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The Politics of Ecology: Environmentalism and Liberalism in the 1960s

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For most Americans the terms “environmentalist” and “liberal” are more or less synonymous. For many historians the set of ideas called environmentalism and the set of ideas called liberalism are similarly—and for similar reasons—connected. But it is not at all clear why these associations make sense. The environmental historian Roderick Nash provides one explanation for the pairing of environmentalism and liberalism in *The Rights of Nature*, where he argues that “one can regard environmental ethics as marking out the farthest limits of American liberalism.”¹ For Nash, the association is a direct one: environmentalism and liberalism are related because the one is an expression of the other. Liberalism, in Nash’s view, centers on granting rights based on intrinsic worth to the previously marginalized and defenseless. As liberal thinkers have argued for the moral consideration of more and more subjects—a process that Nash calls the “ethical extension of liberalism”—they have helped break down prejudices based on social distinctions like class, race, and gender. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this ethical extension came to include all people, and then expanded its reach to nonhuman animals and, finally, the entire natural world. Environmentalism, in this schema, is the logical extension of liberal thought and the ultimate expression of liberal ethics.

Perhaps following Nash’s reasoning, historians have tended to describe the rise of modern environmentalism aligned with the various issues championed by the student movement of the 1960s.² Environmentalism gained the attention of activists late in the decade, when revolutionary sentiments were waning and once-radical causes were becoming part of a more mainstream liberal agenda;

environmentalism, this narrative suggests, grew out of the same principles as did civil rights and feminism, and so followed the same post-1960s trajectory from campus protests to party politics. There has been little need, therefore, to investigate the distinct histories of environmentalism and the other movements that characterized the 1960s and early 1970s.³

Those histories, however, are distinct. The New Left's focus on poverty, civil rights, and later, feminism was not a product of the same set of values that led New Left activists to embrace environmentalism at the end of the decade. The student movement's fundamentally humanistic ethics underlay its commitment to social justice, and prevented it, for most of the 1960s, from treating environmentalism as a serious concern. The movement's growing radicalism—and, in particular, its increasingly anarchist philosophy—opened the door for a sudden turn to ecological issues after 1969. Even then, as radicals used pollution and environmental destruction as evidence of American society's decay, the New Left's devotion to matters of social justice left many activists skeptical of environmentalism's relevance.

The environmentalism of the student movement at the end of the 1960s did not set the stage for the first Earth Day, in 1970, and the surge of environmental awareness in the United States in the decade that followed. Nash's formulation of environmentalism as a direct product of liberal thought, slowly unfolding over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, tells us little about the relationship between environmentalism and other movements and philosophies in the 1960s. The New Left's shifting stance on ecological matters revealed the points of tension between environmentalism and liberal humanism, as well as the thorny social implications of environmental radicalism.

Whether with admiration or regret, most historians of the 1960s have described the New Left as both nebulous and nonideological. The student movement was nebulous because it stretched itself out among many smaller movements, constantly admitting more causes into its fold; it was nonideological because it rejected established philosophies like liberalism and socialism, or else it embraced several philosophies at once. These are fair characterizations to a point. But the New Left was more issue oriented and ideologically committed than many historians allow, especially from the perspective of the environmental movement. The student movement's fidelity to some causes over others led to its dismissal of environmental concerns for most of the 1960s, while the movement's evolving ideological principles set the terms for its brief embrace of the growing environmental movement at the end of the decade.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the most articulate and voluble New Left organization, was usually the best bellwether of the student movement's preference for some issues over others. SDS was never synonymous with the New Left as a whole, but it was often representative, and its rise and fall over the course of the decade paralleled that of the overall student movement. For many observers, SDS was the warm center of the New Left; its views and actions carried weight far out of proportion to its numbers, and whether SDS followed the larger movement or the larger movement followed SDS, its pronouncements, manifestoes, and strategic decisions tended to approximate the sentiments of many student activists.

For the first half of the decade, those sentiments seemed scattered and varied, even to student leaders. SDS rose to national prominence in 1965 more by chance than by design, organizing around an issue that had raised few worries at the time of the group's founding five years earlier. SDS took the lead in staging an April demonstration against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C., an effort that became the largest antiwar protest in U.S. history. In the event's aftermath, as Sidney Lens wrote a year later in *The Progressive*, "the nation suddenly became aware of a new and—to many—a startling phenomenon; a movement loosely called the New Left."⁴ But just weeks earlier, SDS had planned to focus most of its energy on a sit-in in New York denouncing corporate investment in apartheid South Africa, shifting to the peace march only after taking note of growing campus unrest over the war all around the nation.

Unprepared for its sudden notoriety after the April protest, SDS endured many months of organizational hand-wringing and soul-searching, drafting position paper after position paper as it debated what to do with its newfound prominence. Much of that collective anxiety sprang from the group's uncertainty about what specific political goals it was fighting for. SDS member Dick Howard asked, in 1966, "to what end are we spending these years . . . What can we hope for—at best!—from the 'movements' that we have built and are building?" Paul Booth, who helped create the vibrant Swarthmore chapter of SDS and was twice elected vice-president of the national office, wrote in 1966 of SDS's organizing efforts, "there is little clarity as to the content of the radical program in behalf [*sic*] of which the organization is carried out." Looking back many years later, Booth pointed to the 1965 peace march as a lost opportunity, when SDS could have become the much-needed center of a scattered and haphazard antiwar movement, but instead "chose to go off in all kinds of different directions."⁵

Historians of the 1960s have generally agreed with Howard and Booth, emphasizing the patchwork style of SDS politics, and how the New Left distinguished itself from the Old Left in part by making common cause not just with

the working class, but with a diversity of groups mistreated by American society. For historian and onetime SDS president Todd Gitlin, this was a fatal flaw, and when SDS collapsed in 1969, the heterogeneous student movement found itself without any organizational or political ballast, so that “there was no intellectual center for a more general politics which was at once radical and practical.” Similarly, Terry Anderson writes, “The movement raised issues, created activity, but because it was so diverse by 1968 it could not arrive at a common denominator, an answer for the nation’s ills.” James Miller and Wini Breines celebrate the same qualities that Gitlin and Anderson lament, pointing to the New Left’s lack of focus as a source of its strength. Miller suggests that SDS’s vague but persistent commitment to involving all people in democratic processes—whatever the issue—was the group’s chief legacy, and Breines argues that it was exactly the “apolitical” nature of the New Left, and its anti-organizational philosophy, that made it vital. By emphasizing the structure and the abstract principles of the New Left—what Miller calls “participatory democracy” and Breines labels “prefigurative politics”—both historians emphasize form over content and argue that the student movement’s significance arose in part from its lack of a specific political focus. Whether a secret weapon or an Achilles’ heel, the New Left’s sprawling variety was its defining feature.⁶

Even amidst that variety, the New Left held strong political commitments. Those commitments were difficult to identify at first, especially relative to the clear and specific agendas of earlier generations. At the heart of the view that the New Left was politically plastic, and open to any cause that pointed a finger at the powers-that-be, was a tacit or explicit comparison between the new, pluralist left and the old, socialist left. Set against the Old Left and its razor-sharp focus on class relations, the New Left was a motley affair. Student activists and historians who defined the one in terms of the other found the new student movement without a definite center. But the New Left was never without discrimination; it emphasized some issues over others and ignored some causes altogether. And its emphases and omissions suggest a set of political commitments and underlying values. Especially from the perspective of the environmental movement of the 1970s and 1980s, it seems clear that the New Left’s ethics, although never as articulated as the centrality of class relations and the struggle to overthrow capitalism, amounted to a specific critique of liberalism and modern society, rather than a nihilistic protest for the sake of protest.

SDS first articulated its key issues and core values in 1962, at a national conference in Port Huron, Michigan. Only two years old, SDS was not a well-known group, and the conference was sparsely attended. But the document that the conference produced, the *Port Huron Statement*, became the primary

expression of New Left thought in the early 1960s and a point of reference for years after. The *Statement* highlighted a raft of problems needing attention, including labor relations, colonialism, higher education, the military-industrial complex, and especially the American South's racial bigotry and the Cold War's potential for nuclear annihilation. There is the sense, in the several dozen pages of the *Statement*, that its authors could have gone on listing more and more causes for concern. Still, tying them all together were the organization's—and, the document implies, the generation's—basic values: “human beings, human relationships, and social systems.” Tom Hayden, the principle author of the *Statement*, and his cowriters explained SDS's guiding principle as a faith in people: “Men,” they wrote, several years before women in the New Left would point out the movement's inherent sexism, “have unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity.”⁷

The section of the *Port Huron Statement* titled “values” is full of abstract declarations about the promise of innate human character. As a group that fundamentally believed in democratic participation, SDS also had to believe in human wisdom, and so the *Statement* emphasized “human independence,” “love of man,” and the search for the “personally authentic.” SDS was not scandalizing anyone with such ideas; the basic values it espoused were mild and generally amenable. They were, in fact, the values that brought SDS closest to liberalism, the philosophy toward which the group would grow increasingly hostile over the course of the decade, even as it remained grounded in the ideas outlined in the *Port Huron Statement*. Although SDS, from early on, questioned the principles and policies of liberal politicians, alluding to the twentieth-century, American notion of “liberal,” it subscribed to at least some of the central ideas of the eighteenth-century “liberalism” that, in many regards, still informed the modern sense of the word. Among the key ideas that tied the older liberalism, the newer liberalism, and the New Left together were the primacy of the individual and the importance of individual freedoms in a democratic society. “Every liberal, of course,” Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote in 1967, when American liberalism was under attack from all sides, “will define liberalism in his own way. But liberalism has always seemed to me in essence [*sic*] a recognition that the world is forever changing and a belief that the application of reason to human and social problems can enlarge the dignity and freedom of man.”⁸ In this—even if in nothing else—Schlesinger and SDS were in agreement. The New Left, like the liberals they came to despise, were humanists. Schlesinger's definition unwittingly echoed the *Port Huron Statement*, which stated, five years earlier and with emphasis on the object of its admiration, “We regard *men* as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason,

freedom, and love.” Schlesinger put his faith in the Democratic Party, and SDS invested itself in grassroots activism; Schlesinger held that politics was the art of compromise, and SDS gave no quarter; but liberals like Schlesinger and New Leftists like SDS believed, fundamentally, that maximizing individual freedom would produce social good, and that given enough freedom, people had the competence to create conditions favorable to all.⁹

Even as SDS grew further and further apart from liberal politicians in its strategies and tactics, it fought for the same humanistic goals. While the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations tried to reduce poverty with federal programs, relying on the expertise of economists and social scientists, SDS created the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), which placed close to a hundred student organizers in impoverished neighborhoods in a dozen major cities to stimulate activism among inner-city residents. ERAP’s organizers believed that the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, with a small nudge, would inevitably rise up and work together for their own betterment in what SDS hoped would be an “interracial movement of the poor.”¹⁰

Given the New Left’s basic faith in human reason, and its belief that greater human freedom fosters greater accord within human communities, it was open to any movement that sought to liberate people from social restrictions imposed upon them, whether those impositions were codified by law or cultivated through prejudice. Todd Gitlin noted this openness in 1967, commenting on the advantages and drawbacks of the New Left’s improvisational approach to politics. “Thus” he wrote, “we offer alternatives to a wide variety of people and foment movements of different sorts, each of which . . . attunes us to new outlooks.” But, Gitlin warned, “the Movement’s famed permissiveness is frequently in danger of implying that all kinds of work its participants consider radical are equally important, equally deserving of attention and resources.” Even within the capacious political space the New Left offered to a pastiche of causes, Gitlin advised some sense of priority.¹¹

But that sense of priority was already at work within SDS. In regard to concerns about the environment, SDS had operated with some notion of which issues were more important than others from the very beginning. Over the course of the decade, SDS paid almost no attention to the state of the natural world and natural resources, whether from the perspective of the conservation movement’s concern for national parks and forests or the later ecology movement’s fight against pollution. In the *Port Huron Statement*, the absence is notable. In dozens of pages of criticism and analysis is a single sentence registering concern with environmental decline, noting the threat of overpopulation and the “sapping of the earth’s physical resources,” and leaving the matter

there. A year later, SDS refined its critique of American society in a document called *America and the New Era*. Again, the group focused its attention on the Cold War, civil rights, and economic inequality, and ignored environmental concerns. In the year between the *Port Huron Statement* and *America and the New Era*, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*—a book often credited with launching the modern environmental movement—became a bestseller and the center of a well-publicized debate about pesticides. But Carson's warnings about the unintended consequences of modern technology did not resonate with early New Left activists. Although SDS leaders expressed grave concern about nuclear technology and "the Bomb" in 1962 and 1963, they drew no connections between nuclear fallout and the more subtle sorts of technological threats to which Carson alerted the nation.

SDS continued to hold this non-stance toward ecology for the rest of the decade. The SDS newsletter *New Left Notes*, one of the most widely read journals of the student movement, published few if any articles about environmental issues before 1970. Throughout the 1960s, *New Left Notes* reported on race relations, urban poverty, and the war in Vietnam; late in the decade, the journal addressed the black power movement, the counterculture, U.S. imperialism, and radical feminism. But *New Left Notes* paid scant attention to environmental issues or the emerging environmental movement until the first Earth Day in April 1970.

SDS remained committed to a growing array of social issues for most of the decade, as the New Left widened its analysis of the harm wrought by modern America to growing movements like Red Power and, much later, gay liberation. Always closest to SDS's organizational heart were civil rights and ending the war. At the 1967 national convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan, discussion centered on these key issues in workshops on draft resistance and civil rights.¹² Members debated whether to march on Washington to protest the war and resolved to support the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in "rebellions against police violence." In 1967, the agenda included workshops on first-time topics like "cultural revolution" (in recognition of the growing importance of the hippie counterculture) and "liberation of women" (an issue several women in SDS had been pushing for years). But delegates to Ann Arbor did not discuss environmental matters, no more so than delegates to Clearlake, Iowa, in 1966, or to East Lansing, Michigan, in 1968.

The New Left had little to say about environmentalism, one way or the other, for most of the 1960s. Later New Left reactions to the burgeoning ecology movement make clear that groups like SDS considered the natural world a low priority, at best, and a distraction from more urgent concerns, at worst.

The student movement assigned itself the daunting tasks of reducing poverty, helping to end segregation, and ending the Vietnam War, and next to these formidable responsibilities, cleaning up lakes and rivers and protecting forests seemed beside the point. More importantly, the New Left was attracted to the liberatory potential of social movements and to the idea that regular people held the knowledge necessary to address social ills and achieve social harmony. “Man is the end and man is the measure,” declared an anonymous 1966 essay in *New Left Notes* as SDS debated the direction it should take in the second half of the decade. “The rock bottom foundation of radical ideology is a view of man—human nature and human possibility.”¹³ Social justice, for the New Left, was largely about taking power from an entrenched elite and giving it to the broad public, and believing that doing so would quickly lead to a better world. Putting restrictions on people and suggesting that individual freedom could lead to social harm—which seemed at the heart of ecological arguments—were anathema to the New Left’s general optimism. For a movement fighting poverty, bigotry, and war, and relying on human nature and individual freedom to achieve its goals, the idea of trees and animals imperiled by human behavior was neither a pressing concern nor an appealing cause.

By the late 1960s, a growing minority within the student movement began to argue that ecological issues were fundamental to any critique of American society, and that championing the cause of the environment was a radical stance. SDS never accepted this line of reasoning, or perhaps never had the chance to; by 1969, when the premier radical student group splintered into competing factions, ecological matters were still almost entirely absent from its publications, its conferences, and its rhetoric of a society in crisis. For others, however, at the end of the decade, the natural world became one of the most potent signs of the nation’s ills. As the radical student movement toughened its critique of the United States, environmentalism was, for some, a sharp weapon to hurl at entrenched power.

The transformation of environmentalism in the minds of student activists from a single-issue, liberal cause to a wide-ranging, New Left critique was largely a product of the student movement’s own growing radicalism. In the space of ten short years, the New Left moved from what was essentially a mild critique of liberal policies on their own terms, to calls for the overthrow of all major American institutions—“pig society,” as the more militant activists liked to call the political and cultural mainstream. In 1960, the most controversial stance held by SDS was its unwillingness to declare itself explicitly anti-Communist; by 1970, the only thing the New Left and liberal policymakers

shared was opposition to the Vietnam War, and even there, radicals charged liberals with hypocrisy for condemning the very war they started. As the student movement set itself more firmly against liberalism every year, and for the most part, kept doctrinaire forms of socialism at arm's length, critics accused the radicals of a nihilistic refusal to offer any systematic solutions to the problems they raged against.

The accusation of nihilism was extreme and rarely justified. But contemporary observers of the New Left, and historians since, have often called the radicals nonideological. Again in comparison with the Old Left, the New Left was hard to define, and so was defined by what it wasn't. The student movement was neither liberal nor socialist—or both liberal and socialist—and, therefore, lacking any disciplined sort of ideology. According to historian Alan Matusow, the most fundamental reason for the New Left's collapse was "the failure of the movement to fashion an ideology for a native American radicalism." For Old Leftists like Sidney Lens, the student movement's impoverished theory of history and social change was a favorite topic throughout the 1960s, even as Lens generally wrote approvingly of the young radicals.¹⁴

It might have been fair to describe a few tiny factions of the radical student movement as ideologically tenuous—most notably the Weather Underground organization, originally known as Weatherman, the small group that walked out of the 1969 SDS convention and into a years-long bombing campaign against the American state. Weather Underground used Marxism and Maoism rhetorically but not actively; they never organized toward any socialist ends, and instead assumed that simply detonating bombs would spark a revolution and, somehow, a more equal society. But the New Left as a whole was never entirely without ideology. Even as it criticized both liberalism and communism, and dipped itself in the waters of socialism without ever taking the plunge, the student movement remained committed to broad participation, direct action, and individual choice, and remained hostile towards centralized power. In its dedication to nonhierarchical models, in its skepticism of the organized state, and in its improvisational spirit, the ideology of the New Left was more anarchist than anything else. Although only a minority of student activists readily identified themselves as anarchists, in the second half of the decade, many of the New Left's closest observers recognized in the student movement's methods and complaints the ethos of anarchism.

By the late 1960s, the New Left's anarchist, or at least anarchistic, ideology would set the terms for its particular brand of environmentalism. While the student movement's humanism tied it to the basic values of liberalism and curbed its interest in environmentalism, the movement's anarchist sentiments did exactly the opposite. Anarchism and liberalism are fundamentally at

odds in their views of government. Liberals from the twentieth century on believe that government is the only way to guarantee individual freedom and social accord; anarchists believe that government is the primary force preventing freedom and accord. Liberals rely on submission to the authority of the government in order to ensure equal enjoyment of all other freedoms; anarchists argue that any formalized system of hierarchy breeds inequality and the restraint of freedoms, and that only unshackled human nature can lead to widespread liberty. The liberal wants to achieve social ideals by constructing their foundation; the anarchist wants to discover those same ideals by tearing down their confines.

The connection between anarchism and environmentalism is in part a philosophical one. It starts from the most basic anarchist belief: that the moral authority of government is illegitimate. Whereas liberals, following Locke, see government as a necessary protection against the perils of a state of nature, anarchists see government as an obstacle to people's natural tendency toward social harmony. Society, for anarchists, is not created by government, but something that predates government and is corrupted by it. Society is a product of nature, of the natural order that people are a part of when uninhibited by human institutions. Anarchists reject government without eschewing order, and that has left them in need of a source of order outside of human invention. The British proto-anarchist William Godwin distinguished between justice and human law, the former arising from unchanging moral truths, the latter from easily corrupted human decisions. The French anarchist Pierre Proudhon believed that personal relationships, unregulated by government, inevitably produced a balanced social structure. All anarchists have considered their social ideals to be natural phenomena. But it was Peter Kropotkin who first connected his social beliefs directly to the natural world in his major work, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. An amateur naturalist, Kropotkin took issue with social Darwinism, arguing that nature is characterized less by competition than by cooperation. "Science loudly proclaims that the struggle of each against all is the leading principle of nature," he wrote, "and of human societies as well," when in fact, he argued, the opposite was true.¹⁵ Animals of the same species survived and evolved by assisting one another, and this, rather than self-interest, is the basic principle of nature. Kropotkin was arguing literally what most anarchists believe at least metaphorically. By placing the question of how nature operates at the center of discussions about how society should function, Kropotkin held to the anarchist conviction that the answers to social problems do not lie in human institutions but in the immanent order of the natural world.

The New Left started out as neither anarchists nor radicals. The student movement had the seeds of an anarchist spirit early on, in its dedication to democratic procedures, its affinity for direct action, and its idealistic goals. But its taste for radical opposition, and eventually, the rhetoric of revolution, did not fully blossom until late in the decade, when New Left leaders saw less and less as salvageable about the United States, and each fresh philosophical assault on basic American institutions became passé a month later. In the early 1960s, the student movement took smaller steps with greater caution. The *Port Huron Statement*, although critical of the Kennedy Administration and of party politics in general, offered moderate alternatives. Increased student involvement in public affairs; stronger coalitions among students, civil rights, labor, and peace activists; and better funding for federal programs were all ideas that the president himself might have found appealing. *America and the New Era* fired more pointed criticisms and offered more specific solutions, but still based its analysis in liberal values and a general faith in the government as the best tool for solving social problems.¹⁶

Gradually, however, SDS and the student movement stepped out from the shadow of 1950s liberalism. In questioning the ideological consensus of their parents' generation, the New Left followed a handful of dissenting intellectuals like David Reisman, William Whyte, and the sociologist C. Wright Mills. It was Mills who most inspired the early New Left; where Reisman and Whyte were willing to raise questions about conformity and bureaucracy, Mills argued that a growing middle class had given rise to an economic and political order headed by a "power elite" of businesspeople and politicians, who bought Americans' complacency with consumer products and suburban homes. Mills's damning critique of post-World War II society informed early student leaders like Tom Hayden, who wrote his master's thesis on the rebel sociologist.¹⁷

Later New Leftists turned to the writings of the émigré philosopher Herbert Marcuse, who pushed Mills's attack on liberal society even further. Like Mills, Marcuse argued that Americans had been drugged by affluence into a state of apathy, in which they have sacrificed their individuality and their individual freedoms for material comfort. But the enemy, for Marcuse, was not a hidden elite; it was "advanced industrial civilization" itself. And by "civilization," Marcuse did not mean only an economic and political system, but also a system of thought, one that rationalized its own acceptance and categorized alternatives as illogical. He described this total system in his best-selling *One-Dimensional Man*, which wrestled with "one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization": how American society has used its very destructiveness, wastefulness, and emptiness to manufacture the comforts that

have bonded people to a fixed order, so that “the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment” have produced, simultaneously, material well-being and social control. In the modern, industrial world, “the Establishment” has legitimated itself not with guns and clubs, but with wages and commodities.¹⁸

The claim, by Mills and Marcuse, that the majority of Americans have bought into a system that has used comfort to disguise inequity and that has ignored individual rights to preserve an economic order confirmed the student activists’ own experiences. By the mid-1960s, those activists had grown more and more disenchanted with the government’s limited responses to social ills and with the direction of American society in general. In the mid-1960s, the New Left watched as the civil rights movement faced continuing violence, and civil rights activists turned away from the federal government and toward self-reliance, a strategy advocated by Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and the Black Panther Party; as civil rights legislation and Lyndon Johnson’s “war on poverty” did little to stop urban riots in the summers of 1965, 1966, and 1967; as university officials proved unsympathetic to student activism, and students began to challenge administrators, starting with the 1964 free speech movement at the University of California; and most of all, as Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, and the Vietnam War escalated steadily each year after.¹⁹

SDS’s most public response to these disturbing developments was the 1965 antiwar march in Washington, D.C. The march marked the moment SDS achieved national significance, but the event was also a philosophical turning point. SDS president Paul Potter captured the shift in his closing remarks, one of the most remembered of the many speeches given by student activists in the 1960s. Potter discussed a “system” that justified the war in Vietnam, disenfranchised African Americans in the South, and fostered the alienating bureaucracy of modern society. “We must name that system,” Potter urged. “We must name it, describe it, analyze it, understand it and change it.”²⁰

The SDS leadership had debated whether Potter should name “the system” capitalism, or imperialism, or something else entirely, and they decided to leave the exact label ambiguous. But less important than the particular appellation was that SDS now tied together the various injustices it fought against as pieces of a single order, a set of institutions and values underlying all that the student movement opposed. The New Left would soon come to call this overall order “the establishment,” and the analysis implied by that term radicalized the movement. If racism, militarism, and economic stratification all had the same root cause, and that cause was the system of values that shaped

modern society, then change needed to be sweeping, not piecemeal. Wrongs could not be righted one at a time; society itself had to be restructured, and it needed to be restructured on a decentralized basis. The New Left's criticism of the establishment was, first, an opposition to liberalism—to the privileging of economic opportunity over social equality, to an emphasis on individual freedom without an appeal to shared morality, and to the ordering of society by a large-scale state apparatus. But at a more fundamental level, that criticism targeted centralized power, whether under capitalism or socialism. As James Miller has pointed out, SDS was committed, first and foremost, to a "democracy of individual participation." In its early years, its vision of a decentralized society was always in tension with its reliance on federal programs to eliminate poverty and enforce civil rights laws. But as the New Left rejected the liberal state, it favored experiments in radical, decentralized democracy. Looking back on his experiences with both the Old and New Lefts, the playwright Arthur Miller emphasized the affinities between socialists and capitalists, "since both Capitalism and Socialism are forgoing [*sic*] systems; you cannot tend the machine, on which both are based, whenever the spirit moves you but must tend it on time, even when you'd rather be making love or getting drunk." Miller, writing in 1973, clearly had the counterculture fresh in his memory, but his point about a general opposition to large-scale systems—"the machine," as he called it, echoing free speech activist Mario Savio's description of the university nearly a decade earlier—is crucial. The New Left objected to concentrated power, regardless of who held it.²¹

The shift away from liberalism in SDS, sparked by thinkers like Mills and Marcuse, both reflected and fueled a shift in the broader student movement. That shift was evident in the pages of the underground press, which blossomed in the middle of the decade. Starting in the major coastal cities, underground newspapers quickly appeared in cities and college towns across the country. The *S.D.S. Bulletin*—later *New Left Notes*—was the primary mouthpiece of the New Left before 1964, but the next three years saw the first issues of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *Berkeley Barb*, the *East Village Other*, Michigan State's *Paper*, the Madison, Wisconsin, *Kaleidoscope*, and the Chicago *Seed*, among many others.²² One of the more successful was the *Rag*, started in Austin, Texas in 1966 by SDS member Jeff Shero. In its November issue, the *Rag* published an article arguing against the use of electoral politics to achieve progressive goals: "We don't think that social change will come about through opposition candidates . . . Social and political change will occur when large numbers of people begin to feel the need for those changes, and not before."²³ That sentiment—an emphasis on popular attitudes rather than official institutions, on "people over

politics”—captured the still inchoate spirit of the New Left. Thinkers like Mills and Marcuse taught that the institutions themselves were corrupt, and that change would only come from organic efforts by free-thinking individuals. Heeding these ideas, student activists were growing increasingly disaffected from conventional methods of reform, and more enamored of fundamental change through grassroots efforts.

Having disavowed the Old Left's doctrinaire forms of socialism and rejected the sluggish reforms of liberalism, the New Left seemed ideologically free-floating. But its principles, in theory and in action, lent it a coherent spirit, even if not a fully developed philosophy. "The protesting students are Anarchist," wrote Paul Goodman in the *New York Times Magazine*, in response to the 1968 student takeover of Columbia University, "because they are in a historical situation to which Anarchism is their only possible response." University administrators and police officials were likely calling the students "anarchists" as well, but for Goodman, and increasingly, for the student movement as a whole, anarchism did not refer to chaos and disorder, but to a theory of society based on dismantling national institutions and governing on a decentralized basis. At Columbia, Goodman admitted, there were signs of authoritarianism as well; SDS leaders pushed their own protest program despite many other students' reservations. But generally, the Columbia takeover demonstrated the anarchist tendencies of the New Left. "The spontaneity" of student protests, Goodman wrote, "the concreteness of the issues, and the tactics of direct action are themselves characteristic of Anarchism."²⁴

The anarchist ethos of the New Left was only sometimes explicit; student radicals were rarely well-versed in anarchist thought, and their affinity for anarchist values was more intuitive than studied. Anarchism as a social movement is more than a vague opposition to organized power, and the student movement's resistance to particular labels makes it especially difficult to categorize it under a broad heading. "All anarchists deny authority; many of them fight against it. But by no means all who deny authority and fight against it can reasonably be called anarchists," cautioned the historian George Woodcock.²⁵ In 1962, Woodcock argued that an organized, well-defined anarchist movement had become largely irrelevant after the Spanish Civil War.²⁶ By the middle of the century, he wrote, anarchism was a thing of the past. But only six years later, in 1968, Woodcock returned to the question of whether anarchism was dead and buried. The sixties had seen little in the way of organized, articulated anarchism, he maintained, but "only if one seeks explicit statements or anarchistic loyalties. In practice many observers regard anarchism as an important and central element in the pluralistic spectrum of New Radical thought."

Despite young radicals' ignorance of anarchist theory, "the key tenets that have been on anarchist lips for generations are there: the rejection of the state, the abandonment of the comfortable in favor of the good life, direct action, decentralization, the primacy of the functional group, participation."²⁷

As Goodman pointed out in the *New York Times Magazine*, the implicit and diffuse anarchism of the New Left at times allowed for stark contradictions; it was possible to find calls to anarchism and to Maoism not only within the same organizations, but from the same individuals, despite those philosophies' often antithetical beliefs. "The American young are unusually ignorant of political history," Goodman wrote. "The generation gap . . . is so profound that they cannot remember the correct name for what they in fact do." But the New Left's anarchism was not quite as unwitting as Goodman described. The underground press fixed on anarchism from its earliest days. In August 1966, the second issue of the *Rag* carried an article on the Provos, a group of Dutch anarchists that the *Rag* described as "social revolutionaries" who believed in "complete freedom of the individual."²⁸ *WIN*, the newspaper of New York's War Resisters League, dedicated several articles to the Provos in November of the same year and reprinted a flyer distributed by the Resurgence Youth Movement and addressed to "Provos of New York," calling on "anarkists" to "put down this kiss-ass society."²⁹ And in 1966, Jack Newfield, a founding member of SDS, published *A Prophetic Minority*, an account of the student movement in the first half of the decade. Newfield called the movement "pluralistic, amorphous, and multilayered," but identified three distinct political strands within it: socialism, pacifism, and anarchism. Noting the anarchist tendencies of the "new radicalism" even when it was still in the early stages of becoming radicalized, Newfield saw how the New Left disavowed institutional change in favor of popular insurgencies. "National organizations" he wrote, "are not the style of anarchists and improvisers."³⁰

The growing anarchist ethos of the New Left in the middle of the decade was furthered by a phenomenon within SDS that its members called "prairie power." After the 1965 march on Washington, SDS membership rolls swelled, and most of the active new members came from the Midwest and Texas. Although SDS had started in Michigan, much of its early leadership was drawn from East Coast universities. The group's first generation of activists tended to be methodical and highly intellectual, they possessed a fair knowledge of traditional socialist theory, and they liked to debate issues at length before taking any specific action. The second generation, the "prairie power" cohort, was less cerebral and more off-the-cuff, the new members didn't know or care about Old Left thinkers, and they wanted to test their ideas, not discuss them.

They swept into power at the 1966 national convention, and pushing the idea of participatory democracy even further than SDS had previously been willing to do, immediately dismantled what little hierarchy existed in the national office. One concerned member explained this trend as a step away from the social democratic tradition out of which SDS evolved: "Since SDS had become a mass organization," Tom Good wrote in 1966, "a second discernable political tradition has emerged, namely anarchism." Good worried about the lack of disciplined analysis within SDS, but many other members saw flexibility as an advantage. The movement's opposition to American society was deep enough that it called into question basic ideas about progress, governance, and material comfort, but broad enough to remain open to new issues and frames of analysis. The spirit of the movement was fundamentally anti-establishment, but with only a vague agenda for what came next. "Spurning all fixed doctrines and forms," James Miller writes, "they exulted in discovery, improvisation, the drama of unpredictable innovation."³¹

The New Left's ideological convictions were not always immediately recognizable because of the often highly personal and individualistic nature of New Left rhetoric and activism. As the historian Doug Rossinow has argued, the student movement was motivated in part by an existential search for meaning. Young, middle-class Americans in the post-WWII period, Rossinow explains, felt alienated from their "real" selves, and desperate for lives that were—in the words of the *Port Huron Statement*—"personally authentic." The student movement's existentialism became much more apparent late in the decade, as the counterculture shifted the movement's gaze even further inward. But from early on, the New Left championed personal meaning against unquestioning conformity. Starting with the Free Speech Movement, during which students compared themselves to the IBM cards they were assigned as freshmen and the university to a "machine," New Left activists emphasized the importance of individual expression and opposed themselves to the distant and homogenous bureaucracy of the university. In opposition to the impersonal scale and feel of modern society, the student movement offered the liberated self.³²

However, New Left existentialism was never solipsistic. In fact, because the New Left tended to fuse together its many influences, its existential search for meaning became highly politicized. Rossinow explains how, by the end of the 1960s, the student movement's search for personal authenticity made it easier to replace revolutionary goals with a "cultural liberalism" that deradicalized the movement.³³ But earlier in the decade, New Left existentialism actually complemented New Left radicalism, and especially anarchism. Student activists' faith in individual human potential, and their need to express that

potential, aligned them with classic anarchists who put no trust in hierarchy and organized government, and therefore complete trust in individual human nature. For anarchists, the state always repressed individual will and restricted the freedom of people to improve society through improving themselves.³⁴ The New Left felt similarly, both about the restrictiveness of the state and the liberating potential of individual instinct. At the end of the decade, the Student Libertarian Action Movement (SLAM) explained the “sudden reappearance . . . of Anarchy’s black flag on the ramparts of the New Left” by quoting Peter Kropotkin, who called anarchy “a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government.” Kropotkin’s words, according to SLAM, “articulate the New Left’s aspirations” by bringing together “revolutionary goals and tactics with a personal life style.”³⁵ By the late 1960s, New Left politics had begun to fuse with hippie culture, and the rhetoric of revolutionary anarchism sounded among both activists and dropouts. That fusion fertilized the already-present emphasis, within the New Left, on personal expression and genuine community, and the direct line from individual consciousness to communal harmony to social revolution. In San Francisco, the Haight District’s Diggers passed out pamphlets urging young people to “Be free. Drop all the way out. Reject the whole system. All of it . . . What matters is you: being; being free. What matters is freedom. All the way.”³⁶ In New York, the infamous anarchist group Up Against The Wall, Motherfuckers advocated networks of affinity groups to create “the possibility of *real community*,” as well as “an *organizational reality* which allows maximum concerted actions directed toward total revolution.”³⁷

By the end of the decade, the spirit that Todd Gitlin has called the “express train of antiauthority” was gaining momentum.³⁸ Escalation of the Vietnam War played a large role, as growing frustration with American foreign policy fueled a split between liberal antiwar groups, which remained staunchly anti-Communist, and New Left protesters, some of whom began openly to support the North Vietnamese forces. Street fighting between police and protesters outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which led to hundreds of hospitalizations and one death, radicalized both participants and observers. And the endless meetings of SDS and other New Left groups fostered restlessness and calls for action among new recruits. Looking back, Carl Oglesby marked the shift as early as 1965, the year he was elected president of SDS and in which “the black and white sectors of the movement explicitly abandoned reformism and took up that long march whose destination . . . is a theory and practice of revolution for the United States.” In the space of just a few years, the student movement gave up not only on institutional liberalism,

but also on modern American society as a whole, as it accepted the need for fundamental, sweeping change.³⁹

The New Left began to consider environmentalism—or “ecology,” as the cause was called at the time—in the late 1960s, having ignored it for several years. Its response to the growing sense of ecological crisis in the United States was mixed; some New Left activists rallied around the environment, whereas others were skeptical of, and even hostile toward, ecological issues. But both responses were informed by the New Left’s growing radicalism. Activists who scoffed at liberal reform efforts and thrilled to talk of anarchist revolution began to understand the ecology movement as either an element of, or an obstacle to, fundamental change. Either way, it was an important issue. The new terms of radical activity were defined by a basic opposition to what Marcuse called “advanced industrial civilization,” and environmentalism for the New Left came to be defined by that opposition as well.

The event that, more than any other, sparked widespread discussion of ecology on the left was the fight for a small plot of dirt in Berkeley, California. Later dubbed People’s Park, in early 1969, it was little more than an informal parking lot owned by the University of California and taking up only half a city block near Dwight and Telegraph Avenue. In April, a group of Telegraph merchants and radicals proposed that local hippies and activists come together to plant trees and grass. The group wrote an article in the *Berkeley Barb*, inviting members of the community to show up on a Sunday afternoon ready to work. That weekend and the following, several hundred people gathered to landscape the lot. They picked up trash, planted flowers, and started a vegetable patch. State and University officials, unwilling to cede the land but wary of confrontation, spent several weeks debating the best course of action. Finally, 250 highway patrol officers arrived in the early morning, assigned to protect a work crew hired to put up a fence. Several thousand locals gathered in response just a few blocks away and, after hearing a string of speakers, surged toward the park. Halfway there, they collided with the police and highway patrol. Quickly, the confrontation escalated into rock- and bottle-throwing on one side, and tear gas and birdshot on the other. Later, the police switched to more lethal buckshot. At the end of the day, over a hundred people had been shot and wounded, some seriously and one fatally. Governor Ronald Reagan mobilized the National Guard, which occupied downtown Berkeley for 17 days. Those two-and-a-half weeks saw scattered skirmishes and clouds of tear gas floating through the city and then, finally, the withdrawal of the Guard and outside police forces. Still, the Reagan Administration, and through it

the University, refused to lease the park to the city, and it remained contested space for years after.⁴⁰

Initially, many New Left activists did not see People's Park in ecological terms. Well into 1969, the left continued to sideline concerns about pollution and natural resources. The Berkeley group Ecology Action, founded in 1968 and one of the first New Left environmental groups, enjoyed little support during its first year.⁴¹ Before People's Park, Ecology Action struggled with the left's general indifference toward environmental issues. One of the group's early members, Gene Anderson, described conservation as "universally approved and universally unsupported." Part of the problem, he suggested, was that the issue was not especially partisan, and so not especially compelling. Conservatives subordinated environmental concerns to those of business, and liberals were generally pro-government and pro-development. Neither had much interest in making the environment an issue. Radicals, the group Anderson expected the most support from, felt that "somehow other issues are 'more important.'" A "narrow interpretation of Marx' attack on Malthus," Anderson explained, "has led some radical friends of mine to opposition of all conservation on principle."⁴²

The New Left, as Gene Anderson supposed, had no interest in ecology as a single issue. Committed to both humanistic and revolutionary goals, the movement had little to say about trees and open space. *New Left Notes* carried several articles about Berkeley during the People's Park clashes, with no discussion of environmental issues. For much of the student movement, Berkeley was the likely epicenter of a nationwide uprising, and People's Park was simply a potential catalyst to growing militancy, little different from the Democratic National Convention in Chicago the previous year. Dazzled by direct action, they remembered People's Park for the street fighting that followed it, rather than the planting and growing that preceded it. Months after the confrontation over the park, New Left figures Tom Hayden and Frank Bardacke called Berkeley "an example of rebellion to others," and "a kind of 'front' in the worldwide battle against American capitalism." In a four-page article in the *Berkeley Tribe*, Hayden and Bardacke took stock of what the movement had learned about revolution and about itself in the East Bay "stronghold." They discussed police tactics, divisions within the radical community, cultural vs. political revolution, proletarianization, and internationalization, but not ecology or the environment. Hayden and Bardacke's wide-ranging evaluation of what Berkeley had taught American radicals had nothing to say about the ecology movement nor about the growing concern with land use and resource destruction. People's Park was simply a moment when "we ripped off the Man's land" rather than a sign of new goals and concerns. Its significance was quantitative, signaling escalating confrontation, rather than qualitative, signaling a new set of ideas.⁴³

Many local activists, with a more ground-level view of events in Berkeley, had a different take. In the next issue of the *Tribe*, Keith Lampe published an open letter to Hayden and Bardacke, explaining how “astounded” he was that “you guys could type out so many pages of words without once relating to what we’ve learned in recent months about the fragility of the earth’s life-support system.” That absence, he went on, “renders your material naïve and dated.”⁴⁴ Lampe, a one-time instructor at Queens College who moved to California to write for the underground press, had already been reporting about the ecology movement before People’s Park. After the Berkeley showdown, he started a column called “Earth Read-Out,” distributed through the Liberation News Service (the underground press version of the Associated Press). Earth Read-Out ran in many of the most widely read alternative newspapers, and Lampe became an authority on environmental activism for the radical left.

People’s Park, for Lampe and other Berkeley activists, infused the movement with a green ethos and a new concern for the natural world. One participant in the street fighting wrote of the representatives of the state and the university, “We will never forget that if they win this simple struggle, the planet will soon become a slag-heap of radioactive rubble, but if we, in our own way, overcome the official agents of uniform death, the earth will become a park . . .” Another declared, “We will fight with strange new weapons. With dirt and water. With flowers and trees . . . We will plant a park that will encompass the world . . . Can you legislate against the earth? We will be the earth.” A year later, and a month before Earth Day thrust environmentalism into the national spotlight, the *Berkeley Tribe* stated, “People’s Park was the beginning of the Revolutionary Ecology Movement. It is the model of the struggle we are going to have to wage in the future if life is going to survive at all on this planet.” The new struggle, according to the editors of the *Tribe*, combined the social politics of the New Left with a growing ecological sensibility, a fusion first seen at People’s Park: “What we did with one city block last spring is going to have to be done more and more on a larger and larger scale.” Although another People’s Park never materialized, in the year or so following the original event, the radical community in Berkeley grabbed hold of ecology as a paramount concern. Just days after the National Guard pulled out of Berkeley, over 2,000 people gathered on campus for an “Ecology and Politics in America” teach-in; Ecology Action held an ecology workshop and an “extinction fair” over the summer; the Eco-Liberation Front temporarily hijacked a meeting of the Bay Area Pollution Control District in early 1970; and a coalition of eco-minded groups launched a months-long campaign to grow trees on unused Bay Area Rapid Transit land.⁴⁵

By late 1969, the seed of radical interest in the environment planted at People's Park had sprouted, as left thinkers and writers began to think and write about the natural world more than they ever had. In response to an interviewer's question about the place of poetry within the movement, Allen Ginsberg began talking about how the movement was "a little wavelet on a larger awareness that's growing in people, which is a biological awareness rather than a political awareness." Hugh Romney, head of the Hog Farm commune and guerilla theater troupe, made a similar non sequitur in the middle of an interview. "In response to no specific question," as the interviewer later recorded, Romney said, "What I'm really into is the Whole Earth trip, because that's something that everyone can agree on. Everyone can see that the planet is in bad trouble and we've all gotta get together and melt our flags and hang a rainbow on a pole and share all the food." And Todd Gitlin, by 1969 a veteran of the New Left and increasingly skeptical of ever-newer movements, reviewed Gary Snyder's *Earth House Hold* with somewhat grudging admiration. "Of course he misses much," Gitlin wrote. "The people in his world are marginal people—forest rangers, islanders, sailors—and he does not contact the textures of ordinary desperate life as ordinary people live it." But, Gitlin granted, translating Snyder into his own terms, "Snyder can help us do one thing we've scanted, which is to understand how American capitalism rips up everything of value."⁴⁶

Whereas People's Park helped trigger a blossoming of radical interest in ecology, what sustained that interest was the gradual understanding that ecology played a role in an overall, radical analysis. The environment, New Left activists came to argue, was not an isolated issue, but rather an essential element in an overall critique of modern, American society. Some had been making this point for years. In March of 1969, several months before People's Park exploded, Keith Lampe reported on the Sierra Club's annual wilderness conference in San Francisco, which was attended not only by the "liberals" of the club but also by more radical figures like poet Gary Snyder and inventor R. Buckminster Fuller. Lampe admired the message of the Sierra Club's mainstream speakers but regretted the "hesitancy of their suggestions for action." Some rank-and-file members, he noted, were ready to take to the streets, but the speakers refused to endorse direct action. "Hopefully," Lampe wrote, trying to smudge oppositions by emphasizing shared interest in the environment, "Old Leftists and New Leftists in the US today will be able to dig ecology-action . . . All of us now hung up with the Industrial Revolution have got to move from the disastrous notion of man-versus-nature into a peaceful coexistence with nature." Eight months later, Lampe celebrated the

widespread familiarity, across the political spectrum, with the idea of ecology and the plight of the planet. Given that success, it was time to “begin to define a more specifically radical (‘root’) approach to the emergency.” The coming mistakes in addressing ecological issues, he predicted, would be programs based on competition, faith in technology, the profit motive, and centralized authority. These approaches Lampe associated with “the OLD TIME, i.e., the industrial-revolution phase of history.” Nations themselves, he argued, must be phased out, and replaced with “tribal & regional co-operative post-monetary steady-state post-technocratic heliocentric economic models, eco-models.” Earlier than most New Leftists, Lampe saw the radical ideas bound up in the ecology movement. Spun out to its extreme, the logic of ecological activism called into question the foundations of modern, industrial society: property, technology, and the state.⁴⁷

Although few were as committed to a radical ecotopia as Lampe, many other activists began to realize that ecology was an issue tailor-made for opposing the establishment. Because the concern for human survival was so basic, ecology could be used to point out fundamental—even suicidal—flaws in modern American society; because ecology was so totalizing, it could be used to tie together disparate issues, like war, racism, and sexism, and to give them an overarching symptom (or cause; it worked both ways). “The notion of man’s ability/need to completely control his environment is ancient,” the *Austin Rag* commented. “This idea should be critically analyzed by radicals. This analysis should be prompt, for the consequences of a new understanding of man *in* nature are far-reaching.” New York’s *Rat* held similar views about the connections between environmental ills and social shortcomings. “An exploration of ecological trends demonstrates that the present ecological crises cannot be separated from the social crisis. An attack against environmental destruction is an attack on the structures of control and the mechanisms of power within a society,” a writer identified as “Pantagruel” explained.⁴⁸

Still, such connections had to be more clearly identified. People’s Park triggered a growing interest in integrating New Left radicalism with ecology—working at the roots, both figuratively and literally—but the analytical framework for such a combination remained open to interpretation. “The underground culture is beginning to groove on conservation and ecology, but a comprehensive radical viewpoint needs to be developed,” Pantagruel noted. “Lewis Herber in his breakthrough essay ‘Ecology and Revolutionary Thought’ provides a starting point.” In fact, Lewis Herber provided much more than a starting point. “Lewis Herber” was the pseudonym for Murray Bookchin, an Old Left anarchist who became a New Left guru by creating a school of political

thought called “social ecology.” In 1969, the alternative press started to run abridged versions of his essay “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” as well as several other works published first in his magazine, *Anarchos*. Bookchin followed the New Left closely, occasionally writing to their publications and offering advice based on his many years of radicalism. Although Bookchin (as Herber) published *Our Synthetic Environment*, a book warning of industrial society’s increasing entanglement with the natural world, several months before Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, his work was largely ignored. Bookchin enjoyed belated recognition within the New Left, however, exactly because he offered an analysis that tied together social and environmental politics. Social ecology was one well-developed way to give environmentalism the radical edge that the late-1960s New Left required.⁴⁹

Bookchin, in other words, provided a pre-assembled philosophy for integrating the “new” issue of environmentalism into the left’s overall radical analysis. Social ecology argued, essentially, that people’s abuse of the natural world was a direct result of social inequality, that control and exploitation among human beings of each other led to control and exploitation by human beings of nature. “The truth of the matter,” Bookchin wrote, “is that man has created these imbalances in nature as a direct outgrowth of the imbalances he has created in his own society.” As an anarchist, Bookchin placed the blame for the modern world’s predicament squarely on the shoulders of social hierarchy and the suppression of the individual. “The mass society, with its statistical beehive approach,” he wrote, “tends to triumph over free expression, personal uniqueness and cultural complexity. This creates a crisis not only in natural ecology but in social ecology.”⁵⁰ Such an analysis resonated with the New Left, opposed as it was to the impersonal, bureaucratic “establishment” and supportive as it was of free expression and cultural pluralism.

And so the movement adopted environmental concerns into a Bookchin-like framework. “Environment destruction is merely another manifestation of the fundamentally fucked-up system,” someone called “Panurge” wrote in the *Rat*. Such destruction, according to Panurge, “is the more subtle effect of a social system no longer in the hands of the people.” *The Old Mole* of Cambridge, Massachusetts, agreed: “The problem we face cannot be solved if we think about it in terms of pollution, which is a result of the crisis and not a cause,” wrote Roxanne O’Connell. “It has to do with the way we operate and the way people and nature are viewed—as something to be used and exploited.” Quickly, the environment became a canary in a coalmine for many on the left, a chief indicator of just how oppressive and self-destructive modern, establishment society had become.⁵¹

Not all radicals, however, welcomed the idea that ecology and fighting the establishment went hand-in-hand. Many argued that the one undermined the other. Still fundamentally committed to social justice and a humanistic philosophy, many activists worried that pointing to environmental harm did little to cut to the core of what was wrong with the nation. The politics of ecology had not yet been authoritatively interpreted for this radical generation. In one sense, ecology offered the New Left an even deeper critique of American society: the United States injured not only minorities, workers, women, the impoverished, and third world peoples, but also anyone who ate, drank, or breathed. Not only did modern, industrial society tend to benefit a privileged few at the expense of many; it also tended toward the deterioration of the natural world, and even the extinction of the human race. In another sense, however, ecology blunted the movement's radicalism. Claiming that industrial production harmed everyone smudged the differences in race, class, and gender that had become central to the New Left's criticisms of the modern state. The New Left's humanism was rooted in inequities of power between different social groups, and the notion that American society was unwittingly poisoning itself downplayed the unequal distribution of political influence and material resources as it promoted a "we're all in this together" attitude.

Radicals skeptical of ecology stressed these risks. In a *Rat* article generally favorable toward environmental actions, "Pocahontas" nevertheless warned that supposedly radical ecology groups were in reality liberal: "They don't make the connection between violence on the environment and the society that perpetrates that violence." More forthrightly, an article in the *Fifth Estate* declared, "Ecology sucks! It sucks the life out of social reform. It sucks the energy out of campus movements. It sucks the irritants out of capitalism. It sucks change out of politics. It sucks reason out of thought." The ecology movement, the article went on to argue, siphoned money away from crucial social programs, shifted blame from industrial polluters to society as a whole, and distracted from more urgent issues. "Limpid water in our lakes and rivers will not help the worker who doesn't have a job."⁵²

As humanists, New Left radicals were uninterested in any ecology movement that did not center on the social issues they still considered paramount. The week before the first Earth Day, in April 1970, the *Berkeley Tribe* reminded its readers, "there will be no peace between man and nature until there is peace amongst men and women." As anarchists, radicals questioned any framing of environmental concern that did not indict American society as a whole. "Pollution control," the *Tribe* argued, "at this point is merely another means of social control: to prevent America's children from realizing that the crisis in the environment represents nothing less than a crisis in America itself."⁵³ The New

Left wanted an ecology movement humanistic enough to emphasize social inequality and radical enough to call for a new kind of society.

For many radicals, the first Earth Day became a symbol of the wrong kind of ecology. Already, the mainstream media had been covering the story of ecology on campus as the issue to overshadow Vietnam, using words like “responsible,” “conservative,” and “unpolitical.”⁵⁴ Earth Day—created by a United States senator, supported by the Nixon Administration, and embraced by several major corporations—was for many on the left the clearest sign yet of ecology’s potential for co-opting the radical movement. According to the editors of *Ramparts*, Earth Day organizers were attempting to “banish everything but environment to the back pages of our minds.” That same month, *New Left Notes* called overpopulation worries “racist hysteria” and argued that “The problem of non-white people . . . is super-exploitation and racist oppression, not ‘overpopulation.’” Bellingham, Washington’s *Northwest Passage*, an alternative newspaper that had shifted its coverage from New Left issues in general to ecology in particular, published a letter just after Earth Day from “an angry reader,” who called ecology “the white liberal’s cop-out,” and complained, “People figure that if they stick with a subject which is controversial as Apple Pie . . . then they won’t get hassled by those in power.”⁵⁵

In fact, Earth Day was a politically diverse event, demonstrating the different valences of environmentalism at the beginning of the 1970s. The environmental teach-in comprised hundreds of gatherings around the country, from organized and sanctioned rallies and marches to clandestine vandalism of corporations’ headquarters. At the University of Alaska, Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel argued in favor of an 800-mile oil pipeline across the state. At the University of Minnesota, Senator Walter Mondale proposed better government regulation of polluters. And at the Sylvan Theater in Washington, D.C., Rennie Davis told the audience, “we are not going to be tricked into an ecology movement that diverts us from our revolutionary purposes.” Davis described ecology as connected to black liberation, feminism, and ending the war, and declared, “We are saying No to the leadership that wants to use us as tools for liberal politicians.”⁵⁶

After Earth Day, the environmental movement quickly associated itself with the politics of liberal reform, as mainstream environmental groups settled into a tacit partnership with the federal government. A flurry of environmental legislation passed by the Nixon Administration set the terms for environmental activism: filing environmental impact statements, pressing the Environmental Protection Agency into action, identifying endangered species, and suing

industry under a handful of revamped laws to protect air, water, and soil. The new legal regime made the federal government an environmentalist's closest ally. And so the "group of ten" environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Wilderness Society, Environmental Defense Fund, and others—formed an influential lobby in Washington, D.C., to leverage federal power. The 1970s was the decade that the mainstream environmental movement became tied to the liberal state.⁵⁷

But at the end of the 1960s, environmentalism occupied an ambiguous political space. In a decade of vigorous political activism, ecological concerns had played a limited role. For most of the 1960s, the New Left, philosophically committed to issues of social justice, had little interest in the plight of the natural world. Late in the decade, a more and more radical student movement began to see ecological concerns as a powerful indictment of fundamental American values. As student activists disavowed modern American society, they used those concerns as a radical critique of the post-WWII United States. Having largely abandoned liberalism, the New Left adapted the ecology movement to an anarchist framework that emphasized decentralized social structures, personal over economic relationships, and an organic order arising from the bonds of community rather than the dictates of government. Environmentalism's inherent skepticism toward industrialization and unfettered capitalism fit easily into the student movement's bitter assessment of postwar America.

But environmentalism's tendency to subordinate issues of social justice and human freedom to a broad concern with people's impact on the planet was still a source of unease for many New Leftists. Despite its break with postwar liberalism, the New Left remained grounded in humanistic values; social equality and personal freedom were, in the end, the student movement's most fundamental goals. It was easy enough to locate a humanistic impulse at the heart of leftist philosophies like anarchism, existentialism, and socialism.⁵⁸ It was more difficult to find that impulse, without some qualification, in environmentalism. Many in the New Left could not find it at all and characterized environmentalism as either a distraction from more urgent issues or, worse, an establishment strategy to undermine the radical impulse of the student movement. Murray Bookchin's social ecology convinced some in the New Left that social and ecological problems were simply different manifestations of the same injustices, but most radicals never fully accepted theories like Bookchin's. The New Left never reconciled its concern with social difference and its liberatory goals with environmentalism's indiscriminate view of people and wariness of human entitlement.

As Adam Rome has pointed out, “Acknowledging the sixties roots of environmentalism leads to a deeper understanding of the political, social, and cultural history of the period.”⁵⁹ It also leads to a better understanding of the complicated and variable ideology of environmentalism. The environmental movement continues to have a tricky relationship with postwar liberalism, in which environmentalists and social justice activists can find themselves on the opposite sides of issues like labor rights and immigration. Teasing out the subtle political history of environmentalism in the 1960s can help to explain how the movement has fit into the public debates of the decades since.

NOTES

1. Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 4. Donald Worster similarly argues, “We have not fully appreciated how much the protection of wild nature owes to the spread of modern liberal, democratic ideals and to the support of millions of ordinary people around the world.” See Worster, “Nature, Liberty, and Equality” in *American Wilderness: A New History*, ed. Michael Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 263; see also Worster, “The Intrinsic Value of Nature,” *Environmental Review* 4 (1980).
2. See, for instance, James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 295; Alan Brinkley, “The Therapeutic Radicalism of the New Left,” in *Liberalism and its Discontents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 235. Godfrey Hodgson hints at some key differences between environmentalism and other 1960s movements, but in the end focuses more on similarities; see Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time: From World War II to Nixon—What Happened and Why* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005 [first published by Doubleday and Company, 1976]), 401–11. One of the best syntheses of the history of the environmental movement with a more general history of the decade is Terry Anderson’s *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Historians of the environmental movement have paid far less attention to its pre-Earth Day history than to its popularity in the 1970s. See, for instance, Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) and Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962–1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993). The classic work on post-WWII environmentalism is Samuel Hays’s *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Hays pays closer attention than others to the role of the counterculture but still has little to say about the student movement. The exception is Robert Gottlieb, who looks closely at the relationship between the New Left and environmentalism; see Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993).
3. The limitations of this narrative have been made clear by Adam Rome, who provides the best road map so far to environmentalism in the 1960s. Rome discusses the roles of liberals,

middle-class women, and student radicals in raising environmentalism onto the national stage. But Rome suggests that these three groups contributed, at different times and in different ways, to the *same* environmental movement; he does little to distinguish between the very different principles that motivated each, and produced different environmentalisms. See Adam Rome, "Give Earth A Chance": The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *Journal of American History* 90, no. 2 (September 2003): 525–54.

4. Sidney Lens, "The New Left—and the Old," *The Progressive* 30, no. 6 (June 1966): 19.
5. Dick Howard, "Reactionary Radicals," *New Left Notes* 1, nos. 40–41 (28 October 1966): 1; Paul Booth, "Facing the American Leviathan: Convention Working Paper," *New Left Notes* 1, no. 32 (24 August 1966): 27. On Booth's later thoughts, see James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 235.
6. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 417; Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America From Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 202; Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*.
7. The *Port Huron Statement* is available widely, online and in published form, including as an appendix to Miller, "Democracy Is in the Streets," 329–74.
8. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The New Liberal Coalition," *The Progressive* 31, no. 4 (April 1967): 15.
9. The distinction between classical, eighteenth-century liberalism and American, twentieth-century liberalism—essentially, New Deal liberalism—is a tricky one. In terms of economic beliefs, they are fundamentally opposed; classical liberals believed in laissez-faire economic policies and in the market as a force for social good, whereas New Deal liberals advocated regulation of the market and direct federal intervention in the economy. In terms of social beliefs, they are basically aligned; both classical liberals and New Deal liberals valued individual freedom, not only as the best way to achieve social ends, but as an end in itself. When 1960s activists condemned liberalism, they were rejecting a reliance on public programs and a general faith in capitalism and the state; they were not necessarily challenging the fundamental humanistic values of classical liberalism, many of which they shared. Thus, Todd Gitlin responded to Schlesinger's article about liberalism by writing, "The differences between the New Left and Schlesinger's liberalism could occupy many volumes," carefully specifying that "Schlesinger's liberalism" was only one version. Gitlin found the spirit of Schlesinger's appeal to human reason unobjectionable because, in 1967, the New Left was making the same appeal. See Todd Gitlin, letter in "The People's Forum," *The Progressive* 31, no. 5 (May 1967): 38. For helpful discussions of American liberalism, see Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), especially 3–14; Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling Of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition In America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955).
10. On ERAP, see Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, ch.10; Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 65–66.
11. Todd Gitlin, "Theses for the Radical Movement," *Liberation* 12, no. 3 (May–June, 1967): 34–36.
12. Anon., "After the Convention . . .," *New Left Notes* 2, no. 26 (10 July 1967).

13. Anon., "Calls for Radical Reconstruction," *New Left Notes* 1, no. 14 (22 April 1966): 5.
14. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*, 343. For Lens's views, see, for instance, Sidney Lens, "Theory and the Movement," *Liberation* 12, no. 3 (May–June, 1967): 28–31; Lens, "The New Left—and the Old," 19–24.
15. Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006 [previously, London: William Heinemann, 1902]), 188.
16. Wini Breines and James Miller describe the early New Left's moderate-to-radical politics in greatest detail. Breines maintains that despite the early New Left's generally liberal rhetoric, its structure and programs embodied the seeds of a "prefigurative politics"—an aversion to hierarchy, and an interest in means over ends—that was inherently opposed to liberal institutions like the Democratic Party. James Miller, emphasizing SDS's championing of "participatory democracy," argues that the early SDS had a more cogent ideology, rooted in democracy and owing little to the Democratic Party's liberalism, than most historians grant. But both Breines and Miller acknowledge that whatever radical potential SDS had in its early years, that radicalism did not reach fruition until later in the decade. See Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968*; and Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*.
17. On Reisman and Whyte, see David Reisman, Reuel Denney, and Nathan Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989). On Mills, see C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956); Andrew Jamison and Ron Eyerman, *Seeds of the Sixties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 36–46.
18. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 8–9. See also John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes, eds. *Marcuse: From the New Left to the Next Left* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); Jamison and Eyerman, *Seeds of the Sixties*, ch. 4. On Marcuse's popularity among students, see "One-Dimensional Philosopher," *Time* 91, no. 12 (22 March 1968): 38.
19. For an overview of these developments, see Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, chs. 15, 18, 19.
20. For a description of the march, and for excerpts from Potter's speech, see Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), ch. 11.
21. Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 143–50; Arthur Miller, "Introduction," in *Kesey's Garage Sale*, ed. Ken Kesey (New York: Viking, 1973 [1967]), xiii–xviii. The New Left was certainly socialistic, and many of its members approved of socialist ideas, but the New Left's socialism was never as doctrinaire as the Old Left's. Historian Wini Breines writes, "On balance, the early new left and the student movement were not traditionally socialist. They did not believe in a working-class revolution, or in a Marxist analysis of social change and of political organization"; Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968*, 16.
22. On the history of the Underground Press Network, the Liberation News Service, and the alternative press generally, see Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life & Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Roger Lewis, *Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and its Context* (London: Heinrich Hanau Publications, 1972); Raymond Mungo, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times With Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
23. Anon., "The Case Against Electoral Politics," *Rag* 1, no. 7 (November 1966): 18.

24. Paul Goodman, "The Black Flag of Anarchism," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 July 1968, 10.
25. George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: Meridian, 1962), 9. Woodcock's *Anarchism* is the classic work on the subject; see also Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992); James Joll, *The Anarchists* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
26. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 468.
27. George Woodcock, "Anarchism Revisited," *Commentary* (August 1968): 56.
28. Anthony Howe, "Provos: The Dutch Anarchists," *Rag* 1, no. 2, (17 August 1966): 3.
29. "Provo," "Provo Manifesto," and "Provo by a Provo" *WIN* 2, no. 19 (5 November 1966). A year or two later, a group of radicals in Berkeley, California, began calling themselves the Provos and giving away free food in Civic Center Park, which local hippies renamed "Provo Park." The new name stuck. See W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 152.
30. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority* (New York: New American Library, 1966), 30, 208–9.
31. Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 147. On "prairie power," see Miller, pp. 237–59, and Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 148–49; for Tom Good's comments, see "Ideology and SDS," *New Left Notes* 1, no. 29 (5 August 1966): 5.
32. Rossinow argues that a specifically Christian existentialism, articulated by theologians like Paul Tillich, shaped the New Left, especially in Austin, Texas. Although Rossinow considers existentialism central to New Left politics, he does not claim that it precluded other philosophies or ideologies; in fact, he points to an "anarchist vogue" in Austin precipitated by the growing popularity of the ecology movement. See Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 280.
33. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 291–95.
34. Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 101.
35. Student Libertarian Action Movement, *An Introduction to Anarchism* (1970), Microfiche: Anarchist Pamphlets 1830–1985 (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1988), Tamiment Library, New York University.
36. Cisco Harland, ed., *The Hippie Papers: A History of the Communication Company* (Sudbury, MA: Water Row Books, 1992), 62.
37. Anon., "Affinity Groups," *Rat* 1, no. 13 (9–22 August 1968): 11.
38. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 232.
39. On radicalism within the antiwar movement, see Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 145–47. On the Democratic National Convention, see Sale, *SDS*, 473–77; David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). On meetings and restlessness within SDS, see Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 282–86. For Oglesby's view, see Carl Oglesby, "Notes on a Decade Ready for the Dustbin," *Liberation* 14, nos. 5–6 (August–September 1969): 5–19.
40. This account of People's Park is taken largely from W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, ch. 4.
41. On Ecology Action, see *WIN* (special Ecology Issue, August, 1969): 31.

42. Gene Anderson, "The Uptight Politics of Conservation," Bancroft Library, Social Protest Collection, reel 89 (undated, but based on several references to "LBJ," probably mid-1968).
43. Tom Hayden and Frank Bardacke, "Free Berkeley," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 7 (22–29 August 1969): 13–16.
44. Keith Lampe, "The Real Dirt on People's Park," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 8 (29 August–4 September 1969): 10.
45. Anon., "We Will Be the Earth" and "Never Forget," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 22 (30 May–5 June 1969): 2. Anon., "... and but for the sky there are no fences facing . . .," *Berkeley Tribe* 2, no. 10 (13–20 March 1970): 13–16. On the various post-People's Park actions and events, see Anon., "Earth Read-Out," *The Fifth Estate* (12–25 June 1969): 10; Anon., "Eco-Tripping," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 9 (5–12 September 1969): 7; Anon., "Extinction Fair—Dig?" *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 23 (6–12 June 1969): 13; Anon., "Ecolibrium," *Berkeley Tribe* 2, no. 5 (6–13 February 1970): 13; Anon., "Tree Conspiracy Spreads," *Berkeley Tribe* 2, no. 2 (16–23 January 1970): 7.
46. For Ginsberg, see "The Trees Are Our Allies," *The Fifth Estate* (30 October–12 November 1969): 8. For Romney, see "Lumpy Wavy and the 5 Days of Styrofoam," *Seed* 4, no. 8 (7–20 November 1969): 8. For Gitlin, see "Earth and Politics," *Space City News* 1, no. 4 (17 July–28 August 1969): 19.
47. On the wilderness conference, see Anon., "Last Chance For Our Species," *Berkeley Barb* 8, no. 12 (21–27 March 1969): 14. On a more radical ecology, see Anon., "Earth Read-Out," *Berkeley Tribe* 1, no. 20 (27 November–5 December 1969): 18.
48. Anon., "Radical Conservation, Part I: Technology & Environment," *Rag* 3, no. 19 (26 June 1969): 3; Anon., "Earth Revolts: Man Victim," *Rat* 2, no. 14 (9–23 July 1969), 14.
49. For a collection of Bookchin's most important essays from the period, see Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2004).
50. Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *The Fifth Estate* (2–15 April 1970): 9.
51. "The Politics of Ecology," *Rat* 2, no. 16 (12–26 August 1969): 12; "The Roots of Ecology," *The Old Mole*, no. 36 (3–16 April 1970): 12.
52. Anon., "Hold it Right There, Sam! Have You Heard About Ecology?" *Rat* 2, no. 24 (December 1969): 10; Anon., "Vote No On Survival," *The Fifth Estate* 4, no. 21 (19 February–4 March 1970): 7.
53. Anon., "Eco-Shuck," *Berkeley Tribe* 2, no. 15 (17–24 April 1970): 15.
54. See, for instance, "Environment May Eclipse Vietnam as College Issue," *New York Times*, 30 November 1969, 1; "Youth and Environmental Reform," *New York Times*, 24 November 1969, 32; "New Bag on Campus," *Newsweek* 74, no. 25 (22 December 1969): 72.
55. Anon., "Editorial," *Ramparts* 8, no. 11 (May 1970): 2–4; Anon., "Too Many People?" *New Left Notes* 5, no. 13 (May 1970): 8; Anon., "A Letter From An Angry Reader," *Northwest Passage* 3, no. 4 (18 May 1970): 12.
56. On Earth Day, see National Staff of Environmental Action, eds., *Earth Day: The Beginning* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993), 105–14.
57. See Sale, *The Green Revolution*, 25–27, 33–39; Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire*, ch. 6.
58. Rossinow makes this point about the broad appeal of humanism in the 1960s: "The shared

ground of humanism fueled the sense of kinship between the new left and cold war liberalism, on one side, and between the new left and the counterculture, on the other, although these relations were nonetheless fraught with tension, even antipathy.” One person’s humanism, of course, is not necessarily another’s; the philosopher Kate Soper points out that liberal humanism and existential humanism were very different ideas. At the root of all humanisms, however, is “a profound confidence in our powers to come to know and thereby to control our environment and destiny.” This is one of the central differences between humanistic philosophies and environmentalism: the former emphasize our ability purposefully to shape a better world, whereas the latter stresses unintended consequences and our limited understanding of how our actions affect nature. See Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 8; Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-Humanism* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986), 18, 14.

59. Rome, “Give Earth a Chance,” 553.