

# THE INSTINCT FOR COOPERATION



A GRAPHIC NOVEL  
CONVERSATION WITH

**NOAM  
CHOMSKY**

**& JEFFREY  
WILSON**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**ELISEU GOUVEIA**

"Seeing the work of a bright new comics writer like Jeff makes me optimistic about the future of comics and society in general."

—**SETH TOBOCMAN**, founding editor of *World War 3 Illustrated*, author of *You Don't Have to Fuck People Over to Survive*, *War in the Neighborhood*, and *Len*

# The Instinct for Cooperation:

A Graphic Novel Conversation with  
Noam Chomsky

**Written by Jeffrey Wilson**

Illustrated by Eliseu Gouveia

Lettered by Jay Jacot

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For Rachel and all those creating spaces  
for resistance and trouble making.



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## Chapter 1

# Human Nature and Cooperation





THERE'S NOTHING PARTICULARLY UNIQUE ABOUT THIS PHOTO.

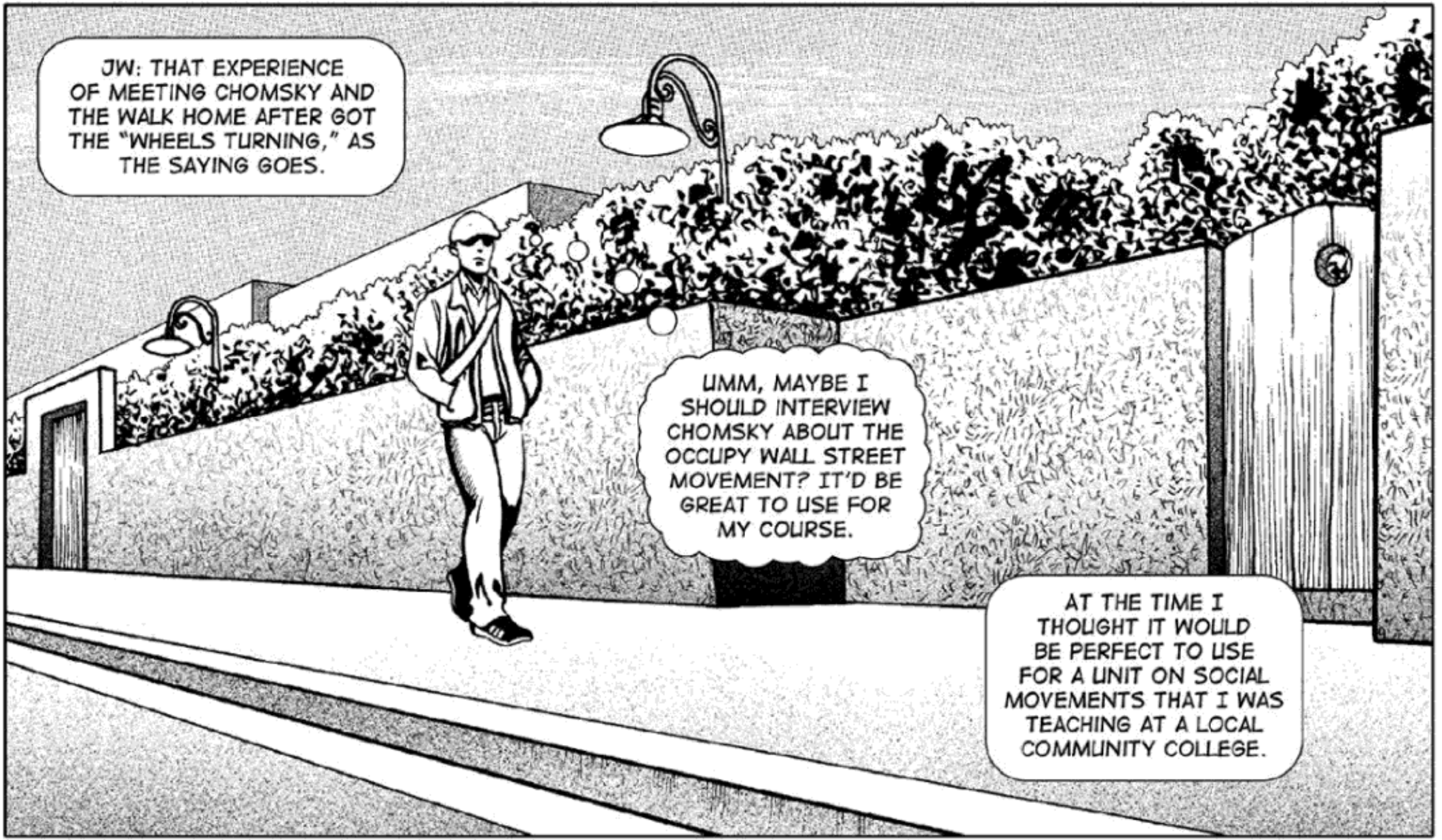
ONE OF HUNDREDS, PROBABLY THOUSANDS THAT CHOMSKY HAS TAKEN ON ENDLESS SPEAKING TOURS OVER THE DECADES WITH FANS OF HIS WRITING LIKE ME.

THIS IS NOAM CHOMSKY (NC).

YOU'LL COME TO BETTER KNOW HIS THOUGHTS AND IDEAS.

THAT'S ME, JEFF (JW).

AND MY BUDDY GABE MAKING HIS ONLY APPEARANCE IN THE COMIC.



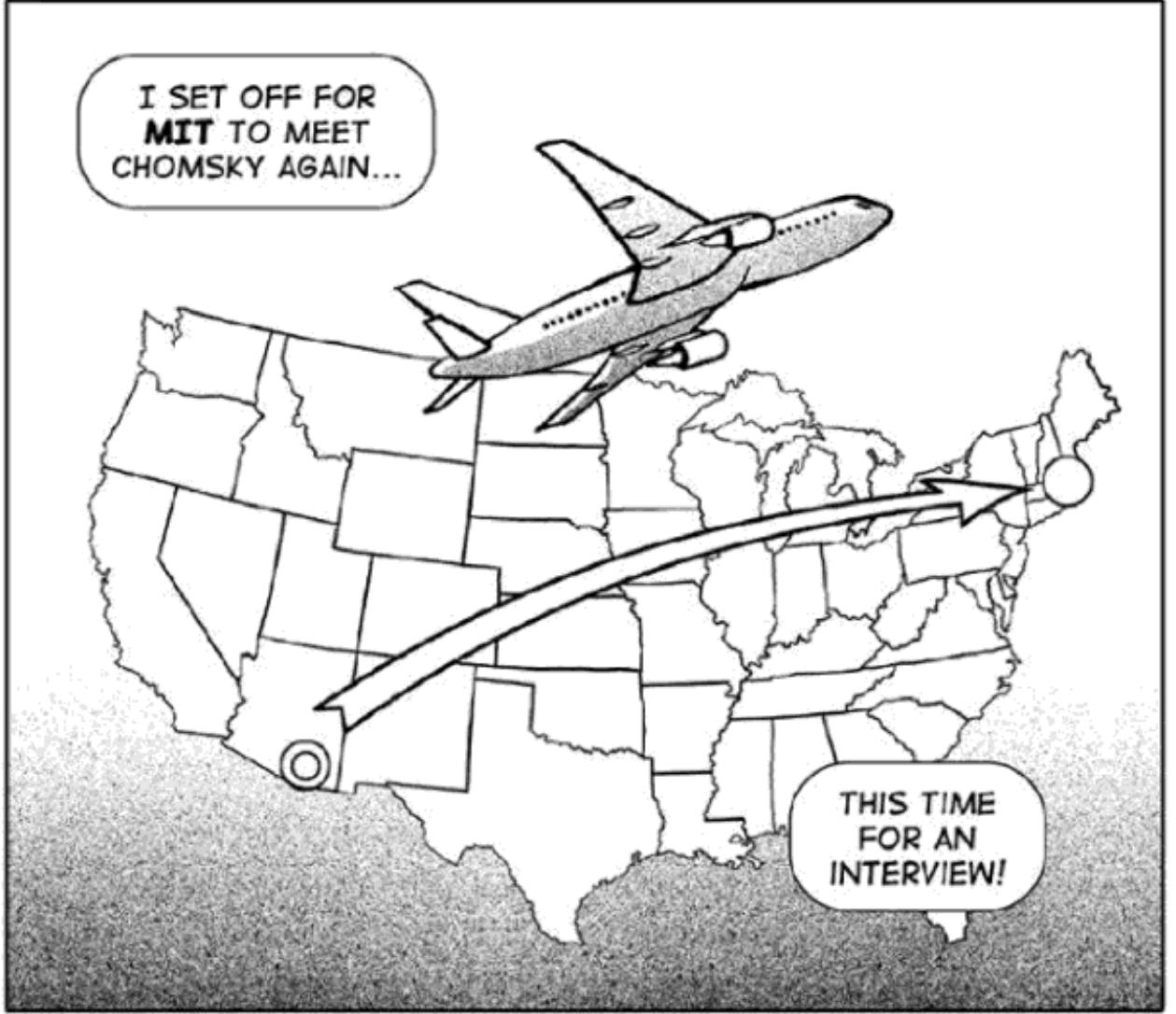
JW: THAT EXPERIENCE OF MEETING CHOMSKY AND THE WALK HOME AFTER GOT THE "WHEELS TURNING," AS THE SAYING GOES.

UHM, MAYBE I SHOULD INTERVIEW CHOMSKY ABOUT THE OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT? IT'D BE GREAT TO USE FOR MY COURSE.

AT THE TIME I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PERFECT TO USE FOR A UNIT ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THAT I WAS TEACHING AT A LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE.



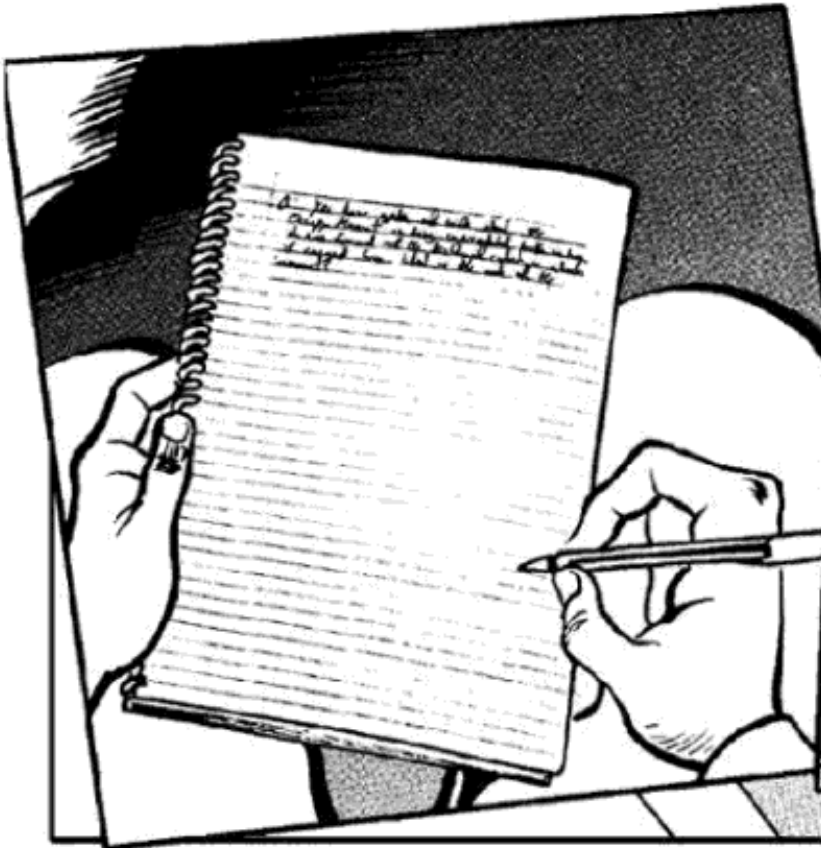
SO WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM GABE AND AFTER A FEW E-MAILS...

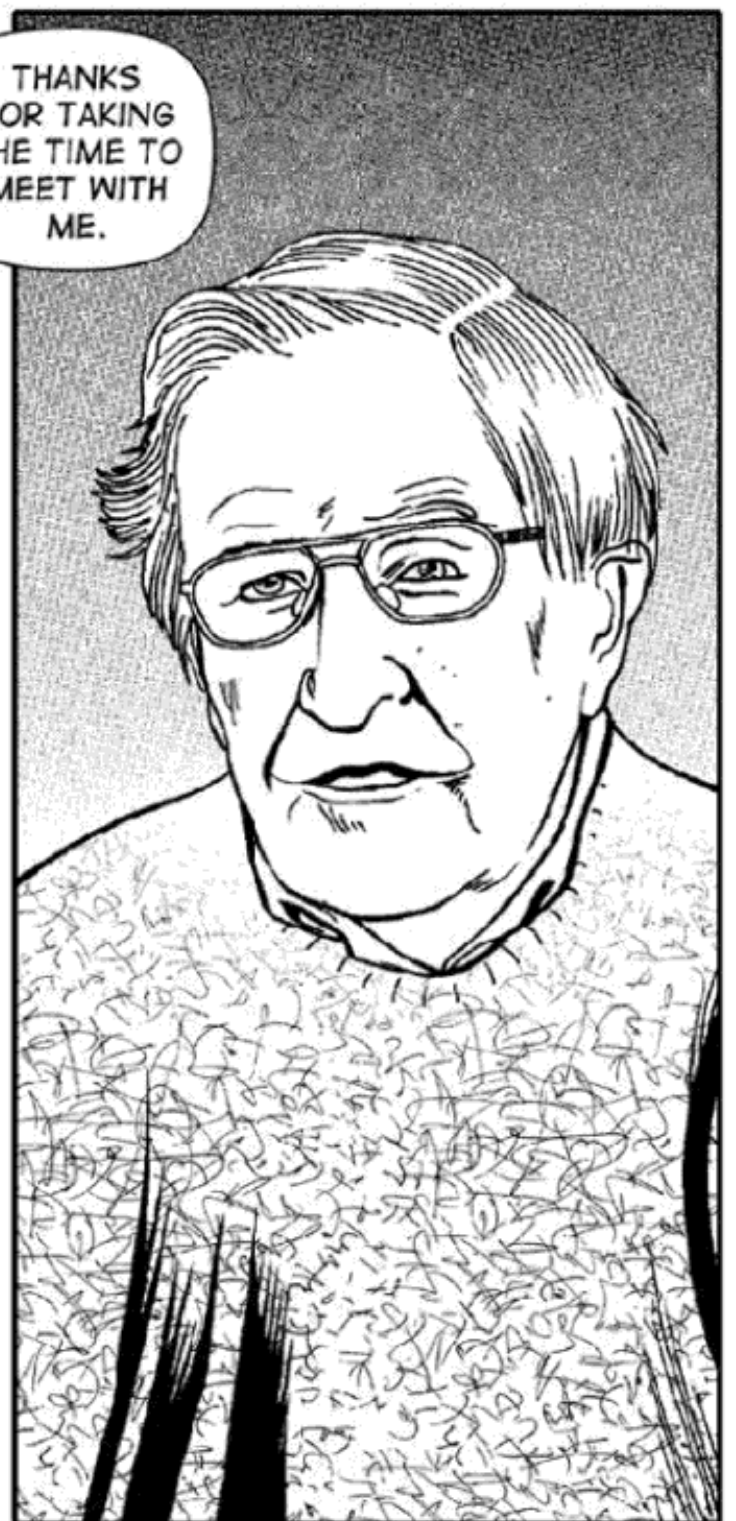
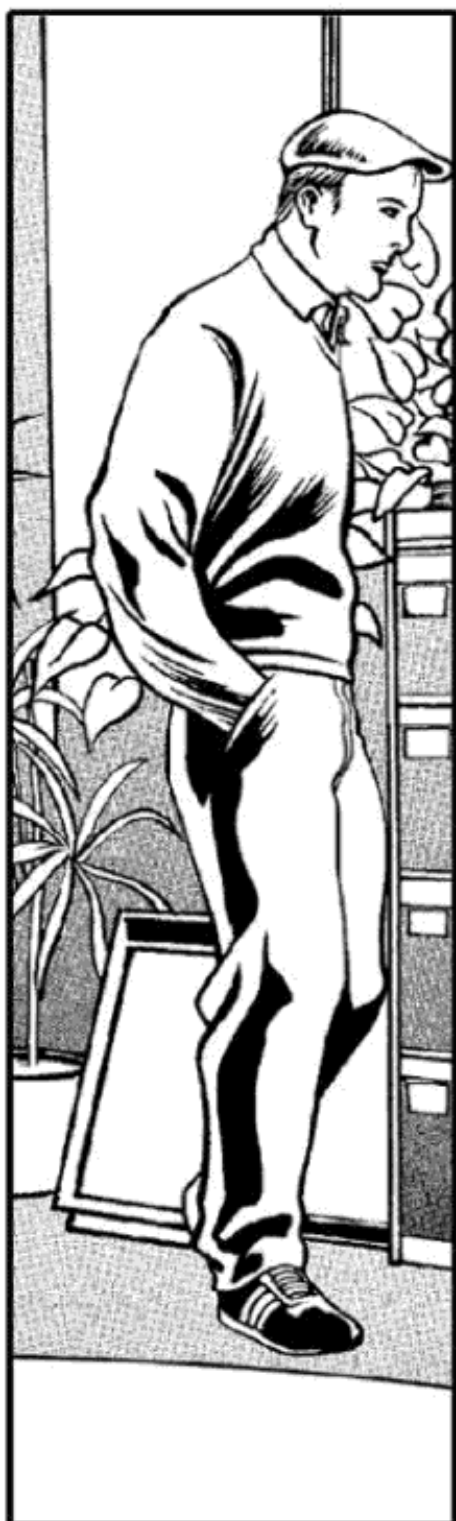
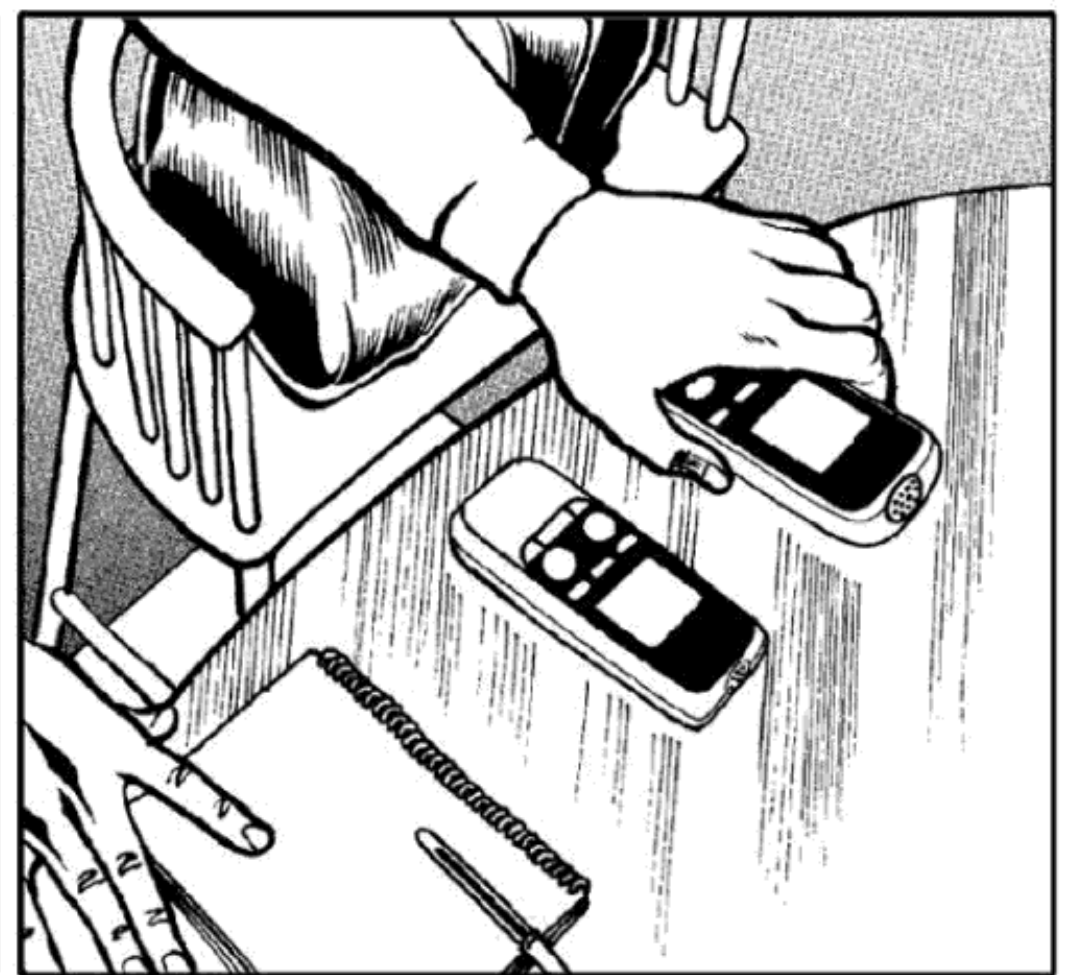
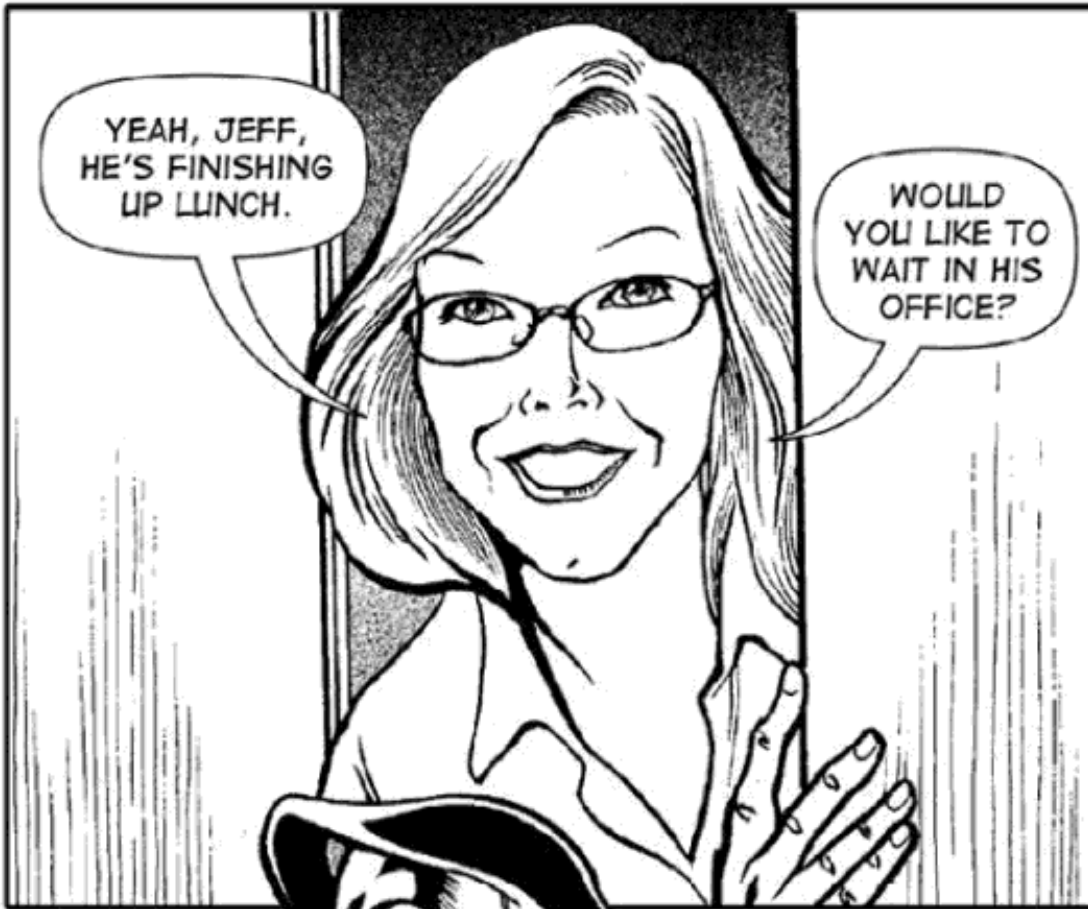


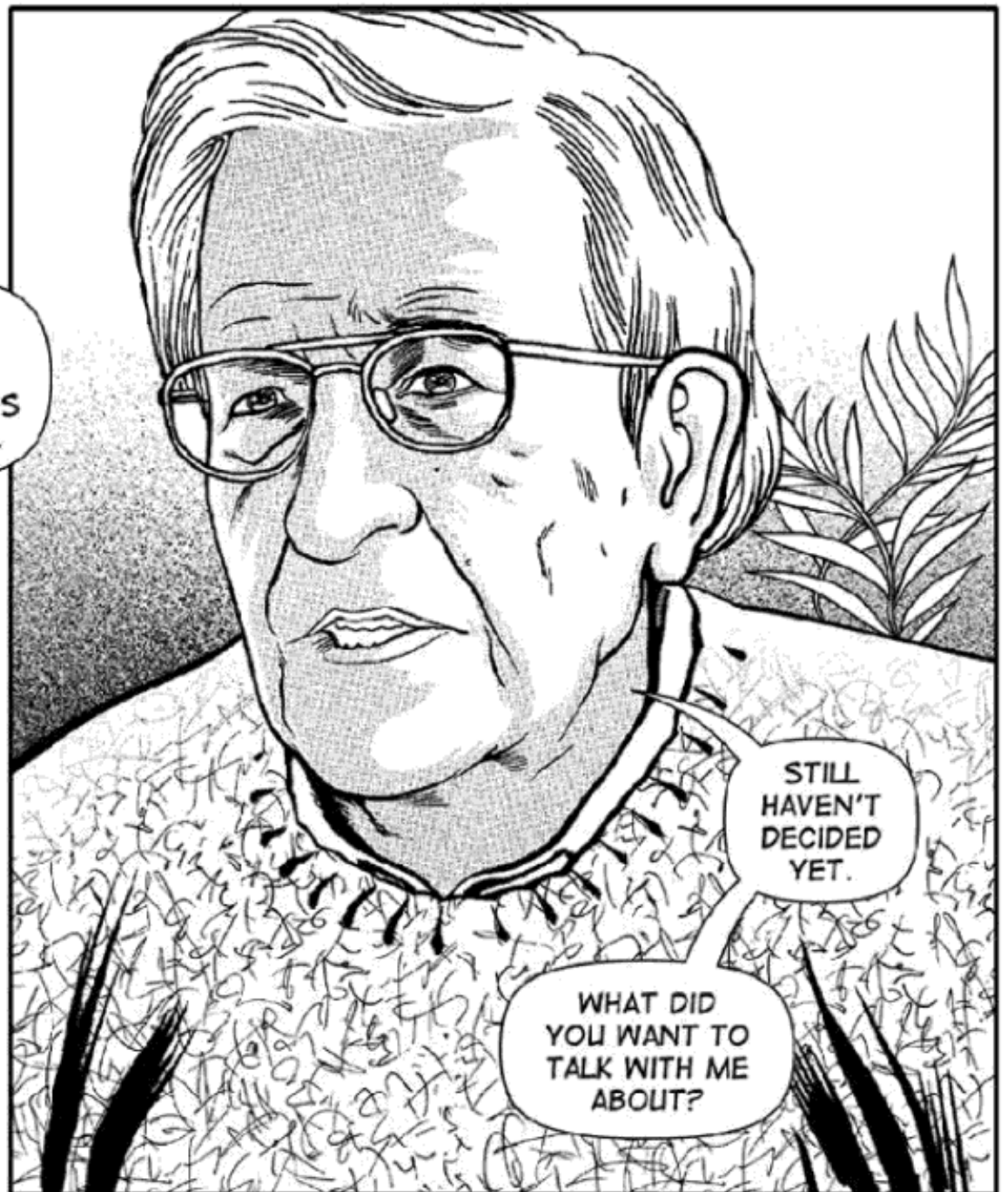
I SET OFF FOR MIT TO MEET CHOMSKY AGAIN...

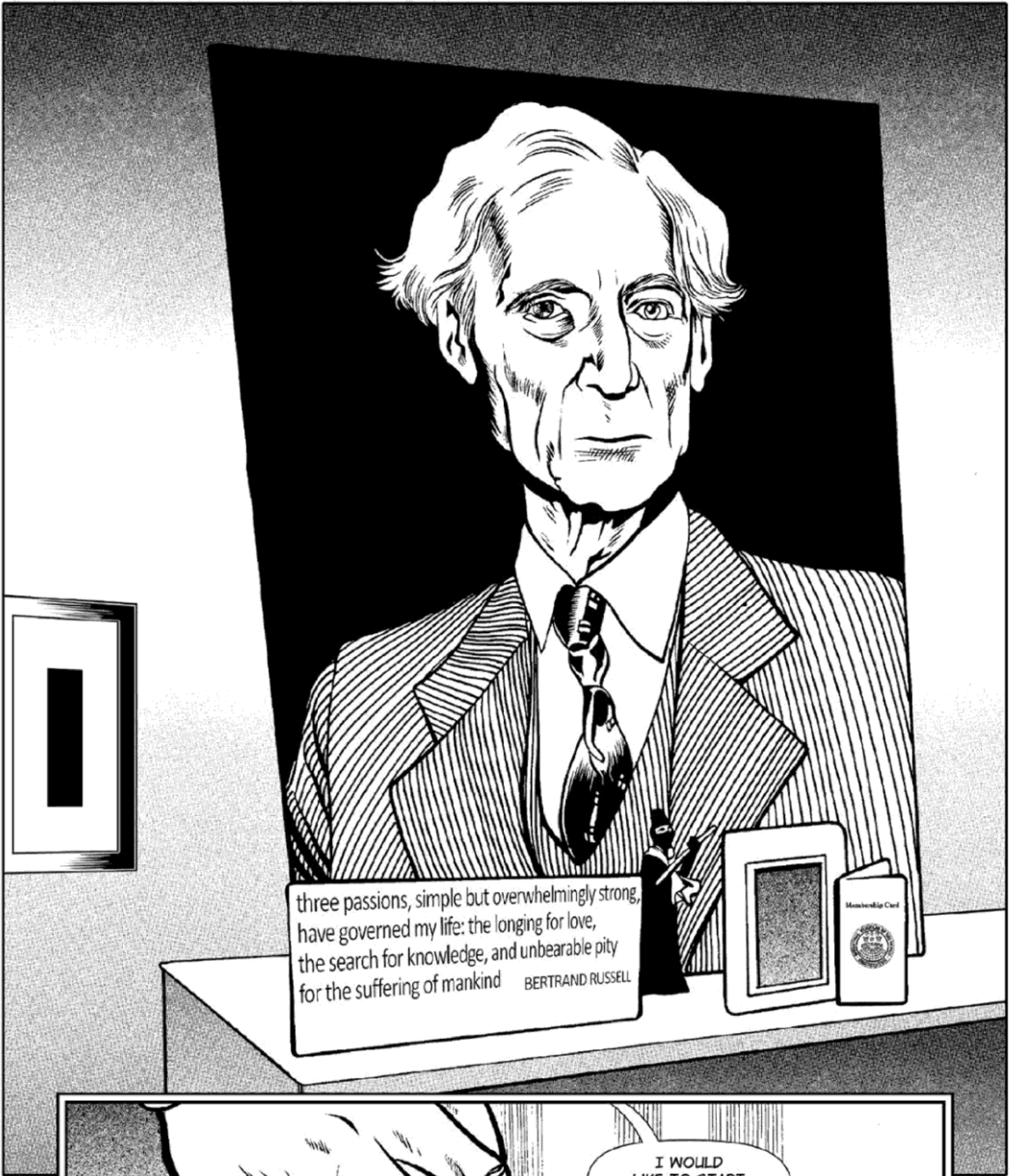
THIS TIME FOR AN INTERVIEW!

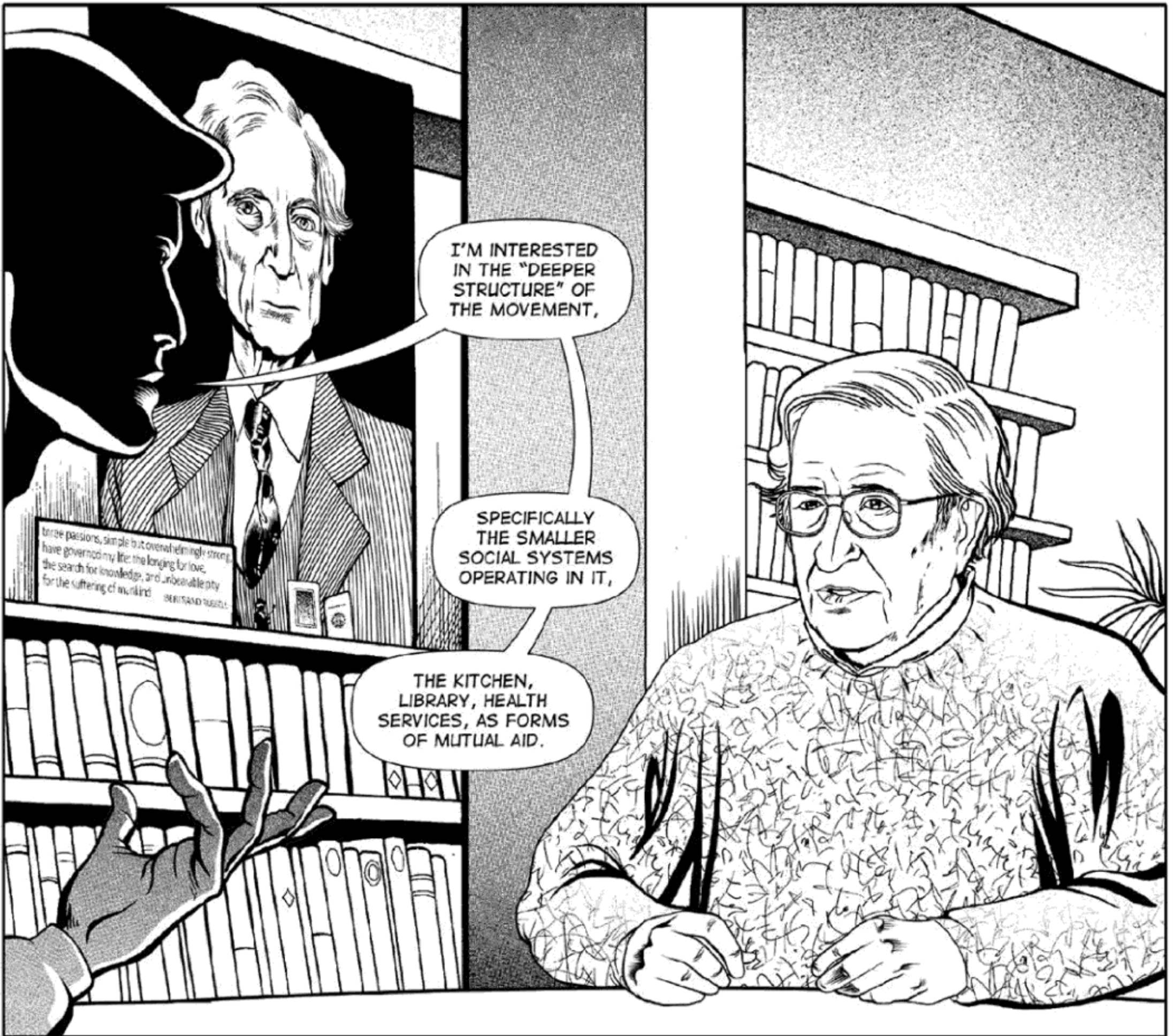












I'M INTERESTED IN THE "DEEPER STRUCTURE" OF THE MOVEMENT,

SPECIFICALLY THE SMALLER SOCIAL SYSTEMS OPERATING IN IT,

THE KITCHEN, LIBRARY, HEALTH SERVICES, AS FORMS OF MUTUAL AID.

...true passions, simple but overwhelming, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.  
BERNARD WILLIS

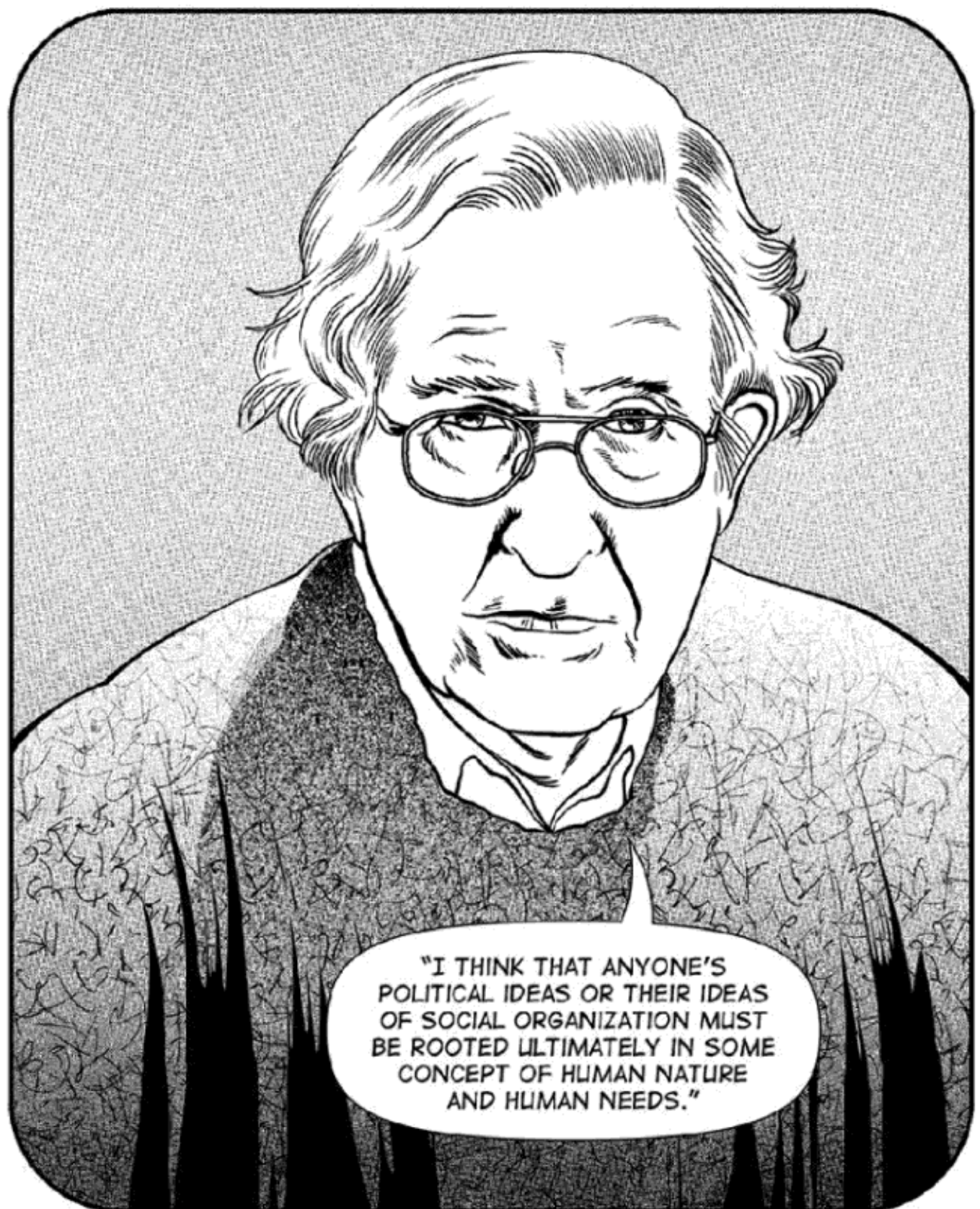
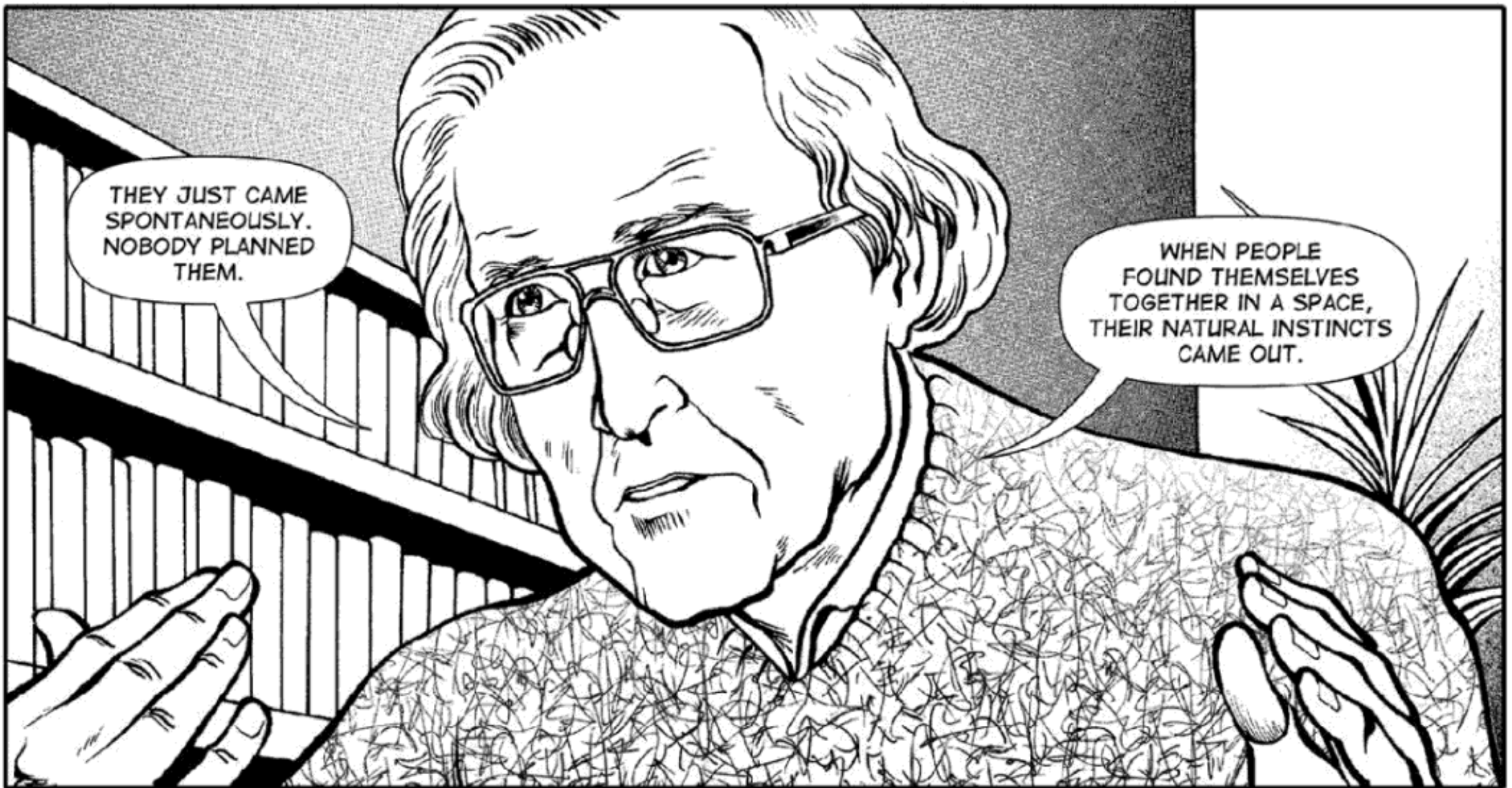


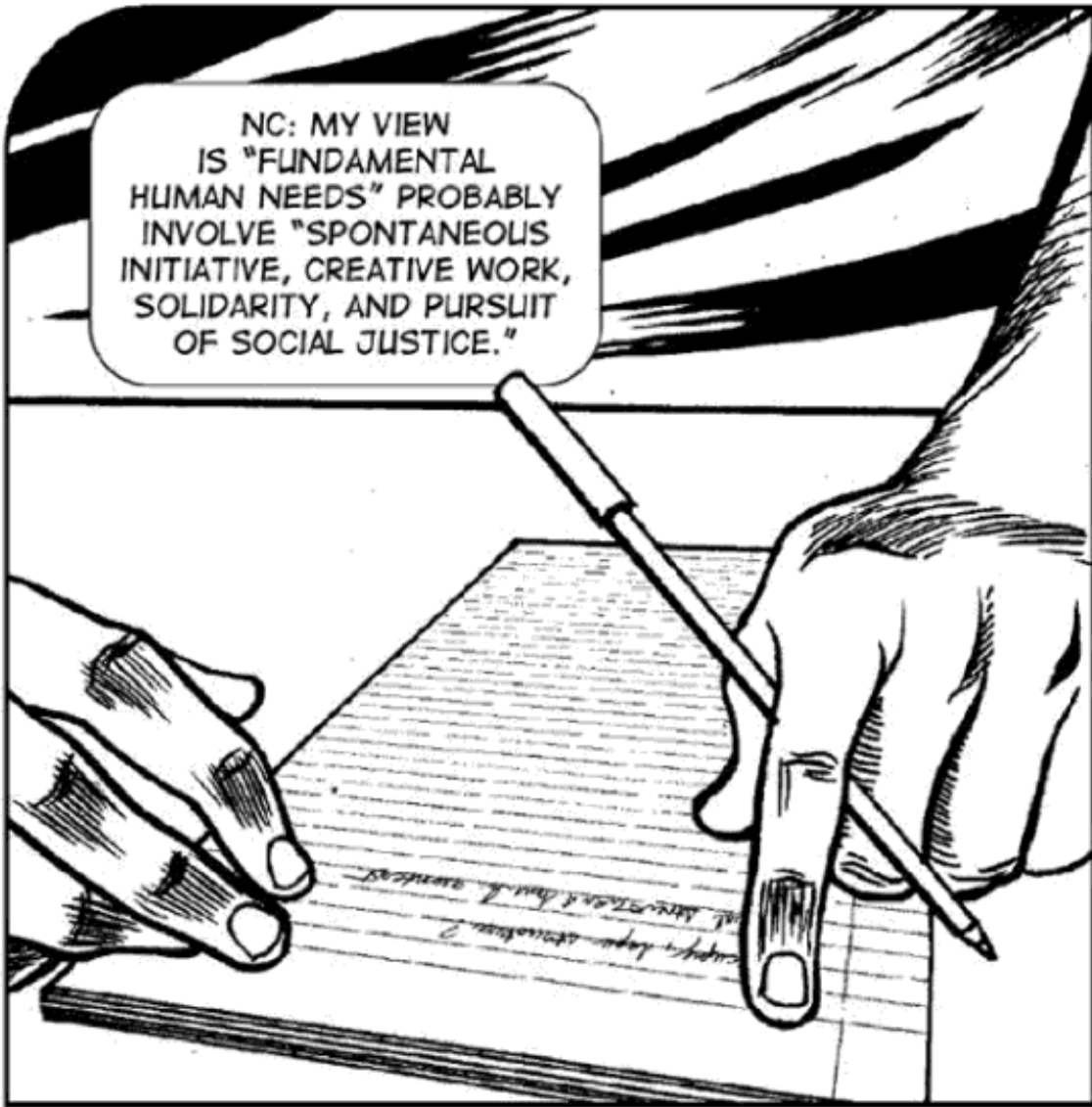
YOU'VE DISCUSSED THIS IN OTHER INTERVIEWS,

BUT I'D LIKE TO GO INTO A LITTLE MORE DEPTH.



WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THESE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF OCCUPY?





NC: MY VIEW IS "FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN NEEDS" PROBABLY INVOLVE "SPONTANEOUS INITIATIVE, CREATIVE WORK, SOLIDARITY, AND PURSUIT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE."



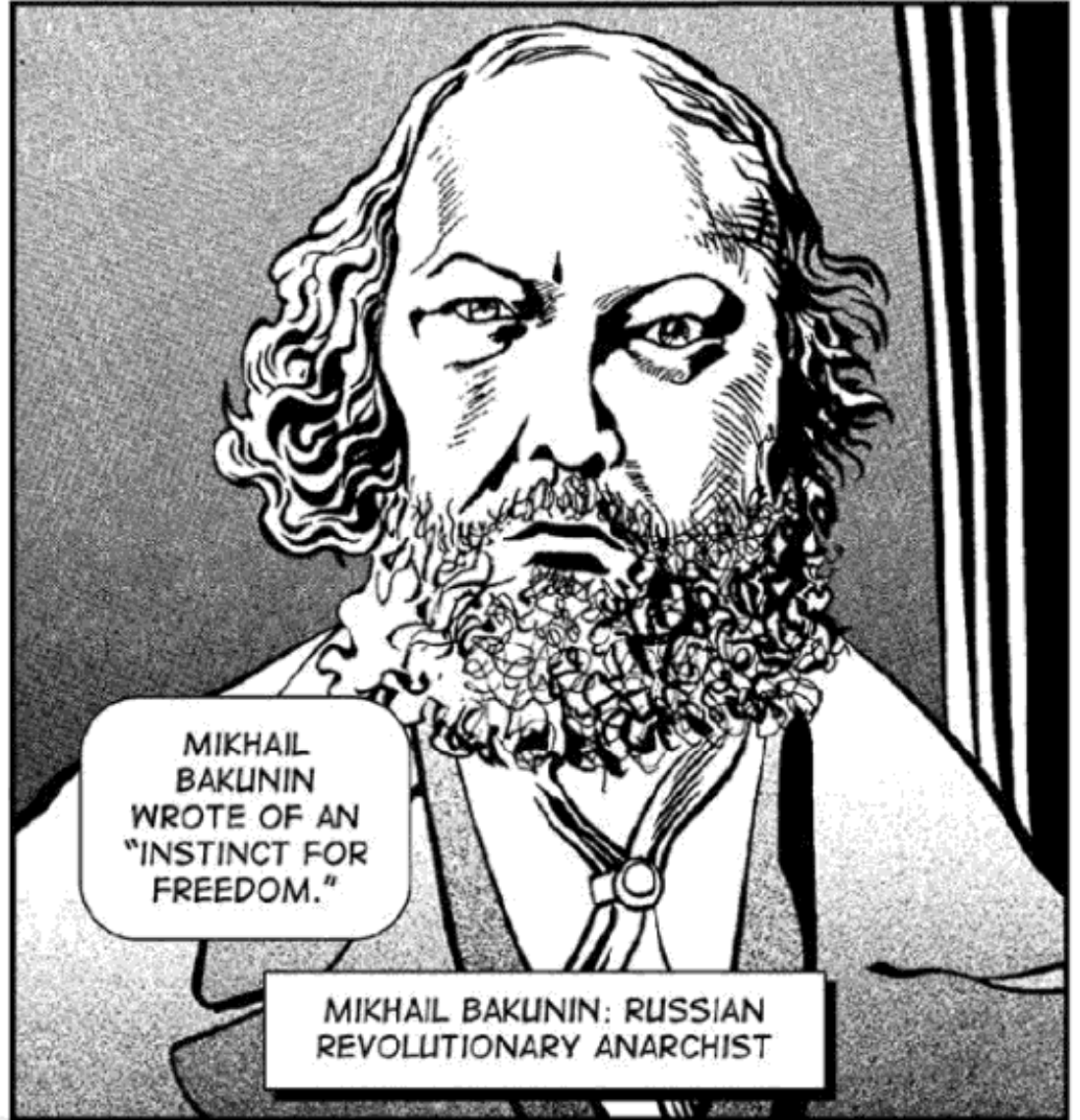
THE SCHOLAR WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT MADE A SIMILAR POINT, WHICH I'VE WRITTEN ABOUT...



"TO INQUIRE AND TO CREATE."

"THESE ARE THE CENTRES AROUND WHICH ALL HUMAN PURSUITS MORE OR LESS DIRECTLY REVOLVE."

WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT: GERMAN PHILOSOPHER AND FOUNDER OF THE HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN



MIKHAIL BAKUNIN WROTE OF AN "INSTINCT FOR FREEDOM."

MIKHAIL BAKUNIN: RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST



IF WE ARE TO MOVE TOWARD A DECENT SOCIETY...



OR HAVE SOME VISION OF A FUTURE SOCIETY,

THESE ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE OUTLINED BY VON HUMBOLDT AND BAKUNIN WILL NEED TO BE ACCOMMODATED.



IF I UNDERSTAND YOU CORRECTLY,

THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN NATURE AND CREATIVITY?

BUT HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO OCCUPY?

RIGHT,

"NOW MY OWN FEELING IS THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN CAPACITY,"

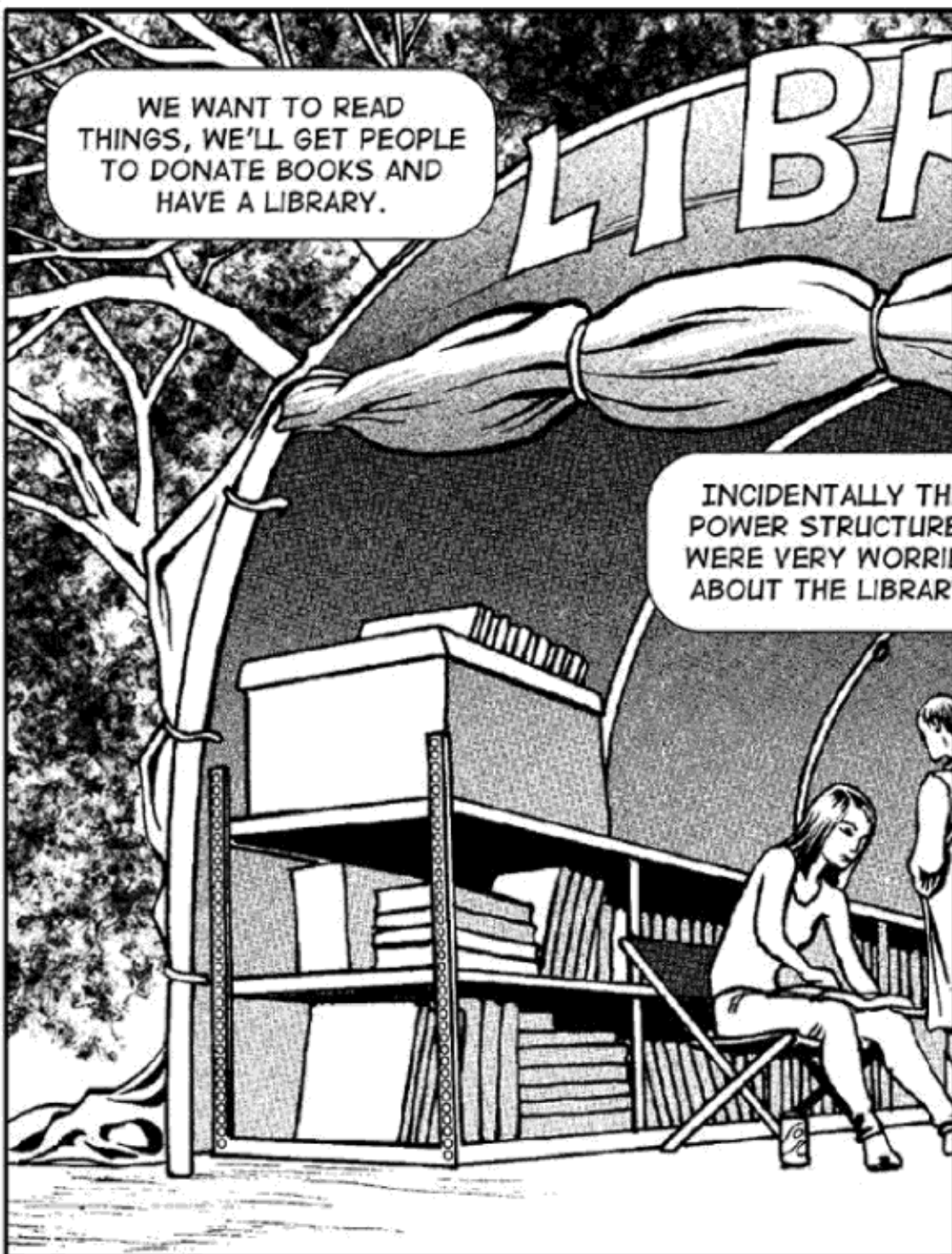
LIKE I'VE SAID OTHER PLACES,

"THE CAPACITY AND THE NEED FOR CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION, FOR FREE CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF ONE'S LIFE AND THOUGHT."

SO WHEN YOU ASKED ME ABOUT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF OCCUPY, IT STARTS WITH PEOPLE'S NATURAL INSTINCTS.

AND YOUR NATURAL INSTINCTS ARE COOPERATION, MUTUAL SUPPORT, BONDS OF ASSOCIATION, HELPING ONE ANOTHER.

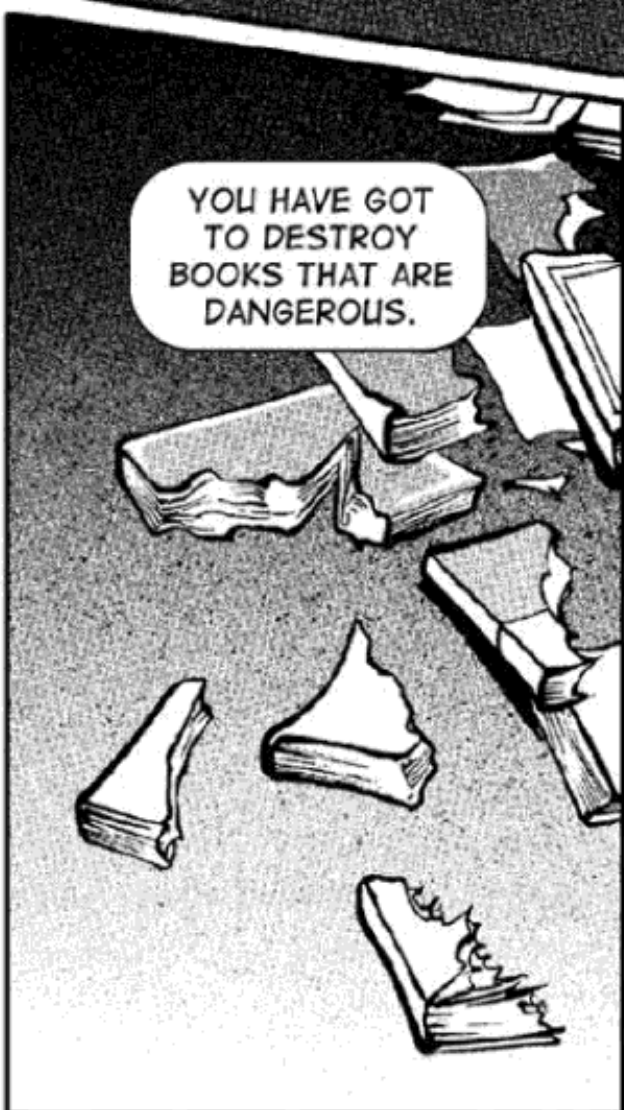






NC: YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT WHEN THE POLICE CAME IN UNDER BLOOMBERG'S ORDERS AND SMASHED UP ZUCCOTTI PARK [LOCATION OF OCCUPY WALL STREET]...

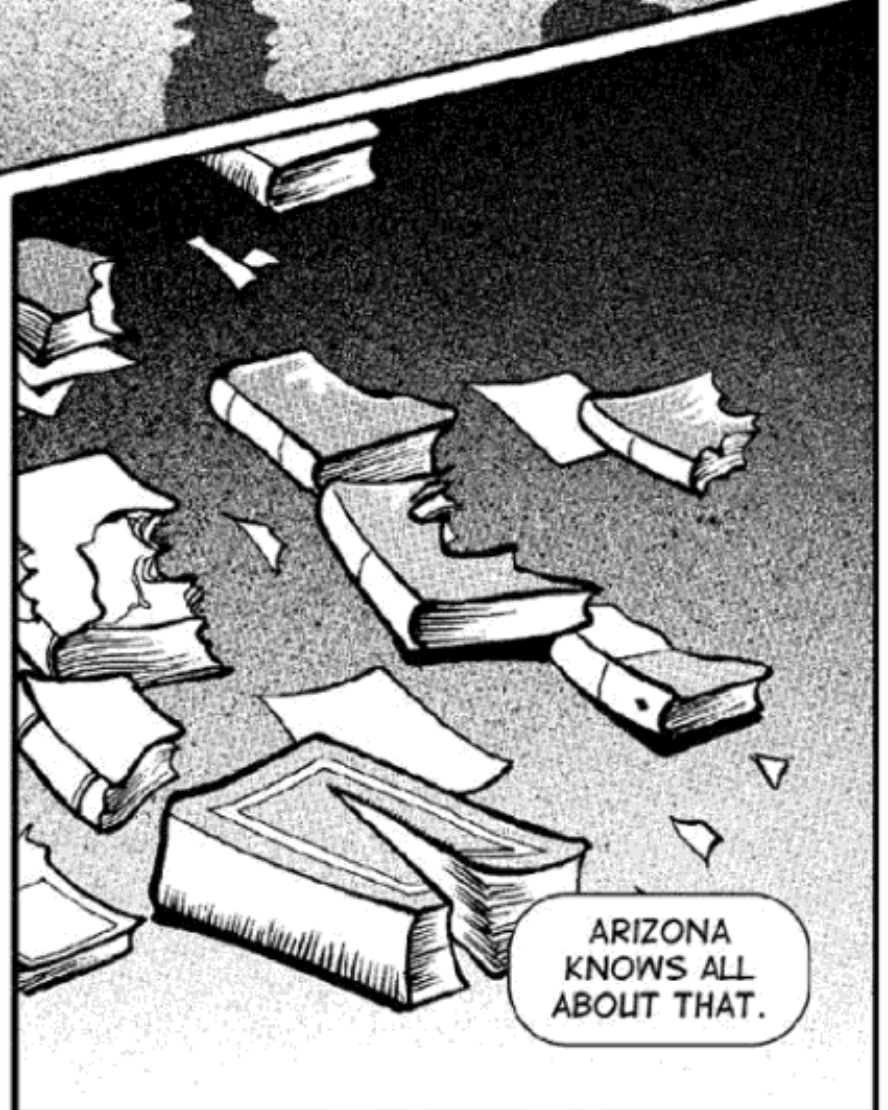
ONE OF THE THINGS THEY DID WAS DESTROY ALL THE BOOKS.



YOU HAVE GOT TO DESTROY BOOKS THAT ARE DANGEROUS.



IT HAS A LONG TRADITION BACK TO THE MIDDLE AGES.



ARIZONA KNOWS ALL ABOUT THAT.

## Chapter 2

# Tucson Knows All About That!



*image*

*not*

*available*



IN FACT, THE LEGEND OF ROBIN HOOD, THE REASON IT'S POPULAR IS BECAUSE HE WAS DEFENDING THE COMMONS AGAINST THE NOBLES, THE SHERIFF AND ALL THAT STUFF.

THAT KIND OF DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT.

THE STANDARD VIEW TODAY IS WHAT'S CALLED THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS, GARRETT HARDIN.

IT MEANS IF YOU LEAVE SOMETHING NOT OWNED IT'S GOING TO DISAPPEAR.

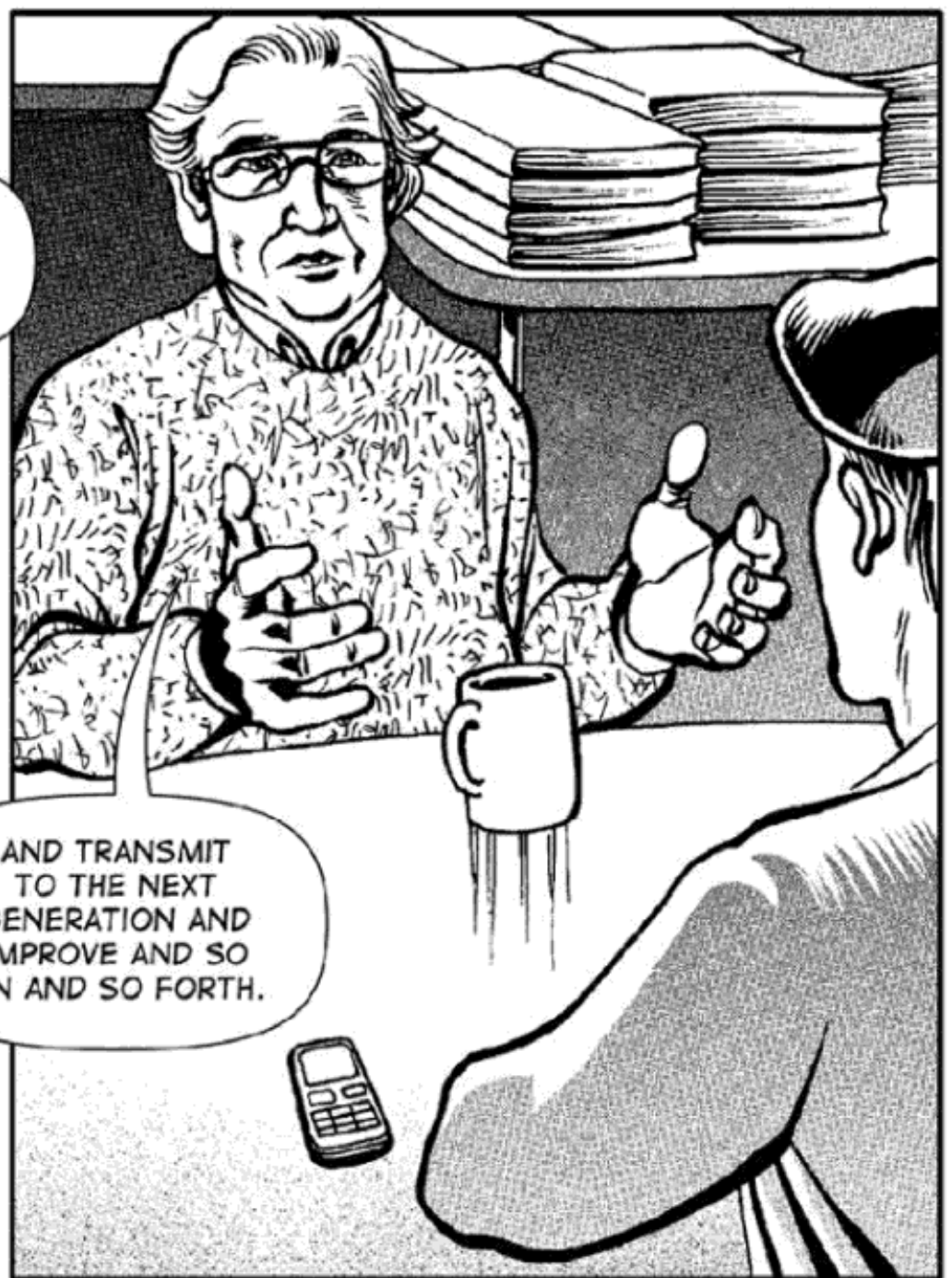


THAT'S TRUE IF EVERYBODY IS AN INDIVIDUALIST SAVAGE, LIKE IF YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE THEN ANYTHING THAT IS COMMON, YOU'LL JUST ROB.

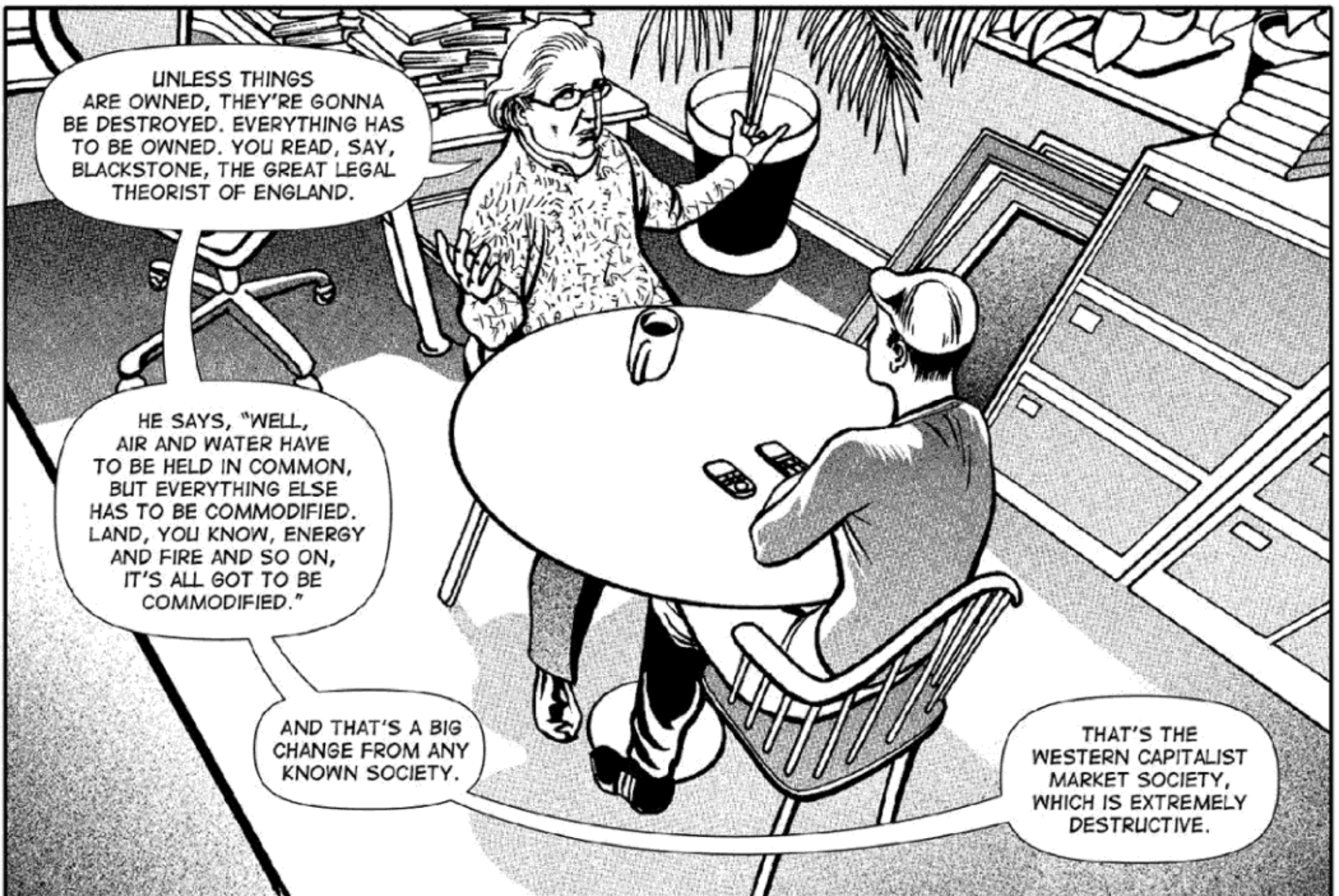
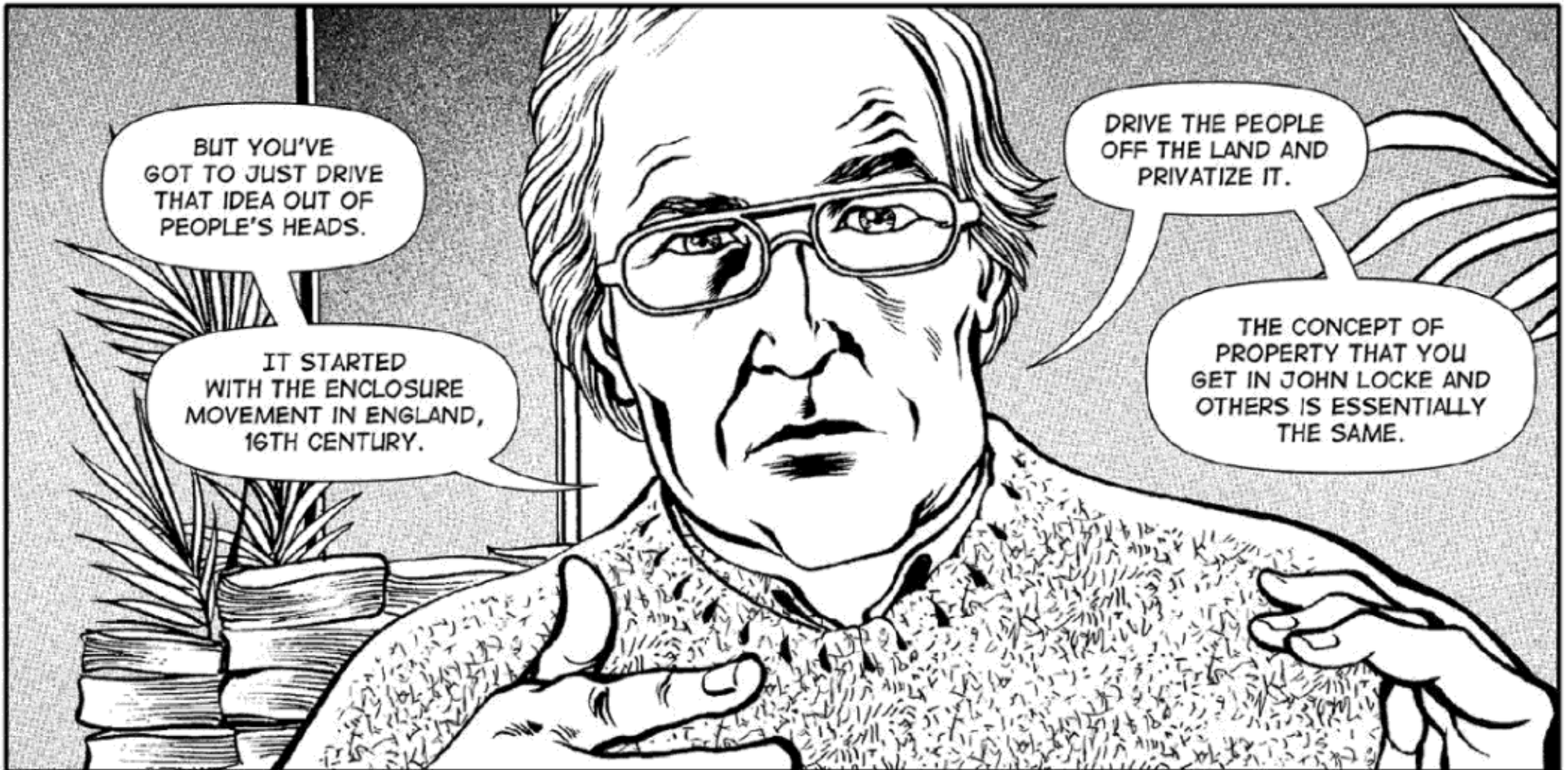
IN ANY DECENT SOCIETY IT'S UNTHINKABLE. IN FEUDAL SOCIETIES, INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES, AND TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES WHAT'S COMMON...




IS WHAT WE ALL OWN AND WORK ON AND TAKE CARE OF...



AND TRANSMIT TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND IMPROVE AND SO ON AND SO FORTH.





NC: THAT'S  
WHY WE ARE  
DESTROYING THE  
ENVIRONMENT.

IF WE CAN HAVE  
TAR SANDS AND SHALE  
OIL, WE'LL BE OK FOR  
ANOTHER HUNDRED  
YEARS, MEANWHILE...

OUR GRANDCHILDREN  
WILL BE LIVING ON  
MOUNTAINTOPS,

BUT THAT'S NOT OUR  
BUSINESS BECAUSE WE  
DON'T WANT TO THINK  
ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS.

## Chapter 8

# Conclusion





## NOTES

### PAGE 11

Robinson, P., "The Chomsky Problem," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1979.

### PAGE 16

Panel 4: Chomsky, N., & Otero, C. *Language and Politics, expanded 2nd ed.* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), p. 113.

### PAGE 17

Panel 1: Chomsky, N., "Language and Freedom" in Pateman, B. (ed.), *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 115.

Panels 2 and 3: Chomsky, N., & Peck, J., *The Chomsky Reader* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995), p. 149. Wilhelm von Humboldt quote can also be found in Humboldt, W.V., & Burrow, J. W., *The Limits of State Action* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

\*Chomsky does offer a cautionary note in *Language and Politics* connecting ideas of human nature with those of freedom. He does not want to over state a connection between human nature and the organization of society. He states, "The most that one can do, I think, is to note some very tenuous and possibly suggestive connections without claiming in the least that they're deductive connections. In fact, they're not. They're at most vague and loose suggestions which perhaps are worth a little bit of thought" (p. 213). Although for Chomsky any move toward a better society should be "predicated on some kind of assumption about human nature" (p. 214).

Panel 4: Chomsky, N., & Otero, C. *Language and Politics, expanded 2nd ed.* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), p. 468. The Bakunin quote is taken from Bakunin, M.A., & Lehning, A., *L'Empire knouto-germanique et la révolution sociale: 1870-1871* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).

Panels 5 and 6: Chomsky, N., & Otero, C. *Language and Politics, expanded 2nd ed.* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004). Chomsky, N., "Language and Freedom" in Pateman, B. (ed.), *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 113.

### PAGE 18

Panel 2: Chomsky, N., & Otero, C. *Language and Politics, expanded 2nd ed.* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), p. 113.

### PAGE 22

Panel 2: H.B. 2281 <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/hb2281s.pdf>

### PAGE 42

Panel 1: Chomsky, N., *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003), p. 11.

Panel 2: Crozier, M. & Huntington, S., *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 173.

### PAGE 43

Panel 1-4: Chomsky, N., & Otero, C. *Language and Politics, expanded 2nd ed.* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), p. 264.

### PAGE 44

Panel 1-5: Chomsky, N., *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999), pp. 47-48.

### PAGE 48

Panel 3-5: Free Speech Movement: Mario Savio's speech before the FSM sit-in, December 3, 1964, Berkeley, CA. (n.d.) Retrieved January 20, 2014, from [http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/mario/mario\\_speech.htm](http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/mario/mario_speech.htm).

### PAGE 49-51

Cohen, R., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 64-65.

### PAGE 88

Taylor, A., *Occupy!: Scenes from Occupied America* (London: Verso, 2011), pp. 52-53.

### PAGE 91

Panel 5: Rau, A.B., "Arizona Tops Nation in College Cuts, Tuition Hikes," *The Arizona Republic*, May 13, 2015.

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Thanks to Mom and Dad. The foundation you helped create made this book possible.

And to Rachel—my first editor, collaborator, and best friend—"thank you" seems too small a phrase, so I'll just say this: You are a living example of how to be gentle and kind.