The Murray Bookchin Reader

Edited by Janet Biehl

‘Murray Bookchin’s books are of crucial importance’
New Scientist
This collection provides an overview of the thought of the foremost social theorist and political philosopher of the libertarian left today. Best known for introducing ecology as a concept relevant to radical political thought in the early 1960s, Murray Bookchin was the first to propose, in the innovative and coherent body of ideas that he has called ‘social ecology’, that a liberatory society would also have to be an ecological one. His writings span five decades and encompass subject matter of remarkable breadth. Bookchin’s writings on revolutionary philosophy, politics and history are far less known than the specific controversies that have surrounded him, but deserve far greater attention.

Despite Bookchin’s critical engagement with both Marxism and anarchism, his political philosophy, known as libertarian municipalism, draws on the best of both for the emancipatory tools to build a democratic, libertarian alternative. His nature philosophy is an organic outlook of generation, development and evolution that grounds human beings in natural evolution yet, contrary to today’s fashionable antihumanism, places them firmly at its summit. Bookchin’s anthropological writings trace the rise of hierarchy and domination out of egalitarian societies, while his historical writings cover important chapters in the European revolutionary tradition.

Consistent throughout Bookchin’s work is a search for ways to replace today’s capitalist society – which disenchants most of humanity for the benefit of the few and is poisoning the natural world – with a more rational and humane alternative. The selections in this reader constitute a sampling from the writings of one of the most pivotal thinkers of our era.

The Murray Bookchin Reader
We must always be on a quest for the new, for the potentialities that ripen with the development of the world and the new visions that unfold with them. An outlook that ceases to look for what is new and potential in the name of "realism" has already lost contact with the present, for the present is always conditioned by the future.

True development is cumulative, not sequential; it is growth, not succession. The new always embodies the present and past, but it does so in new ways and more adequately as the parts of a greater whole.

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The idea for this reader initially came from David Goodway, who, one sunny afternoon in May 1992, sat down with Bookchin, Gideon Kossoff, and myself in an attic in Keighley, West Yorkshire, to draft a table of contents. Although the present book bears only the faintest resemblance to the one we sketched that afternoon, its origins do lie in this meeting. Goodway has my warm thanks for setting the wheels in motion.

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My greatest debt, however, is to Murray Bookchin himself, my companion, who encouraged me to take on this project. Rereading his writings, for this book, has reminded me yet again that it is a privilege to be associated with him.
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1 An Ecological Society


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2 Nature, First and Second


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4 The Legacy of Domination


5 Scarcity and Post-Scarcity

6 Marxism

7 Anarchism
published as “The Spanish Civil War, 1936,” in New Politics 1 (Spring 1986).


8 Libertarian Municipalism
The New Municipal Agenda: This selection comes primarily from Chapter 8 of Urbanization (1987, 1992, 1995), passim; with some interpolations from “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” Green Perspectives, no. 18 (November 1989); “The Meaning of Confederalism,” Green Perspectives, no. 20 (November 1990); and “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview,” Green Perspectives, no. 24 (October 1991). On some occasions, such as while writing Urbanization, Bookchin referred to his political ideas as “confederal municipalism” rather than as “libertarian municipalism.” In this selection, at his request, I have changed “confederal municipalism” to his preferred “libertarian municipalism.”

9 Dialectical Naturalism


10 Reason and History
Introduction

In the aftermath of the cold war, in a world that glorifies markets and commodities, it sometimes seems difficult to remember that generations of people once fought to create a very different kind of world. To many, the aspirations of this grand tradition of socialism often seem archaic today, or utopian in the pejorative sense, the stuff of idle dreams; others, more dismissive, consider socialism to be an inherently coercive system, one whose consignment to the past is well-deserved.

Yet for a century preceding World War I, and for nearly a half century thereafter, various kinds of socialism—statist and libertarian; economic and moral; industrial and communalistic—constituted a powerful mass movement for the transformation of a competitive society into a cooperative one—and for the creation of a generous and humane system in which emancipated human beings could fulfill their creative and rational potentialities. People are ends in their own right, the socialist tradition asserted, not means for one another’s use; and they are substantive beings, with considered opinions and deep feelings, not mass-produced things with artificially induced notions and wants. People can and should throw away the economic shackles that bind them, socialists argued, cast off the fictions and unrealities that mystify them, and plan and construct, deliberately and consciously, a truly enlightened and emancipated society based on freedom and cooperation, reason and solidarity. Material aims would be secondary to ethical concerns, people would have rich, spontaneous social relationships with one another, and they would actively and responsibly participate in making all decisions about their lives, rather than subject themselves to external authoritarian control.

After 1917 a general enthusiasm for the stunning accomplishment of the Bolshevik Revolution pervaded almost all sectors of the international left, so much so that the humanistic ideals of socialism came to be attached to the Communist movement. In the 1930s young American intellectuals growing up under Depression conditions, especially in the vibrant radical political culture of New York City, cut
their teeth on the version of socialism that the Communist movement taught them. Their minds brimming with revolutionary strategies and Marxian dialectics, their hopes and passions spurred by life-endangering battles against a capitalist system that seemed on the brink of collapse, they marshaled all their abilities to achieve the century-old socialist ideal.

Tragically, international Communism defiled that ideal. It committed monstrous abuses in the name of socialism, and when these abuses became too much to bear – the show trials of 1936–8, the betrayal of the Spanish Revolution, and the Hitler–Stalin pact – hopes that the Communist movement could usher in a socialist world were shipwrecked. Many radicals, reeling from these blows, withdrew into private life; others accommodated themselves to the capitalist system in varying degrees, even to the point of supporting the United States in the cold war. Still others, who did remain on the left politically, turned their attention to more limited arenas: aesthetics, or “new class” theory, or Frankfurt School sociology. Meanwhile, outside the academy, what remained of the Marxian left persisted in small groups, defying the prevailing “consensus” in favor of capitalism and accommodation.

Among the young intellectuals who had emerged from the 1930s Communist movement, relatively few responded to its failure by attempting to keep the centuries-old revolutionary tradition alive, by advancing a libertarian alternative to Marxism, one better suited to pursue a humane socialist society in the postwar era. It is a distinction of Murray Bookchin that in these years of disillusion, disenchantment, and retreat, he attempted to create just such an alternative.

Born in January 1921 in New York City to Russian Jewish immigrants, Bookchin was raised under the very shadow of the Russian Revolution, partaking of the excitement that it aroused among his immigrant and working-class neighbors. At the same time, from his earliest years, he imbibed libertarian ideas from his maternal grandmother, who had been a member of the Socialist Revolutionaries, a quasi-anarchistic populist movement, in czarist Russia. In the early 1930s, as the United States plunged deeper into the Depression, he entered the Communist movement’s youth organizations, speaking at streetcorner meetings, participating in rent strikes, and helping to organize the unemployed, even as an adolescent, eventually running the educational program for his branch of the Young Communist League. After breaking with Stalinism – initially, in 1935, because of its class-collaborationist policies (the so-called Popular Front), then conclusively in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War – he turned to Trotskyism and later to libertarian socialism, joining a group surrounding the exiled German Trotskyist Josef Weber in the mid-1940s; his earliest works were published in this group’s periodical, *Contemporary Issues*. 
In the meantime, Bookchin was deeply involved in trade union organizing in northern New Jersey, where he worked for years as a foundryman and an autoworker. (Due to his family’s poverty, he went to work in heavy industry directly after high school.) In whatever factory he worked, he engaged in union activities as a member of the burgeoning and intensely militant Congress of Industrial Organizations, particularly the United Automobile Workers.

During the 1930s, Marxian precepts had seemed to explain conclusively the Great Depression and the turbulent labor insurgency that arose during the decade, seeming to challenge the very foundations of the capitalist system. But Marxist prognoses about the 1940s were glaringly unfulfilled. These predictions had it that World War II, like World War I, would end in proletarian revolutions among the belligerent countries. But the proletariat, far from making a revolution in any Western country under the banner of internationalism, fought out the war under the banner of nationalism. Even the German working class abandoned the class consciousness of its earlier socialist history and fought on behalf of Hitler to the very end. Far from collapsing, capitalism emerged from the war unscathed and strengthened, with more stability than ever before.

The Soviet Union, for its part, was clearly far from a socialist society, let alone a communist one. Far from playing a revolutionary role during the war, it was actively involved in suppressing revolutionary movements in its own national interests. Finally, American industrial workers, far from challenging the capitalist system, were becoming assimilated into it. When a major General Motors strike in 1946 ended with his co-workers placidly accepting company pension plans and unemployment benefits, Bookchin’s disillusionment with the workers’ movement as a uniquely revolutionary force was complete, and his years as a union activist came to an end. The revolutionary tradition, he concluded, would have to dispense with the notion of proletarian hegemony as the compelling force for basic social change. With the consolidation of capitalism on a massive international scale, the idea that conflict between wage labor and capital would bring capitalism to an end had to be called into serious question.

To his credit, Bookchin, faced with these dispiriting conditions, nonetheless refused to relinquish his commitment to revolution. Rather, the revolutionary tradition, he felt, had to explore new possibilities for creating a free cooperative society and reclaim nonauthoritarian socialism in a new form. Anarchism, whose history had long intertwined with that of Marxian socialism, argued that people could manage their own affairs without benefit of a state, and that the object of revolution should be not the seizure of state power but its dissolution. In 1950s America, in the aftermath of the McCarthy period, the left generally – especially the anarchist movement – was small, fragmented,
and seemingly on the wane. Yet anarchism's libertarian ideals—"a stateless, decentralized society, based on the communal ownership of the means of production"—seemed to be the basis, in Bookchin's mind, for a viable revolutionary alternative in the postwar era.

Moving decisively toward this left-libertarian tradition in the middle of the decade, Bookchin tried to free anarchism of its more dated nineteenth-century aspects and recast its honorable principles in contemporary terms. "The future of the anarchist movement will depend upon its ability to apply basic libertarian principles to new historical situations," he wrote in 1964.

. . . Life itself compels the anarchist to concern himself increasingly with the quality of urban life, with the reorganization of society along humanistic lines, with the subcultures created by new, often indefinable strata—students, unemployables, an immense bohemia of intellectuals, and above all a youth which began to gain social awareness with the peace movement and civil rights struggles of the early 1960s.

Even as he embraced the anarchist tradition, however, Bookchin never entirely abandoned Marx's basic ideas. In effect, he drew on the best of both Marxism and anarchism to synthesize a coherent hybrid political philosophy of freedom and cooperation, one that drew on both intellectual rigor and cultural sensibility, analysis and reconstruction. He would call this synthesis social ecology.

Even as Bookchin was moving toward an anarchist outlook, the American economy of the early 1950s was undergoing enormous expansion, with unprecedented economic advances that catapulted even industrial workers into the booming middle class. It was not only military spending that propelled this growth: with government support, science and industry had combined to spawn a wide array of new technologies, suitable for civilian as well as military use. These new technologies, so it was said, seemed poised to cure all social ills of the time, if not engineer an entirely new civilization.

Automobiles, fast becoming a standard consumer item, were promising mobility, suburbs, and jobs—giving plausibility, in the eyes of many Americans, to the slogan, "What's good for GM is good for America." Nuclear power, it was avowed, would meet US energy needs more or less for free; indeed, Lewis Strauss, the former Wall Street investment banker who first chaired the Atomic Energy Commission, predicted that electricity from nuclear power plants would become "too cheap to meter." Miracle grains would feed humanity, and new pharmaceuticals would control formerly intractable diseases. Petrochemicals and petrochemical products—including plastics, food additives, detergents, solvents, and abrasives—would make life comfortable and provide labor-saving convenience for everyone. As for pesticides, as
environmental historian Robert Gottlieb observes, they were "being touted as a kind of miracle product, supported by advertising campaigns ('Better Things for Better Living Through Chemistry'), by government policies designed to increase agricultural productivity, and a media celebration of the wonders of the new technology." Most of the American public welcomed these new technologies, seeming to agree with the director of the US Geological Survey, Thomas Nolan, that the new technological resources were "inexhaustible."³

It was just at this moment of collective anticipation that Bookchin audaciously suggested that an ecological crisis lay on the horizon. "Within recent years," he wrote in a long 1952 essay, "the rise of little known and even unknown infectious diseases, the increase of degenerative illnesses and finally the high incidence of cancer suggests some connection between the growing use of chemicals in food and human diseases."⁴ The chemicals being used in food additives, he insisted in "The Problem of Chemicals in Food," could well be carcinogenic. The new economic and technological boom, despite all its rosy promises, could also have harmful environmental consequences.

Little environmentalist writing existed in the United States in these years, apart from neo-Malthusian tracts that issued dire warnings about overpopulation, like Fairfield Osborn's Our Plundered Planet and William Vogt's The Road to Survival (both published in 1948). Although a conservation movement existed, it worked primarily for the preservation of wilderness areas in national parks and showed little interest in social or political analysis. The existing literature on chemical pollution, for its part, was silent on the driving role that modern capitalism was playing in the development and application of chemicals.

So it was that before most Americans even realized that an environmental crisis was in the offing, Bookchin was telling them it was. Even more striking, he was already probing its sources. "The principal motives for chemicals," he warned, and the "demands imposed upon [farm] land" are "shaped neither by the needs of the public nor by the limits of nature, but by the exigencies of profit and competition."⁵ The use of carcinogenic chemicals was rooted in a profit-oriented society; "profit-minded businessmen" have produced "ecological disturbances . . . throughout the American countryside. For decades, lumber companies and railroads were permitted a free hand in destroying valuable forest lands and wildlife."⁶ Bookchin had not only rooted environmental dislocations in modern capitalism— he had found a new limit to capitalist expansion, one that held the potential to supersede the misery of the working class as a source of fundamental social change: environmental destruction.

Amid the McCarthyite intolerance of all social radicalism in 1952, it required considerable courage to write and publish a radical social analysis of environmental problems. Yet not only did Bookchin write
such an analysis, he advanced, albeit in rudimentary terms, an anarchist solution to the problems he explored, calling for the decentralization of society to countervail the looming ecological crisis, in passages that presage the marriage of anarchism and ecology that he would expound more fully twelve years later:

In decentralization exists a real possibility for developing the best traditions of social life and for solving agricultural and nutritional difficulties that have thus far been delivered to chemistry. Most of the food problems of the world would be solved today by well-balanced and rounded communities, intelligently urbanized, well-equipped with industry and with easy access to the land. . . . The problem has become a social problem — an issue concerning the misuse of industry as a whole.7

For almost half a century, this assertion of the social causes of ecological problems, and the insistence on their solution by a revolutionary decentralization of society have remained consistent in Bookchin’s writings. He elaborated these ideas further in Our Synthetic Environment, a pioneering 1962 work that was published five months before Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring; unlike Carson’s book, Our Synthetic Environment did not limit its focus to pesticides. A comprehensive overview of ecological degradation, it addressed not only the connections between food additives and cancer but the impact of X-radiation, radionuclides from fallout, and the stresses of urban life, giving a social elaboration of what in those days was called “human ecology.”8

The freer political atmosphere of the 1960s allowed Bookchin to express more clearly his revolutionary perspective. His 1964 essay “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” the first manifesto of radical ecology, overtly called for revolutionary change as a solution to the ecological crisis. It advanced a conjunction of anarchism and ecology to create an ecological society that would be humane and free, libertarian and decentralized, mutualistic and cooperative.

In its range and depth, Bookchin’s dialectical synthesis of anarchism and ecology, which he called social ecology, had no equal in the postwar international Left. The first major effort to fuse ecological awareness with the need for fundamental social change, and to link a philosophy of nature with a philosophy of social revolution, it remains the most important such effort to this day.

Social ecology, drawing on multiple domains of knowledge, traces the roots of the ecological crisis to dislocations in society. As Bookchin put it in “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought”: “The imbalances man has produced in the natural world are caused by the imbalances he has produced in the social world.” This inextricable relation between society and ecology remains a pillar of social ecology.
But social ecology has not only a critical dimension but a reconstructive one as well. Since the causes of the ecological crisis are social in nature, we can avert the present danger of ecological disaster only by fundamentally transforming the present society into a rational and ecological one. In this same 1964 article, in “Toward a Liberatory Technology” (written the following year), and in many subsequent works, Bookchin described his version of the truly libertarian socialist society. It would be a decentralized and mutualistic one, free of hierarchy and domination. Town and country would no longer be opposed to each other but would instead be integrated. Social life would be scaled to human dimensions. Politics would be directly democratic at the community level, so that citizens can manage their own social and political affairs on a face-to-face basis, forming confederations to address larger-scale problems. Economic life would be cooperative and communal, and technology would eliminate onerous and tedious labor.

Bookchin would elaborate and refine many aspects of this society—and the means to achieve it—over subsequent decades. But its earliest outlines were sketched as early as 1962 and developed in 1964 and 1965. Here Bookchin also proposed that an ecological society could make use of solar and wind power as sources of energy, replacing fossil fuels. At that time renewable energy sources—solar and wind power—were subjects of some research and experimentation, but they had essentially been abandoned as practical alternatives to fossil and nuclear fuels; nor did the existing environmental literature pay much attention to them. Not only did Bookchin show their relevance to the solution of ecological problems, he stood alone in demonstrating their integral importance to the creation of an ecological society:

To maintain a large city requires immense quantities of coal and petroleum. By contrast, solar, wind, and tidal energy can reach us mainly in small packets; except for spectacular tidal dams, the new devices seldom provide more than a few thousand kilowatt-hours of electricity. . . . To use solar, wind, and tidal power effectively, the megalopolis must be decentralized. A new type of community, carefully tailored to the characteristics and resources of a region, must replace the sprawling urban belts that are emerging today.¹⁰

These renewable sources of energy, in effect, had far-reaching anarchistic as well as ecological implications.

The list of Bookchin’s innovations in ecological politics does not stop here. To take another example—warnings of a greenhouse effect were hardly common in the early 1960s, yet Bookchin issued just such a warning in 1964:

It can be argued on very sound theoretical grounds that this growing blanket of carbon dioxide, by intercepting heat radiated from the earth,
will lead to rising atmospheric temperatures, a more violent circulation of air, more destructive storm patterns, and eventually a melting of the polar ice caps (possibly in two or three centuries), rising sea levels, and the inundation of vast land areas.\footnote{11}

Bookchin underestimated only the time frame – and it is testimony to the enormity of the ecological problem that the damage that he anticipated would take centuries to develop has actually developed in only a matter of decades.

Bookchin spent much of the 1960s criss-crossing the United States and Canada, indefatigably educating the counterculture and New Left about ecology and its revolutionary significance. The first Earth Day in 1970, followed by the publication of *The Limits to Growth* in 1972, signaled the arrival of ecology as a popular issue. But in the following years a less radical, more technocratic approach to ecological issues came to the fore, one that, in Bookchin’s view, represented mere environmental tinkering: instead of proposing to transform society as a whole, it looked for technological solutions to specific environmental problems.

Calling this approach reformistic rather than revolutionary, Bookchin labeled it “environmentalism,” in contradistinction to his more radical “ecology.” Although some histories of the ecological and environmental movements now assert that Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess was the first to distinguish between environmentalism and ecology (in a paper on deep ecology, presented as a lecture in 1972\footnote{12}), Bookchin made this distinction in November 1971, in “Spontaneity and Organization,” anchoring it, as always, in a social and political matrix:

I speak, here, of ecology, not environmentalism. Environmentalism deals with the serviceability of the human habitat, a passive habitat that people use, in short, an assemblage of things called “natural resources” and “urban resources.” Taken by themselves, environmental issues require the use of no greater wisdom than the instrumentalist modes of thought and methods that are used by city planners, engineers, physicians, lawyers – and socialists.

Ecology, by contrast, ... is an outlook that interprets all interdependencies (social and psychological as well as natural) nonhierarchically. Ecology denies that nature can be interpreted from a hierarchical viewpoint. Moreover, it affirms that diversity and spontaneous development are ends in themselves, to be respected in their own right. Formulated in terms of ecology’s “ecosystem approach,” this means that each form of life has a unique place in the balance of nature and its removal from the ecosystem could imperil the stability of the whole.\footnote{13}

Bookchin’s core political program remained far too radical to gain general social acceptance in those decades. But many of his remarkably
prescient insights have by now become commonplaces, not only in ecological thought but in mainstream popular culture, while their originating source has been forgotten or obscured. By advancing these ideas when he did, Bookchin exercised a strong and steady influence on the international development of radical ecological thought.

As significant as Bookchin's prescient insights are, they are only part of what is actually a large theoretical corpus. Over the course of five decades, the ideas of social ecology have grown steadily in richness. Encompassing anthropology and history, politics and social criticism, philosophy and natural science, Bookchin's works evoke the grand tradition of nineteenth-century generalists, who could write knowledgeably on a multiplicity of subjects—a tradition that is, lamentably, fast disappearing in the present age of scholarly specialization and postmodernist fragmentation.

Drawing on anthropology and history, Bookchin explored the libertarian and democratic traditions that could contribute to the creation of an ecological and rational society. A "legacy of freedom," he believes, has run like an undercurrent within Western civilization and in other parts of the world, with certain social virtues and practices that are relevant to the socialist ideal. In its nascent form this legacy appears in the "organic society" of prehistoric Europe, with a constellation of relatively egalitarian social relations. These societies were destroyed by the rise of hierarchy and domination and ultimately by the emergence of states and the capitalist system.

Hierarchy and domination, it should be noted, are key concepts in Bookchin's political work, for although in his view the ecological crisis has stemmed proximately from a capitalist economy, its ultimate roots lie in social hierarchies. The ideology of dominating the natural world, he has long maintained, is an anthropomorphic projection of human social domination onto the natural world. It could only have stemmed historically from the domination of human by human, and not the other way around. During the late 1960s and 1970s Bookchin's anthropological, historical, and political explorations of the "legacy of freedom" and the "legacy of domination," as he called it, percolated through radical social movements—not only the ecology movement but the feminist, communitarian, and anarchist movements as well. The concept of hierarchy in particular, assimilated by the counterculture into conventional wisdom, has become essential to radical thought due largely to Bookchin's insistence on its nature and importance in many lectures in the late 1960s.

Bookchin's ideas have retained an underlying continuity over the decades, and it is precisely by upholding his original principles that he has maintained his stalwart opposition to the existing capitalist and hierarchical system. As could be expected of any writer engaged in
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concrete political activity, his ideas have also changed over time; yet they have done so not to effect a compromise with the existing social order but to sustain a revolutionary position in response to regressive developments both in the larger society and within social movements for change. Often he has initiated intramural debates by objecting to tendencies that he considered out of place in a revolutionary movement, due to their opportunism, their accommodation to the system, or their quietism; his frequently polemical style stems from an earnest attempt to preserve the revolutionary impulse in movements that hold potential for radical social transformation. To his credit, he raised such objections even when the tendencies to which he objected were the more popular ones and when acquiescence would have enhanced his own popularity. Still, even as the key concepts of social ecology remain fundamentally unchanged since the 1960s, the many debates in which he has been engaged have primarily defined and sharpened them. If anything, his ideas have become more sophisticated over time as a result of these debates.

It is typical of Bookchin that his ideas should become honed as a result of practical movement experience. Despite his large body of theoretical writing, he is no mere armchair theorist. Throughout his life he has consistently maintained an active political practice: his union and protest activities in the Depression decade, his libertarian activities of the 1950s and 1960s, his mobilization of opposition to a nuclear power plant proposed for Queens in 1964, his civil rights activities, his participation in endless demonstrations and actions in the 1960s against the Vietnam war and in support of ecology and anarchism, his 1970s involvement in the antinuclear Clamshell Alliance, his efforts to preserve and expand democracy in his adopted state of Vermont, and finally his influence, in the 1980s, on the development of Green movements in the United States and abroad, trying – often unsuccessfully – to keep them on a radical course. Only in his eighth decade have physical infirmities – especially a nearly crippling arthritis – obliged him to withdraw from organized political activity.

Yet withdrawal from active political work has not meant that Bookchin has put down his pen. On the contrary, in an era of reaction, he continues to denounce tendencies that compromise the radicalism of the ecological and anarchist movements, be it a mystical “deep ecology” or an individualistic “lifestyle anarchism,” both of which he sees as personalistic and irrationalistic departures from the social, rational, and democratic eco-anarchism and socialism he has championed for decades. With the emergence of ecological–political tendencies that embraced irrationalism, he emphasized that an ecological society would neither renounce nor denigrate reason, science, and technology. So crucial is this point that he today prefers the phrase “rational society” to other labels for a free society, since a rational society would necessarily be one that is ecological. His commitment to
to "the only reality that makes any sense."

To all his writing, Bookchin brings a passionate hatred of the capitalist social order, expressed in the cadences of six decades of radical oratory. He brings the grim hatred of the grueling toil that he experienced in factories, and the acerbic intensity of one who has looked down the barrel of a gun during 1930s labor protests. At the same time he brings the originality and creativity of a thinker who is largely self-taught, and the love of coherence of one who studied dialectics with Marxists as a youth. He brings to it, in this age of diminished expectations, the outrage of one who consistently chooses morality over realpolitik, and he serves as the lacerating conscience of those who once held revolutionary sentiments but have since abandoned them.

A thorough understanding of his project would require a reading of his most important books. Post-Scarcity Anarchism (1971) contains the two pivotal mid-1960s essays mentioned in this introduction, which encapsulate so many ideas that he later developed more fully and that, in their uncompromising intensity, remain fresh to this day. The Ecology of Freedom (1982) is an anthropological and historical account not only of the rise of hierarchy and domination but of the "legacy of freedom," including the cultural, psychological, and epistemological components of both. Although The Ecology of Freedom has been heralded in some quarters as Bookchin's magnum opus, it has been followed by several books of at least equal importance. The Philosophy of Social Ecology, especially its revised edition (1995), is a collection of five philosophical essays on dialectical naturalism, the nature philosophy that underpins his political and social thought; he himself regards it as his most important work to date. Remaking Society (1989) is a summary overview of his ideas, with emphasis on their anarchist roots. From Urbanization to Cities (which has previously appeared under the titles Urbanization without Cities and The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship) is a wide-ranging exposition of libertarian municipalism, Bookchin's political program, giving much attention to popular democratic institutional forms in European and American history. Re-enchanting Humanity (1995) is his defense of the Enlightenment against a variety of antihumanistic and irrationalistic trends in popular culture today. Finally, his three-volume The Third Revolution (of which the first volume is already in print at the time of writing) traces the history of popular movements within Euro-American revolutions, beginning with the peasant revolts of the fourteenth century and closing with the Spanish Revolution of 1936–7.

The present Reader brings together selections from Bookchin's major writings, organized thematically. Even as I have tried to show the
development of his ideas over time, I have emphasized those works that have stood the test of time and that are most in accordance with his views today, at the expense of works that, generated in the heat of polemic, sometimes verged on one-sidedness. All of the selections are excerpted from larger works, and all have been pruned in some way, be it to achieve conciseness, to eliminate repetition among the selections in this book, or to produce a thematic balance among them. I have very lightly edited a few of the selections, but only where the need for it was distracting. Regrettably, but necessarily for reasons of space, I have had to cut all textual footnotes, retaining only those that cite a specific source. Except for these notes, I have indicated all cuts in the text with ellipsis points. I have provided the sources for all the selections in the listing that appears before this introduction.

Janet Biehl

Notes

2 Ibid., pp. 18, 21.
5 Ibid., pp. 206, 211.
6 Ibid., p. 209.
7 Ibid., p. 240.
10 Ibid., p. 74–5.
11 “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” as it appeared in Anarchy, p. 5. Some of the words from this passage were cut when the essay was republished in Post-Scarcity Anarchism; see p. 60 of that book.