

## Community Reading Group Annotations

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*The Ecology of Freedom: the emergence and dissolution of hierarchy*

By: Murray Bookchin

1. When I was a substitute teacher, a first grader once asked me what the word “communal” meant. In English, it is often in reference to *communism*, an association which comes with significant problems, but in French, the *commune* is no different than a town, a municipality.

2. My studies over the last couple years have involved various takes on the commune—alternative museums, anarchist schools, farms, confederations, and even cities. Each has brought into question another, more complicated word—*civilization*.

3. Relevant to my own ancestry, I consider how Ashkenazi Jews—historically emerging from social precariousness and violence in Europe—have approached these ideas.

4. As I’ve seen the projects of lifestyle anarchists and communists devolve into chaotic hierarchies, the ramifications of civilization have not ceased to concern me. In collaboration, I want to ponder these questions: What is the nature of *civilization*? What is possible in the *commune*?

–Zach Whitworth

A broad, frequently raised question remains to be answered: To what extent does nature have a reality of its own that we can legitimately invoke? ... That nature is all that is nonhuman or, more broadly, nonsocial is a presumption rooted in more than rational discourse. It lies at the heart of an entire theory of knowledge—an epistemology that sharply bifurcates into objectivity and subjectivity.

The claim of epistemology to adjudicate the validity of knowledge as a formal and abstract inquiry has always been opposed by the claim of history to treat knowledge as a problem of genesis, not merely of knowing in a formal and abstract sense. From this historical standpoint, mental processes do not live a life of their own. Their seemingly autonomous construction of the world is actually inseparable from the way they are constructed *by* the world—a world that is richly historical not only in a social sense but in a natural one as well. I do not mean that nature "knows" things that we do not know, but rather that we are the very "knowingness" of nature, the embodiment of nature's evolution into intellect, mind and self-reflexivity. **(37–38)**

Ultimately, organic knowledge is mobilized insight that seeks to know nature within nature, not to abandon analysis for mysticism or dialectic for intuition. Our own thinking is itself a natural process, albeit deeply conditioned by society and richly textured by social evolution. Our capacity to bring thought into resonance with its organic history (its evolution from the highly reactive organic molecules that form the fundament for the sensitivity of more complex ones, the extravagant cloudburst of life-forms that follows, and the evolution of the nervous system) is part of the knowledge of "knowing" that provides thought with an organic integument as real as the intellectual tools we acquire from society. More than intuition and faith, thought is literally as real as birth and death, when we first begin to know and when we finally cease to know. Hence nature abides in epistemology as surely as a parent abides in its child. **(39)**

[Science] as we know it today is the fragmented one-sided vision of a one-eyed god, whose vantage point entails domination and antagonism, not coequality and harmony. ... In our day, this one-sided "wisdom" is laden with the prospects of nuclear immolation and ecological catastrophe.

The great project of our time must be to open the other eye: to see all-sidedly and wholly, to heal and transcend the cleavage between humanity and nature that came with early wisdom. Nor can we deceive ourselves that the reopened eye will be focused on the visions and myths of primordial peoples, for history has labored over thousands of years to produce entirely new domains of reality that enter into our very humanness. Our capacity for freedom ... runs deeper than that of our distant progenitors. We have established a broader material basis for free time, play, security, perception, and sensuousness ... than humanity in a primordial bond with nature could possibly achieve. **(41)**

My use of the word *hierarchy* in the subtitle of this work is meant to be provocative. There is a strong theoretical need to contrast hierarchy with the more widespread use of the words class and State. ... To use the words hierarchy, class, and State interchangeably, as many social theorists do, is insidious and obscurantist. This practice, in the name of a "classless" or "libertarian" society, could easily conceal the existence of hierarchical relationships and a hierarchical sensibility, both of which ... serve to perpetuate unfreedom.

By hierarchy, I mean the cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command, not merely the economic and political systems to which the terms class and State most appropriately refer. (3–4)

The State, economic classes, and the systematic exploitation of subjugated peoples followed from a more complex and protracted development than radical theorists recognized in their day. Their visions of the origins of class and political societies were instead the *culmination* of an earlier, richly articulated development of society into hierarchical forms.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that society in the form of bands, families, clans, tribes, tribal federations, villages, and even municipalities long antedates State formations. The State, with its specialized functionaries, bureaucracies, and armies, emerges quite late in human social development.

But the hierarchical organization of all differentia did not end with the structuring of "civil" society into an institutionalized system of obedience and command. In time, hierarchy began to invade less tangible fields of life. ... The vision of social and natural diversity was altered from an organic sensibility that sees different phenomena as unity in diversity into a hierarchical mentality that ranked the most miniscule phenomena into mutually antagonistic pyramids erected around notions of "inferior" and "superior." ... Thus, the effort to restore the ecological principle of unity in diversity has become a social effort in its own right. (7–8)

If I were asked to single out the one underlying contrast that permeates this book, it is the seeming conflict between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom." [This] conflict dates back to Aristotle's *Politics*. It involves the "blind" world of "natural" or external nature and the rational world of "human" or internal nature that society must dominate to create the material conditions for freedom.

My strategy is to reexamine the evolution and meaning of technology in a new ecological light. I will try to ascertain how work ceased to be attractive and playful, and turned into onerous toil. (10)

## Bookchin Ch. 1

In view of the enormous dislocations that now confront us, our own era needs a more sweeping and insightful body of knowledge—scientific as well as social—to deal with our problems. Without renouncing the gains of earlier scientific and social theories, we must develop a more rounded critical analysis of our relationship with the natural world. We must seek the foundations for a more reconstructive approach to the grave problems posed by the apparent "contradictions" between nature and society. We can no longer afford to remain captives to the tendency of the more traditional sciences to dissect phenomena and examine their fragments. We must combine them, relate them, and see them in their totality as well as their specificity. **(20–21)**

To distinguish ecology from environmentalism and from abstract, often obfuscatory definitions of the term, I must return to its original usage and explore its direct relevance to society. Put quite simply, ecology deals with the dynamic balance of nature, with the interdependence of living and nonliving things. Since nature also includes human beings, the science must include humanity's role in the natural world—specifically, the character, form, and structure of humanity's relationship with other species and with the inorganic substrate of the biotic environment. From a critical viewpoint, ecology opens to wide purview the vast disequilibrium that has emerged from humanity's split with the natural world. One of nature's very unique species, *homo sapiens*, has slowly and painstakingly developed from the natural world into a unique social world of its own. As both worlds interact with each other through highly complex phases of evolution, it has become as important to speak of a social ecology as to speak of a natural ecology.

But social ecology provides more than a critique of the split between humanity and nature; it also poses the need to heal them. ... The science deals with social and natural relationships in communities or "ecosystems." In conceiving them holistically, that is to say, in terms of their mutual interdependence, social ecology seeks to unravel the forms and patterns of interrelationships that give intelligibility to a community, be it natural or social. Holism, here, is the result of a conscious effort to discern how the particulars of a community are arranged, how its "geometry" (as the Greeks might have put it) makes the "whole more than the sum of its parts." **(22–23)**

[A] totalitarian concept of "wholeness" stands sharply at odds with what ecologists denote by the term. In addition to comprehending its heightened awareness of form and structure, we now come to a very important tenet of ecology: ecological wholeness is not an immutable homogeneity but rather the very opposite—a *dynamic unity of diversity*. In nature, balance and harmony are achieved by ever-changing differentiation, by ever-expanding diversity. Ecological stability, in effect, is a function not of simplicity and homogeneity but of complexity and variety. The capacity of an ecosystem to retain its integrity depends not on the uniformity of the environment but on its diversity. **(24)**

To assume that science commands this vast nexus of organic and inorganic interrelationships in all its details is worse than arrogance: it is sheer stupidity. If unity in diversity forms one of the cardinal tenets of ecology, the wealth of biota that exists in a single acre of soil leads us to still another basic ecological tenet: the need to allow for a high degree of natural spontaneity. The compelling dictum, "respect for nature," has concrete implications. To assume that our knowledge of this complex, richly textured, and perpetually changing natural kaleidoscope of life forms lends itself to a degree of "mastery" that allows us free rein in manipulating the biosphere is sheer foolishness.

"Working with nature" requires that we foster the biotic variety that emerges from a spontaneous development of natural phenomena. ... What ecology, both natural and social, can hope to teach us is the way to find the current and understand the direction of the stream. **(24–25)**

To deal with so-called insect hierarchies the way we deal with so-called animal hierarchies, or worse, to grossly ignore the very different functions animal communities perform, is analogic reasoning carried to the point of the preposterous.

Even if the term dominance were stretched to include "queen" bees and "alpha" baboons, specific acts of coercion by individual animals can hardly be called domination. Acts do not constitute institutions; episodes do not make a history. And highly structured insect behavioral patterns, rooted in instinctual drives, are too inflexible to be regarded as social. ... [Dominance] and submission must be viewed as *institutionalized* relationships, relationships that living things literally institute or create but which are neither ruthlessly fixed by instinct on the one hand nor idiosyncratic on the other. By this, I mean that they must comprise a clearly *social* structure of coercive and privileged ranks that exist apart from the idiosyncratic individuals who seem to be dominant within a given community, a hierarchy that is guided by a social logic that goes beyond individual interactions or inborn patterns of behavior. (27–29)

It is not in the particulars of differentiation that plant-animal communities are ecologically united with human communities but rather in their *logic of differentiation*. Wholeness, in fact, is completeness. The dynamic stability of the whole derives from a visible level of completeness in human communities as in climax ecosystems. What unites these modes of wholeness and completeness, however different they are in their specificity and their qualitative distinctness, is the logic of development itself. A climax forest is whole and complete as a result of the same unifying process—the same dialectic—that a particular social form is whole and complete.

When wholeness and completeness are viewed as the result of an immanent dialectic within phenomena, we do no more violence to the uniqueness of these phenomena than the principle of gravity does violence to the uniqueness of objects that fall within its "lawfulness." In this sense, the ideal of human roundedness, a product of the rounded community, is the legitimate heir to the ideal of a stabilized nature, a product of the rounded natural environment. (32)

The need to bring a sense of history into nature is as compelling as the need to bring a sense of history into society. An ecosystem is never a random community of plants and animals that occurs merely by chance. It has potentiality, direction, meaning, and self-realization in its own right. To view an ecosystem as given (a bad habit, which scientism inculcates in its theoretically neutral observer) is as ahistorical and superficial as to view a human community as given. Both have a history that gives intelligibility and order to their internal relationships and directions to their development. (34)

Great historical eras of transition reveal that the rising flood of social change must be permitted to find its own level spontaneously. Vanguard organizations have produced repeated catastrophes when they sought to force changes that people and the conditions of their time could not sustain materially, ideologically, or morally. ... Social change, particularly social revolution, tends to find its worst enemies in leaders whose wills supplant the spontaneous movements of the people.

I do not mean to deny the superadded significance of will, insight, and knowledge that must inform human spontaneity in the social world. In nature, by contrast, spontaneity operates within a more restrictive set of conditions. A natural ecosystem finds its climax in the greatest degree of stability it can attain within its given level of possibilities. ... A climax ecosystem brings to rest for a time the interrelationships that comprise it. By contrast, the social realm raises the objective possibility of freedom and self-consciousness as the superadded function of stability. The human community, at whatever level it comes to rest, remains incomplete until it achieves uninhibited volition and self-consciousness, or what we call *freedom*—a complete state, I should add, that is actually the point of departure for a new beginning. (35–36)

[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]

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The further back we go to communities that lack economic classes and a political State – communities that might well be called *organic societies* because of their intense solidarity internally and with the natural world – the greater evidence we find of an outlook toward life that visualized people, things, and relations in terms of their uniqueness rather than their "superiority" or "inferiority."

...

Individuality, to the extent that it did not conflict with the community interest on which the survival of all depended, was seen more in terms of interdependence than independence. Variety was prized within the larger tapestry of the community – as a priceless ingredient of communal unity.

...

In the various organic societies where this outlook still prevails, notions such as "equality" and "freedom" do not exist. They are implicit in the very outlook itself. Moreover, because they are not placed in juxtaposition to the concepts of "inequality" and "unfreedom," these notions lack definability.

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What the ecological ceremonial does, in effect, is *socialize* the natural world and complete the involvement of society with nature. Here, the ceremonial, despite its naïvely fictive content, speaks more truthfully to the richly articulated interface between society and nature than concepts that deal with the natural world as a "matrix," "background," or worse, "precondition" for the social world. Indeed, far from dealing with nature as an "It" or a "Thou" (to use Martin Buber's terms), the ceremonial validates nature as *kin*, a blooded, all-important estate that words like *citizen* can never attain. Nature is *named* even before it is deified; it is personified as part of the community before it is raised above it as "supernature."

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*Defining usufruct:* The freedom of individuals in a community to appropriate resources merely by virtue of the fact that they are using them. Such resources belong to the user as long as they are being used. Function, in effect, replaces our hallowed concept of possession – not merely as a loan or even "mutual aid," but as an unconscious emphasis on use itself, on the need that is free of psychological entanglements with proprietorship, work, and even reciprocity. The western identification of individuality with ownership and personality with craft – the latter laden with a metaphysics of selfhood as expressed in a crafted object wrested by human powers from an intractable nature – has yet to emerge from the notion of use itself and the guileless enjoyment of needed things. Need, in effect, still orchestrates work to the point where property of any kind, communal or otherwise, has yet to acquire independence from the claims of satisfaction. A collective need subtly orchestrates work, not personal need alone, for the collective claim is implicit in the primacy of usufruct over proprietorship. Hence, even the work performed in one's own dwelling has an underlying collective dimension in the potential availability of its products to the entire community.

...

Communal property, once property itself has become a category of consciousness, already marks the first step toward private property – just as reciprocity, once it too becomes a category of consciousness, marks the first step toward exchange. Proudhon's celebration of "mutual aid" and contractual federalism, like Marx's celebration of communal property and planned production, mark no appreciable advance over the primal principle of usufruct. Both thinkers were captive to the notion of interest, to the rational satisfaction of egotism.

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Limited by the blood oath, allies are difficult to find; the community, based on association through kinship alone, finds it impossible to recognize itself in other communities that do not share common ancestral lineages. Unless such lineages can be created by intermarriages that recreate the blood oath on its primal terms of shared kinship, new oaths must be devised that, while secondary to blood, can find a comparable tangibility in things. Claude Levi-Strauss's notion to the contrary notwithstanding, women are decidedly not such "things" that men can trade with each other to acquire allies. They are the origins of kinship and solidarity – the *arché* of community and its immanent power of solidarity – not little pastries that can be savored and traded away in a Parisian bistro.

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Our entire language is permeated by historically charged euphemisms that acquire a reified life of their own. Obedience displaces allegiance, command displaces coordination, power displaces wisdom, acquisition displaces giving, commodities displace gifts. While these changes are real enough historically with the rise of hierarchy, class, and property, they become grossly misleading when they extend their sovereignty to language as such and stake out their claim to the totality of social life. When used as tools in ferreting out the memory of humanity, they do not help to contrast present to past and reveal the tentative nature of the existing world and of prevailing patterns of human behavior; to the contrary, they assimilate the past to the present and in the very pretence of illuminating the past, they cunningly conceal it from our eyes.

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What strongly reinforces interpretations of the goddess as a more giving principle is the unqualified nature of mother-love itself in contrast to the conditional love associated with patriarchy. Rich Fromm, in the provocative essays he prepared for the Institute for Social Research, noted that woman's love, compared with that of the judgmental patriarch who provides love as a reward for the child's performance and fulfillment of its duties, "is not dependent on any moral or social obligation to be carried out by the child; there is not even an obligation to return her love." This unconditional love, without expectation of any filial reward, yields the total deobjectification of hierarchy and classes. To assume that the goddess did not symbolize this untainted sense of identification is to question her association with the feminine – in short, to turn her into a god, which priestly corporations were to do later with extraordinary deftness.

1. In the complex interpenetration of old by new, early social forms may have lingered on through the entire span of post-Neolithic history. Not until the emergence of capitalism did the peasant village and its cultural repertory disappear as the locus of rural life—a fact that will be of considerable importance when we consider humanity's legacy of freedom (62).
2. Ultimately, the abolition of classes presupposes the "development of the productive forces," the advance of technology to a point where everyone can be free from the burdens of "want," material insecurity, and toil. As long as surpluses are merely marginal, social development occurs in a gray zone between a remote past in which productivity is too low to support classes and a distant future in which it is sufficiently high to abolish class rule (65).
3. Let us consider a factor that has played an important ideological role in shaping contemporary society: the "stinginess" of nature. Is it a given that nature is "stingy" and that labor is humanity's principal means of redemption from animality? In what ways are scarcity, abundance, and post-scarcity distinguishable from each other? Following the thrust of Victorian ideology, do class societies emerge because enough technics, labor, and "manpower" exist so that society can plunder nature effectively and render exploitation possible, or even inevitable? Or do economic strata usurp the fruits of technics and labor, later to consolidate themselves into clearly definable ruling classes (66)?
4. If the object of capitalism or socialism is to increase needs, the object of anarchism is to increase choice. However much the consumer is deluded into the belief that he or she is choosing freely, the consumer is heteronomous and under the sway of a contrived necessity; the free subject, by contrast, is autonomous and spontaneously fulfills his or her rationally conceived wants (70).
5. To lecture society about its "insatiable" appetites, as our resource-conscious environmentalists are wont to do, is precisely what the modern consumer is not prepared to hear. And to impoverish society with contrived shortages, economic dislocations, and material deprivation is certain to shift the mystification of needs over to a more sinister social ethos, the mystification of scarcity. This Ethos—already crystallized into the "life-boat ethic," "triage," and a new bourgeois imagery of "claw-and-fang" called survivalism—marks the first steps toward ecofascism (71-2).

6. In projecting our own social attitudes into preliterate society, we often fail to realize how far removed a primordial domestic community is from a modern political society. Later, in a review of early mythology, I shall show that ' the concept of power is still highly amorphous and undifferentiated in the primordial world. As long as the growing civil sphere is a pragmatic extension of the male's role in the division of labor, it is merely that and no more. Even while the civil sphere is expanding, it is still rooted in domestic life and, in this sense, enveloped by it; hence, the numinous power that surrounds woman in the most patricentric of primordial societies (80).
7. The nascent ambiguities of the aged toward nature later give rise to Western "civilization's" mode of repressive reason. This exploitative rationality pits civil society against domestic society and launches social elites on a quest for domination that, in a later historical context, transforms insecurity into egotism, acquisitiveness, and a craze for rule-in short, the social principle graduated by its own inner dialectic into the asocial principle. Here, too, are the seeds for the hatred of eros and the body, a hatred, in turn, that forms the archetypal matrix for willful aggression and the Thanatic death wish (82).
8. It is important to remember that class society is not the creation of humanity as a whole. In its most ruthless form, it is the "achievement" of that numerically small proportion of "advanced peoples" who were largely confined to Europe. By far, the great mass of human beings who occupied the planet before the Age of Exploration had developed alternatives of their own to capitalism, even to class society. By no means do we have the right to regard them as arrested societies that awaited the gentle caress of "civilization" and the sculpting of the crucifix. That their social forms, technologies, cultural works, and values have been degraded to mere "anthropologies" rather than histories in their own right is testimony to an intellectual atavism that views anything but its own social creations as mere "remains" of its "prehistory" and the "archaeology" of its own social development (87).

## Bookchin Chapter 4

[It is in the dissolution of the ancient blood oath, coextensive with urban formation, that we] sense the ideological activities of the early priesthood that had emerged from a reworking of shamanism. By freeing itself from the social vulnerabilities of the shaman, whose body constituted a mere vessel for spirits, the priestly corporation had acquired the role of a cosmic brokerage firm between humanity and its increasingly anthropomorphic deities—deities no longer to be confused with the nature spirits that peopled the environment of organic society. Theology began to gain ascendancy over divination. Seemingly rational accounts of the origins, workings, and destiny of the cosmos ... tended to replace magic. By emphasizing the "guilt" of the human "wrong-doer" and the "displeasure" of the deities, the priestly corporation could acquire an immunity to failure that the shaman had always lacked. The *technical* failures of the shaman, which typically rendered his social status so insecure in primordial society, could be reinterpreted by the emerging priesthood as evidence of the *moral* failure of the community itself. ... Technical failure, in effect, was shifted from the priestly corporation to a fallen humanity that had to atone for its moral frailties. ... When this effort was institutionalized to the extent that the episodic became chronic, it created the early theocracies that go hand-in-hand with early cities, whose foci were always the temple. ... Urban life began with an altar, not simply a marketplace, and probably with walls that were meant to define sacred space from the natural, not simply as defensive palisades.

By converting mundane nature spirits and demons into humanlike supernatural deities and devils, the priestly corporation had cunningly created a radically new social and ideological dispensation—indeed, a new way of *mentalizing* rule. (91–92)

The warrior societies that emerged within organic society were more thoroughgoing in uprooting it than the priestly corporations that emerged outside it. ... The warriors supplanted their theocratic predecessors, actually leaning to all appearances on the very ideological changes that the theocracies had produced. Hence, it was the warrior chieftain and his military companions from whom history recruited its classical nobility and its manorial lords, who produced the political State, and later, the centralized monarchy with priestly vestiges of its own.

Theocracies are not incompatible with certain democratic features of tribal life, such as popular assemblies and councils of elders. Insofar as the privileges of the priestly corporation are respected, tribal democracy and theocracy may actually reinforce each other institutionally—the one, dealing with the material concerns of the body politic, the other dealing with the material concerns of the temple and the sacred. Between them, an active division of functions may emerge that the fraternal military societies can only regard as a humiliating restriction of their hunger for civil power. The earliest conflicts between Church and State were initially, in fact, three-way conflicts that involved the democratic claims of the clans—and, ultimately, their complete removal from the conflict. (94)

The centrality of the city in achieving [hierarchical society's transformation into class society] can hardly be overemphasized. For it was the city that provided the territory for territorialism, the civic institutions for citizenship, the marketplace for elaborate forms of exchange, the exclusivity of quarters and neighborhoods for classes, and monumental structures for the State. Its timbers, stones, bricks, and mortar gave enduring tangibility to social, cultural, institutional, and even moral changes that might have otherwise retained the fugitive quality of mere episodes in humanity's convoluted history or simply been absorbed back into nature, like an abandoned field reclaimed by forest. By virtue of its endurance and growth, the city crystallized the claims of society over biology, of craft over nature, of politics over community. Like the cutting edge of class society's battle-axe, it fought back the ever-invasive claims of kinship, usufruct, and complementarity, affirming the sovereignty of interest and domination over sharing and equality. For a conquering army to obliterate a culture's city was to annihilate the culture itself; to reclaim the city, be it a Jerusalem or a Rome, was to restore the culture and the people who had created it. On the very urban altars of the blood oath, the city drained kinship of its content while exalting its form, until the husk could be discarded for a mere reproductive unit we euphemistically call the "nuclear family." (97)

Magic, the technique that the animist employs to manipulate the world, seems to violate the conciliatory epistemology of this sensibility. ... [However] by magically imitating nature, its forces, or the actions of animals and people, preliterate communities project their own needs into external nature; it is essential to emphasize that external nature is conceptualized at the very outset as a mutualistic community. Prior to the manipulative act is the ceremonious supplicatory word, the appeal to a rational being—to a *subject*—for cooperation and understanding. ... The consent of an animal, say a bear, is an essential part of the hunt in which it will be killed.

I do not mean that organic society lacked a sense of particularity in the manifold of this experiential unity. ... The animist discriminated between individuals and species as carefully as we do. ... The *repressive* abstraction of the individual bear into a bear spirit, a universalizing of the spirit of bears that denies their specificity, is, I suspect, a later development in the elaboration of the animistic spirit. In rendering the individual bear subject to *manipulative* forms of human predation, generalization in this form marks the first steps toward the objectification of the external world. **(99–100)**

The graduation of animistic thought from the individual to the species, from bears to the "bear spirits," is an obvious preliminary to a conception of natural forces as humanly divine. The deities are subtle evidence of humanity's presence in nature as a natural force in its own right.

It is tempting, here, to see the steppe lands and particularly the desert as domineering environments that brought humanity into subjugation to nature. ... [However] to the great Hebrew prophets, most notably figures like Amos, the desert was above all the land to which one returned to find the strength of character and moral probity to fight injustice. ... His contact with the desert imbued him with a sense of righteousness. The significance of the Semitic contribution to our western sensibility lies not simply in the patriarchal edge it gave to the already existing hierarchies of agricultural societies. ... It also lies in the moral probity and transcendental mentality that generalized the concrete image of nature so prevalent among peasant peoples into a Supernature that was as strikingly intellectual as it was willful in its abstractness. **(103)**

[In the Hebraic tradition] social history, as the will of God, replaces natural history as the cosmogony of spirits, demons, and divine beings.

What renders the Hebrew Bible unique is that it is self-derivative: God's will, as it were, *is* God. No cosmogony, morality, or rationality is necessary to explain it, and man's duty is to obey unquestioningly. When Moses first encounters Yahweh and asks for his name, the reply is a damning intonation: "I am that I am." And further: "I am hath sent me unto you." What Moses confronts is not merely an *only* God or a *jealous* one; he confronts a *nameless* God whose transcendence closes Him to all being beyond His own existence and will. The concrete now *completely* becomes the mere *product* of the universal; the principle, by which animism and early cosmogonies are to evolve from the particular to the general, has been totally reversed. The order of things emerges not from nature to Supernature, but from Supernature to nature. **(103–104)**

Yahweh's will completes the growing separation between subject and object. More significantly, His will divided the two not simply as particulars that make for a richer wholeness, but antagonistically: the object is subjugated to the subject. They are divided as opposites that involve a denial of the concrete, of facticity, and of the body by the abstract, the universal, and the mind. Spirit can now be opposed to reality, intellect to feeling, society to nature, man to woman, and person to person, because the order of things as expressed by Yahweh's "I Am" has so ordained it. One does not have to invoke custom, law, or theory to explain this order; the transcendental Will of God—a god who is *sui generis*—has ordered this dispensation. It is not for man to question His omnipotence. **(105)**

## Bookchin Ch. 5

Between society and the fully developed political State there is ultimately a historical point where the psychic constraints created by repressive socialization and morality begin to deteriorate.

One might conjecture that the State as an instrument of organized violence evolved from the open exercise of violence. ... Yet there is much that so reductionist a view leaves unanswered historically. ... The State did not simply explode on the social horizon like a volcanic eruption. Pastoral invasions may have accelerated its development dramatically, but a leap from stateless to State forms is probably a fiction.

The fact that the State is a hybridization of political with social institutions, of coercive with distributive functions, of highly punitive with regulatory procedures, and finally of class with administrative needs this melding process has produced very real ideological and practical paradoxes that persist as major issues today. How easily, for example, can we separate State from society on the municipal, economic, national, and international levels? Is it possible to do so completely? (124)

For the present, what concerns us are those attributes of the State that have meshed it with society to a point where our ability to distinguish between the two is completely blurred.

Clearly, a distinction must first be made between social coercion and social influence. Despite their similarities, the two are not identical. ... The first is personal; the second, institutional. To take this distinction still further, hierarchical relationships that are based on personality are notoriously loose, ad hoc, and easily disassembled, like the "dominance-submission hierarchies" ethologists so readily impute to primates. Bureaucratic relationships, by contrast, are notoriously rigid, sclerotic, and intentionally divested of all personality. They tend to be self-perpetuating and self-expansive. As mere instruments of rule, bureaucratic structures are quintessentially hierarchical; indeed, they are the political expression of *objective* power, of power that "merely" happens to be executed by people who, as bureaucrats, are totally divested of personality and uniqueness. Accordingly, for many areas of the modern world, such people have been turned almost literally into a State technology, one in which each bureaucrat is interchangeable with another including, more recently, with mechanical devices. (124–125)

Historically, the State obliterates the distinction between governance and administration. The so-called primitive peoples in organic societies were acutely conscious of this difference. The closer we come to cultures organized in bands and comparatively simple tribes, the more "rule" is an ad hoc, non-institutionalized system of administration.

In political ideologies of all types, the abuse of terms like government and administration turn the State into the template for a free society, however much its functions are reduced to a "minimum." ... Like the market, the State knows no limits; it can easily become a self-generating and self-expanding force for its own sake. ... The State's capacity to absorb social functions provides it not only with an ideological rationale for its existence; it physically and psychologically rearranges social life so that it seems indispensable as an *organizing principle* for human consociation. (127)

The State acquires stability, form, and identity only when personal loyalties are transmuted into depersonalized institutions, power becomes centralized and professionalized, custom gives way to law, and governance absorbs administration. But the decisive shift from society to the State occurs with the most supreme political act of all: the delegation of power.

To delegate power is to divest personality of its most integral traits; it denies the very notion that the individual is competent to deal not only with the management of his or her personal life out with its most important context: the social context. Certainly early societies did not deal with the issue of delegated power in terms of selfhood and its integrity, but the historical record suggests that they functioned as though these issues profoundly influenced their behavior. **(129)**

Conflicts over delegation and deputation of power, bureaucracy, and the citizen's claims to competence appear throughout history. ... Like a strange talisman, these conflicts serve almost electrically to dissociate the social claims of the State from the political claims of society. The issue of public competence penetrates the ideological armor that conceals State functions from social to separate governance from administration, professionalism from amateurism, institutionalized relations from functional ones, and the monopoly of violence from the citizens in arms.

A very thin line separates the practice of direct democracy from direct action. The former is institutionalized and self-disciplined; the latter is episodic and often highly spontaneous. Yet a relationship between an assembled populace that formulates policies in a face-to-face manner and such actions as strikes, civil disobedience, and even insurrection can be established around the right of a people to assume unmediated control over public life. Representation has been validated by an elitist belief that the only select individuals (at best, selected by virtue of experience and ability, at worst, by birth) are qualified to understand public affairs. Today, representation is validated by instrumental reasons, such as the complexity of modern society and its maze of logistical intricacies. **(132)**

The shopping mall is the *agora* of modern society, the civic center of a totally economic and inorganic world. It works its way into every personal haven from capitalist relations and imposes its centrality on every aspect of domestic life. The highways that lead to its parking lots and its production centers devour communities and neighborhoods; its massive command of retail trade devours the family-owned store; the subdivisions that cluster around it devour farmland; the motor vehicles that carry worshippers to its temples are self-enclosed capsules that preclude all human contact. The inorganic returns not only to industry and the marketplace; it calcifies and dehumanizes the most intimate relationships between people in the presumably invulnerable world of the bedroom and nursery. The massive dissolution of personal and social ties that comes with the return of the inorganic transforms the extended family into the nuclear family and finally delivers the individual over to the purveyors of the singles' bars. **(137)**

We can never dis-embed ourselves from nature any more than we can dis-embed ourselves from our own viscera. The technocratic "utopia" of personalized automata remains a hollow myth. The therapies that seek to adjust organic beings to inorganic conditions merely produce lifeless, inorganic, and depersonalized automata. Hence, nature always affirms its existence as the matrix for social and personal life, a matrix in which life is always embedded by definition. By rationalizing and simplifying society and personality, we do not divest it of its natural attributes; rather, we brutally destroy its organic attributes. Thus nature never simply coexists with us; it is part of every aspect of our structure and being. To turn back natural evolution from more complex forms of organic beings to simpler ones, from the organic to the inorganic, entails the turning back of society and social development from more complex to simpler forms. **(138)**

[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]

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The principle of the irreducible minimum...affirms the existence of *inequality* within the group – inequality of physical and mental powers, of skills and virtuosity of psyches and proclivities. It does not ignore these inequalities or denigrate them, but on the contrary, to *compensate* for them.

...

To assume that everyone is "equal" is patently preposterous if they are regarded as "equal" in strength, intellect, training, experience, talent, disposition, and opportunities. Such "equality" scoffs at reality and denies the commonality and solidarity by subverting its responsibilities to compensate for differences between individuals.

148 / 223–224

Justitia...presides over a new ideological dispensation of equality. Not only is she blindfolded; she also holds a scale by which to measure exchange fairly – "equal and exact." Guilt and innocence are juridical surrogates for the equitable allotments of things that appear in the marketplace. Indeed, all scales can *ever* do is to reduce qualitative differences to quantitative ones. Accordingly, everyone must be equal before Justitia; her blindfold prevents her from drawing any distinctions between her supplicants. But persons are very different indeed, as the primordial equality of unequals had recognized. Justitia's rule of equality – of equivalence – thus completely reverses the old principle. Inasmuch as all are theoretically "equal" in her unseeing eyes, although often grossly unequal in fact, she turns the equality of unequals into the *inequality of equals*.

152 / 227–228

The formal disappearance of the blood group into a universal *humanitas* that sees a common genesis for every free individual was not to receive juridical recognition until late in antiquity, when the Emperor Caracalla conferred citizenship on the entire nonslave male population of the Roman Empire.

...

Juridically, at least, the empire had dissolved the exclusivity of the folk, the kin group, that had already devolved from tribal egalitarianism into the aristocratic fraternity of birth.

...

The departure this idea represented from Aristotle's concept of "mankind" was nothing less than monumental. Even slavery, so basic to Roman economic life, had been placed at odds with the Hellenic notion of the slave's inborn inferiority. To Roman jurists of the imperial period, servitude now derived not from the natural inferiority of the slave but, as Henry Maine has observed, "from a supposed agreement between victor and vanquished in which the first stipulated for the perpetual services of his foe; and the other gained in consideration the life which he had legitimately forfeited." Chattel slavery, in effect, was increasingly viewed as contractual slavery.

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Archilochus and his wandering band of companions are the earliest record we have of that long line of "masterless men" who surface repeatedly during periods of social decomposition and unrest – men, and later women, who have no roots in *any* community or tradition, who colonize the world's future rather than its past.

159 / 235–236

It is easy – and largely accurate – to say the Church has been a prop for the State. Certainly Paul's interpretation of Jesus' message to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" leaves the troubled world unblemished by any political and social challenges. Early Christianity had no quarrel with chattel slavery, if we interpret Paul's injunctions correctly. Yet when Paul persuades Onesimus, the runaway Christian slave, to return to his Christian master, Onesimus is described as "that dear and faithful brother who is a fellow citizen of yours," for slave, master, and Paul are themselves "slaves" to a higher "master in heaven." "Citizen" and "slave," here, are used interchangeably.

162–163 / 239

Where Hobbes is arrested by the problem of human survival in a meaningless world, Locke advances the higher claims of property and person, and perhaps more strikingly for our age, the crucial role of labor in shaping that most fascinating piece of property – the individual itself.

...

The individual achieves its identity as the "*Proprietor of his own person*, and the actions or Labour of it." Human activity, in effect, is human labor. How profoundly Locke opened a gulf between Greco-Roman thought and liberal ideology can best be seen when we recall that for Aristotle, human activity is basically thinking, and for Christian theology, spirituality.

163 / 240

If liberalism could add nothing to the concept of justice other than Locke's hypostatization of proprietorship, and if progress meant nothing more than the right to unlimited acquisition, then most of humanity had to be excluded from the pale of the "good life" by patently self-serving class criteria of justice and progress. By the end of the eighteenth century, liberal theory had not only been debased to political economy, but to a totally asocial doctrine of interest. That human beings acted in society at all could be explained only by the compulsion of needs and the pursuit of material gain.

165 / 242

It is not the ethical calculus that comprises the most vulnerable features of utilitarian ethics but the fact that *liberalism had denatured reason itself into a mere methodology for calculating sentiments* – with the same operational techniques that bankers and industrialists use to administer their enterprises. Nearly two centuries later, this kind of rationality was to horrify a less credulous public as a form of thermonuclear ethics in which varying sums of bomb shelters were to yield more or less casualties in the event of nuclear war.

## Bookchin Ch. 7

The classical world is preoccupied with justice, fair dealings, individual liberty, and enfranchisement of the outsider in the world city, rather than with freedom's equality of unequals. Freedom is viewed as utopistic and fanciful.

[As ideal] freedom again rises to the surface of consciousness with Christianity. When Augustine places the wayfaring "Heavenly City" into the world as a force for social change, he also locates it in a meaningful, purposeful historical drama that leads to humanity's redemption. Hence humankind is removed from the meaningless recurring cycles of ancient social thought. ... Redemption thus ceases to be the arbitrary whim of a deity. ... History imparts to faith a logic and intelligibility that inspires hope, meaning, and *action*.  
**(168)**

But Augustine not only provides us with the first notion of a political utopia; he emphatically denigrates political authority. To be sure, early Christianity had always viewed political entanglements as tainted. ... It neither challenged the political order of the time nor acquiesced to it, but merely acknowledged existing realities.

The conflict latent in this dual message of political quietism and messianic activism could hardly be suppressed once the Christian doctrine became increasingly secularized. The Church was the major factor behind its own transformation from an other-worldly into a worldly power. **(169–170)**

[Following the Investiture Controversy] Christian doctrine became increasingly social and secular until religious disputes barely concealed harsh clashes over the implications of the Augustinian position. The eventual submission of sacerdotal to secular power did not terminate these conflicts. To the contrary, it made them outrageously worldly in character.

[Subversive Christian sects influenced by Augustine] carried Christian eschatology beyond the confines of the Augustinian position into a distinctly secular social philosophy and movement. The social theories of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke owe their secular quality to the assimilation of "other-worldliness" to "this-worldliness." ... Once the Church itself became the plaything of the temporal powers and the papacy an instrument of Rome's local patriciate, heaven too began to lose its hypnotic power over the human mind, and hope ceased to find refuge in the spiritual dispensation of an otherworldly King. **(171–172)**

[In a world where freedom as an ideal was largely compensatory (i.e., an economy of privileges and entitlements), backwards-looking visions of freedom generally did not challenge the legitimacy of domination as natural; indeed, slave revolts in the ancient world often sought not only emancipation but also revenge, forcing toppled slave owners into bondage. The politics of the ancient world were typified by an overarching fatalism about the impossibility of perfecting society.]

Christianity, by contrast, offered a different vision. Authority, laws, domination, and servitude were explained by the need to restrain a "fallen humanity." Sin, like the afflictions in Pandora's box, had been released by woman's "accursed curiosity," but redemption and its abolition of authority, laws, domination, and servitude lay in the offing. The Christian clergy retained an activist stance toward absolution and brought the flock into motion to fight sin, Moslem infidels, and the territorial lords as the needs of the Church hierarchy required. Hence, to look back to the Garden of Eden was actually to look forward to its recovery, not to bemoan its disappearance. The ethical drama that eventually would yield its recovery was an *active* struggle with the powers of evil and wrong: humanity made its own history. **(172–174)**

*[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]*

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Gnosticism must be dealt with very prudently before any of its tendencies are described as a Christian "heresy." In its Manichaean form, it is simply a different religion, like Islam or Buddhism. In its Ophite form, it is a total, utterly anarchistic, inversion of Christian canon and dogma. And in its Marcionite form, its point of contact with Christianity is both too intimate and too challenging to be regarded as either Christian or non-Christian. In virtually all its forms (and they are too numerous to elucidate here), gnosticism slowly percolated through the Christian world, affecting later radical sects and movements that were to open startling new visions of personal and social freedom.

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Like the gnostic doctrines generally, Marcion's doctrines are rigorously dualistic. The world, including humanity, has been created by a Demiurge, an oppressive creator. In marked contrast is a superior, unknown God, an "alien" acosmic deity who embodies "goodness" and is the father of the Christ person. The "good" God is the alien, even to the people whose salvation Jesus is to achieve. By the same token, this deity is alien to the cosmos that has been created entirely by the Demiurge. Each divinity is separate from and antithetical to the other. The Demiurge is "just"; his antithesis, the alien God, is "good." Here, Marcion uncannily opposes "justness" or justice to "goodness" — which, by a mere fraction of a step forward, could yield the concept of "freeness."

183-184 / 262

What matters is not so much the elitist conclusions that the gnostic cults adopted but the eschatological strategy they used—a strategy that could easily be divested of its elitist sequelae. Based on this strategy, the claim of cults such as the Ophites to "forbidden things" (including orgiastic ones) could also be viewed as a "metaphysical alignment." All "moral" judgment, not only that of the orthodox Christian, is tainted. The "moral" code is merely the "complement of the physical law, and as such the internal aspect of the all-pervading cosmic rule," observes [Hans] Jonas. "Both emanate from the lord of the world as agencies of his rule, unified in the double aspect of the Jewish God as creator and legislator." Human will in normative law is appropriated "by the same powers that control his body. He who obeys it has abdicated the authority of his self." To defy the authority of the Creator and his juridical minions was turned from a "merely permissive privilege of freedom" into "a positive metaphysical interest in repudiating allegiance to all objective norms . . . ."

...

Jonas sees in gnostic libertinism more than mere defiance; it is "a positive obligation to perform every kind of action, with the idea of rendering to nature its own and thereby exhausting its powers." Accordingly, "sinning" becomes "something like a program." Its completion is a "due rendered as the price of ultimate freedom."

184-185 / 263

But can this exploration of the gnostics end with a discipline of indiscipline? A wild compulsion to be free? Gnosticism's commitment to "goodness" and physical indulgence implies the latent existence of more creative impulses than a "moral nihilism." We hear the message of Rabelais's Abbey of Theleme, whose devotees are no longer spiritual pneumatics but earthly rationalists; we also hear the message of Fourier's "phalanstery," which resonates with a radically new social, cultural, and technical dispensation: its psychological cosmos of personal affines, its gastronomic delights, its artistic and variegated organization of labor, its concept of work as play, and its generous (for Fourier's time) commitment to the emancipation of women.

...

We also hear another message. Where imagination is permitted to outstrip all the constraints that ideology, morality, and "law" place on human creative powers, what emerges is the voice of art, not merely of theology. Religion has always been a ritualized drama that appeals to aesthetic needs as well as to faith. And gnosticism shared with the cultic mysteries of the ancient world, as well as with Christianity, a need to achieve a derangement of the senses, an ecstatic union of spirit with body that theology described as a union of worshipper with deity. *A world that is rendered askew is a world that can be seen anew* – and changed according to the dictates of art as well as reason. Herein lies the great power of imagination that has vitalized radical movements for centuries: a "world turned upside down" that has been the goal of great anarchic movements, from the ancient world to the French student radicals of 1968.

187-188 / 266-267

The moral issues of freedom were to suffer a decline with the secularism introduced by Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, and the Victorian liberals. In addition, the very notion that freedom—that is, active citizenship in the Periklean and Hellenic sense—presupposes the existence and development of certain distinct libertarian institutions was to be eclipsed by debates and analyses on the subjects of property ownership, the mystique of nationhood (and the nation-state), and the tendency to equate institutional centralization with social rationalism. Hobbes, Locke, and Marx were obviously concerned with security and property when they did not discourse on the nature and need of centralized authority. The active revolutionaries of the modern era—Cromwell, Robespierre, Babeuf, Blanqui, and Lenin, to cite the most familiar of the lot—were dogmatic centralists who often moved beyond the limits of liberal republicanism in order to foster highly authoritarian political forms.

...

The imagery of a recurring history, largely cyclic in character, often replaced Christianity's eschatological vision of the Last Days, with its populist reward of a Land of Cokaygne or at least an earthly Jerusalem.

189 / 268

Rarely has it been understood that the Bolshevik Party and the Nazi Party were themselves complete State apparatuses that completely supplanted the preexisting State structures they "seized." Hitler, no less than Lenin, was to follow Marx's famous maxim that the State must not be merely occupied but "smashed" and replaced by a new one.

## Bookchin Ch. 8

Historically, the earliest expression of freedom within the realm of unfreedom consists of popular attempts to restore the irreducible minimum and the circulation of wealth frozen in the temples, manors, and palaces of the ruling elites. ... The "big men"-initially, the tribal warrior chieftains, later the nobles and monarchs of the secular realm and their priestly counterparts-were the custodians of society's use-values. They collected them in storehouses (an action partly justified by the Biblical story of Joseph) and redistributed them according to a hierarchy of values that increasingly reinforced their authority. The early history of ... "civilization" is largely an account of the custodians' expanding grip on the productive process: their deployment and rationalization of labor, their control over its fruits, and their personal appropriation of an increasingly larger fraction of the labor process and its social product.

Consolidated as mystified power and authority, the treasure of the ruling elites had to be exorcised. It had to be removed from the hands of the hierarchical strata who guarded it. It also had to be stripped of its mystified traits by a two-fold process of dissolution: firstly, by restoring this treasure to the natural, comprehensible forms of mundane use-values in order to render authority itself mundane and controllable; secondly, by recirculating wealth within the community in order to restore the principle of usufruct. Accordingly, by plundering, redistributing, or even "purifying" property with the torch of the incendiary, the "masses" were not merely oriented toward a consumerist disposition of wealth, but were also demystifying its institutional function as a force for domination-as well as restoring the primordial principles of the irreducible minimum and the equality of unequals. In this tradition-laden version of the "black redistribution," we find a rational attempt to subvert the hold of objects as the incarnation of hierarchy and domination over the lives of human beings. These expropriative explosions of the people, which so often are dismissed as the "plundering" expeditions of "primitive rebels" (to use Eric Hobsbawm's fatuous characterization), were surprisingly sophisticated in their intentions. They recur throughout history. Even the most unadorned consumerist visions of freedom have a broader social dimension than we normally suppose; they are concerned not only with the satisfaction of human needs but with the desymbolization of power and property. (192-193)

However spiritual the anticlerical rebellions of the time may seem to the modern mind, the fact remains that anticlericalism had a grossly underrated anarchic dimension. In trying to remove the clergy from its function as humanity's delegate to the spiritual kingdom, all the anticlerical movements of the time were striking a blow against the notion of representation itself and its denial of the individual's competence to manage his or her spiritual affairs. That the Church's wealth was an extraordinarily magnetic lodestone and its moral hypocrisy a source of popular fury are indubitable social facts that surfaced repeatedly. But the Church was also a political challenge. Its hierarchy was offensive to the preindustrial mind because it challenged-indeed, obstructed-the individual's freedom to participate directly in the spiritual kingdom, to relate to the Deity without mediation, to participate in a direct democracy concerning matters of faith. (200-201)

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a variety of highly radical sects surfaced from the depths of Christianity's fascinating cauldron of ideas. Some, like the Free Spirit, were quite explicitly radical; others, like the Beghards and Beguines, were less so. Crystallized into conventicular networks and secular orders, these sects produced ideas that severely vexed the Church and brought it into sharp conflict with its own doctrinal offspring.

To these sects, humanity was composed of the same divine substance as God, hence it could enter into direct communion with the deity. Such a view not only challenged the need for ecclesiastical intervention between humanity and God, but also gave its acolytes an exhilarating sense of personal freedom that could easily justify the removal of all worldly restrictions on human behavior and open the way to unrestrained moral license.

Hence, freedom to the Free Spirit meant even more than the right to orgiastic pleasure, an ecstasy of the senses; it meant total spontaneity of behavior and a cosmic reattunement to nature, the embodiment of God. Perhaps unknown to its acolytes, the Free Spirit restored Supernature to nature, and nature, in turn, to an almost enchanted mythopoeic status in the spiritual balance of things. Such ideas or intuitions were not to die easily; they spoke too deeply to the inner, libidinal recesses of human desire. ... It constituted an indispensable dimension of freedom as a

release from the internal regimentation of feeling and bodily movements—the subjective aspect of the existentially liberated individual. Without this aspect the notion of freedom remains an externalized social abstraction that has no space for its "heretics," its creative artists, and its intellectual innovators. (205–209)

Even more than early antiquity's "black redistribution," the medieval folk utopias, Christianity's apocalyptic doctrines, gnosticism's concept of a "good" God who is alien to a petty "just" Creator, and finally the long line of sectaries that culminated in the overtly secular Ranters—all increasingly distinguished freedom from justice, the equality of unequals from the inequality of equals. All their doctrines or practices were based on compensation and complementarity.

But the realization of any of these ideals clearly presupposed the transformation of the individual and of humanity from a condition of sin to one of "grace," which, in turn, had presuppositions of its own. Grace could be achieved only by an internal ... transformation of one's very sense of being.

The gnostics ... appealed to the mind and to the power of knowledge in bringing humanity into their unique conception of grace. This lofty endeavor could hardly hope to succeed on doctrinal grounds alone—hence the socially withdrawn nature of gnosticism during late antiquity. ... If *gnosis*, or knowledge, was to guide human behavior and bring heaven to earth, it had to be reinforced by a psychic "battering ram" that could demolish the individual's "civilized" (that is, carefully policed) character structure. (211–212)

Much that we would call the ideological, moral, cultural, and institutional "superstructure" of medieval society was deeply intertwined "with its economic and technical "base." Both "superstructure" and "base" were enriched and broadened by the wealth each brought to the other. Economic life and technical development existed within a wide-ranging orbit of cultural restraints as well as cultural creativity. Freedom could be defined not merely in material terms but in ethical terms as well. That capitalism was to distort this wide-ranging orbit and virtually destroy it has already been emphasized but can bear some repetition. The era that separates the Middle Ages from the Industrial Revolution was to be marked by a terrifying deterioration of community life, by a reduction of highly cherished popular ideals to brazen economic interests, and by a disintegration of individuality into egotism. ... Indeed, capitalism has redefined the terms by which to discuss the nature and prospects of freedom. ... [It] reflects the authentic economization of society, and of the "social question" itself, by an economy that has absorbed every cultural, ethical, and psychological issue into a material system of needs and technics. (216)

By "economizing" the totality of life, capitalism "economized" the "social question," the structures of freedom, and the revolutionary subject. The communal context for this subject has been largely dissolved. The English Revolution imposed a new imperative on the legacy of freedom: to discuss human emancipation meaningfully, one now had to exorcize the demons of material denial, a new system of "scarcity" largely created by the market system, and the nature of technological development. Freedom is now completely entangled with economics, a liberated life with the notion of "scarce resources," utopia with technics, and the ethical revolutionary subject with the proletariat.

Every appeal of human consciousness, be it "class consciousness" or "personal consciousness," is an appeal to the creativity of mind and an expression of belief in human virtue. ... [It is] a belief in the powers of human reason to attain a free society. ... The material dispensation that capitalism has created for the future is itself a "freedom." ... It is a freedom not merely to choose the kinds of goods society should produce (the freedom of a productivist utopia), but to choose from among the extravagant, often irrational array of needs that capitalism has created (the freedom of a consumerist utopia). When these two freedoms are melded into a still higher one, the utopian dream that lies ahead can be neither strictly productivist nor consumerist. ... Potentially, at least, we are faced with the broadest conception of freedom known thus far: *the autonomous individual's freedom to shape material life in a form that is neither ascetic nor hedonistic, but a blend of the best in both—one that is ecological, national, and artistic.* (217–218)

[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]

221-222 / 304-305

*Techné*...covered a wider scope of experience than the modern word *technics*. As Aristotle explains in *Nicomachean Ethics*, "All art [*techné*] is concerned with coming into being, that is, with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made." Here he distinguishes the crafted product—even artistic works such as architectural masterpieces and sculpture—from natural phenomena, which "have their origins in themselves." Accordingly, *techné* is a "state concerned with making, involving a true course of reasoning..." It is "potency," an essential that *techné* shares with the ethical "good." All "arts, i.e., productive forms of knowledge, are potencies; they are originative sources of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other."

224-225 / 308

To the modern mind, labor is viewed as a rarefied, abstract activity, a process extrinsic to human notions of genuine self-actualization. One usually "goes to work" the way a condemned person "goes" to a place of confinement: the workplace is little more than a penal institution in which mere existence must pay a penalty in the form of mindless labor. Expressions like a "nine-to-five job" are highly revealing; they tell us that work, labor, or toil (today one can use any of these words as equivalents) is external to "real life," whatever that may mean. We "measure" labor in hours, products, and efficiency, but rarely do we understand it as a concrete human activity.

232 / 316

To speak, as Marx does, of the worker's "appropriation" of "Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants" is to assume that there is no developmental synchronicity between human "wants" and natural "wants." A sharp disjunction is thereby created between society, humanity, and "needs" on the one side, and nature, the nonhuman living world, and ecological ends on the other. By contrast, organic society contains the conceptual means for functionally distinguishing the differences between society and nature without polarizing them. Insofar as production is also reproduction, insofar as creation is also gestation and the product is the child of this entire process rather than an "appropriated" thing, a "marriage" does indeed exist between nature and humanity that does not dissolve the identity of the partners into a universal, ethereal "Oneness."

233-234 / 318

[For the craftsperson,] work was thus revelation as well as realization, a synchronicity of subject and object. Only later was it to bifurcate into a tyranny of subject over object—initially, by reducing human beings to objects themselves. Absorbed within the totality of organic society, the tool was part of the "Way" of the craftsperson, not a frozen instrumental component of a vocational "tool-kit." The term "Way," universal to the language of all early communities, united ethos, ritual, sensibility, duty, and lifestyle with cosmogony and with the substances that made up the world. To set one apart from

the other was simply incomprehensible to the extraordinary sensibility of that remote era. Work, in turn, had an almost choral quality: it was incantative and evocative, and it soothed and coaxed the substance that the tool had organically cojoined with the craftsman. ... The "work song," a genre that still lived a century ago in nearly all preindustrial occupations, is the historic echo of the primal chant, itself a technics, that elicited spirit from substance and inspired the artisans and their tools.

235 / 319

For some three centuries now, a scientific vision of reality has been solidly structured around the presupposition that we can interpret reality's orderliness in the form of a scientific logic, rigorously answerable to such rationally demanding systems as mathematics. But no assumption or even suggestion has been made that logic and reason inheres in the world itself. Science, in effect, has been permitted to live a lie. It has presupposed, with astonishing success, that nature is orderly, and that this order lends itself to rational interpretation by the human mind, but that reason is exclusively the subjective attribute of the human observer, not of the phenomena observed. Ultimately, science has lived this lie primarily to avoid the most unavoidable "pitfalls" of metaphysics—that an orderly world that is also rational may be regarded as a meaningful world.

236 / 321

We are also haunted by the possibility that a different order of subjectivity permeates our own. This subjectivity inheres in the wholeness of phenomena and their interrelationships. Is it far-fetched to ask whether an organic subjectivity that stems from the fullness, complexity, and self-regulating relationships of ecosystems exhibits a "mentality" in nature similar in principle to the cerebral subjectivity of human beings? When we speak of the "wisdom of the body" —or, for that matter, the "fecundity of life" and the "revenge of nature"—we speak a language that often goes beyond strictly metaphoric terms. We enter into a realm of "knowingness" from which our strictly cerebral processes have deliberately exiled themselves.

236-237 / 321-322

Unless human mentality validates its claim to "superiority" by acquiring a better sense of meaning than it has today, like it or not, we are little more than crickets in a field, chirping to one another. Certainly, our words have no sense of coherence and destiny other than a preening claim to "superiority" that totally ignores our responsibilities to other human beings, to society, and to nature. Potentially, as Hans Jonas has beautifully put it, we may well make up in depth and insight what we lack in cosmic scope and the finality of achievement. But just as function must not be mistaken for fact, neither must potentiality be mistaken for actuality. The great bulk of humanity is not even remotely near an understanding of its potentialities, much less an intuitive grasp of the elements and forms of their realization. A humanity unfulfilled is not a humanity at all except in the narrowest biosocial sense of the term. Indeed, in this condition, a humanity unfulfilled is more fearsome than any living being, for it has enough of that mentality called mere "intelligence" to assemble all the conditions for the destruction of life on the planet.

## Bookchin Ch. 10

The historic problem of technics lies not in its size or scale, its "softness" or "hardness," much less the productivity or efficiency that earned it the naive reverence of earlier generations; the problem lies in how we can contain (that is, absorb) technics within an emancipatory society. In itself, "small" is neither beautiful nor ugly; it is merely small. Some of the most dehumanizing and centralized social systems were fashioned out of very "small" technologies; but bureaucracies, monarchies, and military forces turned these systems into brutalizing cudgels to subdue humankind and, later, to try to subdue nature. To be sure, a large-scale technics will foster the development of an oppressively large-scale society; but every warped society follows the dialectic of its own pathology of domination, irrespective of the scale of its technics. It can organize the "small" into the repellent as surely as it can imprint an arrogant sneer on the faces of the elites who administer it. Terms like "large," "small," or "intermediate," and "hard," "soft," or "mellow" are simply externals—the attributes of phenomena or things rather than their essentials. They may help us determine their dimensions and weights, but they do not explain the immanent qualities of technics, particularly as they relate to society. (240–241)

It is difficult for us to understand that political structures can be no less technical than tools and machines. In part, this difficulty arises because our minds have been imprinted by a dualistic metaphysics of "structures" and "superstructures." To dissect social experience into the economic and political, technical and cultural, has become a matter of second nature that resists any melding of one with the other. But this tendency is also partly due to an opportunistic political prudence that is wary of confronting the stark realities of power in a period of social accommodation. Better and safer to deal with technics as tools, machines, labor, and design than as coercive political institutions that organize the very implements, work, and imagination involved in the modern technical ensemble. Better to deal with how these means achieve certain destructive or constructive forms on the natural landscape than to explore the deformations they produce within subjectivity itself. (243)

From the New World to the Old, the stupendous elaboration of centralized states and the proliferation of courts, nobles, priesthoods, and military elites was supported by a highly parasitic institutional technology of domination composed of armies, bureaucrats, tax farmers, juridical agencies and a septic, often brutal belief system based on sacrifice and self-abnegation. Without this political technology, the mobilization of labor, the collection of vast material surpluses, and the deployment of a surprisingly simple "tool-kit" for monumental technical tasks would have been inconceivable. Beyond the responsibility of massing huge numbers of human beings into regimented tasks, this system had three essential goals: to intensify the labor process, to abstract it, and to objectify it. A carefully planned effort was undertaken to piece work together so that the State could extract every bit of labor from the "masses," reduce labor to undifferentiated labor-time, and transmute human beings into mere instruments of production. (249)

Leaving aside the stupendous array of devices and prime movers that the factory was to commandeer in its service, its most important technical achievement has occurred in the technics of administration. No less important than its evolving technical armamentarium was the evolution of the joint-stock company into the multinational corporation, and of the feisty, muscular foreman into the suave, multilingual corporate executive. Nor was the State to be spared its own change from a royal court, with circuit judges and ink-splattered scribes, into a stupendous bureaucratic population that, together with its military strongarm, formed a nation-state in its own right within the confines of the nation. The bureaucratic apparatus that underpinned overtly totalitarian monarchies such as the Incas of Peru and Pharaohs of Egypt is dwarfed by the managerial civil, and corporate bureaucracies of a single American, European, or Japanese commercial city. (251)

Perhaps the most important ideological factor to foster the development of capitalism in European society was Christianity, with its strong emphasis on individuation, its high regard for the redemptive role of labor, its elevation of an abstract Supernature over a concrete nature, and its denial of the importance of community as distinguished from the universal Papal congregation.

This emphasis on the personal ego, with its voyaging sense of enterprise, was reinforced by Christianity's obsession with labor. Historically, the Church placed its highest stakes on faith rather than works, on contemplation rather than labor. But in practice, the medieval Christian orders were mundane working establishments which left a heavy imprint on the technologically undeveloped peasantry around them. Monasteries played a major role in innovating technics and in rationalizing labor; indeed, they pioneered as missions, not only in the dissemination of faith but in the dissemination of technical knowledge and planned, orderly systems of work. (252)

[NO] religion assailed more earnestly the authenticity, intensity, and meaningfulness of community affiliation than Christianity. The Stoic plea for a recognition of a universal *humanitas* entailed not a denial of one's loyalty to the community but merely the individual's recognition of mystical affinity to the "city of Man." The Christian plea for a universal *humanitas* was actually more cunning. It shrewdly acknowledged the claims of the State but tried to replace the community's claims with those of the "city of God," notably the Church. The Church's jealousy toward the Christian's community loyalties was lethal; the religion demanded strict obedience to its clerical infrastructure. The notion of Congregation implied that the clergy had priority over all communal claims upon persons ... and over all codes of solidarity other than the laws of Deuteronomy and Christ's strictures to his disciples. Thus the Church lived in covert hostility with the community—just as the State could find no peace with the blood oath, even in its patriarchal form. Here, industrial capitalism, like science before it, found a perfect fit between the bourgeois concept of citizenship and the Christian. The free floating ego, divested of all community roots, became its ideal of individuality and personality. The "masterless men" that all previous societies had feared so intensely became the new image of the untrammelled, self-reliant entrepreneur—and his counterpart in the uprooted, propertyless proletariat. (254)

It is tempting to focus our descriptions of technology and our accounts of technological innovation on the large-scale works of mobilized labor favored by early states and ruling elites. The achievements of power—its temples, mortuaries, and palaces—evoke our ingrained awe of power. The hydraulic systems of great alluvial empires like the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Asian, and the cities, roads, and megalithic structures of pre-Columbian America cast a long shadow over history. Tragically, this shadow has largely obscured the technics of peasants and artisans at the "base" of society: their widespread networks of villages and small towns, their patchwork farms and household gardens; their small enterprises; their markets organized around barter; their highly mutualistic work systems; their keen sense of sociality; and their delightfully individuated crafts, mixed gardens, and local resources that provided the real sustenance and artwork of ordinary people. A complete history of technology, food cultivation, and art has yet to be written from the standpoint of the so-called commoners, just as has a complete history of women, ethnic minorities, and the oppressed generally. (256–257)

It is social ecology's crucial responsibility to demystify the tradition of a "stingy nature," as well as the more recent image of "high" technology as an unrelieved evil. Even more emphatically, social ecology must demonstrate that modern systems of production, distribution, and promotion of goods and needs are grossly irrational as well as antiecological. Whosoever sidesteps the conflicting alternatives between a potentially bountiful nature and an exploitive use of technics serves merely as an apologist for the prevailing irrationality. Certainly, no ethical argument in itself will ever persuade the denied and underprivileged that they must abdicate any claim to the relative affluence of capitalism. What must be demonstrated—and not merely on theoretical or statistical grounds alone—is that this affluence can ultimately be made available to all—but should be desirable to none. It is a betrayal of the entire message of social ecology to ask the world's poor to deny themselves access to the necessities of life on grounds that involve long-range problems of ecological dislocation, the shortcomings of "high" technology, and very specious claims of natural shortages in materials, while saying nothing at all about the artificial scarcity engineered by corporate capitalism. (262)

Hence, an ecologically oriented technical imagination must seek to discover the "Way" of things as ensembles, to sense the subjectivity of what we so icily call "natural resources," to respect the attunement that should exist between the human community and the ecosystem in which it is rooted. This imagination must seek not merely a means for resolving the contradictions between town and country, a machine and its materials, or the functional utility of a device and its impact on its natural environment. It must try to achieve their artistic, richly colored, and highly articulated integration. Labor, perhaps even more than technics, must recover its own creative voice. Its abstract form, its deployment in the framework of linear time as a *res temporalis*, its cruel objectification as mere, homogeneous energy, must yield to the concreteness of skill, to the festiveness of communal activity, to a recognition of its own subjectivity. In this broad revitalization of the natural environment, of work, and of technics, it would be impossible for the technical imagination to confine itself to the traditional imagery of a lifeless, irreducible, and passive material substrate. We must close the disjunction between an orderly world that lends itself to rational interpretation and the subjectivity that is needed to give it meaning. The technical imagination must see matter not as a passive substance in random motion but as an active substance that is forever developing—a striving "substrate" ... that repeatedly interacts with itself and its more complex forms to yield variegated, "sensitive," and meaningful patterns. (266)

[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]

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To evoke nature as the source for an objectively grounded ethics, as I propose to do, requires careful qualification. A nature conceived as the matrix of "blood and soil," or as the domain of a blind "dialectical" lawfulness that imbues tyranny with the suprahuman qualities of inexorable destiny, would justly be regarded as atavistic. The racial ethos of fascism and the scientistic "dialectics" of Stalinism, both based on very particularistic images of nature, have claimed a toll in life and suffering that beggars the most barbarous eras of human history. We no longer need a "nature" (that is, an authoritarian sociobiology) that advances an ideological rationale for ethnic arrogance and concentration camps under the aegis of "inevitability" or "blind law." But nature is not a homogeneous fabric that is woven from a single thread. The nature to which we can now address ourselves is neither bloody nor blind; it provides no ideological refuge for a mythos of irrationality, race, or, like Marxism, a contrived mechanism that passes itself off as a "social science" concealed under the shroud of Hegel.

285-286 / 377

To imply a sense of direction in causality—a "why" rather than merely a "how" in nature—was redolent of theology. Medieval scholasticism had so thoroughly Christianized Aristotelian nature philosophy and causality that the Renaissance mechanicians viewed them as little more than a system of Catholic apologetics; even Hobbes's vision of a "social mechanics" veered sharply into a critique of Aristotle's final cause. To be sure, this conflict was unavoidable and even freed Aristotle's own thought from the inquisitorial grip of the Church. But opposition and persecution (Bruno and Servetus were to go to the stake and Galileo to confinement as science's principal martyrs in this conflict) led to an exaggerated rejection of all organicism—indeed, to an astringent Cartesian dualism between a "soulful" subjectivity exclusively confined to "man" and a strictly mechanical, quantitative view of physical nature.

...

But this battle was not won without a severe penalty. To free the human mind from the trammels of religion, humanity itself was enslaved to the powers of science. A new organon replaced the old. The Baconian ideal of humanity's recovery of its mastery over nature did not cleanse it of the taint of "original sin" and restore it to the plentitude of the Garden of Eden. Science joined hands with technics to *reinforce* the mastery of human over human by enslaving humanity to the same dark, mythic world of domination that it once had ideologically opposed. Science itself had now become a theology.

302 / 395-396

The social and ecological problems of our time will not allow us to delay indefinitely in formulating a sound outlook and practice. The individual elements of these ambiguities of freedom have acquired a life of their own, all the more because our neutrality fosters abstention and withdrawal. The continuing substitution of rationalism for reason, of scientism for science, and of technics for ethics threatens to remove our very sense of the problems that exist, not to speak of our ability to resolve them. A look at technics alone reveals that the car is racing at an increasing pace, with nobody in the driver's seat. Accordingly, commitment and insight have never been more needed than they are today. Whether or not the time is too late I will not venture to say; neither pessimism nor optimism have any meaning in the face of the

commanding imperatives that confront us. What must be understood is that the ambiguities of freedom are not intractable problems – that there are ways of resolving them.

308–309 / 402–403

A new science that accords with libertarian reason...has the responsibility of rediscovering the concrete, which is so important in arresting this enterprise. Ironically, "paradigms" that quarrel with "paradigms," each blissfully remote from the natural history and ecological reality in which they should be immersed, increasingly serve the ends of instrumentalism with its inevitable manipulation of mind and society. Paradoxical as it may seem, the abstraction of science to methodology (which is largely what scientific "paradigms" do) tends to turn the scientific project itself into a problem of method, or more bluntly, a problem of instrumental strategies. The confusion between science as *knowledge*, or *Wissenschaft*, and as "scientific method" has never been adequately unscrambled.

...

"Science" must become the many sciences that make up its own history, from animism to nuclear physics; it must therefore respond to the many "voices" emitted by natural history. But these voices speak the language of the *facts* that constitute nature at different levels of its development. They are concrete and detailed; indeed, it is their very diversity as concretes that makes the organization of substance a drama of ever more complex forms, of "molecular self-organization" (to use the language of biochemistry). ... Generalizations that seek to *elude* these concretes by fettering them to purely intellectual criteria of "truth" and "scientific method" – to garner what is quantitative in reality at the expense of what is qualitative – is to reject as archaic "paradigms" a vast heritage of truth whose value often lies in its richer, more qualitative view of reality.

312–313 / 407–408

The worker's complete dependence on the factory and on an industrial labor market was a compelling precondition for the triumph of industrial society. Urban planning, such as it was, together with urban congestion, long working hours, a generous moral disregard for working-class alcoholism, and a highly specialized division of labor melded the needs of exploitation to a deliberate policy of proletarianization. The need to destroy whatever independent means of life the worker could garner from a backyard plot of land, a simple proficiency in the use of tools, a skill that provided shoes, clothing, and furnishings for the family – all involved the issue of reducing the proletariat to a condition of total powerlessness in the face of capital. ... The factory system, with its need for a large corps of unskilled labor, far from giving the workers greater mobility and occupational flexibility (as Marx and Engels were to claim), actually reduced them to aimless social vagabonds.

...

To reinfuse the "artificial crafts" with the "natural arts" is not just a cardinal project for social ecology; it is an ethical enterprise for rehumanizing the psyche and demystifying *techné*. The rounded person in a rounded society, living a total life rather than a fragmented one, is a precondition for the emergence of individuality and its historic social hallmark, autonomy. This vision, far from denying the need for community, has always presupposed it. But it visualizes community as a *free* community in which *interdependence*, rather than dependence or "independence," provides the many-sided social ingredients for personality and its development.

## Bookchin Ch. 12

[Human] nature is formed by the workings of an organic process. Initially, to be sure, it is formed by a continuation of nature's cooperative and associative tendencies into the individual's personal life. Culture may elaborate these tendencies and provide them with qualitatively new traits ... thus producing what could authentically be called a society, not merely a community. But nature does not merely phase into society, much less "disappear" in it; nature is there all the time. Without the care, cooperation, and love fostered by the mother-child relationship and family relationships, individuality and personality either are impossible or begin to disintegrate, as the modern crisis of the ego so vividly indicates. Only when social ties begin to decay without offering any substitutes do we become acutely aware that individuality involves not a struggle for separation but a struggle *against* it. ... Society may create these new arenas and extend them beyond the blood oath ... but it does not create the *need* to be *engrouped*, to practice care, cooperation, and love. (317)

I have found residual areas of freedom in communities where the word simply does not exist, in loyalties that are freely given without expectations of recompense, in systems of distribution that know no rules of exchange, and in interpersonal relations that are completely devoid of domination. Indeed, insofar as humanity has been free to voice the subjectivity of nature and meanings latent within it, nature itself has revealed its own voice, subjectivity, and fecundity through humanity. Ultimately, it is in this ecological interplay of social freedom and natural freedom that a true ecology of freedom will be fashioned.

If the freedom of humanity implies the liberation of nature *through* humanity, by what criteria and means can we reenter natural evolution? (319)

Imagination as a socially creative power found its voice not in the prevalent radical social engineers of the nineteenth century but in the rare, luminescent utopian works that flashed annoyingly around "scientific socialists" of all kinds. Occasionally, the iridescence of these works dazzled them, but more often than not, they were embarrassed by these fanciful flights into new realms of possibility and responded with vigorous disclaimers.

What marked the great utopians was not their lack of realism but their sensuousness, their passion for the concrete, their adoration of desire and pleasure. Their utopias were often exemplars of a qualitative "social science" written in seductive prose, a new kind of socialism that defied abstract intellectual conventions with their pedantry and icy practicality. Perhaps even more importantly, they defied the image that human beings were, in the last analysis, machines; that their emotions, pleasures, appetites, and ideals could be cast in terms of a culture that viewed the quantitative as authentic truth. Hence, they stood in flat opposition to a machine-oriented mass society. Their message of fecundity and reproduction thus rescued the image of humanity as an embodiment of the organic that had its place in the richly tinted world of nature, not in the workshop and the factory. (325)

Fourier is in many ways the earliest social ecologist to surface in radical thought. I refer not only to his views of nature but also to his vision of society. His phalanstery can rightly be regarded as a social ecosystem in its explicit endeavor to promote unity in diversity. Fourier painstakingly itemized and analyzed all the possible passions that must find expression within its walls. Although this has been grossly misread as such, it was no pedantic exercise on Fourier's part, however much one may disagree with his conclusions. Fourier seems to have had his own notion of the equality of unequals; the phalanstery must try to compensate in psychic wealth and variety for any inequalities of material wealth existing among its members. Whether its members are well-to-do or not, they all share in the best of wines, the greatest of culinary, sexual, and scholarly pleasures, and the widest conceivable diversity of stimuli.

For Fourier, an emphasis on variety and complexity was also a matter of principle, a methodological and social critique he leveled at the mechanical outlook of the eighteenth century. (331)

It is not in this book that the reader should expect to find the "concrete universals" that will stimulate imagination and evoke the details of reconstruction, but rather in the interchange of utopian views that still awaits us. I would like, however, to advance certain basic considerations that no radical utopian vision—particularly an ecological one—can afford to ignore. The distinction between libertarian and authoritarian approaches ... can be ignored only

at grave peril to the utopian vision. This distinction underpins every conceptual aspect of an ecological society. We can ill afford to forget that the two approaches have developed side by side for millenia, and that their contest has affected every aspect of our sensibilities and behavior. Today, when technics has assumed unprecedented powers of control and destructiveness, these approaches can no longer coexist with each other, however uneasily they have done so in the past. (334)

Today, a food cooperative is unlikely to replace a supermarket; a French-intensive garden to replace agribusiness; barter and mutual aid to replace our banking system; personal intercourse to replace the electronic paraphernalia by which the world "communicates" with itself. But we can still choose the former body of possibilities over the latter "realities."

We also must recover the terrain necessary for the personification and the formation of a body politic. To defend society's molecular base its—neighborhoods, public squares, and places of assembly—expresses a demand not only for "freedom from . . ." but also for "freedom for . . ." (335)

To disengage ourselves from the existing social machinery, to create a domain to meet one's needs as a human being, to form a public sphere in which to function as part of a protoplasmic body politic—all can be summed up in a single word: reempowerment. I speak of reempowerment in its fullest personal and public sense, not as a psychic experience in a specious and reductionist form of psychological "energetics" that is fixated on one's own "vibes" and "space." There is no journey "inward" that is not a journey "outward" and no "inner space" that can hope to survive without a very palpable "public space" as well. But public space, like inner space, becomes mere empty space when it is not structured, articulated, and given body. It must be provided with institutional form, no less so than our highly integrated personal bodies, which cannot exist without structure. Without form and articulation, there can be no identity, no definition, and none of the specificity that yields variety. What is actually at issue when one discusses institutions is not whether they should exist at all but what form they should take—libertarian or authoritarian. (336)

What is obviously at issue is not whether a council has been delegated, chosen by sortition, or formed in an ad hoc manner, but whether or not it can formulate policy. It would matter very little—given a reasonable amount of prudence, public supervision, and the right of the assembly to recall and rotate councilors—if councils were limited to strictly administrative responsibilities. Their narrow functions would thereby define their powers and their limits. It would not be difficult to determine whether these limits, once clearly defined, have been overstepped and the council has engaged in functions that impinge on the assembly's policy-making powers. Nor would it be difficult to determine when certain functions have been discharged and needless administrative bodies can be disbanded. A relentless system of accountability would put administrative groups largely at the mercy of decision-making assemblies, hence reinforcing the limits that confine councils to strictly coordinative functions. (338–339)

For human society to acknowledge that its well-being, perhaps its very survival, may depend upon consciously abetting the thrust of natural evolution toward a more diversified, varied, and fecund biosphere does not necessarily mean that we must reduce nature to a mere object for human manipulation—an ethical degradation of nature as a "something" that merely exists "for us." To the contrary, what is authentically "good" for us may very well not be a purely human desideratum but a natural one as well. As a unique product of natural evolution, humanity brings its powers of reasoning, its creative fingers, its high degree of conscious consociation—all qualitative developments of natural history—to nature, at times as sources of help and at other times as sources of harm. Perhaps the greatest single role an ecological ethics can play is a discriminating one—to help us distinguish which of our actions serve the thrust of natural evolution and which of them impede it. That human interests of one kind or another may be involved in these actions is not always relevant to the ethical judgments we are likely to make. What really counts are the ethical guidelines that determine our judgment. (342)

## Bookchin Epilogue

In an age when mechanical materialism competes with an equally mechanical spiritualism, I have emphasized the need for a sensitivity to diversity that fosters a concept of wholeness as the unifying principle of an ecology of freedom. This emphasis, central to the goals of this book, contrasts markedly with the more common emphasis on "Oneness." In my opposition to current attempts to dissolve variety into mechanical and spiritual common denominators, I have exulted in the richness of variety in natural, social, and personal development. I have presented an account (admittedly somewhat Hegelian) in which the history of a phenomenon—be it subjectivity, science, or technics—constitutes the definition of that phenomenon. In each of these cumulative domains, there are always degrees or aspects of comprehension, insight, and artfulness that we must judiciously reclaim in order to grasp reality in its various gradations and aspects. (350)

More than ever before, we must emphasize that the words libertarian and authoritarian refer not only to conflicting forms of institutions, technics, reason, and science, but above all, to conflicting values and sensibilities—in short, to conflicting epistemologies. My definition of the term "libertarian" is guided by my description of the ecosystem: the image of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and complementary relationships, free of all hierarchy and domination. By "authoritarian," I refer to hierarchy and domination as my social guide: the gerontocracies, patriarchies, class relationships, elites of all kinds, and finally the State, particularly in its most socially parasitic form of state capitalism. But without including conflicting sensibilities, sciences, technics, ethics, and forms of reason, the terms "libertarian" and "authoritarian" remain simply institutional terms that have only an implicit character. Their implications must be elicited to the fullest extent to cover the entire range of experience if the conflict between them is to be meaningful and revolutionary. (352–353)

It is becoming increasingly tenable to suggest that the entire universe may be the cradle of life—not merely our own planet or a few planets like it. The "Big Bang," whose faint echoes from a time-span of more than fifteen billion years ago can now be detected by the astrophysicist's instruments, may be evidence less of a single accidental "event" than of a form of cosmic "breathing" whose gradual expansions and contractions extend over an infinity of time.

This much is clear: we can no longer be satisfied with a passive "dead" matter that fortuitously collects into living substance. The universe bears witness to an ever-striving, developing—not merely a "moving"—substance, whose most dynamic and creative attribute is its ceaseless capacity for self-organization into increasingly complex forms. Natural fecundity originates primarily from growth, not from spatial "changes" of location. Nor can we remove form from its central place in this developmental and growth process, or function as an indispensable correlate of form. The orderly universe that makes science a possible project and its use of a highly concise logic-mathematics—meaningful presupposes the correlation of form with function. \* From this perspective, mathematics serves not merely as the "language" of science but also as the logos of science. This scientific logos is above all a workable project because it grasps a logos that inheres in nature—the "object" of scientific investigation. (355–358)

The prospect that life and all its attributes are latent in substance as such, that biological evolution is rooted deeply in symbiosis or mutualism, indicates how important it is to reconceptualize our notion of "matter" as active substance. ... [The] traditional assumption that life has been forced merely to adapt to an independent, geologically and meteorologically determined "environment" is no longer tenable. This dualism between the living and the nonliving world (which is based on accidental point mutations in life-forms that determine what species will evolve or perish) is being replaced by the more challenging notion that life "makes much of its own environment." (359)

Neither pain, cruelty, aggression, nor competition satisfactorily explain the emergence and evolution of life. For a better explanation we should also turn to mutualism and a concept of "fitness" that reinforces the support systems for the seemingly "fittest." If we are prepared to recognize the self-organizing nature of life, the decisive role of mutualism as its evolutionary impetus obliges us to redefine "fitness" in terms of an ecosystem's supportive apparatus. And if we are prepared to view life as a phenomenon that can shape and maintain the very "environment" that is regarded as the "selective" source of its evolution, a crucial question arises: Is it meaningful any longer to

speak of "natural selection" as the motive force of biological evolution? Or must we now speak of "natural interaction" to take full account of life's own role in creating and guiding the "forces" that explain its evolution? ... Life is necessary not only for its own self-maintenance but for its own self-formation. **(362–363)**

The fallacies of archaic cosmology generally lie not in its ethical orientation but in its dualistic approach to nature. For all its emphasis on speculation at the expense of experimentation, ancient cosmology erred most when it tried to cojoin a self-organizing, fecund nature with a vitalizing force alien to the natural world itself. Parmenides's Dike, like Henri Bergson's *elan vital*, are substitutes for the self-organizing properties of nature, not motivating forces within nature that account for an ordered world. A latent dualism exists in monistic cosmologies that try to bring humanity and nature into ethical commonality—a *deus ex machina* that corrects imbalances either in a disequilibriumed cosmos or in an irrational society. Truth wears an unseen crown in the form of God or Spirit, for nature can never be trusted to develop on its own spontaneous grounds, any more than the body politic bequeathed to us by "civilization" can be trusted to manage its own affairs. **(363)**

Hence our study of nature—all archaic philosophies and epistemological biases aside—exhibits a self-evolving patterning, a "grain," so to speak, that is implicitly ethical. Mutualism, freedom, and subjectivity are not strictly human values or concerns.

Mutualism, self-organization, freedom, and subjectivity, cohered by social ecology's principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and nonhierarchical relationships, are thus ends in themselves. Aside from the ecological responsibilities they confer on our species as the self-reflexive voice of nature, they literally define us. Nature does not "exist" for us to use; it simply legitimates us and our uniqueness ecologically. Like the concept of "being," these principles of social ecology require no explanation, merely verification. They are the elements of an ethical ontology, not rules of a game that can be changed to suit one's personal needs. **(365)**

[Page numbers correspond to the original 1982 Cheshire Books edition and the 2005 AK Press edition, respectively]

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What is most fascinating today is that nature is writing its own nature philosophy and ethics—not the logicians, positivists, and heirs of Galilean scientism. As I have noted, we are not alone in the universe, not even in the “emptiness” of space. Owing to what is a fairly recent revolution in astrophysics (possibly comparable only to the achievements of Copernicus and Kepler), the cosmos is opening itself up to us in new ways that call for an exhilarating speculative turn of mind and a more qualitative approach to natural phenomena. It is becoming increasingly tenable to suggest that the entire universe may be the cradle of life—not merely our own planet or a few planets like it. The “Big Bang,” whose faint echoes from a time-span of more than fifteen billion years ago can now be detected by the astrophysicist's instruments, may be evidence less of a single accidental “event” than of a form of cosmic “breathing” whose gradual expansions and contractions extend over an infinity of time. If this is so—and we are admittedly on highly speculative grounds—we may be dealing with cosmic processes rather than a single episode in the formation of the universe. Obviously, if these processes express an unending form of universal “history,” as it were, we, who are irrevocably locked into our own cosmic era, may never be able to fathom their reality or meaning. But it is not completely unreasonable to wonder if we are dealing here with a vast, continuing development of the universe, not simply with a recurring type of cosmic “respiration.”

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As [Lynn] Margulis observes, summarizing the Gaia hypothesis that she and James E. Lovelock have developed, the traditional assumption that life has been forced merely to adapt to an independent, geologically and meteorologically determined “environment” is no longer tenable. This dualism between the living and the nonliving world (which is based on accidental point mutations in life-forms that determine what species will evolve or perish) is being replaced by the more challenging notion that life “makes much of its own environment,” as Margulis observes. “Certain properties of the atmosphere, sediments, and hydrosphere are controlled by and for the biosphere.”

...

By comparing lifeless planets such as Mars and Venus with the Earth, Margulis notes that the high concentration of oxygen in our atmosphere is anomalous in contrast with the carbon dioxide worlds of the other planets. Moreover, “the concentration of oxygen in the Earth's atmosphere remains constant in the presence of nitrogen, methane, hydrogen, and other potential reactants.” Life, in effect, exerts an active role in maintaining free oxygen molecules and their relative constancy in the earth's atmosphere.

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Neither pain, cruelty, aggression, nor competition satisfactorily explain the emergence and evolution of life. For a better explanation we should also turn to mutualism and a concept of “fitness” that reinforces the support systems for the seemingly “fittest.” If we are prepared to recognize the self-organizing nature of life, the decisive role of mutualism as its evolutionary impetus obliges us to redefine “fitness” in terms of an

ecosystem's supportive apparatus. And if we are prepared to view life as a phenomenon that can shape and maintain the very "environment" that is regarded as the "selective" source of its evolution, a crucial question arises: Is it meaningful any longer to speak of "natural selection" as the motive force of biological evolution? Or must we now speak of "natural interaction" to take full account of life's own role in creating and guiding the "forces" that explain its evolution? Contemporary biology leaves us with a picture of organic interdependencies that far and away prove to be more important in shaping life forms than either a Darwin, a Huxley, or the formulators of the Modern Synthesis could ever have anticipated. Life is necessary not only for its own self-maintenance but for its own self-formation. "Gaia" and subjectivity are more than the effects of life; they are its integral attributes.

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A society that cuts across the grain of this ontology raises the entire question of its very reality as a meaningful and rational entity. "Civilization" has bequeathed us a vision of otherness as "polarization" and "defiance," and of organic "inwardness" as a perpetual "war" for self-identity. This vision threatens to utterly subvert the ecological legitimation of humanity and the reality of society as a potentially rational dimension of the world around us. Trapped by the false perception of a nature that stands in perpetual opposition to our humanity, we have redefined humanity itself to mean strife as a condition for pacification, control as a condition for consciousness, domination as a condition for freedom, and opposition as a condition for reconciliation. Within this implicitly self-destructive context, we are rapidly building the Valhalla that will almost certainly become a trap rather than a fortress against the all-consuming flames of Ragnarok.

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We can try to calm the antagonistic Bronze-Age warrior spirit of Odin, pacify him and his cohorts, and perhaps ventilate Valhalla with the breath of reason and reflection. We can try to mend the tattered treaties that once held the world together so precariously, and work with them as best we can. In the fullness of time, Odin might be persuaded to put aside his spear, cast off his armor, and lend himself to the sweet voice of rational understanding and discourse.

...

Or our efforts can take a radical turn: to overthrow Odin, whose partial blindness is evidence of a hopelessly aborted society. We can abandon the contractual myths that "harmonized" an inherently divided world, which the Norse epic held together with chains and banishments. It will then be our responsibility to create a new world and a new sensibility based on a self-reflexivity and an ethics to which we are heirs as a result of evolution's relentless thrust toward consciousness. We can try to reclaim our legitimacy as the fullness of mind in the natural world – as the rationality that abets natural diversity and integrates the workings of nature with an effectiveness, certainty, and directedness that is essentially incomplete in nonhuman nature.