

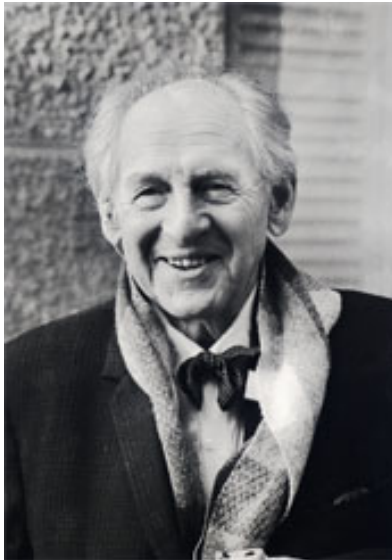


# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

## Leopold Kohr (Austria)†

**Honorary Award (1983)**



*...for his early inspiration of the movement for a human scale.*

Leopold Kohr

Leopold Kohr was born near Salzburg, Austria, in 1909. He was educated at the Universities of Innsbruck, Paris, Vienna and the London School of Economics. After a variety of occupations, which included being a foreign correspondent in the Spanish Civil War, he entered academic life, teaching first at Rutgers University in the US and then as Professor of Economics and Public Administration at the University of Puerto Rico from 1955 to 1973. He subsequently taught political philosophy at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Kohr was the originator, and for two and a half decades the solitary advocate, of the concept of the human scale and the idea of a return to life in small communities. Both of these were later popularised by his friend, Fritz Schumacher, notably in the best-selling book *Small is Beautiful*.

Kohr consistently advocated the effectiveness of the small autonomous unit in the solution of human problems. With regard to Third World nations, he was one of the first to assert that massive external aid crippled their vital communal identity and stifled local initiatives and participation. His vision called for a dissolution of centralised structures in favour of a control system of small communities solving local problems with their own material and intellectual resources.

These ideas were powerfully expressed in a series of books, including: *The Breakdown of Nations* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), *Development without Aid* (1973) and *The Overdeveloped Nations* (1977), both published by Christopher Davies, Swansea.

On his death in 1994, one newspaper obituary hailed him as a leading thinker of the 20th century for his critique of the cult of bigness and economic growth. Others noted that it was hard to reconstruct the patronising derision which greeted Kohr's ideas throughout most of his long life, but although he described himself as a philosophical anarchist "he brought to his anarchism a constant bubbling stream of wit and humour despite the fact that his theories assailed a great many of the leading assumptions of both politicians and economists."

In Austria, the city of Salzburg awarded him its rare honour, The Golden Ring, and established an institute bearing his name. In 2008, a Leopold Kohr Research Center was founded at the University of Salzburg.

### Quotation

*"So let us solve the great problem of our time, the disease of excessive size and uncontrollable proportions, by going back to the alternative to both right and left - that is, to a small-scale social environment with all its potential for global pluralistic cooperation and largely unaffiliated self-sufficiency, by extending not centralised control but by decontrolling locally centred and nourished communities, each with its own institutional nucleus and a limited but strong and independent gravitational field."*

Leopold Kohr

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