

Transcript ~ Anarchist Principles

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Now what do we mean by anarchist principles? Last time we gave a general account or picture of anarchist thought and towards the end of my lecture, I summed it up in terms of what A-N-A-R-C-H-Y could be made to stand for. 'A' for the affirmation of individual freedom, individual potential; 'N' for negation of all external authority, state authority, institutional authority, external authority of every kind; 'A' for the awakening of the masses to the recognition of their common potential and their future; 'R' for revolution, a revolution as a continuous activity working at all times, a revolution in human minds, a revolution in human hearts, a revolution in conduct, a revolution addressed to the removal and redress of injustices but also to the abolition of the state and of the entire apparatus of government; 'C' for communes and for all cooperative activity where human beings voluntarily constitute themselves into associations and are able to draw out their latent cooperative abilities; 'H' for historical optimism, the faith that what one is doing is supported by the whole course of human events and it is also the hidden trend of the present and the necessary trend of the future; lastly, a kind of yearning for a golden age, an ideal society where human nature will truly come into its own.

Now all anarchist thought assumes that whatever men and women essentially are is obscured, is obscured because of institutional conditioning. Now this is an important point that we don't even know what human nature is really like because human nature is already warped and distorted by coercion, by a continuous appeal to reward and punishment. If you bombard a being born with a naked sense of wonder, directness, simplicity, sympathy, generosity with a certain narrow pinched philosophy of what is it to be a human being, making it continually dependent upon reinforcement from the outside, working through threats upon fears, eventually you produce a very warped kind of human being.

Now this is very important, this idea that we don't really know what we truly are because we can't really find ourselves, let alone fulfill ourselves, through the forums and the institutions that are available. This is an innately revolutionary idea. It is rather like saying in classical texts on meditation that meditation is a removal of all hindrances to the unmodified mind. The mind is capable of an inherent expansion, it can move in every direction, it can become as boundless as space, but unfortunately if this is the innate tendency of the mind, the mind is also prone to limit itself, hinder itself, and therefore all that is self-injured, engendered in the way of limitations come in the way of natural expansion. So you've got to peel off the mask, remove the hindrances, restore the innate fluidity and expansiveness of the mind.

Now so indeed with human beings in general. Human beings are intrinsically capable out of their commonality with all other human beings of putting themselves into the position of others. The most important mark then for the anarchist of true ethics is your capacity to put yourself in the position of another human being, to transcend your own role, your own situation, to become that person, to ask what is it like to be that person. And this innate capacity of the human being is not supported at all by our institutions and by the ethos prevailing in a social structure which is so much working through sanctions, through reward and punishment. So as a result there is a furtiveness to human behavior, there is a hypocrisy, there is a lack of innate honest expression of true feeling, there is synthetic emotion, and also human beings once they become fear-ridden become obsessed with their own separate self-interest.

Now we of course take a lot of this for granted because it is very much part of the dominant philosophy of utilitarianism in the last 200 years. Now Rousseau in France and Switzerland in the 18th century challenged the social contract theorists of England, Hobbes and Locke. Rousseau argued that man is innately good and his famous statement in one of his early essays was, man is born free but finds himself everywhere in chains. The innate goodness of man is repressed by the kind of socialization which in fact constricts and makes artificial human conduct. So, Rousseau was very critical of what we call civilization. Civilization he felt is achieved at the cost of artificiality, at the

cost of a false sophistication, an alienation from the innate sympathy, generosity, sense of wonder of the child. And this, though Rousseau was not himself an anarchist but had a whole philosophy of community and popular sovereignty, was very influential as an undercurrent in 19th century thought.

Godwin as a young man read various French philosophes. He read especially Helvétius, d'Holbach, his philosophy of nature; he also read Rousseau. And Godwin already aware through his own self-education of Hobbes and Locke rejected the idea of social contract as put forward by Hobbes and Locke. He rejected the view of human nature of his predecessors in England. Godwin also knew something about Plato but a great deal of what he thought out was on his own, and being brought up as a Calvinist, rejecting Calvinism all the way. He experienced in his own psyche the extraordinary tyranny of the idea of an omnipotent God and the idea of predestination through the arbitrary will of a supreme creator. And Godwin felt from his own experience because of self-education, that through reading and thinking he progressively freed himself, and he assumed that all human beings are innately capable of freeing themselves from all the luggage of the past and the tyranny of false conceptions. But to be able to do this one has got to think very clearly and abstractly.

And therefore Godwin in 1793, at the time of the French Revolution, wrote in 18th century style, which is no doubt difficult, but if you're patient with it and pick out sentences it's not as difficult as it seems. He wrote his Enquiry into Political Justice, and in your book if you'll see at the very beginning he sets out what the intention, the object of that book is. The object of that book is to find out what are the powers of human beings, and how can they be seen independently of what he calls positive institutions, working through force, working through coercion, working through sanctions. And very quickly he says you'll find there is a gap between human potentials and human behavior; human behavior as conditioned by coercive institutions, and therefore he says what we really need to do is to think away from existing institutions. This is a very important exercise. It's an exercise in philosophical freedom, in philosophical abstraction, difficult no doubt to handle that level of abstraction for many people who are today even more

conditioned by all the tendencies to concretization because of television, because of images, the very capacity to think abstractly is enormously undermined unless one works with certain civil systems such as in mathematics. But for Godwin if you really want to think out alternative societies and what are the hidden possibilities of human nature you've got to abstract away from the facts. You've got to imagine society very different from what exists. You've got to imagine human beings who are not conditioned by fear and reward. You have to imagine each human being as capable of an innate freedom of thought and that freedom of thought comes painfully through self-correction; but that freedom of thought also involves liberating the fertility of the mind which is capable of making so many complex associations of ideas from what is given, from what is required through sanctions by external institutions. This means you really got to understand that the human mind is innately progressive.

A lot of Godwin makes much more sense today because now we know in the 20th century, unlike in the 17th or 18th or 19th, enough about the human brain to know that what we don't know about the brain is vastly greater than what we do know about the brain. But we do know this, that most of the potential brain energy of a human being is untapped; that human beings are living as it were within the basement, they are through habits drawing a very small portion of their potential mental power, their capacity for concentration, their capacity for visualization, their capacity for imagination, their capacity for innovation and even to know this is very liberating. And if you see that in this all human beings are in a very similar position, that they are the victims of modes of discourse, types of conduct which are rooted in fear or desire for reward, a kind of mechanical, animalistic response, you will really come to see that there is a truth about you going back to your childhood, a truth that is somewhere in your dreams, in your solitary moments, which has very rarely expressed itself, very rarely had a chance to come out.

And Godwin says if you recognize that the human mind is innately progressive, that there are no limits to the expansion of human awareness, then of course it becomes an extraordinary blow or corrective, it can act as a dynamite to inertia, to ossification. So

you don't have to be the way you are, you don't have to be the way you were, people in general do not have to be limited. If only they can see that this limitation, though it comes from the outside, has subtly involved their acquiescence, their passivity, their cooperation. So if only they would refuse to cooperate with the conditioning process, they would release the elasticity of the mind. The mind is like a spring that has been held down, and it's been held down for so long that therefore one has a sense of congestion, of claustrophobia. But once you see that you can do something about it, the mind is restored to its true state, to its natural elasticity, its capacity for choice, for expansion, alteration of perspective, for selecting and sifting combinations of ideas and concepts, ideas which Godwin said are to the mind as atoms are to the body. And just as atoms are continuously being interchanged between different material objects, so also there is a continuous interchange of ideas. But most of the time, alas, the process is unconscious, because people are creatures of habit, and people therefore become extremely acquiescent in reference to what they think are the facts, and as a result, the potential for creativity is mostly untapped in society.

So this, for Godwin, is a very serious state of affairs, and to be able to see this clearly, he said, let us affirm certain general principles. Principles are propositions, they affirm or deny, they bring together ideas that otherwise we would not connect. And Godwin wants to lay down certain principles which provide criteria, criteria for independent judgment of all external institutions. And he says the starting point of all of this must be the recognition of the universal desire in all human beings for happiness. All human beings are moved by this central concern for happiness, and happiness is much vaster, much richer than can be associated merely with physical pleasures.

And therefore Godwin says let us distinguish between primary pleasures and secondary pleasures. If you live a typical routinized existence, you have certain physical pleasures that after a point become automatic—a pleasure in food, a pleasure in certain kinds of physical activity. All these pleasures connected with the senses have no doubt their place for Godwin, because Godwin does not despise sensation, he does not

deprecate the physical body, but he says, if you really look at happiness, you will find that your mind is involved, your expectations are involved, you're involved in comparison and contrast. There is all the difference between when you're very hungry, ravenously consuming food, and in a very leisurely way, choosing to make something or go to eat somewhere, and appreciating the taste of very well-prepared food in which the mind is involved, in which there is a kind of savoring, and not just a savoring, but having food in a certain kind of atmosphere, which say very like the Japanese do with very lovely dishes. It doesn't matter, even if you live very simply, you can just have two or three very fine dishes, you might be just having soup, and it might be just soup from a tin, but by putting a little parsley, a few herbs of your own, you give it some individual character. But if you sit down calmly to enjoy it, without rush, not as if you're just filling in a machine, but as if you are a thinking being reflecting and enjoying, this can make a very great difference to your assimilation. And, in other words, human beings are capable, by using the mind, to intensify, increase, and make more subtle and exquisite the range of pleasures available to them.

So, Godwin says, secondary pleasures involve sympathy. Naturally you're going to get more joy out of eating if you're eating with someone else with whom you can share something, someone with whom you can look at the sun, someone with whom you could talk, someone with whom you could just sit in silence, someone with whom you feel a certain comradeship. So, sympathy is very important to increasing one's capacity for true pleasure or for happiness. Then, of course, it is quite natural that when you're enjoying food in the company of a friend, you like the feeling if you have cooked it, that you have really done a good job. You like the feeling that you can do something which can give joy to someone else, which you yourself find acceptable. And even if, of course, you're critical of yourself, and you're aware that you could do better, or you're happy to learn from someone else who has a better menu or a better flair for cooking, but you see that your own self-approbation is not unimportant.

That is you have to think well of yourself. Self-respect is rooted in self-approbation, and this is a paradox. If you are honestly concerned with the respect you give yourself,

then you're not going to be a mere creature of a narrow view of self-interest based upon the conceptions of others. It is very legitimate that human beings should find a basis for self-respect, and this basis for self-respect is quite compatible with intellectual sympathy, sympathy for other human beings who also have self-respect, and Godwin says, if you start to think about this you'll find that these secondary pleasures involving sympathy and self-approbation, they extend the range of pleasures. And therefore, he says, ultimately, what is happiness? Happiness is a maximum variety and the maximum access to that variety of sources of pleasure. A high civilization is one in which there is a variety of sources of satisfaction, in which people are not all conformist and conditioned by one narrow view of what is it to seek satisfaction.

So, the richer the variety, the richer the diversity of means, the greater the general access to those means, and one of the means actually is time, it's not always a matter of material goods. Having enough time, enough leisure for enjoyment of whatever it is that you are about to enjoy, whether it be music or food or music and food and the company of others altogether, it is very important that there be maximum access to a varied range of sources of pleasure. And furthermore, it is very important to happiness that you can have some continuity in your satisfaction, that you're not constantly distracted, not constantly interrupted. If you can ever sit down to savor and enjoy something, because you're endlessly distracted, endlessly your attention is deflected, you can't really release your potential for true enjoyment of true happiness.

Now, in other words, Godwin makes you think. He wrote this in the 18th century in a much simpler society, he saw then trends which would one day become tyrannical. Today, of course, we see it much more clearly. So it requires great courage of mind to say, no, there must be an alternative, there must be another lifestyle, another way of life, I don't have to crowd in like a machine all the impressions, I don't have to go around like a buzzing machine, I can choose and I can select, and even though I have to work with existing limitations, but I can increase the amount that I choose, the amount of time, leisurely contemplation that I bring to my life.

Say, apply this to 'Anarchist Thought', instead of being bombarded by the assignments, pick only one sentence, one sentence, a paragraph from your reading, meditate upon it, don't worry if you don't have the whole thing, you're not expected to, take a sentence, take a paragraph, take a seed idea. So if you yourself will select, and here you have the opportunity, elsewhere of course, you might have to go through much more information but make the best of what you can. Then of course you will really come to see that what you can do, others can do as well. And therefore you can generate a concept of universal happiness in which there is an enormous increase in leisure, in simplification, where the basic needs are much easier to fulfill, and where a lot of the clutter and excess which Godwin thinks has got to do with inequality, injustice, and especially property in society, all of this can go.

So he says if you start to think this way then you begin to find that you can't really develop yourself, your understanding, your reason, your capacity for good judgment, choosing among alternatives, unless you can overcome prejudice and predilection. The first thing that comes in the way, when you look at other human beings, and this is a mechanical reaction, is prejudice. You see people in terms of height, in terms of weight, in terms of color, in terms of external detail, you rarely have time to see the light in the eyes of human beings. And most of the time there is such a crowding in of these superficial images that you've really got to do something about it, and go you might say to a mountain and put yourself in the position of a man from outer space, of a man from another planet. Put yourself in the position of an impartial spectator, look at the whole of the human condition impartially, see all human beings very much as wanting the same thing. And this is a very liberating exercise because paradoxically the more impartially you can view the human scene the more you become aware of the potentials of all mankind, the more you can release and become credible to yourself in your perception of your own potential. You can't do this purely by thinking and brooding a lot about yourself. This is a great mistake of contemporary society, where what one contemporary writer has called, like the cat eating the mouse, there is one part of a human being devouring the other part through a kind of destructive self-analysis, that arises because

of lack of sympathy, lack of empathy, because one doesn't give enough thought and time to a lot of other people.

And Godwin says, if you can put yourself in the position of an impartial spectator, overcoming prejudice and predilection, then you really come to see what a tremendous potential there is in all humanity. And when you can feel good about this, feeling good is important for Godwin, but it's supported by the understanding, then you are also able to recognize that there is a great deal in you that has yet to come out, that is untapped, that is waiting to be awakened. And therefore he says, do recognize that one can never really feel good if one cannot be truly ethical, and to be truly ethical is to be truly universal, to be truly impartial, to adopt the position of an impartial spectator. Because if you belong to a group of human beings in a commune, in a say a communal household, in a little town, and you really want the good of all, you've got to overcome prejudice, you've got to take what you can find wherever you can find it.

One of the early ideas of the great early American pioneer, Tom Paine, you've got to put no limit to human wisdom. Wherever it is available it has to be tapped, and for this you have to overcome bias, and you have to get beyond mechanical equality. All human beings have potentials; all human beings are equally worthy of respect. Perfectly true, but in practice, because not all human beings are doing enough about it, you've also got to take that into account. Not all human beings are sufficiently independent-minded, using their own reason, too many people are slaves to external images.

And therefore, he says, you've really got to give proper weight to the contribution of one human being vis-à-vis another, but you can do it impartially. But furthermore, he says, every human being can put himself or herself into a position where you could feel so much the reality of the general good that you're quite willing to stand apart and let someone else take over. We certainly do this in the case of an emergency or crisis. If there is a fire, we're not taking votes, we're not allowing anybody to handle it, we want the man, most qualified, the one who really has the knowledge to come and get going and to let us know what to do. In other words, we know how to respond when

we really have a pressing need and want that need to be met. A patient is dying in a hospital, there is no time for taking a vote among all the nurses and all the passers-by. No, that's the time for getting the most knowledgeable, the best available knowledge, and making it work on behalf of the patient.

So we do know this, but Godwin says we can train ourselves to think this way at all times. That is, we can get rid of this false, narrow, competitive view of the self and of one's identity. If you recognize that for all human beings the path is similar, but over a period not all have put themselves in the same position, they have not worked sufficiently to gain true self-reliance. So, where there is true self-reliance that is where you are going to get a real strength. So if you understand this, Godwin says, then you have a criteria, a general criterion of what is justice. Justice is that which will maximize the general good; justice is that which will move most closely towards maximum general happiness. Now, this sounds utilitarian. Well, we'll come to that in a moment. But what Godwin is really saying is if maximum good, or maximum human welfare, is always connected with happiness then every human being must try to move towards a position where he or she can do the utmost for all other human beings. Now here you can clearly see a person is alone because only you can find out what you might have been able to do. No one else can really tell you what you could have done, unless a person knows you very well, they might give you suggestions, but in the end, it is you who have got to ask in different situations, you have to train yourself, is this the best I can do? Can I do more in this situation? Is there more in me that can be released because I am willing to stretch myself?

And again, in a crisis, human beings discover reserve energies, they discover possibilities that they didn't know exist. And most of the time, they don't seem to recognize the need for it, and this is to Godwin, the fault of the existing structure of society. It makes us lazy. Whereas, if we recognize that a human being, as a self-conscious being, must operate the controls himself or herself, a human being must do something about releasing reserve energy, then you really come to see that you have got to do a lot of cool thinking. You have to become very deliberate, you have not only to

overcome prejudices in regard to other human beings, you have to overcome prejudices in regard to yourself. You can't say, "oh, I am that kind of guy, this is the kind of gal I am". That is, you can't give a certain rigid image of who you are in terms of the behavior of the last three months, in terms of what happened this summer, in terms of what happened the last few years. You have got to recognize that really you don't know yourself, and you have got to try out new ways of doing things, it is only when you try them out that you can really begin to discover where your reserve energies lie. And in so doing, if you recognize that this is also true of every other human being, you will actually surprisingly find that to many a problem that is worrying you there is someone near you who has the solution. But you won't know who it is if you proceed on the buddy-buddy theory of human existence. That is a pernicious theory, quite understandable for people in prison, but not good enough if you want to become a truly free man, because there may be somebody who you really don't know, somebody who is forbidding to you, somebody you know who you can't really put in a box, and that person may be able to help you.

So you have got to be able to overcome prejudice and seek for the maximum available knowledge that can come from any possible direction, so as to be able to make the most intelligent choices, appraisals, and thereby maximize your own good, but your own contribution to the good of all. Now, this is no doubt a very ideal concept. Godwin deliberately set up a conception of justice that is so demanding, because you find in terms of this concept of justice, just about every human being could say at the moment of death, I lived below my potential, I didn't do enough for humanity, I didn't do enough for other people, and because I didn't do enough for other people, I didn't really do enough with myself and for myself. This may be depressing, but Godwin says you've got the guts, if humanity is progressive, to recognize this to be the case. But he says don't blame people, people are creatures of the environment. In other words don't get head up and don't get indignant. This is because of the existing state of affairs, because human energy has not been released.

Godwin also sensed a very important thing that you find in Plato. Plato in The Republic says that the immortal soul is concerned with doing justice, it is concerned with itself as an agent, as a creator, and therefore the immortal soul is not concerned with being acted upon from the outside. This is for Plato the *nous*. The *psyche*, the soul when it is conditioned by all that happens in the sensory world, in the empirical world, that *psyche* becomes an object acted upon from the outside. In other words every human being is both a creator and a creature, but that in us which is a creature of external influences is wanting justice done to us, whereas that in us which is an active agent, a creative agent, is wanting to do justice. And why for Plato this is very important is because in The Republic you have 'The Myth of Er'. The soul at the moment of death is taking stock of its life and is also determining its next life. And a number of examples are given of different people, the choices they will make in reference to their future lives, and there the critical thing is when you look back at your life how much justice have you done to other human beings, not how much has been done to you.

So clearly you see, despite all our talk of rights and autonomy, typically we live, and this is very much supported by behaviorism, we live as creatures of the environment acted upon from outside, whereas to live as a creative agent requires courage, it requires meditation in solitude, it requires a willingness to find out what is it you could do independent of what others now are doing or may do for yourself. And once you change the very basis, the very polarity you might say, of your magnetic field, then your sphere of discretion, to use a lovely phrase of Godwin, your sphere of discretion does not become a self-protective sphere where you are hiding from others, but it becomes a dynamic creative field, an expansive sphere from which you can reach out benevolently to other human beings. So this is a very powerful and ideal concept of justice, but it helps to change your polarity. You may never be able to do full justice to everyone, but at least you are not oppressed with whether others have done justice to you. And Godwin says in this way you also generate a concept of excellence in relation to freedom, of virtue in relation to making the most effective use of your capacity to contribute to the general

good, a concept of duty where you truly feel a kind of necessity in contributing to the good of the whole, and you think away from rights.

Godwin was not at all happy about the emphasis upon rights. He felt that, of course, if all human beings are going to be moved by a concept of universal justice, they are going to be impartial spectators, and all human beings are going to be truly virtuous, that is truly benevolent both in intention and in result, to be benevolent in result needs knowledge, they have the knowledge, but they also have the goodwill, if this is going to happen, then of course automatically everybody's share or claim or right is also secure. A's performing his duty to B and C automatically generates a fulfillment of a claim or a share of B and C. Each of us is entitled to the best from everyone else. In that sense, each of us has a claim on others. That claim is only meaningful if each of us is concerned to do the best. If you're more concerned and actively concerned to do the best for others, you become credible in calling from others their best, and then you're drawing upon it, but it is not an offensive claim. In other words, he says, it becomes simply a recognition of what human beings owe to each other, and thereby what human beings also may legitimately expect from each other. And he says this is very different from a view of rights that is connected with property, that is based upon separateness, that is based upon self-exclusion, because that view of rights will very quickly make you concerned with what others are doing for you, it will make you mentally lazy, it will make you passive.

So, for Godwin, the important thing is to be less passive and to be more active in awareness, to initiate more and to be less a mere responder to events; to take the initiative, this is to individuate. And therefore, he actually said, excellence in all human beings, in the human species, is a function of innovation, initiative, independence of mind, and here he especially commended what he called the right to private judgment. It is very important that you make up your mind on your own, that you think away from what you have heard, from what you have borrowed. Even if you come to the same conclusion it is very important that three different people independently come to a

conclusion which each feels good about, which each has really thought out in terms of alternatives, and this faculty of independent judgment will atrophy if it is not exercised.

So, what comes in the way of all of this? What comes in the way of all of this is external authority concentrating force, that is what the government represents, a concentration of force working coercively, working through imposition. And for Godwin government isn't merely at a distance. In his own day, what was happening in Whitehall, Parliament, you might say was not very important where he was living. You could say the same now about Washington. But actually, he says, once you concentrate force in a central institution you create a climate of thought in society where people are concerned to coerce, to impose. So most of the time in modern society people are imposing on each other their ill-considered opinions, therefore they are not really learning, gaining true knowledge, they are not exercising positive freedom.

And he says, if you really understand this, then you come to see that there will always be a gap between human progression, the progressive awareness and awakening of the human mind, and institutions. Institutions have a kind of false perpetuity, they try to freeze something, and this goes back to Roman times, this is a mistake. Whatever the institution it is going to lag behind human progress in awareness, and therefore it is very important that we try to think of structures, associations, simpler combinations of human beings, where people can more directly enter into communication and intercourse, which is meaningful, noetic, and creative. And if this is what we've got to do, we've got to see the corruption in the psychology of rewards, the search for punishment, the fear of punishment, or the search for reward. Supposing, he says, on your own you have thought out something good you can do for other people, and suddenly someone comes from outside and says, you're required to do this, otherwise you'll be punished. It may be the very same thing which you had meant to do, but there is a corrosion, there is a corruption. You don't even know anymore whether you're doing it because that's what you feel you ought to do, because you feel good about it, or because someone else required you to do it. So therefore, once you get used to responding only to bribes and threats, after a point you find you really can't be creative.

So, this is what has happened to human beings. Over many years, you have grown up in a situation where they can only respond through fear or reward, and therefore they can't really make use of leisure, they can't innovate, and they're constantly running away and saying, it is everyone else's fault, or nothing can be done. In other words, they are falling back into a kind of mental indolence. So, for Godwin, the answer is the emergence of true individuals, truly individuated human beings. But what Godwin wants is going to be a slow process, it is not going to happen very fast. The rate at which individuals are going to break away from the mold and truly release their creative energy is going to be somewhat slow, but if enough people think about this, and if enough people understand how this process works then you could do something to increase the chance of freedom, and therefore happiness, and therefore moving towards a better state of affairs.

So you can see that Godwin starting from principles which are very demanding, in terms of which everybody could do better, is not giving an answer which is going to be flattering to the weaker side of one. There is a weaker side in oneself which wants a fantasy myth, which wants to be coaxed into assuming that everything is going to work out quickly. This, for Godwin, is immature. And we are used to working through human weaknesses. Most of our friendships, most of our choices are based upon weakness, therefore, of course, we don't do very much with our potential. And Godwin wants us to have the guts, the courage, to work in terms of our strength, and to him this frees the mind. There is something very therapeutic, very liberating, in seeing things clearly as they are, in taking an inventory. Just as when you take your accounts, you see exactly how much you are indebted, or what is it you have to do, so also with the mind, so also with the moral life. Take an honest inventory of your limitations, your strengths, and if you find that the sums don't add up, well, better to face it early and see for what it is and then think of corrective measures. In other words, we have got to overcome self-deception, and self-deception is linked up to prejudice, it is linked up to injustice, it is linked up therefore to the passive need of vast numbers of people for the coercion of

external authority. So this is a formidable picture of freedom seen from the standpoint of the individual.

To Bakunin, on the other hand, he's at the opposite end of the spectrum. You've got to see everything from the point of view of universal solidarity, from the point of view of the whole of the human race, from the point of view of the whole of the community. In other words, Bakunin coming out of Russia, recognizing the tremendous strength of the milieu, the, you might say, primitive communism in a Russian commune, recognizing also the appalling corruption of czarist institutions, of everything that is represented not only by the military, but also by the intellectuals in Petersburg; Bakunin then traveling in the rest of Europe finds that when he comes out of the influence of Proudhon, Hegel, and Marx, that Marxism makes a lot of sense to him. Because Bakunin notices a very extraordinary paradox, that those throughout history who talk a religious, idealist language end up in practice as apologists for elites, they end up, in fact, the exact opposite. And he says, you've got to understand this clearly, you mustn't be mesmerized by language. Beware of the person who is talking in the name of God, 'the God', because that's the person who throughout history has introduced the Inquisition, torture, persecution. Bakunin knows very well the history of Europe, it's a torture history. And he says, it is a church that first showed the trick, which later on the state performs; talk in terms of universal good for the sake of gaining control, and he says, this is very sinister, it's very frightening, but you've got to recognize this.

Whereas, paradoxically, and he found this to be true of Marxism, philosophical materialism, those who are purportedly materialists, basically they are early pioneers in, you might say, philosophical biology, they are talking about human interdependence, they are talking about primary needs and material facts, and they are restoring the continuity between the human species and the animal species. Bakunin had nothing against animals. There is nothing wrong with trying to understand what is it that characterizes the animal world and also recognizing that this is one critical part of the human species. But he says, it's a paradox. If you start with the facts, with physical advantages, with ecology and biology, though you start with a materialistic starting

point, you actually end up very humanitarian, because you find yourself freed from dividing human beings into sheep and goats, according to whether they are true believers or heretics. You will in other words come to be humanitarian. Now, here Bakunin was very right, because in the late 18th century, it was French encyclopedists, ex-Jesuits, anti-clerical, it was philosophical materialists who introduced many humanitarian reforms. If there are humanitarian reforms, say, in reference to prisons, after all, until the late 19th century, you would pay money to watch a hanging. Things were pretty terrible. And in the 18th century, the people really challenged and questioned all these tortures and all these appalling instances of human cruelty were philosophical materialists, were humanists, they were atheists, meaning they did not hide behind some one man-created concept of anthropomorphic god. Now, when you read a lot of Bakunin, you would find that Bakunin is actually truly responsive to what may be called the spiritual current in humanity that has to do with consciousness, but he's very concerned to detach this from institutional religion. And he says, why do you have to understand this process, because you find that just as a church working through a man-created chimerical fiction concept of God exploits human beings in the name of that god. So you would also find in politics a lot of exploitation goes on in the name of ethics, and this exploitation also works through certain fictions, and one of them, he says, is a fiction of the isolated individual. To him there can be no such thing; that is Bakunin is critical of individualism.

And Godwin is not necessarily an individualist, Godwin is speaking of Platonic individuation, and Godwin is well aware of social bonds. Godwin said explicitly, society is a sum of individuals. But for Bakunin you've got to understand evolution, you've got to understand human consciousness, you've got to broaden your concept of the environment, because both Bakunin and Godwin gave much weight to the environment. But you've really got to see that society represents a principle of interdependence, and this is a fact, this is not an ideal, this is not a theory, it is a fact, it is a fact of human life that human beings are universally interdependent. And if so, what comes in the way of the perception of the universal interdependence of humanity? To

him the big block at the time he wrote, was, as in Marxism, bourgeois morality. Bourgeois morality is hypocritical morality, bourgeois morality is centered upon privilege, centered upon the maintenance of inequality. And he says, over the centuries, human beings have learned cunningly to rationalize, rationalize concentration of power. They will use religious language, they will use moral language, they will use metaphysical language, but in the end what they are rationalizing works on behalf of the few, it does not work on behalf of the many. Now to Bakunin all of this, even in the 19th century, is dead, it's finished, but though it is dead it continues to cast a spell, it takes a lot of time to exorcise and free human beings from what is truly dead. Because Bakunin saw, already in the 19th century, there is a tremendous awakening he said all over the world of the idea of humanity. And Bakunin in his great international brotherhood of workers and his disagreement with Marx, a separate story which we'll touch on at another time, Bakunin recognized a tremendous potential of human beings coming from different parts of the world who recognize the solidarity of the great mass of people. Also Bakunin, like Dostoevsky, understood, though an aristocrat, the wretched of the earth, in the most depraved human being, there is a germ of goodness. In the most lost, wretched human being, the most demented, the most distorted, deformed, in the criminal, in all such people, there is somewhere, in the prostitute, there is some innate spark of recognition of the solidarity of humanity.

So what then comes in the way? Above all what comes in the way is through a false invocation of another fiction, such as a social contract, we create the monolithic sovereign state. And then comes Bakunin's great affirmation, his principle you might say: "The state is a negation of humanity". The state is trying to appropriate from individuals in the name of what can only be given to the whole of humanity. And that is why patriotism is so pernicious, the state is very cunning; it is always asking you to do something more for others, but the others are bounded by an artificial boundary, and within that artificial boundary there are artificial distinctions. So you will end up, really, with ultimately a very egoistic view of the human good. And although egoism and self-preservation is an understandable tendency in human beings, but when it works at the

expense of another tendency which is also innate in human beings, a tendency towards sympathy, solidarity, it becomes destructive. And therefore for Bakunin a great deal of the mythology of the present is destructive and it must be allowed to go, it must be destroyed if necessary; there is something cathartic, something liberating, something purifying about destroying and removing what comes in the way of the affirmation of the solidarity of all humanity. Now in this of course Bakunin was very prophetic. Whether or not one may agree with his Marxism or with all the elements in his argument, and most of the time he really didn't argue because he jumped to conclusions, he was a very generous-hearted man who truly felt in his very bones and blood the solidarity of mankind. And therefore he felt you have to call things by their proper names; call patriotism a lie; see the contract theory for what it is to be a fiction. In other words Bakunin understood how evil truly works; evil is the misappropriation of the good.

For Godwin vice is negative because Godwin didn't really believe that malevolence has sufficient force; of course there is malevolence. Most of the time, he says, vice arises out of lack of benevolence, and we lack benevolence because we are thoughtless. If we don't consciously try to be benevolent, if we don't consciously try to will the good and increase the good, we are going to fall short; and if you fall short after a point, you're going to do things which may actually not be good for others, and you may call it vice. So like a Platonist, Godwin felt that vice is only a privation of virtue, it's the absence of virtue. Now Bakunin in a different way is coming to a similar idea; he's saying, of course there is egoism, of course there is human selfishness, but why does it arise? Because of the frustration and the perversion and the misappropriation of the innate recognition in all humanity of universal solidarity. So the enemy of what is universal is a pseudo-universal, and the state is pseudo-universal, just as the church is pseudo-universal. We have to distinguish between the great universal affirmation of the Christ, of the Buddha, of all the prophets, and institutions in their name which really try to impose one revelation, one institution, some central authority. In the same way we have to distinguish between the universal urge in all humanity for freedom, but a freedom that

is not incompatible with solidarity, a freedom in consciousness which is an affirmation of unity. That to Bakunin is natural, that is he felt untainted in the peasant and it is still there in the worker, but unfortunately in bourgeois society we got a pseudo-morality of mine and thine which is acquisitive, and at the same time we become very clever at using rationalizations, pseudo-moral language. So what is the enemy of true ethics? Pseudo-morality... Pseudo-morality enables us to justify going to war. And he says, what is the logical conclusion of patriotism and affirming state sovereignty? It is perpetual war.

So either you are going to go all the way and accept it; that is the logic, because the state becomes concerned with its own preservation in the name of preserving individuals, but everything is collectivized, institutionalized, centralized. And then, of course, the state becomes capable of introducing a whole apparatus of technology and of repression for the sake of survival, and then of course it's my state versus the rest, and this is no doubt a very powerful mentality you could whip up at any time. Human beings in their ignorance are going to be aroused by fear, by searching for scapegoats. So in that sense you can always foment let's say the Cold War. But it has got nothing to do with the real facts for Bakunin. The vast mass of people, whether in Russia or America, are very much the same, and they recognize the universal interdependence of mankind, and today, more than ever, there is a greater recognition of global solidarity everywhere. If so, we have got to have the courage to say no to those who try to release in the name of patriotism, in the name of nationalism, in the name of civility and allegiance to the state our desire to give up something of ourselves for the sake of all. There is a dishonest exaction of human sacrifice, then it becomes like a monster devouring and also demoralizing people. And this is totally different, fundamentally different in kind from the kind of sacrifice which human beings will voluntarily give when they are affirming solidarity; the solidarity of a group, the solidarity of a commune, the solidarity of mankind. And Bakunin says let us see this very clearly, and to him seeing this clearly is to understand the course of history, because time as for the Marxist so for Bakunin is on the side of true universalization.

For Godwin, you might say, time is on the side of individuation, but Godwin says it's going to take a lot of time before individuation really gets going, and Godwin doesn't say very much about the future because he is pretty occupied in setting out his principles. Bakunin, on the other hand, not being like Godwin a systematic thinker, but really an aristocrat who broke with his family, who was in prison, who traveled often with no money, living off other people, but meeting various people in the different cities of Europe, Bakunin was a kind of wanderer, a kind of nomad, and through this wandering in the cities he found that among many peoples who are down and out, who are rebels, who are eccentrics, who are underprivileged, there was something that they knew, and what they knew was very important to the future, but it cannot really come about without acting out a rejection of the state, a rejection of conscription, a rejection of the expropriation of wealth and property. So Bakunin then clearly believed that the future will inevitably lead us towards the full realization of what is already there, but it can't happen in a very tidy way; it's going to involve a lot of violence because there is already built-in fraud and violence in the system, and it's like a disease.

Bakunin often thought in organic analogies. It's as if society has cancer, if society has cancer, surgery is going to be painful, but the stuff has got to come out; and that is what the state represents, a cancerous growth upon human society, and because of all of this, the health of human beings can never really come into its own without initially an awakening in consciousness. In consciousness you've got to come to affirm universal solidarity, universal freedom, and having come to affirm this unconditionally and universally you must negate institutions and you must refuse to swallow their propaganda. So Bakunin anticipated, you might say the mass age, the mass society of the 20th century, and he saw that there was great peril to propaganda, great peril to conditioning. So you might say he was simply a man much more angry and therefore much more liable to put it very strongly than Godwin ever would in his 18th century cooler, rationalist prose. But whether you start from the standpoint of the individual and set up this demanding and exacting ideal of individual freedom and universal justice, or you start, like Bakunin, with a solidarity of humanity, the fact of biological and

social interdependence of all life and of all species and of all mankind, and then come to negate the mythology that justifies centralization, inequality and injustice, in either case you're really coming back into the true stream of anarchist thought.