

BILBAO 2017 SPEECH

I) Acknowledgements

a- Organizing team

b- The Kaxilda

c- To all the people who have come, regardless of the degree of interest or involvement, whatever the amount of knowledge or questions that are pending. In this difficult task of implementing Social Ecology and Communalism, no one is left behind, on the contrary.

d- It is true that we have invited people with degrees and careers. And it is also to be thankful because for most intellectuals, it is easier to allow oneself to be flattered by power than to engage in a libertarian political movement.

We have also invited Debbie Bookchin, not so much for her last name. What mattered to us when we invited her is not that she was Beatriz and Murray Bookchin's biological daughter, but that she was her spiritual daughter. We have invited her because of her own capabilities and the great work she is doing as a journalist and thinker at the Institute of Social Ecology in Vermont.

f- This is not a question of proselytizing our specific social entities. Since communalism is a world where many worlds fit and potentiate them, what we will look for here in these days is how to set it in motion and develop it.

II) Continuity

Of course, our task is immense and time is pressing because, as Murray Bookchin said, if we don't do the impossible, we will have to face the inconceivable. But we still have some possibilities within our reach and it is a question of not wasting them. Neither optimistic, nor pessimistic, tragic in the manner of the ancient Greeks. We must do the impossible.

This is the second international meeting of Social Ecology. The first took place in Lyon last year. For me it is a great pleasure to hold this second meeting in the Iberian Peninsula and more specifically in Euskal herria. The first attempt dates back to 1998, when a meeting on libertarian municipalism was to be held in Lisbon. At that time, the majority of the libertarian movement was still paralyzed by the weight of its past, that of a powerful trade unionism to which it desperately clung. Although it was no longer as in the 1930s that capitalism was resisted in order to overcome it, but rather how the entire society already trapped in its claws could escape it and leave it without foundation. This stagnation in the past prevented him from updating his thinking, seeing that conditions had changed and listening with serenity to the proposals of M. Bookchin. This stagnation would lead many libertarians to renounce defying the State, thinking naively that this category could be used, occupying its machinery, phagocytating it for the common good.

Fortunately, times have changed and the current of social ecology is opening up, backed by increasingly successful grassroots popular practices. In Chiapas, in Bolivia, in Mexico, in Rojava, as well as in Europe, with the Zad, with the 15M, practices have been initiated, with a clear rejection, both of the antiquated and nineteenth-century models of revolutionary unionism and of the outdated proposals of a Left that has failed a thousand times in its attempt to train the capitalist wolf, climbing behind its backs with the stairs of the institutions. Capital is evil and the State is simply its other side, its indispensable facilitator, no matter how much the most extremist neo-liberals who always end up resorting to it say.

III) The major contributions of Bookchin

One of Bookchin's greatest contributions to my mind is his attitude in the face of adversity and even defeat. A tragic attitude in the Greek sense of the word to which I referred earlier and to which a keen sense of dialectics is added. Thus, throughout his long life as a militant and thinker, we see how the movements in which he is involved, from the Communist Party to anti-nuclear movements and trade unionism, are failing in one way or another. After the repeated despair and sinking, he has always had this determination to overthrow capitalism, all and persecuting in his will not to leave any vacuum of power, that is, to weave alternative revolutionary proposals. He has always had the will to understand and the ability to learn lessons that would allow him to enrich and make his thinking more coherent. This is how, little by little, digging through all the disciplines related to life, with nature in both the first and second nature, he will be able to elaborate, perhaps, the greatest theoretical contribution that could have been given, from the nineteenth century until today. A theoretical framework coherent in two stages: an analytical one, related to human disgrace and the destruction of life, brought to a standstill by the present capitalist society. This first part is summed up in this sentence: "Ecological disasters deepen their roots in social injustices," and social injustices have their origin in domination in all its aspects, not only economic exploitation, but also in all those that allowed the subsequent establishment of social injustices and capitalism. That is sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, racism, anthropocentrism, etc....

This analytical conclusion of a huge revolutionary scope makes him the first theoretician of a holistic and radical ecology: social ecology.

In my opinion, it is Murray Bookchin's militant path that allows him to elaborate his proposals for revolutionary change, not that of the capital R, but that which, step by step, undermines the foundations of the prevailing system and at the same time lays the foundations of an ecological society that will replace it. And it is that by being a very active participant in revolutionary unionism, it pursues the struggle to the end, that is, until it realizes that trade unionism can no longer defeat capitalism, because it has become one of its categories. Not for this reason, the workers will cease to be exploited, far from it, but they have largely ceased to oppose capitalism, that is, to be "The" revolutionary subject. Then Murray realizes that capitalism, in addition to exploiting and emptying human beings of their genuine creative capacities, is undermining the natural bases that one day allowed the appearance of that human being on planet earth, even threatening life itself. He was one of the first to warn of the triple collapse that is coming: climate, food and energy on account of a capitalism that has no other choice but to grow or die. It had given way to a full ecology: political ecology. This makes it the bridge between the two major contradictions of capitalism; one internal, the social war within the first nature: society and the other: the plundering of the second nature, ecosystems. He had bridged the gap between two fronts of struggle and saw that we could not cope with these disasters induced by the failure to end this capitalist society. End this society yes, but everything and proposing a way out: social ecology as an analysis and also as a goal, as a paradigm for the integration of human communities into ecosystems. Communalism as a political tool of struggle and at the same time as a basis for future society.

IV) His sources of inspiration

In order to elaborate this theoretical body of great coherence, we have been able to appreciate his commitment, his analytical and synthesis capacity, starting from the practice in a constant swing with dialectical theory. Now, his thought cannot be understood outside of its historical framework. This is what I explain in the paper that I have presented on the occasion of these 2nd meetings of social ecology of Bilbao.

a) Marxism

Raised and developed in a revolutionary communist environment, in the 1930s he took advantage of

the opportunity to deepen Marxist theory from within to supplement his hunger for knowledge. Then, the repeated disappointments in his long revolutionary journey instead of sinking him, thanks to a keen intuition and his sense of dialectics, would lead him to think about social ecology. A few years later, a few years before his death, he would give us his most valuable legacy, his most elaborate thought, which we know today as communalism and which the Kurds have named democratic Cofederalism.

b) Social anarchism

From that paper I wanted to highlight the fundamental influence of Spanish anarchism in his thinking. An anarchism like never before in the world due to its great roots in the humblest populations of the Iberian Peninsula, its organizational capacity and the importance of the rich counter-culture it knew how to develop. An anarchism that raised much enthusiasm and great hopes with an ethical and spiritual imaginary with peasant roots and its practice in accordance with its aims: libertarian communism. Thus, after the Francoist coup d' état, the anarchists were able to set in motion an unprecedented popular dynamic that put into practice an ideology close to the proposals of social ecology.

He was a great connoisseur of anarchism in the Spanish state, and in the face of the communist arguments of the essential need for vertical structures for revolution, he always put it as an example of an effective and forceful horizontal organization. But he would have been even more glad to know how close he was to social ecology was the proposal of social urbanism in Catalonia and the importance of the current of the Free Municipality in the anarchist movement, always displaced from memories by the purest trade unionism. It is now up to us and the supporters of social ecology on the peninsula to rescue this rich tradition, with its multiple and complementary facets, to step in stronger when it comes to relying on our capacities and making their political and social proposals our own.

(c) Current anarchism on the peninsula

He is inhibited and unable to respond adequately to events.

First, for lack of sufficient analysis of the categories of capitalism.

He does not know very well which tool is the right one to act with. so he's having a hard time locating himself. One part of it is so extreme and nineteenth-century purism that it disconnects itself from social and political realities and is thus marginalized. The other party, however, is more pragmatic but uses the tools that are part of the categories of capitalism and ends up adhering to abstractions typical of capitalism in crisis such as nationalism. See the statement of the organised group regarding the procès in Catalonia. Thus, without its own strategy, this other part is dragged along by those drawn up by political parties such as the CUPs or even Podemos.

Both sides are merely widening the current political vacuum, one to marginalize and the other to adapt to the mould prepared by capitalism and its main category, the state, within its institutions.

V) Communalism, libertarian municipalism or democratic confederalism

Social ecology is a rich tool for historical analysis of the evolution of the hierarchies of power, the market and the anthropological rupture that represents the irruption and logic imposition of capitalism as an automaton subject. Social ecology covers the whole problem not only from an economic and political economy point of view, but also researches other sources of knowledge such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy and so on. Moreover, it is not a closed framework and invites, as Bookchin did, to delve deeper into the causes of the advent of a more than absurd situation, which leads us to that triple collapse as Bookchin warned us in the sixties.

Social ecology also studies in detail our legacy of freedom both in philosophy and in the practices of traditional organizations, starting from pre-literate societies up to the present day. But also in the social and political alternatives in all the revolutionary movements throughout history, such as democracy in ancient Greece, Christianity, the free cities at the end of the Middle Ages, the millennial revolts in northern Europe, the French revolution, the assemblies of puritanism on the east coast of the USA, the Commune of Paris, the Russian revolution, the revolution in the

From all this, we try to get the best out of it without forgetting the mistakes so as not to make them again.

From his own militant experience and from this rigorous research, which also includes the positive aspects of the intrinsic negativity of capitalist society, according to his dialectical method, Bookchin proposes communalism. Communalism is not that kind of revolution with a capital R, of those that day in the morning intends to throw capitalism overboard. This proposal is absurd because the future society cannot flourish on the ashes of the old one. Rather, it is a question of eroding capitalism, just as the bourgeoisie eroded feudalism in its day. It is a matter of building these human communities that one day will once again be integrated into the ecosystems. The difficulty is the urgency of that need, but we have no choice but to start by creating study groups to develop a common strategy within the pedestrian zone of capitalism in which we are situated. Then, starting from our intimate knowledge of our neighborhood, the place where we live with its codes and cultural characteristics, we begin to constitute political assemblies, giving space to social groups so that they can express and strengthen their own characteristics in the political sphere.

This perspective is not far-fetched, and if this pessimism could be defended before the Syrian war, the success of the Kurdish comrades with the introduction of democratic Confederalism leaves no doubt as to their political realism. This example is an element of great importance, such as a wind of feasible utopia that blows around the world, along with the wind that also raised the Zapatismo in Chiapas. Obviously, the reality of this pedestrian zone of capitalism is very different and we will have to study a lot in order to set in motion a movement that will no longer stop. But in many parts of the world many initiatives are already being implemented in this direction and we cannot wait because if our proposals are not prepared, these movements run the risk of being recovered by any truncated anti-capitalism and as well as what does not kill fat, we will be giving capitalism another breath so that it can carry out its destructive work, called "capitalocene".

Camus said that there is no life worth living without a projection in the future, without promise of maturity and progress. That living against a wall is a dog's life.

The vast majority of humanity is unfortunately in this situation, where it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. That is why, in this political and cultural vacuum of great importance, in a decadent neoliberal civilization, fanatics of all kinds, both religious and nationalist, find fertile ground to propose their paradigms. Although of a great abstraction and frozen in the past are presented with a spiritual dimension that gives them some power. Let us not let them occupy that land, we have much more to offer.

Machado said that the path is made by walking and it is true. But everything and keeping our feet on the ground and keep walking, we need to have a story and an objective that break with the cultural hegemony of domination and at the same time serve us as a utopia, the one that as we move forward is receding. We need an imaginary of political spirituality that aligns the path with all its spiritual warmth, a warmth that deepens its roots in the materiality of the complicity that arouses empathy and enthusiasm for the construction of a new world.

This is how social ecology, with its policies of libertarian municipalism, communalism or democratic confederalism, puts a new world back in our hearts.