposed authority of the feudal lord, military state or empire and the natural, autonomous and internally self-regulating city-region.

Although never losing his faith in the social-ecological possibilities of a technologically regenerated rural society based upon regional federations of self-governing peasant communes, Kropotkin did not consider that the small and isolated communes of which Fourier had dreamt provided anything near an adequate vision of a stateless and ecologically integrated social order capable of solving the problems of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Kropotkin, like Reclus, as well as many other socialists of his time was deeply influenced by the Paris Commune of 1871. The communes of the new social-anarchist and ecological order, at which the commune had glimpsed, would not be small and isolated communities, rather they would be large, autonomous and self-sustaining agro-industrial agglomerations the largest of which might reach the size of Paris. The nation-states of Europe being replaced by a loose-knit federation of smaller territories consisting of the independent city-commune and its surrounding ecological regions. Paralleling this process "labour" and "interest-related" associations would develop to manage "inter communal services", and cater for those intellectual and artistic needs that would remain unfulfilled within the individual commune or region.

Unlike Reclus, who dedicated his whole life to geography, Kropotkin gave up a more than promising career as a professional geographer in order that he might devote his intellectual energies more fully to the anarchist cause. Consequently, unlike Reclus, who wishes to avoid the utopianism of Fourier, Kropotkin was not afraid to make imaginative and quite detailed proposals as to how the self-sufficient, ecologically integrated and self-governing city-region of the future might hope to operate -- and in a number of works, the most notable being The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and

Workshops attempted to outline in a detailed way the economic, social, institutional and ecological basis of the "free-communes" of the approaching world social-anarchist and ecological revolution.

The social-ecological and anarchist revolution was to be one where the large towns and cities would wish to function freely and revolt against external state authority and begin to organize and reconstruct social, industrial and agricultural life in a more regional and ecologically integrated way. The idea of integrating the urban community with industry and agriculture within the context of the naturally defined ecological region is perhaps the most fundamental concept within Kropotkin's social-ecological vision. Just as the introduction of small, locally based industrial workshops and the utilisation of appropriately scaled technology within agriculture could greatly serve to assist rural and village communities to maintain their independence, self-sufficiency and productivity as his fellow Nihilists claimed, Kropotkin like-wise argued that the introduction of modest sized agricultural complexes into urban and sub-urban geography would allow for the more efficient use of locally available organic wastes and enable the city to produce a much greater percentage of its daily food requirements -- thereby reducing the environmental impact of agriculture upon the health of the city's surrounding ecological region and take the strain of the rural population who would no longer be producing simply to meet the basic food requirements of the big city. Agricultural production was thus to be integrated into urban life creating a more balanced urb-agrarian environment. Social and environmental stability was dependant upon a holistic approach in which the city/country divide although by no means eliminated would no longer remain alienated and opposed from one another. This integration of agricultural production and consumption within the urban environment would not only make the city a greener and more pleasant human environment but would also allow for an urban existence that stood in a substantially more harmonious relationship with nature's biological and evolutionary tendencies.

"The large towns, as well as the villages, must undertake to till the soil. We must return to what biology calls the integration of functions...the taking up of it as a whole -- this is the course followed throughout nature".[9]

Kropotkin rejected "(American) extensive" farming methods which merely served to exploit and exhaust the soil in the interests of short-term gain and instead extolled the virtues of ecological or organic agriculture and the "intensive" or market-garden approach to agricultural production. He was particularly impressed by the techniques of the market gardeners of Paris, Troyes & Rouen and the peasant farmers of Jersey, Gurnsey and the Scilly Isles who had developed systems of vegetable and fruit cultivation which were for their time some of the most ecologically integrated, efficient and technologically advanced forms of agro-industrial production available.

The Paris gardeners for example, if Kropotkin's figures are to be believed, on very small plots within the limits of the city to grow a substantial percentage of Paris's daily fresh vegetable requirements. Horse manure from the streets of Paris was collected and taken by barge to the outskirts of Paris where it was composted with other organic materials to produce a balanced organic growing medium. Crops were grown on raised beds in frames, greenhouse or under cloches and warmed through the cold Paris winters by undersoil heating, steam pipes and artificial light. The power for such technologies being provided by appropriately scaled steam generators, which would, Kropotkin hoped. eventually be powered by local, renewable or alternative energy sources such as wind and the sun:

> "A Mouchot of the future will invent a machine to guide the rays of the sun and make them work, so that we shall no longer seek sun-heat stored in coal in the depths of the earth. They will experiment the watering of the soil with cultures of micro-organisms -- a rational idea, conceived but yesterday, which will permit us to give to the soil those little living beings, necessary to feed the rootlets, to decompose and assimilate the component parts of the soil".[10]

Thus Kropotkin envisaged a new form of urbarian life in which each suburb would be able to supply a large percentage of its basic food requirements. A city where even the inhabitants living right at its centre would have their vegetable and low-level energy needs provided by local market gardeners and energy suppliers whose raw materials are supplied by locally available clean energy systems and the organic wastes of the inhabitants themselves via

moderate sized recycling complexes deployed on a suburb by suburb basis.

Just as agriculture was to be introduced into city life, industry, true to the spirit of Fourier, was likewise to be introduced into rural life. Kropotkin was extremely interested in recent technological developments and placed an enormous amount of faith in technologies ability to overcome many of the problems of social existence which still unfortunately haunt us. Indeed Kropotkin's reflections upon the future uses of resources like electricity deeply impressed many of his late 19th century contemporaries. The advancement of technology would soon allow even the smallest village to be supplied with electricity from local sources and thereby benefit from the improved industrial and agricultural methods that science and technology had recently begun to develop. Thus Kropotkin enthusiastically welcomed technological innovation and argued that in a non-centralized communal society the pollution problems associated with large urban concentrations of industry could be avoided. The idea was to fully utilize the benefits of technological progress by rescaling industry to meet the requirements of village and small-town life. The ultimate aim being the diversification and dissipation of industry, ideally resulting in rural self-sufficiency in industry as well as in agriculture; to have "the greatest possible variety of industries gathered in each country, in each separate region, side by side with agriculture". (Preface to *Fields, Factories & workshops*). Although many of the detailed proposals of Kropotkin's social-ecological and anarchist vision were wrong -- the overall orientation and the practical everyday suggestions as to how regional ecological stability and self-sufficiency might be obtained were for their time extremely thought provoking and have since greatly influenced a large number of non-anarchist intellectuals and popular leaders, such as Ghandi or E.F. Schumacher, whose environmentalism undoubtedly owes much to the pioneering research of this great anarchic visionary and co-founder of modern environmental-geography.

Part IV.   Anarchism and Ecological Practice in the Russian (1917-21) & Spanish (1936-39) Revolutions

The social-ecological principles historically contained in anarchist thought were put into practice by anarchists in both the

Russian and the Spanish revolutions. In Russia the ruthless land policies of the Bolsheviks who wished to see all the agricultural land under the direct control of the state and farmed by means of large agricultural armies led to the systematic destruction not only of village life and independence but to the complete suppression of the co-operative movement which had played a significant role in preventing famine in the immediate post-revolutionary period and was the basis out of which the truly free federation of agricultural communities of which Fourier and the Russian youth of the 1860's had dreamt may well have become a reality. Those rural areas in which brands of anarchism predominated such as the Ukraine although making limited moves in the direction of creating a rural federation of independent agricultural collectives were too busy fighting both the monarchists and the Marxist-Communists (Bolsheviks) to achieve anything of lasting significance in this direction. Fortunately the same cannot be said of the Spanish Revolution where the ideas of Kropotkin and Reclus had been enthusiastically welcomed by a large section of the rural and urban population and which seemed particularly applicable to the Spanish situation.

"Spain is the only country in the twentieth century where anarchism was adopted extensively as a revolutionary theory and practice. Since the Civil War, many scholars have tried to explain why this particular strain of socialism had such tremendous appeal there. Simplistic explanations which emphasize the isolation or backwardness of Spanish villages, traditions of communalism, and the Spaniard's spontaneous talent for cooperation have proven to be inadequate. Of much greater significance were a deeply rooted federalist tradition which grew in response to centuries of domination by the state and church, and the success of working class organizations in acknowledging the attachment which workers felt to their local areas and the principles of autonomy and self-management. Anarchism in Spain was born out of the tension and contradictions found in nineteenth-century Spanish society; it was also born out of natural human desires for community control.
Prior to 1936, boundaries between villages, districts and provinces were drawn by the Madrid government to discourage regional autonomy. To protect landed interests and the cultural hegemony of Castile, the Madrid government placed a civil guard in every pueblo and neighbourhood, and tried to eliminate all expressions of regional autonomy and peasant communalism, fearing even the middle classes because of its support for regional autonomy. In August 1936, the autonomous government of

Catalonia implemented a new set of territorial demarcations based on an earlier perception study by geographers which attempted to get a sense of the 'real' areas with which people identified. Similar territorial alterations were made in other anarchist regions to facilitate inter-communal exchange and to acknowledge the emotional attachments which peasants had to to their local environments".[11]

Although the anarchist movement was allowed to assert its independence for only a short while before being crushed by the combined forces of Authoritarian Communism (Stalin), Facism (Franco backed by Mussolini & Hitler) and the International trade and arms blockade (imposed by the rest of Europe and America) the reconstructive forces of anarchism were nonetheless allowed enough time to initiate and implement a series of wide-ranging measures, in both the cities and the countryside, which were to serve as the practical first-steps in the direction of achieving their goal of a just and ecologically integrated communal society in the absence of centralized state control. The changes that anarchistically orientated rural towns and villages made within agricultural production represented a considerable achievement in terms of both yield and in their use of ecologically and eco-regionally sensitive farming methods.

"The unique development of anarchist thought in Spain was due in part to social geography. The close identification of people with their local regions led anarchists to form decentralized federations of workers and to pose alternative non-authoritarian uses of space. Spanish anarchists posed the idea of a 'region' as the most fundamental cell in economic and social life. Composed of villages, districts, and provinces, each region was to embody cultural and ecological traditions. Spatial organization performed a key role in disseminating anarchist ideas in Spain prior to the Civil War. This was apparent in the federal structure of syndicates and in the efforts of peasants to assert village autonomy. After collectivisation, assemblies met immediately to consider the question of land use. Since top priorities after the harvest were to diversify planting and to bring as much unproductive land under cultivation as possible, irrigation was required. Many collectives set out to build reservoirs, water conduits, bridges and wells in areas which had lacked water since the thirteenth century. A desire to increase self-sufficiency, decrease the seasonality of labour and maintain access to crops cut off by the war also led rural collectives to diversify production and cultivate formerly vacant land. Large numbers of animals were added to herds, and linkages were established between various activities -- for example, fruit-growing, bee-

keeping, and honey production. Reflecting an attachment to place, many collectives exhibited a concern for long-term conservation, rotating crops, planting trees to prevent soil erosion, and establishing laboratories to research new planting techniques and animal waste fertilization. The introduction of many small industries on collectives also required the construction of new barns, storage facilities, mills, and processing centres. Small scattered workshops were often consolidated and their functions integrated within a single new building or a converted church. Because of their interior spaciousness and centrality, churches were also used as distribution warehouses, after tiled floors, water pipes, partitions, and new windows were installed".[12]

Part V.   Towards Global Eco-Regional Federation: Ecological-Anarchism & the 21st Century

The collapse of the Spanish Revolution was quickly followed by the outbreak of World War 11 -- during which all democratic social groupings of whatever persuasion were compelled to fight with all the means at their disposal the dark forces of fascism. The desire for peace at whatever the cost and the relative affluence of Europe in the immediate post-war period led to a significant decline in the influence of anarchism as Europe and America settled into an era of consumerism and the false security of the Cold War period. By the mid 1960s, however, the youth had become bored with a society based simply upon the acquisition of material possessions, and this combined with the rapidly worsening ecological crisis which such consumerism had to a large degree created again began to search for alternative visions of human bio-social existence. The student unrest of the 1960s coincided with the reprinting of many of the classics of anarchist thought - particularly Fourier & Kropotkin -- which had remained out of print for decades -- and the counter-culture's pre-occupation with community life-styles, organic agriculture/horticulture, self sufficiency and alternative energy can undoubtedly be attributed to a rediscovery of the history, theory and practice of communitarian anarchism. Although the counter-cultural movement rapidly lost much of its force and allowed itself to be taken over by capitalist and commercial interests, eventually degenerating into a disgusting orgy of drugs, self-centredness and misplaced religiosity their advocacy and experimentation with alternative and more ecologically integrated communal life-styles has

had a marked impact upon the intellectual and moral development of human social life in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Perhaps the most gifted and articulate spokesperson from this period was the social-ecological thinker Murray Bookchin who produced two outstanding pamphlets; Ecology & Revolutionary Thought and Towards a Liberatory Technology in 1965. Drawing from the works of Fourier, Kropotkin and Reclus as well as other social-ecological thinkers of the Twentieth Century such as E.A. Gutkind, Bookchin convincingly argued that a stateless society consisting of federations of self-sufficient and self-governing communities fully utilizing locally available energy resources and whose agriculture and industry was uniquely tailored to the ecological peculiarities of the region in which each village, town or city was located, was not only socially and politically desirable as Kropotkin, Reclus and the Spanish people had indicated, but that "an anarchist society, far from being a remote ideal, had become a precondition for the practice of ecological principles". That the return to a more decentralized eco-regionally determined social lifestyle and the adoption of locally based 'clean-energy' systems would not only allow for greater levels of direct democracy but had from the viewpoint of planetary survival become absolutely necessary. In the above mentioned pamphlets as well as in his book The Limits of The City, Bookchin argued that the urban sprawl of the modern city and the large-scale state/capitalist agricultural and industrial concerns needed to support such large and concentrated urban populations not only failed to provide an adequate social arena in which our species might successfully engage in meaningful political activity and exercise genuine control over the life of the community in which he/she lives, but also that the large urban agglomerations of the Twentieth Century are absolutely incapable of ensuring the long-term health and stability of the ecological regions in which they are located. Likewise the massive inputs of energy needed to supply such large populations with basic transport, heating and manufactured articles necessitated a dangerous and globally suicidal approach to energy and that the only biologically and ecologically realistic approach was the adoption and utilization of local and alternative clean energy sources. The modern ecological crisis, Bookchin concluded, had taken the anarchist vision of an eco-regionally integrated and independent communal mode of human bio-social existence out of the realm of utopian fancy and placed it firmly in the realm of objective reality.

"Until recently, attempts to resolve the contradictions created by urbanization, centralization, bureaucratic growth and stratification were viewed as a vain counter drift to "progress' -- a counterdrift that could be dismissed as chimerical and reactionary. The anarchist was regarded as a forlorn visionary, a social outcast, filled with nostalgia for the peasant village or the medieval commune. His yearning for a decentralized society and for a humanistic community at one with nature and the needs of the individual -- the spontaneous individual, unfettered by authority -- were viewed as the reactions of a romantic, of a declassed craftsman or an intellectual "misfit". His protest against centralization and stratification seemed all the less persuasive because it was supported primarily by ethical considerations -- by utopian, ostensibly "unrealistic" notions of what man could be, not by what he was. In response to this protest, opponents of anarchist thought -- liberals, rightists and authoritarian "leftists" -- argued that they were the voices of historic reality, that their statist and centralist notions were rooted in the objective, practical world. Time is not very kind to the conflict of ideas. Whatever may have been the validity of libertarian and non-libertarian views a few years ago, historical development has rendered virtually all objections to anarchist thought meaningless today. The modern city and state, the massive coal-steel technology of the Industrial Revolution, the later, more rationalized systems of mass production and assembly line organization of labour, the centralized nation, the state and its bureaucratic apparatus -- all have reached their limits. Whatever progressive or liberatory role they may have possessed, they have now become entirely regressive and oppressive. They are regressive not only because they erode the human spirit and drain the community of all its cohesiveness, solidarity and ethico-cultural standards; they are regressive from an objective standpoint. For they undermine not only the human spirit and the human community but also the viability of the planet and all living things on it. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the anarchist concepts of a balanced community, a face to face democracy, and a decentralized society -- these rich libertarian concepts -- are not only desirable, they are also necessary. They belong not only to the great visions of man's future, they now constitute the preconditions for human survival. The process of social development has carried them out of the ethical, subjective dimension. What was once regarded as impractical and visionary has become eminently practical. And what was once regarded as practical and objective has become eminently impractical and irrelevant..."[13]

Social-Anarchism unlike that of its traditional social, political and philosophical rivals; Marxism and Capitalist Individualism is an idea that has yet to come of age. Anarchism, however, unlike that of

Capitalism and Marxism has always fostered an intense interest in the proper ecological management of the Earth, and its history, theory and practice contains valuable clues and suggestions as to how we might overcome the ecological crisis that presently confronts the human species.

It will have become obvious when reading this brief historical survey of some of anarchism's foremost theoreticians of the past that their exists within social anarchism a rich vein of profound ecological sensibility. As the Marxists as well as the more familiar parliamentary groupings such as the liberals or social-democrats have come to claim in the last couple of years that they are the 'party of environmental consciousness' it has become increasingly necessary to counter such political opportunism and to underline that there has traditionally existed ideas and actions in the theory and practice of social anarchism which are entirely consistent with modern ecological thought and consciousness. Anarchism, unlike any other political and social philosophy, has as a matter of historical fact, for more than two centuries practically and theoretically supported the concepts of the ecological region, alternative energy, green cities and smaller-scale organic farming techniques. The historical linking of anarchism and ecological thought is assuredly no accident -- anarchists simply didn't simply stumble upon the correct practical solutions to our burgeoning ecological crisis. Rather, anarchism's conception of a future and more ecologically integrated social existence was based upon a profound, well-thought-out and deeply-cherished anarchist life - philosophy - containing important ecological insights based upon the rational and scientific observation of natural-life processes."

Footnotes

1.   Charles Fourier, The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier,
      London; Jonathan Cape, 1975, p.291
2.   Charles Fourier, op.cit. p.292-3
3.   Charles Fourier, op.cit. p.270
4.   Isaia Berlin, Introduction to Franco Venturi, Roots of
      Revolution: A History of the Populist & Socialist Movements
      in Nineteenth Century Russia, New York; Gross et &
      Dunlap 1966 pp. vii-xxx, passim
5.   Peter Kropotkin, Obituary of Elisee Reclus, The
      Geographical
      Journal, September 1905, p.388
6.   Elisee Reclus, L'Homme et la Terre, quoted on page 342 of
      Kropotkin's obituary of Reclus cited above.
7.   From the final chapter of La Terre (2 Vols)
      Vol II, Paris Hachette, 1869. Translated by J Granchaoff,
      Red and Black (Quaama NSW) No 20
8.   Reclus, "From the final chapter of La Terre (2 Vols)
      Vol II, Paris Hachette, 1869. Translated by J Granchaoff,
      Red and Black (Quaama NSW) No 20
9.   Peter Kropotkin The Conquest of Bread, 1913 popular
      edition, London; Chapman & Hall, p.99
10.   Peter Kropotkin, op.cit., p.294
11.   Myrna Margulies Breitbart Anarchist Decentralism
      in Rural Spain, 1936-1939: The Integration of Community
      & Environment. Antipode: A Radical Journal of
      Geography, Vol. 10/11, 1979 pp. 83-98, passim
12   Same as 11.
13.   Murray Bookchin. Post-Scarcity Anarchism London: 1974
      pp. 68-9.