

organic radicals

challenging the system to its core

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A compendium of 91 Green-Anarchist thinkers

René Oudeweg (editor)

Paradosis

Organical Radicals

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Table of Contents

1 Ivan Aguéli.....	7
2 Miguel Amorós.....	17
3 Mikhail Bakunin.....	20
4 John Ball.....	26
5 Judi Bari.....	30
6 Adolf Bastian.....	34
7 Sharon Beder.....	36
8 Walter Benjamin.....	39
9 Georges Bernanos.....	45
10 Joseph Beuys.....	48
11 Hildegard von Bingen.....	53
12 William Blake.....	56
13 Ernst Bloch.....	72
14 Martin Buber.....	75
15 Joseph Campbell.....	79
16 Fritjof Capra.....	82
17 Edward Carpenter.....	87
18 Chuang Tzu.....	92
19 Voltairine de Cleyre.....	96
20 Ananda Coomaraswamy.....	99
21 Paul Cudeneç.....	107
22 Guy Debord.....	114
23 Hans Driesch.....	120
24 Françoise d'Eaubonne.....	126
25 Jacques Ellul.....	129
26 Alexis Escudero.....	135
27 Frantz Fanon.....	141
28 Silvia Federici.....	147
29 Mohandas Gandhi.....	154
30 Renaud Garcia.....	159
31 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.....	166
32 Emma Goldman.....	169
33 Kurt Goldstein.....	176
34 Otto Gross.....	179
35 René Guénon.....	190
36 Georg Hegel.....	196
37 Hermann Hesse.....	204
38 Friedrich Hölderlin.....	208
39 Aldous Huxley.....	212
40 Karl Jaspers.....	220
41 Richard Jefferies.....	225
42 Derrick Jensen.....	231
43 Carl Jung.....	239
44 Ynestra King.....	244
45 Leopold Kohr.....	247
46 Peter Kropotkin.....	251

47 Satish Kumar.....	257
48 Bharatan Kumarappa.....	261
49 Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa.....	267
50 Gustav Landauer.....	271
51 Georges Lapierre.....	278
52 Michael Löwy.....	285
53 Eugène Marais.....	290
54 Herbert Marcuse.....	296
55 Peter Marshall.....	301
56 Carolyn Merchant.....	304
57 Henry Miller.....	308
58 Constantin von Monakow.....	317
59 Cory Morningstar.....	323
60 William Morris.....	330
61 Thomas Müntzer.....	339
62 Seyyed Hossein Nasr.....	342
63 Ngugi wa Thiong'o.....	349
64 Novalis.....	353
65 George Orwell.....	359
66 Paracelsus.....	369
67 Kit Pedler.....	375
68 Fredy Perlman.....	381
69 Plotinus.....	394
70 Val Plumwood.....	400
71 John Cowper Powys.....	405
72 Ranchor Prime.....	415
73 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.....	420
74 Herbert Read.....	430
75 Rudolf Rocker.....	437
76 Theodore Roszak.....	444
77 John Ruskin.....	453
78 Henry Salt.....	462
79 Friedrich Schelling.....	467
80 Ernst Friedrich Schumacher.....	471
81 Frithjof Schuon.....	479
82 Jaime Semprun.....	484
83 Charlene Spretnak.....	491
84 Rabindranath Tagore.....	499
85 Henry David Thoreau.....	502
86 Leo Tolstoy.....	512
87 Ferdinand Tönnies.....	522
88 Alan Watts.....	527
89 Max Wertheimer.....	534
90 Gerrard Winstanley.....	540
91 John Zerzan.....	547

1 Ivan Aguéli

Ivan Aguéli (1869-1917), also known as Abdul-Hâdi, was a Sufi anarchist and post-impressionist artist who moved from Stockholm to Paris in the 1890s.



He has been identified as being in the same ideological current as organic radical thinkers Leo Tolstoy and Paul

Cudeneuc (1) and played a crucial part in launching the whole perennialist/Traditionalist movement associated with René Guénon.

Writes Mark Sedgwick: “His personal impact on Guénon was major, as it was at his hands that Guénon converted to Islam and became Abd al-Wahid”. (2)

Aguéli’s articles and translations featured in Guénon’s reviews *La Gnose* (1911-1912) and *Le Voile d’Isis*, later known as *Etudes traditionnelles* (1933-1946) and thus helped shape the movement’s evolution.

Indeed, leading French Traditionalist and Sufi Michel Vâlsan (1911–74) noted in 1953 that the whole Traditionalist movement was in some ways the fulfillment of Aguéli’s original vision. (3)

So what was this vision? To start with, Aguéli was, of course an anarchist. He wrote in 1893: “It is a beautiful phenomenon, anarchism. It is for certain the most beautiful in our filthy time. Imagine a sunrise and a sunset at the same time”. (4)

By this time he had already visited the Anarchist Club in London and reportedly met Peter Kropotkin. (5)

His association with anarchists in Paris – he shared accommodation with Charles Chatel (1868–97), the editor of the periodical *L’En Dehors* and then of the *Revue Anarchiste* – led to him being arrested and held in prison in 1894 before being narrowly acquitted of wrongdoing in a jury trial. (6)

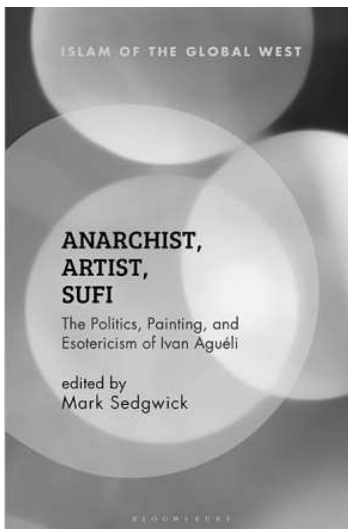


Robin Waterfield describes how he used his time behind bars to “study Hebrew and Arabic besides reading such writers as Fabre d’Olivet, Dionysius the Areopagite, Villiers, L’Isle Adam and, not surprisingly, his compatriot Swedenborg”. (7)

Along with his lover Marie Huot, described by Sedgwick as “an anarchist, a vegetarian and an animal rights activist”, (8) Aguéli achieved some kind of notoriety in the French capital and in 1900 shot and wounded a matador in a protest against the proposed introduction of Spanish-style bullfighting to France. (9)

In the French capital, Aguéli became known for his extravagant behavior. “Quick tempered and given to making lengthy speeches on

unpopular subjects such as the excellences of anarchism, he frequently wore a turban or Arab dress”, (10) says Sedgwick.



While living in Cairo, he was in contact with members of the “vibrant” (11) Egyptian anarchist movement.

Meir Hatina describes how his outlook embraced individual freedom, equality for all without discrimination, public education, social justice, empathy for the weak and political defiance of state structures of oppression.

“In his perception, a moral society based on mutual aid and mass education was a *sine qua non* in an age where the universal moral compass became indifferent and fatalist. In line with anarchist thinking, Aguéli also ruled out militarism and wars, and preached universal brotherhood”. (12)

Aguéli was strongly opposed to imperialism: its centralization of power and exploitation represented the exact opposite of his anarchist ideals.

In Cairo he worked with Enrico Insabato (who later turned out to be an agent of the Italian state sent to infiltrate the anarchist movement!) on an “unusual, half-political, half-theological periodical” (13) in Italian, Arabic and sometimes Turkish, called *Il Convito* and/or *Al-Nadi*.

This review, says Paul-André Claudel, “developed a very critical opinion of Western exploitation”, (14) mainly singling out France and Britain, but also Germany, Austria, Russia and Spain (though not Italy!).

When the global empire of “development” destroys human community in the name of “progress”, it simultaneously brands all those who oppose such destruction as “reactionary” obstacles to the inclusive and sustainable modernity which it is generously spreading across the world.



But the radical Aguéli “was deeply involved in the struggle for Arab cultures to retain their uniqueness in their encounter with the modern European ideas that were quickly gaining entry with colonialism”, (15) as Viveca Wessel explains.

Moreover, he and his comrades saw with complete clarity the way that so-called “progress” was used as a propaganda device to justify the worldwide expansion of private wealth and power at the expense of people everywhere.

They declared in *Il Convito*: “We are against the Europeanization of Muslim countries: the system has given bad results and we consider so-called ‘progress’ as a huge fraud that we must unmask. It is nothing but stupid and useless vandalism: it means the destruction of harmonies and of sentimental and architectural orders that we want to preserve at all costs”. (16)

The aim here was “to encourage a return to a more traditional Islamic identity, which was considered under threat by the West,” writes Claudel, (17) invoking “a form of ideological traditionalism, far from any ‘modern’ and ‘liberal’ model’.” (18)



The universalism that attracted Aguéli to Islam also led him to place his adopted religion within a broader context – a central theme of the perennialist/Traditionalist outlook which he helped create,

He wrote in 1911: “Islam has many points of comparison and contact with most other systems of belief or of social organization. It is neither a mixed nor a new religion.

“The Prophet expressly states that he has invented nothing whatsoever as far as dogma or religious law is concerned. He has only restored the ancient and primeval faith.

“That is why there are so many similarities between Taoism and Islam. This assertion is not mine, but one that has been made by famous Muslim and Chinese authors”. (19)

In defending Islam from Western hostility in 1904, Aguéli deployed the term “Islamophobia” – possibly inventing the word. (20)

But at the same time he defended Sufism from modern reformers within Islam who, says Sedgwick, “tended to dismiss it as superstitious and obscurantist”. (21)

Seyyed Hossein Nasr later depicted Sufism as the “heart of Islam” (22) and for Aguéli the heart was the centre of “universal intelligence”. (23)



This belief in the belonging of the individual to a universal entity has led to some misunderstanding about the compatibility of Islam and anarchism.

Aguéli wrote: “The word *Islam* is an infinitive of the causative verb *aslama*, to give, deliver, hand over. There is an ellipsis: *li-llahi* (to God) is understood; *al-Islamu li-llahi* therefore means: to

hand oneself over to Allah, that is to say, to obediently and consciously follow one’s destiny”. (24)

At first glance, there seems to be a clash here between the anarchist belief in individual freedom and the Islamic imperative to hand oneself over to Allah.

But when one grasps that Aguéli equates Allah with the individual’s own destiny, the apparent contradiction evaporates.

“Everyone carries his destiny within himself”, (25) he stresses. “The order consists of following one’s destiny *obediently and consciously*, which means to live, to live one’s entire life, which is that of all lives, that is to say, to live the lives of all beings...

“The more the life of self identifies with the life of non-self, the more intense living becomes. The fusion of self into non-self takes place through the more or less ritual, conscious, or voluntary gift.

“It is easy to understand that the *art of giving* is the principal arcanum of the Great Work. The secret of this art consists in absolute disinterestedness, in the perfect purity of the spirit in the act, i.e., of the intention; in the complete absence of all hope of return, of any sort of recompense, even in the world to come”. (26)



Far from being at odds with his anarchism, this statement reflects the anarchist conviction that true individuality lies in finding the strength to surpass mere individualism for greater ends.

The “giving” of which Aguéli writes is nothing other than the selflessness, the desire to give one’s life to “the cause”, which gave a quasi-religious feel to historical anarchism, even when its adherents were avowed atheists.

It is a question of rising up from the low ego-bound condition of need and fear encouraged by the modern system and boldly accessing a spiritual potential which that same system assures us does not exist.

“The identity of self and non-self is the Great Truth, just as the realization of this identity is the Great Work”, (27) writes Aguéli.

He explains that there are two types of reality: “The first is reality as it appears to ordinary people, meaning people in possession of their five senses and their combinations according to the laws of mathematics and elementary logic. The second reality is an awareness of eternity. In the tangible world, the one corresponds to quantity, the other to quality”. (28)

Aguéli’s role as an artist is as deeply entwined with his Sufism, his anarchism and his Traditionalism as those three aspects of his life are entwined with each other.

Essayists have described how his “aesthetic sensitivity toward nature, landscapes, animals, and of course human beings” and to the contrasting ugliness of modern European “civilization” (29) led him to understand that “what is beautiful relates to what is true, good, and ordered”. (30)

There is an obvious parallel here with the anti-industrialist aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelites in Britain, which is explored [here](#).

William Morris and his fellow artists regarded light in art as a representation of beauty, reality, nature, goodness and purity – qualities which all went hand in hand, according to their holistic philosophy.

This theme was later taken up by Ananda Coomaraswamy, who explained, in his study of the medieval theory of beauty, how the form, beauty, goodness and truth of a thing are seen as deeply connected, almost synonymous. (31)

Art was the product of an inner universal light and the individual artist was the channel through which this light passed and made itself visible to us.



Aguéli, enthusing in 1911 about what he terms “pure art”, writes: “I have seen works by Picasso wherein rays of light have crystallized into a mosaic of precious cut stones and enormous diamonds of extraordinary transparency”. (32)

In a work of art, “the antithesis of line and color finds its immediate resolution in light”, he writes.

“One need only consider a drawing of the old masters: despite the monochrome or the black and white it always gives us the impression of color. Their paintings, though blackened or faded by the passage of time, always appear lit by a sun created by God specifically for each one of them... an impression of luminosity that gives a work of art its life and magic”. (33)

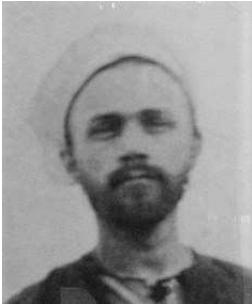
Art, for Aguéli, can offer a glimpse of “motionless time” or “the permanent presence of the extra-temporal and undying self” and the best kind “impresses itself directly, without any intermediary, through an internal *material sensing* of the beating pulse of life itself”. (34)

These reflections, which obviously informed his own art, were very much drawn from his study of the Sufi philosophy of light.

Simon Sorgenfrei notes: “Light as metaphor for divine power and illumination has a long standing in Islamic tradition (as it does in many other religious traditions)”. (35)

Aguéli ended up being expelled from Egypt in 1916 by the British colonial authorities, who regarded him as a threat to their imperialist activities in the First World War. (36) This hostile move led to his flight to Barcelona, where he died, penniless and under a train, the following year.

There is an Aguéli museum in his home town of Sala in Sweden.



1. Anthony T. Fiscella, 'Kill the Audience: Ivan Aguéli's Universal Utopia of Anarchism and Islam', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi: The Politics, Painting, and Esotericism of Ivan Aguéli*, edited by Mark Sedgwick (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 93.
2. Mark Sedgwick, 'The Significance of Ivan Aguéli for the Traditionalist Movement', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 176.
3. Michel Vâlsan, "L'islam et la fonction de René Guénon," *Études traditionnelles* 305 (January 1953): pp. 44-6, cit. Sedgwick, 'The Significance of Ivan Aguéli for the Traditionalist Movement', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 165.
4. Ivan Aguéli, 'Letter from Paris' (1893), *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 192.
5. Viveca Wessel, 'Ivan Aguéli's Life and Work', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 22.
6. Wessel, p. 24.
7. Robin Waterfield, *René Guénon and The Future of the West: The life and writings of a 20th-century metaphysician* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1987), p. 40.
8. Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 60.
9. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 61.
10. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, pp. 62-63.
11. Meir Hatina, 'Ivan Aguéli's Humanist Vision: Islam, Sufism, and Universalism', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 146.
12. *Ibid.*

13. Paul-André Claudel, 'Ivan Aguéli's Second Period in Egypt, 1902-9: The Intellectual Spheres Around Il Convito/Al-Nadi, Anarchist, Artist, Sufi, p. 102.
14. Claudel, pp. 107-08.
15. Viveca Wessel, 'Ivan Aguéli's Life and Work', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 26.
16. *Il Convito*, no. 19 (1904), cit. Alessandra Marchi, 'Sufi Teachings for Pro-Islamic Politics: Ivan Aguéli and Il Convito', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 120.
17. Claudel, pp. 112-13.
18. Claudel, p. 112.
19. Abdul-Hâdi/Ivan Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam' (1911), *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 230.
20. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'The Enemies of Islam' (1904), *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 205.
21. Mark Sedgwick, 'Ivan Aguéli: Politics, Painting and Esotericism', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 6.
22. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), cit. Hatina, p. 149.
23. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam', p. 225.
24. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam', p. 224.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam', p. 226.
27. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam', p. 228.
28. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Universality in Islam', pp. 221-222.
29. Hatina, p. 143.
30. Simon Sorgenfrei, 'Ivan Aguéli's Monotheistic Landscapes: From Perspectival to Solar Logics', *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 58.
31. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover, 1956).
32. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Pure Art' (1911), *Anarchist, Artist, Sufi*, p. 219.
33. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Pure Art', p. 213.
34. Hâdi/Aguéli, 'Pure Art', p. 212.
35. Sorgenfrei, p. 63.
36. Sedgwick, 'Ivan Aguéli: Politics, Painting and Esotericism', p. 3.

2 Miguel Amorós

“No revolt against domination can really represent the general interest unless it turns itself into a rebellion against technology, a Luddite revolt”

Miguel Amorós (1949-) is an anti-industrial anarchist theorist, close to the situationist movement.



In the 1970s he was involved in setting up anarchist groups such as *Bandera Negra* (Black Flag) and *Tierra Libre* (Free Land). Jailed by the Spanish Franco regime, he then went into exile in France.

Between 1984 et 1992, Amorós was involved, with [Jaime Semprun](#), in producing the post-situationist review *Encyclopédie des Nuisances* and became known for combining full-on revolutionary anarchism with anti-industrialism.

In an article entitled ‘Where Are We Now?’, inspired by the essay of the same name by [William Morris](#), he wrote: “The most basic task ahead of us is to bring as many people as possible together around the conviction that the system has got to be destroyed”. (1)

He added: “Technology is an instrument and a weapon because it benefits those who know best how to use it and how to be used by it. The bourgeoisie have used machines and the ‘scientific’ organisation of work against the proletariat”. (2)



“No revolt against domination can really represent the general interest unless it turns itself into a rebellion against technology, a Luddite revolt”. (3)

Amorós mused on the disastrous own-goal scored by the 19th century anti-

capitalist movement when it decided that industrial development offered the best route to liberation.

He wrote: “Contrary to what Marx and Engels claim, the workers’ movement condemned itself to political and social immaturity when it abandoned Utopian socialism and chose science and progress (bourgeois science and bourgeois progress) instead of community and individual flowering”. (4)

In the essay ‘Elementary Foundations of the Anti-Industrialist Critique’, he insisted that “factories, machines and bureaucracies are the real pillars of capitalist oppression”. (5)

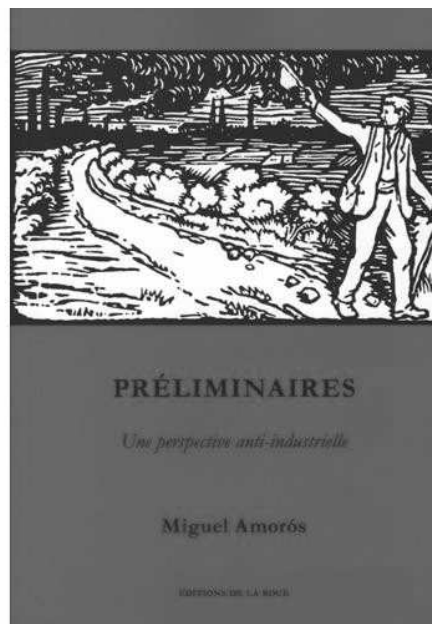
He added: “Our critique of science, technology and the industrial system is a critique of progress. And in the same way it is a critique of the ideologies of science and progress, not least the workerist ideology, in both reformist and revolutionary guise, which is based on taking over, in the name of the proletariat, the bourgeois industrial system and its technology”. (6)

In the article ‘We Anti-Industrialists’ he wrote that in the previous phase of capitalist domination people had worked so that they could consume, whereas in the current phase we had to constantly consume so that work existed. The anti-development struggle was based on the negation of both work and consumption, in a bid to break this vicious cycle, he explained. (7)

Rather than abandon the traditional anarchist class struggle in order to embrace an anti-industrial perspective, Amorós has often stressed that they are one and the same fight.

“The anti-industrial critique does not deny the class struggle, it preserves and surpasses it and, moreover, class struggle cannot exist in today’s world other than in the form of anti-industrial struggle”, he wrote in his ‘Elementary Foundations of the Anti-Industrial Critique’. (8)

In this essay, he also made it clear that humankind will know no happiness and no future unless we can destroy the prison of industrial capitalism, writing: “An existence designed by technocrats according to industrial norms is, in effect, a life of



slavery... (9) The struggle against capital is not simply a struggle for a free life, but a struggle for survival". (10)



1. Miguel Amorós, 'Où en-sommes nous?', *Préliminaires: Une perspective anti-industrielle* (Villsavary: Éditions de la Roue, 2015), p. 22.
2. Amorós, 'Où en-sommes nous?', *Préliminaires*, p. 12.
3. Amorós, 'Où en-sommes nous?', *Préliminaires*, p. 19.
4. Amorós, 'Où en-sommes nous?', *Préliminaires*, p. 20.
5. Amorós, 'Fondements élémentaires de la critique anti-industrielle', *Préliminaires*, p. 60.
6. Amorós, 'Fondements élémentaires de la critique anti-industrielle', *Préliminaires*, pp. 60-61.
7. Amorós, 'Nous, les anti-industriels', *Préliminaires*, pp. 55-56.
8. Amorós, 'Fondements élémentaires de la critique anti-industrielle', *Préliminaires*, p. 59.
9. Amorós, 'Fondements élémentaires de la critique anti-industrielle', *Préliminaires*, p. 60.
10. Amorós, 'Fondements élémentaires de la critique anti-industrielle', *Préliminaires*, p. 61.

3 Mikhail Bakunin

“We must first of all purify our atmosphere and transform completely the surroundings in which we live”

Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) was a charismatic anarchist pioneer, a tempestuous man of action who spotted, very early on, the authoritarian implications of Marx’s socialism and helped form the dissenting faction within the First International that became the anarchist movement.



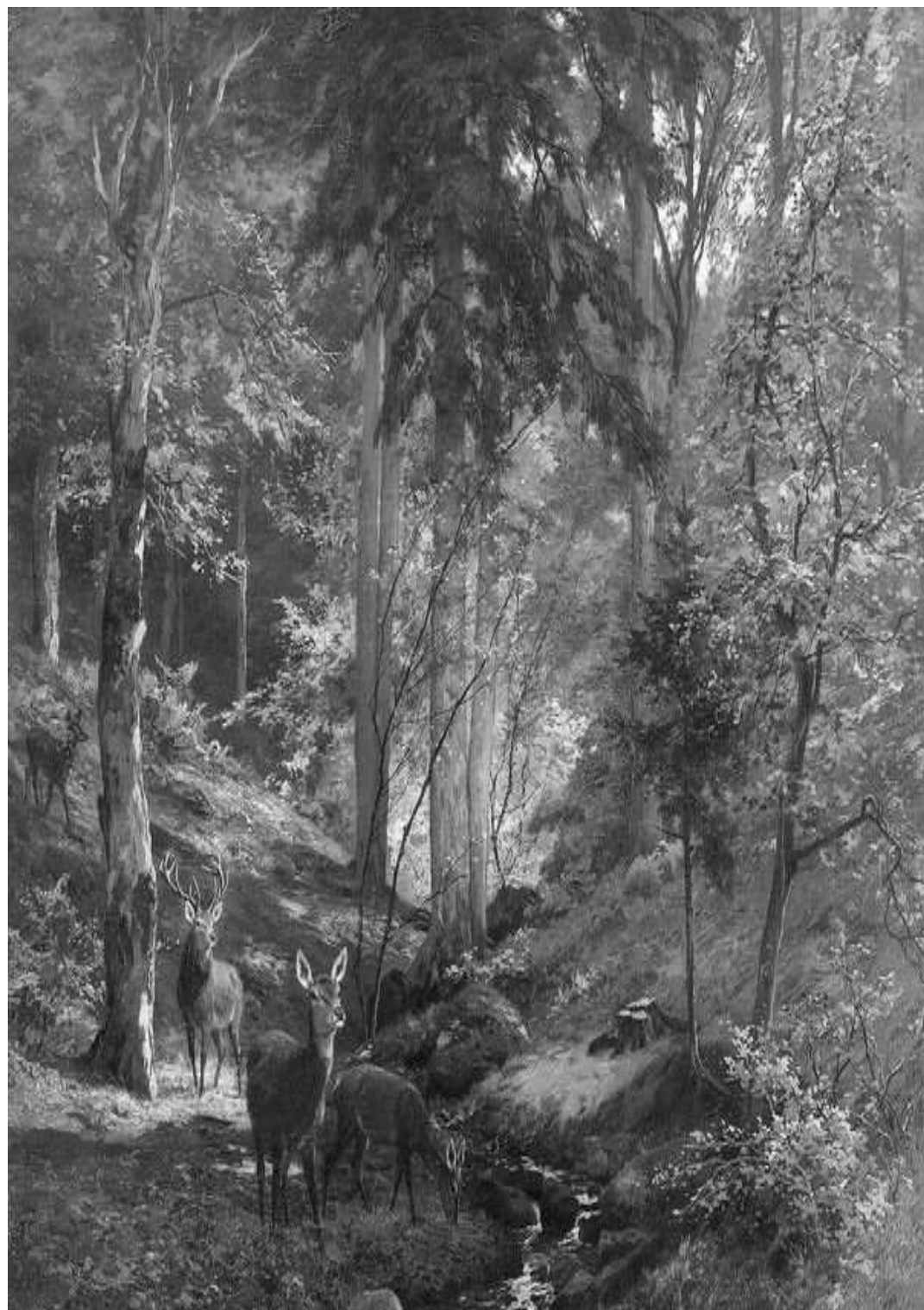
He was a romantic revolutionary, whose sense of freedom rejected the state as “nothing else but the negation of humanity” (1) and yet went far beyond mere individualism.

Bakunin was repulsed by the sterility of the flat economic theories of Marx and his comrades, complaining in 1871 that they “want to see all human history, in the most idealistic manifestations of the collective as well as the individual life of humanity, in all the intellectual, moral, religious, metaphysical, scientific, artistic, political, juridical, and social developments which have been produced in the past and continue to be produced in the present, nothing but the reflections or the necessary after-effects of the development of economic facts”. (2)

For Bakunin, the desire for freedom, the will to revolt, was something innate within the human spirit and he accused the Marxists of ignoring a number of “natural traits”. These included “the intensity of the instinct of revolt, and by the same token, of liberty, with which it is endowed or which it has conserved”.

He added: “This instinct is a fact which is completely primordial and animal; one finds it in different degrees in every living being, and the energy, the vital power of each is to be measured by its intensity”. (3)

Bakunin attended lectures by the great nature-philosopher Friedrich Schelling and, although he later developed his own ideas in other directions, the influence remains clear.



For instance, in 'Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism' he wrote: "Nature, notwithstanding the inexhaustible wealth and variety of beings of which it is constituted, does not by any means present chaos, but instead a magnificently organized world wherein every part is logically correlated to all the other parts". (4)

Elsewhere he declared that natural laws were the only kind that he was prepared to bow to: "Yes, we are unconditionally the slaves of these laws. But in such slavery there is no humiliation, or rather it is not slavery at all. For slavery presupposes the existence of an external master, a legislator standing above those whom he commands, while those laws are not extrinsic in relation to us: they are inherent in us, they constitute our nature, our whole being, physically, intellectually and morally.

"And it is only through those laws that we live, breathe, act, think and will. Without them we would be nothing, we simply would not exist". (5)

Bakunin expanded on his radical organic vision in the essay 'Philosophical Considerations': "Whatever exists, all the beings which constitute the undefined totality of the Universe, all things existing in the world, whatever their particular nature may be in respect to quality or quantity – the most diverse and the most similar things, great or small, close together or far apart – necessarily and unconsciously exercise upon one another, whether directly or indirectly, perpetual action and reaction.

"All this boundless multitude of particular actions and reactions, combined in one general movement, produces and constitutes what we call Life, Solidarity, Universal Causality, Nature. Call it, if you find it amusing, God, the Absolute – it really does not matter – provided you do not attribute to the word God a meaning different from the one we have just established: the universal, natural, necessary, and real, but in no way predetermined, preconceived, or foreknown combination of the infinity of particular actions and reactions which all things having real existence incessantly exercise upon one another. Thus defined, this Universal Solidarity, Nature viewed as an infinite universe, is imposed upon our mind as a rational necessity". (6)



For him, our belonging to nature and the Universe was not a negation of individual freedom but its fulfilment. He called for a liberty consisting of the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers latent in each person, “liberty that recognizes no restrictions other than those determined by the laws of our own individual nature, which cannot properly be regarded as restrictions since these laws are not imposed by any outside legislator beside or above us, but are immanent and inherent, forming the very basis of our material, intellectual and moral being”. (7)

Bakunin never imagined that the liberation of humankind would be easy or achieved by using the mechanisms provided by the capitalist system itself. On the subject of voting, he commented: “Men once believed that the establishment of universal suffrage would guarantee the freedom of the people. That, alas, was a great illusion.” (8)

Reforming current society, fighting for little changes here and there, would achieve nothing while the overall tyranny remained, he insisted. Revolution was needed to sweep away the whole rotten edifice.

“We must first of all purify our atmosphere and transform completely the surroundings in which we live, for they corrupt our instincts and our wills, they constrict our hearts and our intelligences”, (8) he wrote.

“There will be a qualitative transformation, a new living, life-giving revelation, a new heaven and a new earth, a young and mighty world in which all our present dissonances will be resolved into a harmonious whole.

“Let us put our trust in the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unsearchable and eternally creative source of all life. The urge to destroy is also a creative urge”. (9)



1. Mikhail Bakunin, ‘The Bear of Berne and the Bear of St Petersburg’, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism*, ed. by G.P. Maximoff, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964) p. 140.
2. Mikhail Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, trans. by K.J. Kenafick, (London: Freedom Press, 1990) p. 21.
3. Bakunin, *Marxism, Freedom and the State*, p. 50.
4. Mikhail Bakunin, ‘Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism’, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, p. 55.
5. Mikhail Bakunin, ‘The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution’, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, p. 239.
6. Mikhail Bakunin, ‘Philosophical Considerations’, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, p. 53.
7. Mikhail Bakunin, ‘La commune de Paris et la notion de l’État’, cit. Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, ed. by Barry Pateman (Edinburgh, Oakland and West Virginia: AK Press, 2005), p. 122.
8. Mikhail Bakunin, *Oeuvres*, Vol II, 1907, *The Anarchist Reader*, ed. George Woodcock, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1986) p. 108.

8. Mikhail Bakunin, 'Appeal to the Slavs', cit. George Woodcock, *Anarchism*, (London: Penguin, 1979) p. 144.
9. Mikhail Bakunin, 'Reaction in Germany', cit. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 139.

4 John Ball



“When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?”

John Ball (c. 1340-1381) was a wandering radical preacher, a “hedgerow priest”, who came to the fore in the medieval Peasants’ Revolt in England.

He was thrown out of his job as a priest in Colchester in 1366 and started travelling around medieval England, spreading the word of revolt. He was thrown in jail on several occasions.

In 1381, when 100,000 rebels marched into London, capturing towns and castles on their way, they freed him from prison.

Ball preached to the crowds at Blackheath and it is here that he asked the famous rhetorical question: “When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?”

George Woodcock identifies Ball as one of the figures of the English and German peasant uprisings who first voiced “the kind of social criticism that was to end in anarchism”. (1)

The fragment of his speech which was preserved for posterity by French chronicler Jean Froissart “attacks both property and authority and implies a link between them that anticipates the arguments developed by the nineteenth-century anarchists”, adds Woodcock. (2)

Ball said: "Things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until all goods are held in common, and until there will be neither serfs not gentlemen, and we shall be equal.



"For what reason have they, whom we call lords, got the best of us? How did they deserve it? Why do they keep us in bondage? If we all descend from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve, how can they assert or prove that they are more masters than ourselves? Except perhaps that they make us work and produce for them to spend!" (3)

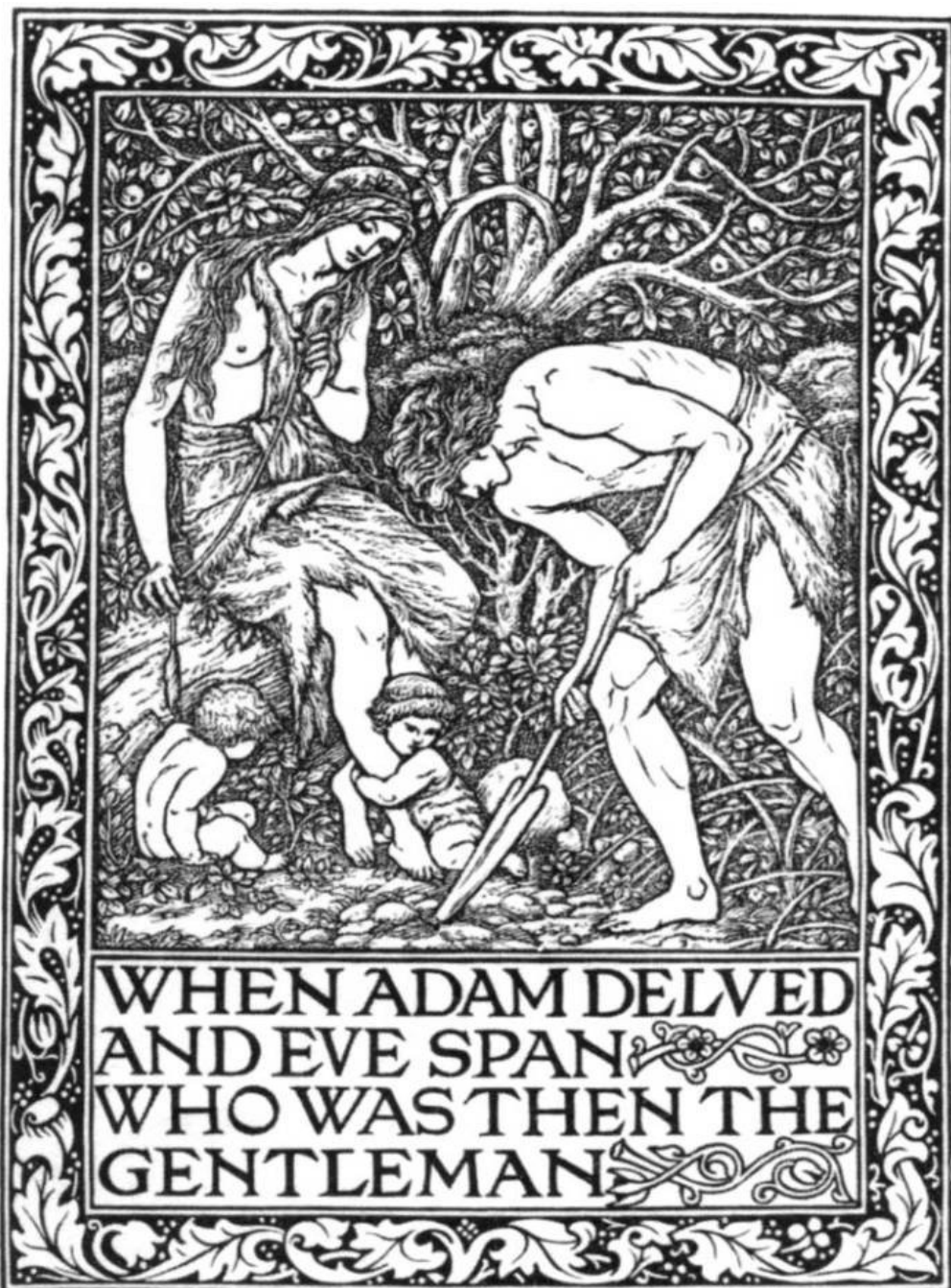
Ball told his medieval contemporaries that their serfdom was unjust and that the time had come when they could "cast off the yoke they have borne so long and win the

freedom they have always yearned for". (4)

Ball's radicalism was very much inspired by the dream of a Golden Age, the idea of a natural, organic, egalitarian society which had been stolen from the people.

Talking about the weeds ("tares") in the Bible that had almost choked the good grain, he declared that the tares were the great lords, the judges and the lawyers. They all had to go, so that the people could all enjoy equal freedom, rank, and power, and share all things in common. (5)

When the authorities had crushed the revolt, Ball was tried and executed in the presence of Richard II.



WHEN ADAM DELVED
AND EVE SPAN
WHO WAS THEN THE
GENTLEMAN

Ball has been an inspirational figure for countless generations of English radicals. He appears, for instance, as a character in an anonymous 1593 play called *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* and would have been familiar to Gerrard Winstanley and the other radicals of the 17th century English Revolution who took up his call for an England where all things were held in common.

In 1888 William Morris published his novel *A Dream of John Ball*, in which a time-traveller updates Ball on the end of feudalism and subsequent rise of industrial capitalism. The radical priest realises that his hopes for a free and egalitarian future have yet to be realised, five hundred years after his death.

In 1999, an article in *Green Anarchist* declared that Ball's message was "not of moderation, not of putting limited demands for financial improvement, but of the revolutionary desire for authenticity and true human community that underlay them, of the courage to fight for ourselves and our visions". (6)



1. George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 38.
2. Ibid.
3. Woodcock, p. 39.
4. Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 91.
5. Ibid.
6. John Connor, 'John Ball – Primitivist: The Peasants' Revolt and the State of Nature', *Green Anarchist* #57-58, Autumn 1999. theanarchistlibrary.org

5 Judi Bari



“There is no such thing as green capitalism... serious ecologists must be revolutionaries”

Judi Bari (1949-1997) was an American feminist and environmental activist, who organized Earth First! campaigns against logging in the ancient redwood forests of Northern California in the 1980s and '90s.

There was a car bombing attempt on her life in 1990.

In ‘The Feminization of Earth First!’ in 1992 she recalled: “I was attracted to Earth First! because they were the only ones willing to put their bodies in front of the bulldozers and chainsaws to save the trees. They were also funny, irreverent, and they played music.

“But it was the philosophy of Earth First! that ultimately won me over. This philosophy, known as biocentrism or deep ecology, states that the Earth is not just here for human consumption.

“All species have a right to exist for their own sake, and humans must learn to live in balance with the needs of nature, instead of trying to mold nature to fit the wants of humans”. (1)



In a 1998 essay, 'Revolutionary Ecology: Biocentrism & Deep Ecology', Bari went into greater depth about her ideological position.

She wrote: "Starting from the very reasonable, but unfortunately revolutionary concept that social practices which threaten the continuation of life on Earth must be changed, we need a theory of revolutionary ecology that will encompass social and biological issues, class struggle, and a recognition of the role of global corporate capitalism in the oppression of peoples and the destruction of nature.

"I believe we already have such a theory. It's called deep

ecology, and it is the core belief of the radical environmental movement". (2)

She stressed that the central importance of nature exists independently of whether humans recognize it or not: "And the failure of modern society to acknowledge this – as we attempt to subordinate all of nature to human use – has led us to the brink of collapse of the earth's life support systems". (3)

Bari shared the core organic radical understanding that basing a political belief system on "ancient native wisdom" is, in the context of today's industrial society, "profoundly revolutionary, challenging the system to its core". (4)

She rejected as absurd the idea that human beings could "own" parts of the earth and explained that because capitalism is based on private property it is "in direct conflict with the natural laws of biocentrism". (5)

Bari was defiantly revolutionary, declaring: "This system cannot be reformed. It is based on the destruction of the earth and the exploitation of the people.



“There is no such thing as green capitalism, and marketing cutesy rainforest products will not bring back the ecosystems that capitalism must destroy to make its profits. This is why I believe that serious ecologists must be revolutionaries”. (6)

She was unimpressed by the Marxist disregard for nature and emphasis on industry. Bari contrasted its centralism and statism with a decentralised left-wing organic model for human societies.

She insisted: “Ecological socialism would mean organizing human societies in a manner that is compatible with the way that nature is organized. And I believe the natural order of the earth is bioregionalism, not statism. Modern industrial society robs us of community with each other and community with the earth”. (7)



Bari saw clearly the links between patriarchal and industrial-capitalist ways of thinking and acting.

She wrote: “Contrary to this masculine system of separation and dominance, eco-feminism seeks a science of nature. And this science of nature is a holistic and interdependent one, where you look at the whole thing and the way that everything interacts, not just the way that it can be when you separate it.

“And also it presupposes that humans are part of nature, and that our fates are inseparable; that we have to live within the earth’s fertility cycles and we can enhance those fertility cycles by our informed interaction”. (8)



1. <http://historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/barifemef.html>
2. <http://www.judibari.org/revolutionary-ecology.html>
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

6 Adolf Bastian

For Bastian, the individual was like the cell in an organism

Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) was an ethnologist who paved the way towards an understanding of the overall universality of humankind, and the role of particularities within that whole.

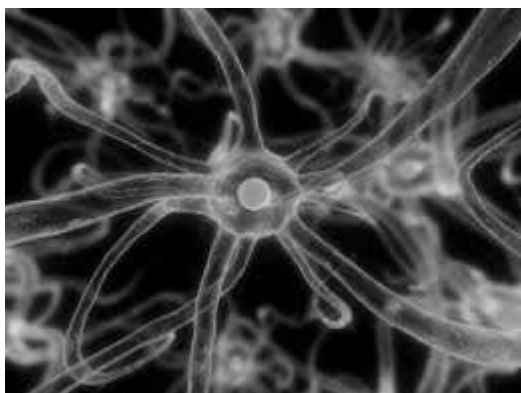
Bastian identified a general psychic unity of humankind as a single species. This was revealed by what he termed elementary ideas (*Elementargedanken*), which are universally shared by all humans.

Laid on top of that foundation was a level of specific cultures and practices (*Völkergedanken* in Bastian's terminology).

The particularities, consisting of folklore, myths and beliefs, emerged within each group by way of cultural evolution, he suggested, adapting to the specific external environment. But they shared the same elementary and universal origin.

Bastian's theory is important for the way that it places particular group traits within a larger framing context of humanity.

This holistic vision does not allow a particular *Volk* to be defined as the principal reality, as in the *völkisch*-nationalist current which fuelled both Nazism and Zionism.



It transcends the dualism of the universal versus the particular by understanding the organic interconnection between different levels of collective identity.

For Bastian, the individual was like the cell in an organism, a social group which has its own “societal soul” (*Gesellschaftsseele*).

His thinking influenced [Carl Jung](#) in his theory of the human collective unconscious and archetypes, anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski and also proponents of comparative mythology such as [Joseph Campbell](#). (1)



1. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (London: Souvenir Press, 2011), p. 32.

7 Sharon Beder



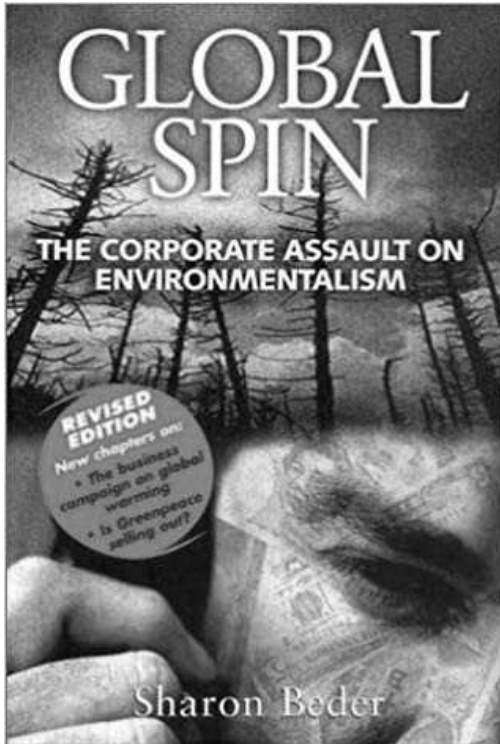
“Corporations seek not only to influence legislation and regulation but also to define the agenda”

Sharon Beder (1956-) is an author and researcher whose work challenges the false version of reality pumped out by the industrial capitalist system.

Beder’s research has exposed corporate PR and its “greenwashing” rhetoric around so-called sustainable development and she has also critiqued various manifestations of neoliberalism such as privatisation and the promotion of market “solutions” to social problems.

In her book *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism*, first published in 1997, Beder cited evidence that – despite the constant propaganda with which they are bombarded – the majority of people in most countries regard the protection of nature as more important than the permanent capitalist demand for economic growth.

“Yet this widespread public concern is not translating into government action because of the activities of large corporations that are seeking to subvert or manipulate the popular will”, (1) she added.



Beder described a corporate subversion of the green movement, using “greenwashing” spin and phoney “astroturf” (rather than grassroots) campaigns, that she regarded as being “a response to the effective exercise of democratic power by citizen and environmental activists two decades earlier”. (2)

She explained: “Corporations clearly have far greater financial resources at their disposal. As pressure groups, they can invest millions of dollars into grassroots organising, polls, lawyers, computer and satellite technology, video news releases, and professional advice to put their case directly to politicians and government officials and to garner public support”. (3)

She identified a covert form of power which is one of the goals of this corporate conspiracy – the ability to set the political agenda and shape perceptions.

“Corporations seek not only to influence legislation and regulation but also to define the agenda – what it is legitimate for government to consider and what can be discussed in the political arena – thereby rendering those groups who have other agendas ineffective”. (4)

Thus, she said, the capitalist system did not try to persuade us that our environment was not important, because it knew that such an attempt would not only fail, but would also expose to us the unpalatable reality of its stance on the issue.

Instead, it set firm limits as to how far we can go in challenging industrialism, in terms of what we believe is not just feasible, but even imaginable.

Wrote Beder: “The aim is not to eliminate debate or prevent controversy, because controversy reinforces the perception of a healthy democracy. What is important is the power to limit the subject, scope and boundaries of the controversy”. (5)

Her other books include *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR* (2000), *Suiting Themselves: How Corporations Drive the Global Agenda* (2006) and

(with Wendy Varney and Richard Gosden) *This Little Kiddy Went to Market: The Corporate Capture of Childhood* (2009).



1. Sharon Beder, *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism* (Totnes: Green Books, 2002), p. 275.
2. Beder, p. 276.
3. Beder, pp. 278-79.
4. Beder, p. 281.
5. Beder, pp. 282-83.

8 Walter Benjamin

“That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art”

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was a philosopher and social critic who was forced to flee his native Germany when the Nazis came to power and died on the Franco-Spanish border at the start of the Second World War.

Benjamin’s position is difficult to tie down, as he was influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, by Marxism, by German idealism and by Jewish mysticism.

Michael Löwy places him broadly within the tradition of “anti-capitalist Romanticism” which he identifies as being particularly influential among German-speaking Jewish intellectuals at the time.



One of Benjamin’s early sources of inspiration was Friedrich Hölderlin (1) and he also studied the work of organic radical thinkers such as Friedrich Schelling, (2) Georg Hegel, (3) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, (4) Gustav Landauer, (5) Martin Buber, (6) and Ernst Bloch, (7) who became a friend.

Gershom Scholem says Benjamin was “a great metaphysician” (8) who was guided by a “deeply-rooted messianic faith” (9) and a concept of myth and tradition “which over the years was going to take on an increasingly mystic hue”. (10)

“He declared that he still didn’t know himself what the aim of philosophy was, given that there was no need to discover the ‘meaning of the world’, since this had been defined by myth, which, for Benjamin, was everything”. (11)

Benjamin was a strong critic of industrialism. He denied, for instance, the authenticity of mass-produced art.



He wrote: "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition". (12)



He challenged the official story of 'progress' with his imagining of the angel of history, as inspired by Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*.

Wrote Benjamin: "His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.

"The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them.

"This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress". (13)

For Benjamin, opposition to industrialism was part and parcel of his opposition to capitalism. His deconstruction of the ideology of progress was not carried out in the name of conservation or of restoration, but in the name of revolution. (14)

He pointed out that, in stark contrast, fascism involved the typically modern combination of technological progress and social regression. (15)



yesterday.

From this radical organic perspective, fascism is clearly revealed to be a counter-revolutionary force protecting the industrial capitalist system.

Benjamin stressed that being inspired by pre-industrial societies, and comparing those societies favourably with our own, does not amount to a simple yearning for

We would never be looking at an impossible *retour* (return) to the past, but to a *détour* via the past to a future of our choice.

Löwy says that Benjamin believed that “revolutionary utopia is reached through the discovery of an ancient, archaic, prehistoric experience”. (16)

In Benjamin’s outlook, says Löwy, “the archaic societies of *Urgeschichte* [the distant past] feature a harmony between man and nature which has been destroyed by ‘progress’ and is in need of reinstatement in the emancipated society of the future”. (17)

As a young man Benjamin was a leading light in the pre-WWI *Jugendbewegung*, (18) the *Wandervögel* often wrongly maligned as “the beginnings of the Hitler Youth”. (19)

Scholem says that he and Benjamin later shared a kind of “theocratic anarchism” (20) which led them, on August 23, 1927, to attend a huge and angry protest in Paris against the impending execution, in Massachusetts, USA, of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.



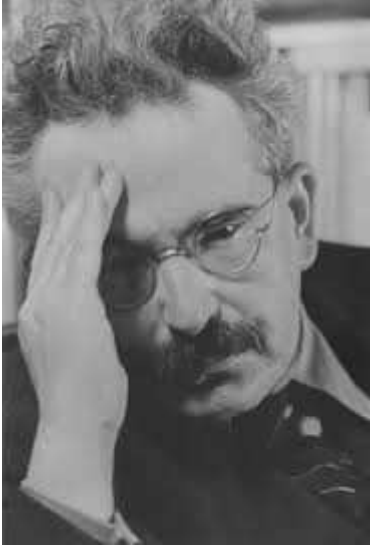
Recalls Scholem: "The police, partly on horseback, charged the protesters. We were caught up in a human maelstrom and, near the Boulevard de Sebastopol, we managed to narrowly avoid the police batons by diving into a side street. Benjamin was very fired up". (21)

Benjamin was drawn to surrealism and then Marxism, under the influence of the dramatist Bertolt Brecht and the Frankfurt School.

But he found himself caught between two ways of thinking: metaphysics on the one hand and socialist materialism on the other.

Scholem writes: "The liquidation of magic in language for which he was calling, in conformity with the materialist theory of language, was blatantly at odds with all his earlier ideas on the subject, which were founded on theological and mystical inspiration". (22)

These poles were never fully resolved and remained a source of philosophical tension in Benjamin's work, lending his writing a unique flavour. Brecht remarked, somewhat disparagingly, that Benjamin was "mystic even in his denunciation of mysticism". (23)



1. Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Histoire d'une amitié*, trans. by Paul Kessler (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1989), p. 28.
2. Scholem, p. 24.
3. Scholem, p. 53.
4. Scholem, p. 117.
5. Scholem, p. 24.
6. Scholem, p. 52.
7. Scholem, p. 123.
8. Scholem, p. 111.
9. Scholem, p. 86.
10. Scholem, pp. 88-89.
11. Scholem, p.53.
12. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) p. 223.
13. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 259-260.
14. Michael Löwy, *Juifs hétérodoxes: Romantisme, messianisme, utopie* (Paris: Éditions de l' éclat; 2010), p. 36.
15. Löwy, *Juifs hétérodoxes*, p. 121.
16. Michael Löwy, 'Walter Benjamin et le surréalisme in Europe', *Revue littéraire mensuelle*, April 1996, p. 83.
17. Michael Löwy, *Rédemption et utopie: le judaïsme libertaire en Europe centrale* (Paris: Éditions du Sandre, 2009), p. 148.
18. Scholem, p. 11
19. <https://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/hj-beginnings.htm>
20. Scholem, p. 130.

21. Scholem, p. 208.

22. Scholem, p. 301.

23. Bertolt Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal*, 1938-1955, cit. Scholem, p. 256.

9 Georges Bernanos



“The Civilization of the Machines is the civilization of quantity opposed to that of quality”

Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) was a French novelist and commentator who strongly criticised the industrial capitalist machine.

After a youthful flirtation with the far-right Action Française, he went on to condemn fascism as “disgustingly monstrous” and was a prominent supporter, from exile in Brazil, of the Free French Forces resisting the Nazi occupation during the Second World War.

From a radical organic perspective, he is significant for his outspoken opposition to the industrial capitalist world and its crushing of the human spirit.

In a 1944 interview Bernanos said: “This world, described stupidly as modern as it were sufficiently justified by the very fact of existing today, has enormous means at its disposal, and notably a propaganda system whose power, efficiency and all-embracing scope simply cannot be compared with anything man has previously known or even imagined.”

(1)



Three years later he penned the essay 'France Against the Robots' ('La France contre les Robots'), in which he declared war on those he described as "the imbeciles". He condemned the machine-civilisation and its technology, declaring: "The Civilization of the Machines is the civilization of quantity opposed to that of quality". (2)

Bernanos warned that the headlong plunge into productivism, consumerism and money-making was threatening humanity and its spiritual well-being.

He wrote: "We can understand nothing about modern civilisation if we don't first accept that it

is a universal conspiracy against all kinds of interior life". (3)

Jacques Allaire nicely summed up Bernanos' analysis of the industrial-commercial malaise: "Having has replaced being. In our modern societies, blinded by the speed with which they can produce, the sense of having has become the one and only sense. Having is even the essence of being". (4)

Inevitably, Bernanos' critique of industrial capitalism led to him being accused of being backward-looking or reactionary. But this was far from the truth and he always insisted that it was not a question of going into reverse gear but of changing the direction in which are moving forward.

He wrote: "The rule of Money is the rule of the Old. In a world which has succumbed to the dictatorship of Profit, anyone who dares to put honour before money is automatically reduced to powerlessness. It is the spirit of youth which is rejected. The youth of the world has a choice to make between two extreme solutions: surrender or revolution". (5)



1. Georges Bernanos, interview with *Diario de Belo Horizonte*, June 1944.
2. Georges Bernanos, 'La France contre les robots', cit. *Aux origines de la décroissance – Cinquante penseurs*, coordonné par Cédric Biagini, David Murray, Pierre Thiesset (Paris: L'Échappée, 2017), p. 28.
3. Bernanos, 'La France contre les robots', cit. *Aux origines de la décroissance*, p. 31.
4. Jacques Allaire, *Aux origines de la décroissance*, p. 30.
5. Bernanos, *La France contre les robots*, cit. *Aux origines de la décroissance*, p. 31.

10 Joseph Beuys



“My sense of form makes me think one ought really to go back to the natural world”

Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) was an influential artist and theorist, who has also been described as an “alchemist” and social visionary. (1)

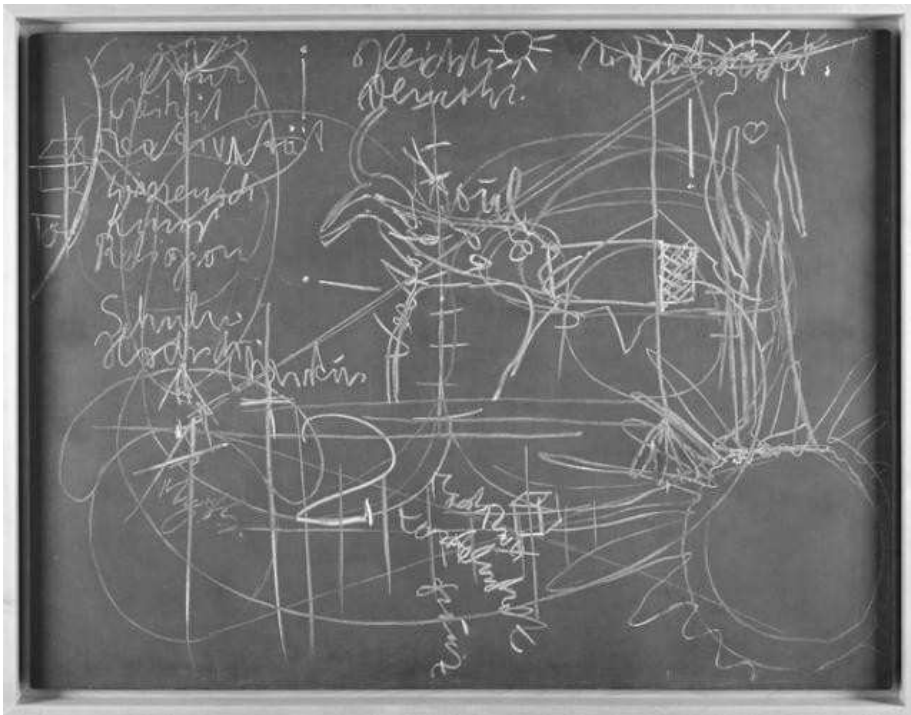
He was a co-founder of the German Green Party and declared that his greatest artworks had been the Free International University, which he also co-founded, and his teaching. One of his best known art projects involved the planting of 7,000 oak trees in Kassel, Hesse.

Beuys’ philosophy was founded on holistic interconnectedness. Shelley Sacks wrote that in his life’s work “we experience a view of holism that does not simply mean putting everything into one pot, but opens up a genuine understanding of the relationship between humans, nature and the cosmos and the interconnections between expanded art practice and our work toward a free, democratic and sustainable future”. (2)

Beuys used the idea of the plant gestalt, the inherent form of a plant (as explored by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe) to also describe the living organism of human community.

This approach, while eminently compatible with anarchism and its organic sensibility (as set out by [Theodore Roszak](#), for instance), represented a break with the mechanistic Marxist-influenced thinking which was unfortunately dominant on the left for much of the 20th century.

Beuys talked of “compensating for the errors in the philosophy or sociology of the last century” and of “balancing the mistaken tendencies in Marx with something that, extending beyond his correct analysis, can lead to truly holistic development of the world”. (3)



In his criticism of modern industrial capitalist society, Beuys explored the ecological idea of a social organism, “a living being that we cannot today perceive with our ordinary senses, without practice”. (4)

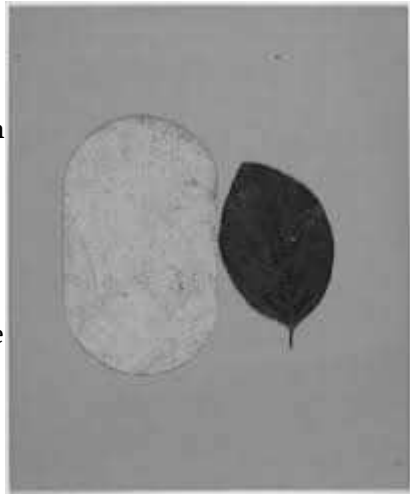
This social organism – in anarchist terms the self-governing community which has no need of hierarchy in order to thrive – is something which we must strive to bring to full completion: “The most beautiful of the beautiful still needs to be attained: the social organism as a living being shaped by its inherent capacity for freedom and as the great achievement of a culture that goes beyond the modern age...” (5)

But today, Beuys said, the social organism was “so ill that it is absolutely high time to subject it to radical treatment, otherwise humanity will go under”. (6)

In order to identify and analyse this illness, we could “compare the contemporary shape and form of the social organism with its archetype” (7) – in other words, with human society in the organic and autonomous health imagined by anarchism.

However, sadly, in current society, people did not ask themselves how human society should be structured and had “no sense or perception of the archetype, that is, of the healthy condition of a social organism as it evolves”. (8)

On the question of where we might find this archetype, Beuys said: “My sense of form makes me think one ought really to go back to the natural world”. (9) Human self-knowledge came from knowledge of the nature of which we were part, he added.



Following the classical anarchist tradition, Beuys saw human freedom as being founded on underlying natural “laws”, warning that “we live in a time in which freedom is very often abused and mistaken for arbitrariness”. (10)

He insisted that *freedom from* also required *freedom to* or *freedom for*. Freedom was not some kind of “relief from responsibility”, he explained: “On the contrary, the concept of freedom burdens human beings with full responsibility... it is human beings who must now act out of their own freedom and responsibility”. (11)

Beuys identified a serious problem in industrial capitalist society as being that “ultimately perception of the interconnectedness, of the whole web of interrelationships, is destroyed”. (12)

Our participation in society was hindered by the hierarchical structures within which we were all imprisoned, he argued: “Even if someone wishes to, he can’t take real responsibility for his actions since everything is, as it were, done from above downwards”. (13)



He was very critical of the idea of economic growth, so central to capitalism, declaring: “The concept of economic growth and the concept of capital and all that goes with it, does not really make the world productive.

“The current system is not about growth – they just call it growth. It is in fact a

process of shrinkage and contraction. Because external growth obviously develops further like a tumour. It is actually a death process... It’s not growth; it’s just additive, cancerous proliferation of certain interests that people can no longer control.” (14)

Beuys echoed the likes of [William Morris](#) and [Ananda Coomaraswamy](#) in seeing the development of modern society as a drift away from the primal qualities of human craftsmanship.

He argued, for instance, that relating to things in an uninhibited and “primary” or “primitive” way could often be the most highly developed expression of culture.

Said Beuys: “One also knows that there are no poorly made objects to be found during the so-called primitive era, the period of early history. Hand-axes or arrowheads, or simple fishing hooks or suchlike – they’re all of very high quality.

“And that is precisely what is lacking in our time. It’s all been spoiled. Now this has a great deal to do with craft. I don’t mean craft as refined ability, using all sorts of machines and highly developed things, but craft as an attitude, as consciousness”. (15)



1. Biographical details, *What is Art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys, ed. with essays by Volker Harlan*, trans. by Matthew Barton and Shelley Sacks (West Hoathly: Clairview, 2014).
2. *What is Art?* p.xi.
3. *What is Art?* p. 10.
4. *What is Art?* p. 22.
5. *What is Art?* p. 75.
6. *What is Art?* p 21.
7. *What is Art?* p. 22.
8. Ibid.
9. *What is Art?* p. 31.
10. *What is Art?* p. 72.
11. *What is Art?* p. 73.
12. *What is Art?* p. 23.
13. *What is Art?* pp. 26-27.
14. *What is Art?* p. 27.
15. *What is Art?* pp. 31-32.

11 Hildegard von Bingen



A “most honoured Greening Force”

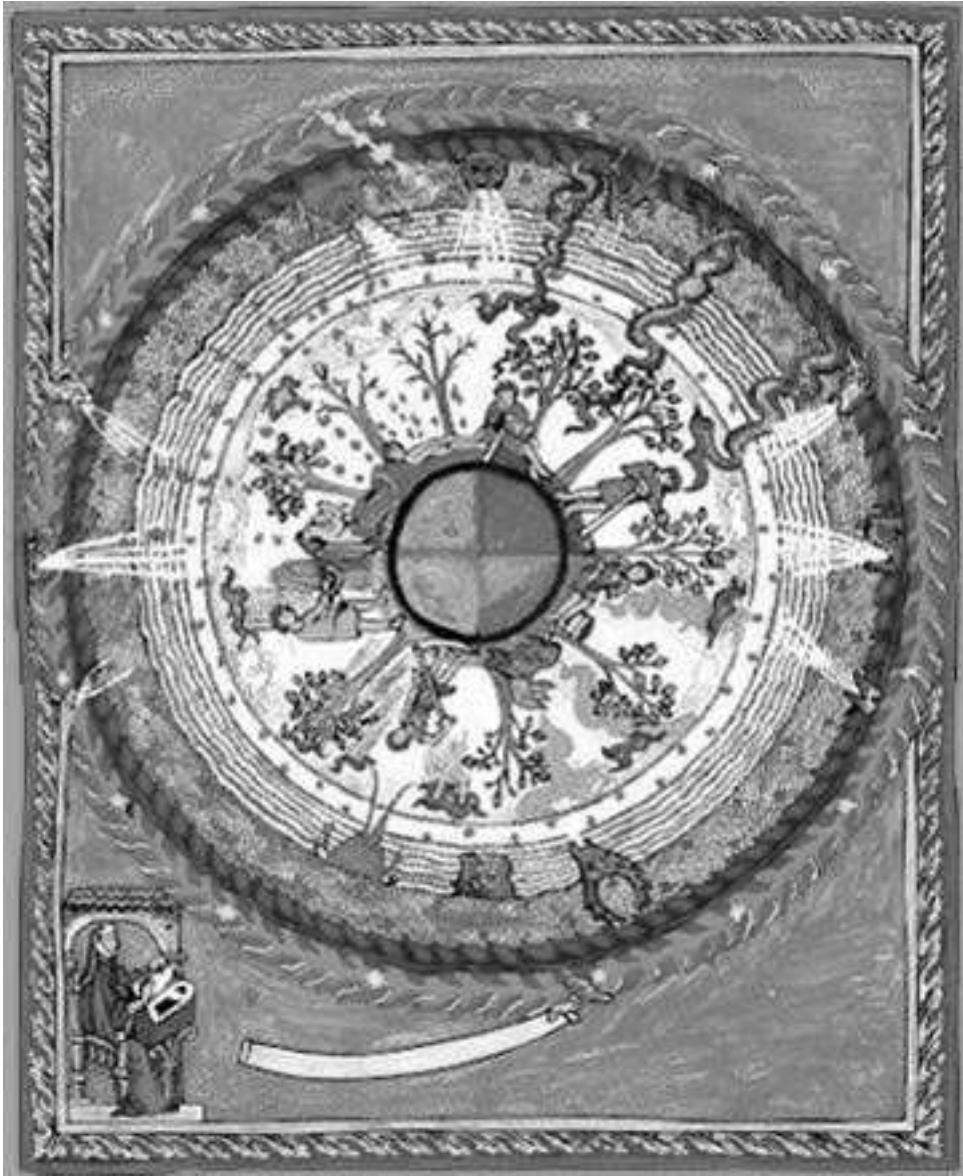
Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) was an abbess, composer, writer and philosopher, who is regarded as the founder of natural history in Germany.

She used the term *viriditas*, which mixes the Latin terms for “green” and “truth”, as a concept of the creative power of life.

This was, she wrote in her book *Causae et Curae*, a “most honoured Greening Force”, which “lights up, in shining serenity, within a wheel that earthly excellence fails to comprehend”.

Von Bingen was inspired by an idea of freshness, vitality, fertility, fecundity, fruitfulness and growth, of nature-given spiritual and physical health.

In contrast to this moist life-force was *ariditas*, the dryness or infection that can arise when the flow of *viriditas* is blocked. (1)



In her writing on the holistic interrelationship between the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe, she focused often on patterns of four – the four elements, the four seasons, the four major winds and so on.

Although this was a traditional understanding, she enhanced it with her own concept of the four humours in the body – blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile.

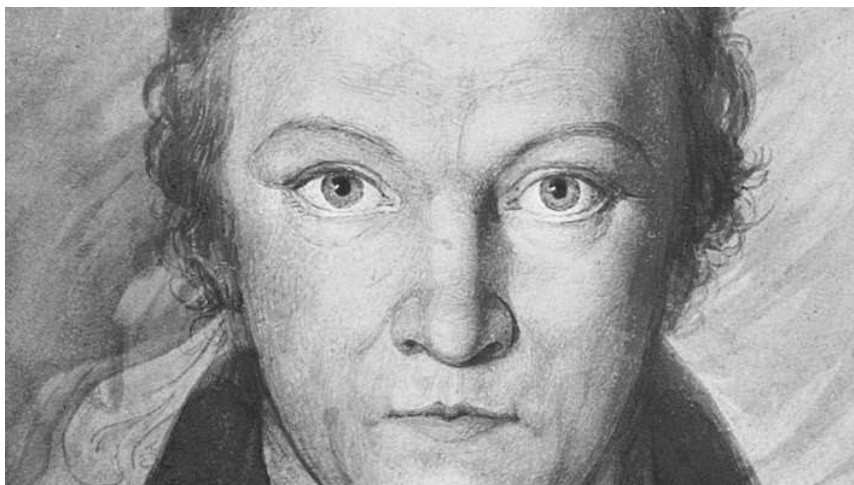
Victoria Sweet has written that von Bingen’s medicine “both reflects and expresses the premodern relationship of humans with the natural world”. (2)

Von Bingen is also known for her midlife awakening, embarking on the most important part of her life at the age of around 50. Carl Jung referenced her in his work on the individuation process.



1. healthyhildegard.com
2. 'Hildegard of Bingen and the Greening of Medieval Medicine', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 73, no 3, 1999.

12 William Blake



“Human Thought is crush’d beneath the iron hand of Power”

The poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827) is today held in high esteem in his native land.

His art is regarded as among the greatest of the period, his poems such as ‘The Tyger’ are widely appreciated and the song ‘Jerusalem’, which uses his words, has become a kind of unofficial English national anthem.

But in his lifetime Blake was an entirely marginal figure, a social, artistic and intellectual misfit who died in poverty and obscurity.

Indeed, he was an outright enemy of the dominant culture and until the end of his days did not “cease from mental fight”, nor did his metaphorical sword sleep in his hand, (1) as he challenged its deepest assumptions.

Blake was very much an opponent of the Industrial Revolution, which already had a firm grip on the England into which he was born.