

# **The Emergence of Hierarchy, Domination, and Centralisation Reflections on the Work of Murray Bookchin**

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## **Abstract**

This article began as an attempt to create a précis of Bookchin's remarkable book: *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. However, as work progressed, thoughts on what was missing from the book became more insistent. These gradually became more crystallised and elaborated until they became what the author now regards as one of the main contributions of the article. These reflections may be captured by saying that the explanation and elucidation of the seemingly inexorable rise – apparently since time immemorial – of hierarchy, domination, and centralisation (so thoroughly documented by Bookchin) seemed to call for application of socio-cybernetics. Perhaps most disturbingly, however, the accurate representation of those socio-cybernetic forces seemed, like the growth, development, and functioning of other autopoietic systems that are characterised as “organic”, to require representation of the life-force itself.

## **Overview**

The author of this article originally set out to summarise, or, better, create a précis of, Murray Bookchin's remarkable book *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* which was re-published in 2005 (Bookchin, 1991/2005).

To summarise that précis. Many of the inhabitants of modern society are vaguely aware of a serious paradox. On the one hand, they have the feeling that they are increasingly free. They have endless choice of material goods and services, they are free to express their individuality (at least in certain ways) ... and there is much public discussion of the need to accept some previously taboo forms of diversity. On the other hand, they experience emotions that would seem to be best understood as reactions to constraint. If they are “lucky” they have a choice between jobs they do not want or which force them to move away from their family and friends or spend long hours travelling. They know that, if they do not accept these conditions they will be subjected to degrading treatment at the hands of the “welfare” services (as are many of their fellows). In many of these jobs, they are forced, despite their better judgment, to contribute to the unethical and destructive activities of which modern “civilisations” are so largely composed. Many know that if we are to survive as a species we have to radically change the way we live ... but most are acutely aware that they can not, in reality, opt for a way of life they would choose. Still less do they have a chance to contribute in any meaningful way to bringing about the changes that they can see are so necessary in society.

Bookchin's main aim is to help us to understand the sources of this paradox. Hence the title: *The Ecology of Freedom*.

The results are disconcerting indeed.

Bookchin begins by arguing that human societies were initially structured *organically*. While roles within them were differentiated, coordination between those roles was achieved through many non-hierarchical feedback processes – as is the case within any organism. This arrangement has gradually been replaced by hierarchical organisation. Bookchin, like many of us, knows that hierarchical social organisation is grossly *inefficient*. However, and here is something most of us don't realise, the creation of hierarchy depends on the manufacture of endless senseless work. This senseless work is “needed” to make visible, legitimise, and compel participation in, hierarchy. However it is seriously destructive of human habitat. If our species and the planet as we know it are to survive, it is urgent to re-create some form of organic arrangement.

Unfortunately, moving toward more “organic” arrangements for the management of society is going to be much more difficult than most of those who have argued for the demise of centralised, command and control oriented, organisations and societies have in the past realised. This is because the transition from organic to hierarchical societies has proceeded inexorably since time immemorial despite endless protests ... and, indeed, actual demonstrations of the viability of alternatives ... provided by acute observers of society and inventive thinkers.

Bookchin accounts for each step in this relentless process in terms of (i) the constellation of factors that came into play in the course of each transition and (ii) “self-organising” processes.

Unfortunately, Bookchin fails to discuss the network of social forces that lie behind the “self-organising” processes he refers to. As I see it, this is more than unfortunate because halting the rise and rise of centralised, hierarchical, dominance oriented societies – and thus enabling our species and the planet as we know it to survive – seems to me to depend precisely on understanding, and intervening in, those processes.

And so it becomes imperative to think about them more carefully.

As I reflected on what this might involve, I first noted that the term *autopoietic* would be better than “self-organising” because it implies that we have to pay serious attention to the self-producing, self-extending, components of the process.

But then, thinking further about the issue, it dawned on me that even this formulation is inadequate. The process we are concerned with here also has a remarkable *self-elaborating* capacity. To all intents and purposes this destructive, compelling, shift from organic to hierarchical organisation *itself has features characteristic of organic processes*. It is continuously self-extending and self-elaborating.

Organic processes are, of course, those that define life itself.

It is this organic – life – process which has overcome entropy – that is to say, it is this process which has overcome the tendency, codified in the second law of thermo dynamics, for organisation to degenerate into chaos.

According to the laws of physics life should never have happened.

But what if the tendency to hierarchical, centralised, command-and-control organised, societies has also, literally, acquired a “life of its own”?

Is *this* organic process going to overcome the organic process which created a world-with-life and in the end allow the laws of physics to triumph?

So, to conclude, the author of this article finds himself arguing that, if we are to halt the process driving our species toward extinction, it will be necessary not merely to map, and find ways of intervening in, the networks of invisible social forces which govern the operation of society – that is to say to map the socio-cybernetic forces at work – but to include within those maps representations of the life force itself.

## INTRODUCTION

This article started life as an attempt to write a précis of Bookchin’s *Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (1991/2005) in a form which would make the issues available for discussion on what we hoped would become an interactive website at [www.eyeonociety.co.uk](http://www.eyeonociety.co.uk).

However, my reflections on what was said in some sections of that book acquired a life of their own – becoming ever more elaborate and therefore taking up more and more space in this article.

In the end, it has become necessary to divide the article into two Parts.

Part I summarises a number of theoretical reflections which were prompted by some of the material Bookchin presents. As I see it, such theoretical formulations are crucial to finding ways of understanding and intervening in the inexorable social processes that Bookchin has so thoroughly documented and shown to be so important from the point of view of heading our species toward extinction. *It is these processes which are depriving us of the “freedom” to act on the observations that so many of us have made in the course of our day-to-day lives.* Yet, as we come slowly to understand them, it emerges that the actions we must take are not at all those which “common sense” would suggest.

Part II presents a précis – often in his own words – of many of Bookchin’s more than illuminating observations. Here particular attention is paid to summarising the documentation he has provided for the terrifying continuity – since time immemorial in fact, and despite endless protests – in the elaboration of the self-destructive social arrangements which are currently so conspicuously heading our species toward extinction at an exponentially increasing rate.

## PART I

### *Mapping the Social Forces Which Lie Behind*

*our Seemingly Inexorable Plunge To Extinction*

Bookchin's thesis begins by arguing that human societies were initially structured *organically*. Roles within them were *differentiated and complementary*, as are the roles of the cells comprising an animal body. Coordination was achieved through many non-hierarchical feedback processes – as is also the case within any organism.

Such an arrangement is anything but “primitive”, and referring to early societies in this disparaging way belies our own predisposition to think in ways which blind us to the importance of certain aspects of reality. We fail to see what it is of value in other ways of doing things. Worse, for many people, the very notion that organisations might be arranged organically is, literally, unthinkable.

In contrast, the types of social organisation that have emerged over the millennia are perhaps best characterised as *hierarchical*. They have centralised, dominance, and command-and-control oriented structures.

As has been repeatedly observed throughout history, these societies are deeply destructive both of the average quality of life of those who live in them, and, much more importantly, their habitats. The destruction of habitat has enormous implications for their future. This has never been more serious (nor more widely recognised) than it is today.

But what is most disturbingly documented by Bookchin is that the trend from organic to hierarchical societies has persisted inexorably despite the observations of acute observers of society and numerous experiments demonstrating the viability of alternative ways of doing things. (The latter have included, not only within-organisational demonstrations, but also the remarkable Greek enactment of participative democracy\*, which was, apparently, deliberately introduced to stem the rise of hierarchical command-and-control oriented society.)

It follows that the chances of reversing this trend – and thus increasing our chances of surviving as a species – are remote indeed.

For this reason, if for none other, it is vital to try to understand the reasons for this, apparently unstoppable, trend.

Bookchin himself accounts for each transition (each of which itself often took thousands of years) in social organisation in terms of (i) the constellation of historical factors that came into play at the time and (ii) “self-organising” processes.

His detailed accounts of the constellations of historical happenings and arrangements that evolved in the course of each transition are reminiscent of those of Braudel (e.g., 1993).

However, one of the things his account fails to explain is why, at each and every stage (with a few exceptions to which Bookchin goes out of his way to draw attention, but which he might usefully have discussed in more detail<sup>1</sup>) these developments led progressively to the emergence of hierarchy, division, regulation, and command and control.

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\* Bookchin account of this is summarised below.

He does, however, and this is very important, draw attention to a series of parallel processes which have contributed to this evolution. He notes, for example, that the elaboration of these hierarchical structures is heavily dependent on the manufacture of endless senseless work\* which contributes little to quality of life† but does legitimise, give a meaning to, render conspicuous, and compel participation in, the hierarchical and destructive activities of society and compliance with the demands and “needs” of dominators.

Contrary to the economystic Marxist position, the satisfaction of basic human needs and the enhancement of quality of life does *not* require or depend on this work. Still less does it depend on the associated hierarchical and dominance-oriented arrangements. The typical economystic explanation is back to front<sup>3</sup>. The “needs” have been created to legitimise the manufacture of work and the socio-technical organisation of that work legitimises a social hierarchy which satisfies the needs of an elite whilst subjecting, and compelling the active participation of, the masses. To decline to contribute to the prescribed (destructive) social activities becomes tantamount to forfeiting any claim to a livelihood.

It follows from these observations that what appear to be physical and economic problems (and thus apparently to be addressed via the physical and biological sciences and economics) are, in reality, by-products of social organisation and thus to be addressed by developing a better understanding of, and finding ways of harnessing and intervening in, the social forces which persistently induce us to create more senseless and destructive work.

So, how to understand these forces?

A passing reference to some poorly understood “self-organising” – or even “autopoietic” – process seems altogether inadequate.

Just as it is necessary for biologists to understand the mechanisms and feedback loops that control the development and functioning of organisms, so it necessary to understand and map the networks of social forces and processes which control the operation of social systems.

It is the job of socio-cyberneticians to map such networks of forces.

*Cybernetics* is the study of the guidance, control, and feedback processes that regulate the behaviour of animals and machines . . . . and the design of better ones. (One has to say “animals” because, otherwise, people think cybernetics is solely concerned with the design of control systems for machines, quintessentially missiles.) It follows that *socio cybernetics* involves studying and mapping the invisible social forces which contribute to the reproduction and, more importantly, continuous development, or production (as distinct from

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\* *Most* work in modern society is senseless. Obvious examples include the cadre of officials providing guidance, and implementing penal processes, supposedly to “help” (i.e. force) people fill up forms to obtain jobs which do not, and should not exist, transporting milk for thousands of miles to centralised distribution centres and back again, or transporting bottled water backwards and forwards across Europe. However, as shown in Endnote 2, most work in modern society consists in the manufacture, marketing, and distribution of junk foods, junk toys, junk defence systems, junk insurance, junk education, and junk research.

† Authors such as Lane (1991) and Marks et al. (2006) have clearly demonstrated that much higher quality of life than most of us enjoy today can be achieved with much lower levels of consumption. This is because the materialistic possessions and commercial services we work so hard to produce enhance quality of life hardly at all. In reality, quality of life depends on such things as networks of friends and security for the future which cannot be commoditised and bought and sold. See Raven (1995) for a fuller discussion.

mere reproduction) of the autopoietic systems that govern the operation of society ... and the design of better ones.

Unfortunately, designating such systems as “self-organising” often seems to be regarded as sufficient to absolve authors from responsibility for identifying the processes at work. Worse, the term fails to draw attention to important features of the systems being described.

The term “autopoietic” is better because it underlines the self-producing, self-extending, rather than merely *reproducing*, characteristics of these systems.

But even this designation is inadequate because the systems have remarkable *self-elaborating* characteristics.

The most widespread examples of systems with self-producing (as distinct from “externally produced” ... as in a factory), self-reproducing, and self-elaborating characteristics are animals and plants ... actually organic systems of any form. (Indeed the term “organic” is *defined* by reference to systems having these characteristics.)

Now to the punch line. To all intents and purposes, the destructive drift from “organic” to hierarchically-organised social institutional frameworks *has many, if not all, of the defining features of an organic process*.

Organic processes are, of course, those that define life itself.

Now, it is this organic – life – process which has overcome entropy – that is to say, it is this process which has overcome the tendency, codified in the second law of thermodynamics, for organisation to degenerate into chaos.

According to the laws of physics life should never have happened<sup>4,5</sup>.

At this point I had a further disturbing thought. What if *this* organic process – this plunge toward destructive, centralised, command and control organisations – is going to overcome the organic process which created our world-with-life in the first place and thus, in the end, contribute to the enactment of the laws of physics.

But, to return to the main theme of this Part of our article: How are we to map the socio-cybernetic forces and feedback loops that contribute to the autopoietic/organic processes which head us toward dominance, hierarchy, and self-destruction?

Examples of the kind of thing one might have in mind can be found in Morgan (1986), Raven (1995) and Raven & Navrotsky (2001) or by activating the following links to diagrams in our “eyeonsociety” website:

[http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%201%20\(formerly%2023.1\)%20rev.pdf](http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%201%20(formerly%2023.1)%20rev.pdf)

<http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/diagram%2020.6.pdf>

<http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/flpadwc.pdf>

Unfortunately, besides the problems discussed by Raven & Navrotsky, it has since become more and more apparent (see e.g. Raven 2009) that we still have a long way to go in bringing about the kind of transformation in the concept of *social* forces that Newton effected in relation to physical force<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, it has also become apparent that what we thought

was a solution to the question of how to harness the social forces driving down the quality of education (Diagram 20.5 as a “solution” to the problem posed by Diagram 20.4 in my *New Wealth of Nations*\*) was *not*, in reality, an example from the socio-cybernetic field paralleling a diagram showing how to harness the forces acting on a sailing boat in order to drive the boat *into* the wind instead of allowing it to crash the boat against the rocks.

And now, it seems, our task has become significantly more complicated because, it appears, we need to include representations of the life force itself. This *really* brings us up against the frontiers of science because, so far as I know, no one has come anywhere near understanding the *productive/elaborating* capacities of the organic.

To conclude this part of our article, then, it seems to follow from Bookchin’s work (although it is *not* one of the things he advocates) that the task of halting our seemingly inexorable slide toward self-destruction as a species is, among other things, critically dependent on developing an understanding of the more than autopoietic process he documents – and then finding ways of intervening in that process. Yet the task of mapping these forces turns out to be even more difficult than might otherwise have been realised. Unfortunately, unless we do so, there seems to be every reason to believe that the seemingly organic evolution of hierarchical society will destroy life on the planet, thus leading to the entropy predictable from physics.

## PART II

### A Précis of *The Ecology of Freedom*

Bookchin’s own claim to be offering us new ways of thinking about things which will help us to move forward is summed up in a statement that it gradually occurred to him that the emergence of hierarchy was more fundamental than “class”, domination more fundamental than “exploitation”, freedom more fundamental than justice, and that the design and creation of liberatory institutions more important than the abolition of the state.

#### *Some Fundamental Reorganisations of our Thoughtways*

(i) *Our perception of domination in nature is a projection of our preoccupation with domination in society.*

Bookchin argues, nay *demonstrates*, that our perception of domination *in nature* ... the domination of one species over another ... and our view of mankind’s rightful domination *over nature* are projections of our own preoccupation with domination *within* our own species rather than the reverse.

(ii) *Our perception of preliterate societies as primitive and in need of organisation is a projection of our concern with hierarchy and material economics. It behoves us to think of them as “organic”.*

There are many reasons why this shift in terminology is important.

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\* These two diagrams can be obtained directly by clicking on the following links:  
[http://www.eyesociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%203%20\(formerly%20Diagram%2020.5\).pdf](http://www.eyesociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%203%20(formerly%20Diagram%2020.5).pdf)  
[http://www.eyesociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%201%20\(formerly%2023.1\)%20rev.pdf](http://www.eyesociety.co.uk/resources/Figure%201%20(formerly%2023.1)%20rev.pdf)

First, as we have seen, the term “organic” implies unity .... and, increasingly, unity through differentiation. Thus the organs of the body are not hierarchically organised. Some are not more important than others. So one has equality of unequals. The same was true in organic societies. Functions were differentiated and complementary. Although the concept of “equality” did not exist, there was, in effect, equality of unequals – and this fact was recognised in prescriptions for, e.g., a right to an irreducible minimum of food.

Equality of unequals (equity in diversity) contrasts dramatically with the manufacture of dramatic inequality between people who are essentially equals in modern societies. While insisting – legally and otherwise – that we ignore important differences between people (and treat them in “the same” way), modern societies focus on, and amplify, individual differences in a single area (e.g. “general cognitive ability”) and use this to legitimise unconscionable, hierarchically-organised differences in treatment. These norm-referenced differences render hierarchy visible and lead people to scramble to climb onto the next rung on the ladder. The degrading and de-humanising treatments visibly heaped on the “less able” (with the ardent collaboration of the slightly “more able”) force everyone, even those who don’t want to do so, to collaborate in the scramble ....viz. to participate in the unethical activities of which work in modern “civilisation” so largely consists (see Endnote 2). There is virtually no way of gaining recognition or reward for other talents and contributions, still less any way of pursuing an individually satisfying lifestyle without such superhuman effort as to undermine the very satisfactions one hoped to achieve.

The so-called “educational” system plays a vital role in this process. I have introduced the words “so-called” and put the word educational in inverted commas since the word “education” comes from the Latin root “educere”, which means “to draw out” ... and thus enjoins teachers to draw out – viz. identify and develop – the *diverse* talents of their pupils. Instead of “drawing out” these diverse talents of pupils, our schools first render invisible the huge diversity (inequality) of talents available, thereby reducing everyone (by nothing less than legal mandate) to equals. And then, through highly centralised and authoritarian societal management arrangements, manufacture, amplify, and impose *inequality* along lines that have little predictive significance ... except for the allocation of position and status.

But there is another, and very important, sense in which primordial societies were organic. It is easy to say that their inhabitants viewed themselves as *in* nature rather than *over* it. But what this means mostly eludes readers. According to Bookchin, the rituals of organic societies were not, on the whole, concerned with manipulating or dominating nature. Rather they sought to promote the fertility and development of food, animals, and their habitats in such a way as to benefit the animals as well as human beings. In other words the overall process was, in effect, “seen” as a symbiotic activity which involved *participation in* the overall environment and the cycles of nature. Through these rituals people *facilitated the workings of the cosmic order*. But it was not a one-way flow. Nature was not “a habitat” – it was a *participant* that advised the community with its omens, secured it with camouflage, and left telltale messages. It nourished the community with a largesse of plants and animals. Nature was no silent world. In such a context, phrases like “stewardship of nature” have a hollow ring – a ring stemming from the implicit assumption that the only meaningful way to think about things is in terms of hierarchy and dominance.

The socialistic concept of communal property is likewise imbued with the notion of hierarchy, rights, and ownership. It mirrors the concept of private property. In contrast, the term *usufruct* refers to 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 – but only as long as – they are using them. There is no assumed reciprocity, exchange, or mutual aid. All such options assume accounts and balance sheets that reflect a mean spirited proclivity for acquisition characteristic of modern society ... acquisition of goods that have been socially defined as necessities and luxuries and competition for which thereby compels such participation in a competitive, hierarchical, society that it is impossible to think that human beings could be otherwise motivated.

Labelling organic societies as “primitive” embodies the implicit assumption that our own social organisations – viz. centralised, command and control oriented, societies that trap most people into a mechanical, dehumanised, way of life – are “more advanced”, better, than theirs.

*(iii) The way we conceptualise “Nature”.*

All these tendencies characterise our view of “nature”. We tend to think of Nature as being hierarchically organised, domination-oriented (ruled by tooth and claw), competitive, and “stingy” – unwilling to give up its bounty: In reality, it is organised organically with numerous niches providing support for a huge diversity of symbiotically organised (mutually supportive) life forms. As for being stingy and unwilling to give up its bounty, it is we who have created endless senseless “needs” ... largely, in a kind of circular process, to create the jealousies and differentials required to support the notion of hierarchy and the motivation to compete and conquer. This not only creates the illusion of stinginess, it also legitimises the need to orchestrate dominance-based arrangements to create the wherewithal to satisfy them.

*(iv) The pervasiveness of hierarchical thinking: the non-exclusiveness of mind and reason.*

Notions of hierarchy permeate our thoughtways. Indeed, we see thinking itself as somehow inherent in mind as distinct from something characteristic of the whole body and the wider universe that lies behind it. Social dominance is supported by notions of the superiority of intellectual work over physical work. Social organisation is supported by glorification of intellectual experience over sensuousness. Work at the senseless activities that dominate modern “civilisation” is given precedence over pleasure ... indeed the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure is reserved for those who do not “have” to work. Faith in authoritarian dictat pervades our thinking about morality, ethics, spiritual matters, the use of language, what may be discussed, how one is to establish “truth”, and even how one is to speak, write, and spell. A hierarchical mentality justifies toil, guilt, and sacrifice by inferiors and the indulgent gratification of virtually every social caprice by “superiors”. Moral codes are overwhelmingly justified by reference to authority, whereas ethical decisions are ideally guided by reason.

Bookchin argues that objective social structure is paralleled by a psychic structure which it is as, or more, difficult to change.

“In my view, reason exists in nature as the self-organising attributes of substance; it is the latent subjectivity in the inorganic and organic levels of reality that reveal an inherent striving for consciousness.” (Note the attribution of key features of the organic to supposedly inorganic. Note how the emergence of life itself is to understood as an emergent, self-organising, organic process ... or, rather, how the observation of organic self-organising processes is viewed as the basis for distinguishing the organic from the inorganic, the alive from the dead ... but without either thinking about the nature of the so-called self-organising

process or carefully examining the reasons for classifying things as inorganic. Note the attribution of mind and reason – and therefore life itself – to the inorganic.)

(v) *The economystic account of recent history.*

The shift from the earliest horticultural societies to the cultures of domination, oppression, and legalised mass murder and genocide that we call “civilisation” occurred very unevenly, and over millennia. As some “developed” faster, they imposed their heavenly and earthly institutions on others by force. But, in general, traditional forms were assimilated to new ends, with old relationships being used for new purposes. In many cases, early social forms lingered on for millennia.

The most significant changes were in mindset. The figures of mythology remained, but were imbued with new meaning. It was not so much the social role of women that changed as the view they held of themselves. The social division of labour acquired an increasingly hierarchical form. Craftsmen carved out superiority over cultivator; thinker over worker. Diversity was recast in linear form and validated by all the resources of religion, morality, and philosophy.

The classical, not just Marxist, explanation of this “development” runs as follows: Command structures were necessary to manage the division of labour that was required to subjugate nature. The agricultural surpluses so achieved sustained urbanised intellectual elites whose task it was to administer society and create the knowledge that became science. An egalitarian division of the surpluses would merely have resulted in an equality of poverty which would have precluded administrative and scientific advance. To resolve the problem of natural scarcity, human beings had to become mere technicians. People became instruments of production, just like the tools and machines they created. They became subject to the same forms of coordination, rationalisation, and control that society imposed on nature and inanimate technical instruments. Self-repression and social-repression formed the indispensable counterpoint to personal-emancipation and social-emancipation.

Logical though this account seems, it begs disturbing questions: Were all these things really as inevitable as they appear? Or is the account merely some kind of post-hoc rationalisation, a network of myths (possibly generated by the elite, but certainly promoted by them), to justify the extant situation? Is nature really as parsimonious as it is made to appear? Does effective public administration – societal organisation – and the development of scientific technics really depend on a leisured ruling class ... or has this class simply plundered the fruits of developing technics and legitimised it by promulgating this mythology?\* Did the domination of nature really require the domination of man by man, or is the very idea of the need to dominate nature a projection of emerging preoccupation with domination within human society? Did domination within human society foreclose other possibilities; other ways in which humankind could interact with nature?

It is quite possible that pervasive materialistic, economystic, preoccupations, combined with authorities’ need for myths to legitimise their dominating position, make it impossible to

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\* Bookchin never discusses the recursive process whereby such legitimising myths are generated thus helping to promote the development concerned and then how the development leads to the creation of more legitimising myths. How are these myths generated, selected, and promoted? How can one facilitate the development of alternative thoughtways? Although Bookchin fails to discuss this process, it seems to be something that it is essential to understand.

formulate, even think about or envisage, other accounts of history. If so, they also prevent us seeing the present differently and creating alternative scenarios for the future. They prevent us seeing the need for, and possibility of, fundamental changes in the way we live and the way we think about relationships. If the wants and desires we feel we need to satisfy were created, not by nature but by humankind (in order to legitimise and reinforce a hierarchical social structure characterised by dominance), other possible scenarios for the future open up.

### *The Emergence of Domination and Hierarchy*

Bookchin argues that the origins of hierarchy and the mythology needed to support it lie, not in the economic, but in the social realm. Differentiation of roles is entirely compatible with organic society.

He argues (although he provides no evidence to support his argument) that old age was the source of one of the problems that led to the emergence of hierarchy. Old age is a time of *dependency* rather than contribution. How to secure continued welfare? Answer: by forming a pressure group of elders and generating a mythology to legitimise it. Their need for social power, and hierarchical power at that, is a function of their declining biological power. Claiming wisdom facilitated a claim to magical power: the power to intervene in extra-human processes on behalf of the tribe and the power to orchestrate social rituals to the same end. Thus the elders/shamen first crystallise *professional* power .... professional power linked to political power, linked, in turn, to the manipulation of *fear*.

“Incipient, potentially hierarchical, elites gradually evolve, each phase of their evolution shading into the succeeding one, until the first firm shoots of hierarchy emerge and eventually mature. Their growth is uneven and intermixed. The elders and shamans rely on each other and then compete with each other for social privileges, many of which are attempts to achieve the personal security conferred by a certain measure of influence. Both groups enter into alliances with an emerging warrior caste of young men, finally to form the beginnings of a quasi-political community and an incipient State. Their privileges and powers only then become generalised into institutions that try to exercise command over society as a whole.”

And so on to institutionalised control.

Contractual relations – or, more properly, the “treaties” and “oaths” that give specifiable forms to community life – initially served humanity well. But the more demanding the environment became, the more preliterate peoples had to explicate the ways in which they were responsible for each other and how they must deal with exogenous factors – particularly nearby communities – that impinged on them. Sexual, kinship, reciprocal, federative, and civil areas of community life had to acquire greater structure. The need to formalise and structure was reinforced by individuals who felt that they carried heavier burdens and responsibilities than the rest of the community. These individuals included the nascent “oppressed” (often women) and those we might regard as the nascent “privileged”.

The early priesthood 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 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 – laden with an epistemology of rule – tended to replace magic. By emphasizing the “guilt” of

the human “wrongdoer” 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 insecure, could be reinterpreted by the emerging priesthood as evidence of the moral failure of the community itself. Drought, diseases, floods, locust infestations, and defeats in warfare – to cite the Biblical afflictions of ancient humanity – were reinterpreted as the retribution of wrathful deities for communal wrong-doing, not merely as the dark work of malevolent spirits. Technical failure, in effect, was shifted from the priestly corporation to a fallen humanity that had to atone for its moral frailties. And only priestly supplications, visibly reinforced by generous sacrifices in the form of goods and services, could redeem humanity, temper the punitive actions of the deities, and restore the earlier harmony that existed between humanity and its gods. In time, sacrifice and supplication became a constant effort in which neither the community nor its priestly corporation could relent. When this effort was institutionalised 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, its priestly quarters, its storehouses, craft shops, and the dwellings of its artisans and bureaucracies. Urban life began with an altar, not simply a marketplace, and probably with walls that were meant to differentiate sacred space from the natural, not simply as defensive palisades.

Like the priestly corporation, the clan was transformed into an economic corporation. Community, once conceived as the vital *activity* of communizing, became the source of passive communal labour, a mere instrument of production. Communal traits were valued insofar as they lent themselves to technical coordination, exploitation, and rationalization – a very ancient commentary on the exploitative nature of a communism structured around hierarchy. Hence clan society, far from being initially effaced, was used against itself to produce a wealth of material objects. The priestly corporation, in effect, had become a clan unto itself that raised itself above all other clans. It had become something quite new: a *class*.

Accumulated wealth, now conceived as the sum of humanity’s material sacrifices to the deities, was divested of the demonic traits that organic society had imputed to treasure. The wealthy temples that emerged in both the Old World and the New are testimony to a sacralisation of accumulated wealth; later, of booty as the reward of valour; and finally, tribute as the result of political sovereignty. Gifts, which once symbolised alliance between people in mutual support systems, were now transformed into tithes and taxes for supernatural and political security. This steady reworking of the communal clans into labour forces, of communal lands into proprietary sacerdotal estates, of conciliatory myths into repressive religious dramas, of kinship responsibilities into class interests, of hierarchical command into class exploitation – all were to appear more like shifts of emphasis in traditional systems of right rather than marked ruptures with hallowed customs. Leaving the catastrophic effects of invasions aside, primordial society seems to have been seduced into the new social disposition of class society without clearly departing from the outlines of organic society.

That hallowed process called Reason, of generalization and classification, appears very early in an involuted and contradictory form: the *fictive* manipulation of nature begins with the *real* manipulation of humanity. Although the shaman’s efforts to give greater coherence to the world will become social power that confers upon humanity greater control over the external world, the shaman and, more precisely, his successor – the priest – initially divides this world to manipulate it. In either case, early hunter-gatherers projected the social structure of secular

power onto the supernatural just as other groups do: later religions merely reflect the then contemporary social structures.

As society slowly developed toward hierarchy and then into class structures, so too did the deities. In a hierarchical society still saturated with matricentric traditions, the foremost deity is the Mother Goddess, who personifies fertility and soil, the cojoined domains of sexuality and horticulture. In a well-entrenched patricentric society – one that introduces the male, his beasts, and the plow into food cultivation – the Mother Goddess acquires a male consort, to whom she gradually yields her eminence as patriarchy becomes prevalent. This process continued across the threshold of “civilization” into urban societies until the socialization of the deities led to political theogonies. If a community conferred in assemblies, so too did the deities; if the impact of war on primitive urban democracies led to the establishment of a supreme ruler, a supreme deity also tended to emerge. As long as the world was under the sway of shamanistic and, more significantly, priestly mediation, it tended to remain embedded in a religious matrix. In fact, it can never free itself from the mythopoeic and religious as long as human dominates human. Social divisions are obscured by myth and mythology; even the warrior-chieftain tried to validate his social status by becoming a priest or a deity. Authoritarian social forces are made to appear as natural forces, like the deities that personify or seem to manipulate them.

#### *The Emergence of the State by Force and the Role of Mental Transformation*

The state’s capacity to rule by brute force has always been limited. The myth of a purely coercive, omnipresent, State is a fiction that has served the state machinery all too well. It has done this by creating in the oppressed a sense of awe and powerlessness which ends in social quietism. Without a high degree of cooperation from even the most victimised classes of society (such as chattel slaves and serfs) its authority would eventually dissipate.

In seeking an explanation of how the State emerged one has, therefore, above all, to explain how this subjective, mentalised, view of the world gradually evolved.

In seeking this it is important to bear in mind that there has, in reality, been an immense variety of state forms that have been subject to varying amounts of public control. These have included the early Sumerian state, in which the military overlords were repeatedly checked by popular assemblies; the Aztec state, which was faced with a tug-of-war between the *capulli* and the nobility, the Hebrew monarchies, which were repeatedly unsettled by prophets who invoked the democratic customs of the “Bedouin compact”, and the Athenian state, institutionally rooted in direct democracy.

How has it come about that these have been eliminated and the modern state, with its pervasive invasion of community life, its mass media, its highly sophisticated surveillance systems, and its authority to supervise almost every aspect of personal life has come into being?

To get from stateless societies to the modern state a whole network of developments were required. Modern states could only emerge after traditional society’s customs and sensibilities had been so thoroughly reworked to accord with domination that humanity lost all sense of contact with the organic society from which it originated.

One important component in this transition is increased bureaucratisation. But, as is usual in social systems, there is a recursive cycle whereby bureaucratization promotes the anonymity and power of elites and these promote the growth of bureaucracy. More than likely, both are promoted by a network of social forces that has yet to be mapped and made explicit.

Bureaucratic relationships, unlike those that preceded them, 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, in 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 and, in due course, with mechanical devices.

### *Greek Social Philosophy and Governance*

Bookchin claims that the Greeks were well aware of the dangers of bureaucracy and specifically set out to guard against it.

His account of how they did this is illuminating in itself, but it is also valuable in illustrating, first, a basis from which public administration could have developed in a very different direction to that in which it has in fact evolved, second, the immense demands that such a system places on the citizen, and, third, the way in which philosophers, while ostensibly promoting freedom and participation, end up legitimising hierarchy, centralisation, and control.

According to Bookchin, for some reason that is not made explicit, the Greeks “needed” a “rational” philosophical framework to support hierarchy (viz. the dominance of citizens over women, freedmen, and slaves). The problem was that, while their general philosophy embraced participatory democracy, only a sub group of the population – although, admittedly, a remarkable cross-section of that group – was involved. The vast majority – which encompassed *all* women, freedmen, slaves, and the alien residents and who provided most essential day-to-day services for the community – had no voice.

It seems that Plato and Aristotle offered rather different, but very interesting, rationales for this division.

Plato attributed differences in individual capacities and performances to men having been born with different types of soul. Those born with “gold” souls were equipped to be philosopher-rulers of the polis. Those with “silver” souls were destined to be its warriors. Both needed to be trained in a rigorous regimen that fostered athleticism and a communal sharing of all possessions and means of life that would lead to a family-like solidarity. The remainder of the population had bronze or iron souls. Despite this they could give birth to children with gold or silver souls. And vice versa.

For Aristotle, social organisation must be informed by ethics (which, to Bookchin, means rational consideration of the long-term consequences of actions) and the desire of rational men to lead the good life. Leading the good life involves active participation in civic affairs. Slaves, women, and barbarians are incapable of involvement in governance – politics –

because they lack the necessary intellectual qualities. But they benefit enormously from the activities of those who are able to do so.

But both Plato and Aristotle legitimated hierarchy as rational. This hierarchy might be democratic but would often be totalitarian. Philosopher-rulers were free to lie to the entire population in the interests of the common good.

Perikles made the link between governance and individual competence and integrity in Athens remarkably clear in the following quotation:

“We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality, trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger.”

Perikles' confidence in the integrity of the polis is built upon his expansive confidence in the integrity of its citizens. Here, the Athenian ideal of citizenship as the physical reality of the body politic – indeed, as society incarnated into an assembled community of free individuals who directly formulate and administer policy – finds a conscious expression that it does not achieve again until very recent times. To Perikles, all Athenians are to be viewed as competent individuals, as selves that are capable of self-management, hence their right to claim unmediated sovereignty over public affairs. The genius of Athens lies not only in the completeness of the polis but in the completeness of its citizens, for while Athens may be “the school of Hellas” Perikles doubts “if the world can produce a man, who where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies and graced by so happy a versatility, as the Athenian.” The Greek concept of *autarkeia*, of individual self-sufficiency graced by an all-roundedness of selfhood, forms the authentic basis of Athenian democracy. Not surprisingly, this famous passage, which begins with a paean to the community, Athens, ends with its warmest tribute to the individual – the Athenian.

According to Bookchin, we have very few statements, including the declarations of human rights produced by the great revolutions, that bear comparison with that of Perikles. The great oration exhibits a sensitive balance between community and individual, and an association of social administration with competence that rarely achieves comparable centrality in later statements on freedom. It is not in “gods” that the Athenian polis placed its “trust,” but in the citizenry itself. The practice of a direct democracy was an affirmation of citizenship as a process of direct action. Athens was institutionally organised to convert its potentially monadic citizenry from free-floating atoms into a cohesive body politic. It had regular citizen assemblies (*Ecclesia*), a rotating Council of Five Hundred (*Boule*), and a court. Juries replicating the hundreds in the polis in miniature, were the conscious creations of a public realm that had largely been fostered intuitively in tribal societies and were rarely to rise to the level of rational practice in the centuries that followed.

The entire Athenian system was organised to obstruct political professionalism, to prevent the emergence of bureaucracy, and to perpetuate an active citizenry as a matter of design. We may rightly fault this democracy for denying power to slaves, women, and resident aliens. But these traits were not unique to Athens; they existed throughout the Mediterranean world in the fifth century BCE. What was uniquely Athenian were the institutional forms it developed for the participation of a significant proportion (and cross-section) of its

population – forms that more traditional “civilizations” rendered into the privilege of only a very small ruling class.

Conflicts over (upward) delegation and deputation of power, bureaucracy, and the citizen’s claims to competence appear throughout history. Recently they emerge in the form of popular demands for municipal and neighbourhood autonomy. What are essentially claims to competence on the part of the public confront the mythologies that conceal State functions from social functions, governance from administration, professionalism from amateurism, institutionalised relations from functional ones, and the monopoly of violence from the citizens in arms. Athenian institutions were unique not merely because of their practices, but because they were the products of *conscious intent* rather than the accidents of political intuition or custom. The very practice of the Athenians in creating their democratic institutions was *itself* an end; it was equivalent to the polis conceived as a social process.

A very thin line separates the practice of direct democracy from direct action<sup>\*</sup>. The former is institutionalised 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 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.

Hellenic democracy acquired a particularly onerous – actually fearsome – reputation as a “mobocracy”. This is perhaps because it revealed that direct action could be institutionalised without being bureaucratized. Hence, direct action could be turned into a permanent process – a permanent revolution – not merely a series of episodic acts. If it could be shown that direct action as a form of self-administration serves to stabilise society, not reduce it to chaotic shambles, the State would be placed in the dock of history as a force for violence and domination.

No concept of politics has been the target of greater derision and ideological denunciation by the State, for it impugns every rationale for statehood. It substitutes the ideal of personal competency for elitism, amateurism for professionalism, a body politic in the protoplasmic sense of a face-to-face democracy for the delegation and bureaucratization of decision-making and its execution, the re-empowerment of the individual and the attempt to achieve agreement by dialogue and reason for the monopoly of power and violence. From the State’s viewpoint, the public “usurpation” of social affairs represents the triumph of chaos over kosmos. And if the legacy of domination has had any broader purpose than the support of hierarchical and class interests, it has been the attempt to exorcise the belief in public competence from social discourse itself. Although direct democracy has received more gentle

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\* The most common definitions of direct action are usually exemplary rather than theoretical. They consist of citing strikes, demonstrations, “mob violence”, sit-ins of all kinds and in all places, Gandhian civil disobedience, and even vigilantism. In all such cases, our attention is directed to events rather than goals and theoretical generalizations. What unites this behaviour under the term “direct action” is the unmediated intervention of people into affairs that are usually resolved by parliamentary debates and legislation. People take over the streets; They may even occupy the parliamentary structures and rely on their own action rather than on political surrogates to achieve certain ends.



treatment as an archaism that is incompatible with the needs of a “complex” and “sophisticated” society, direct action as the training ground for the selfhood, self-assertiveness, and sensibility for direct democracy has been consistently denounced as anarchy, or, equivalently, the degradation of social life to chaos.

In the Hellenic world, Freedom existed *for* activity rather than as an opportunity to be freed *from* activity. It was not a realm but a practice – the practice of being free by participating in free institutions, by daily recreating, elaborating, and fostering the activity of being free. One was not merely “free” in the passive sense of freedom from constraint, but in the active sense of “freeing,” both of oneself and one’s fellow citizens. Fustel de Coulange wrote about it as follows:

“We are astonished... at the amount of labour which this democracy required of men. It was a very laborious government. See how the life of an Athenian is passed. One day he is called to the assembly of his deme, and has to deliberate on the religious and political interests of this little association. Another day he must go to the assembly of his tribe; a religious festival is to be arranged, or expenses are to be examined, or decrees passed, or chiefs and judges named. Three times a month, regularly, he takes part in the general assembly of the people; and he is not permitted to be absent. The session is long. He does not go there simply to vote; having arrived in the morning, he must remain till a late hour, and listen to the orators. He cannot vote unless he has been present from the opening of the session, and has heard all the speeches. For him this vote is one of the most serious affairs. At one time political and military chiefs are to be elected – that is to say, those to whom his interests and his life are to be confided for a year. At another, a tax is to be imposed, or a law to be changed. Again, he has to vote on questions of war, knowing well that, in case of war, he must give his own blood or that of a son. Individual interests are inseparably united with those of the state. A man cannot be indifferent or inconsiderate. If he is mistaken, he knows that he shall soon suffer for it, and that in each vote he pledges his fortune and his life\*.”

### *Diversity, Freedom, and Justice*

Much of the book is devoted to elaborating, and exploring the implications of, an interesting paradox: The dive toward hierarchy, domination, and centralisation has been accompanied by its opposite – more and more explicit discussion of, and legislation for, freedom and justice.

The concept of freedom was unformulatable in most preliterate societies. Lacking any institutionalised structure of domination, they had no way of defining a condition that was still intrinsically part of their social lives.

Unfortunately, the absence of an appropriate conceptual framework for thinking about issues like freedom and domination exposed the community to manipulation. The elders and shamans, and later the patriarchs, priestly corporations, and warrior chieftains who corroded organic society, needed only to produce shifts in emphasis from the particular to the general – from specific animals to their spirits; from zoomorphics to anthropomorphic deities; from usufruct to communal property; from demonic treasure to kingly storehouses; from gifts to commodities; from mere barter to elaborate marketplaces – to gain more and more control.

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\* Bookchin adds: “Experience has taught me to add a caveat. Fustel de Coulange’s account of the Athenian’s lived freedom is not a “burden” that I would expect the modern individual to bear at this point in history. It could be so, but it is not. Here, I am merely providing an illustration of freedom as distinguished from “free time”, “recreation,” and that empty word “leisure.” Nor is it “busyness” or “business” – the “business” of “occupying” or “entertaining” oneself. In any case, I am offering an example of freedom, not a recipe for it.”

Articulation of the concept of freedom proceeded hand in hand with the emergence of the concept of justice, producing many paradoxes.

Societal concern with justice and laws to promote it was prompted by the arrival of strangers (non-kin) into traditional societies. How to think about them? How to deal with them? What kind of treatment to accord them?

The problem became progressively more acute with the development of city life and trade. The strangers who leveraged the development of judicial arrangements for asserting their rights often serviced the city with craft or commercial skills. They were helped in their campaigns by the other oppressed groups who could hope to escape the whimsies and insults of arbitrary rule only by getting their rights and duties inscribed in an inviolable, codified, form. Thus progress toward justice was, in large part, a product of the social and ethnic outsider.

But, although prompted by the need to deal explicitly with diversity, justice renders equal – discounts, ignores, renders invisible – endless fundamentally important considerations that are in fact relevant, such as differences in financial and social situation. To assume that everyone is “equal” is patently preposterous when it is taken to include such things as strength, intellect, training, experience, talent, disposition, and opportunity. Such “equality” scoffs at reality and denies the commonality and solidarity of the community by subverting its responsibilities to *compensate* for differences between individuals instead of, to emphasise the point by repetition, treating unequals equally. This specious concern with “equality” thus yields a very real inequality, in the end negating equality on its own terms.

So, in progressively elaborating codes for equalising unequals, society renders a great deal of diversity undiscussable – and thus restricts freedom – whilst, at the same time, codifying rights to certain freedoms.

The subversion of organic society drastically undermined authentic freedom. Compensation was restructured into rewards, gifts were replaced by commodities. Cuneiform writing, the basis of our alphabetic script, had its origins in the meticulous records the temple clerks kept of products received and products dispersed, in short, the precise accounting of goods, possibly even when the land was “communally owned” and worked. These accounting records therefore prefigure the moral literature of a less giving and more despotic world in which the equality of unequals had given way to mere charity. Thereafter “right” was to supplant freedom. No longer was it the primary responsibility for society to care for its young, elderly, infirm, or unfortunates; their care became a “private matter” for family and friends – albeit very slowly and through various subtly shaded phases. On the village level the old customs still lingered on, but this world was not part of “civilization”; merely an indispensable but concealed archaism.

With the coming of warriors and their manorial economy, a new social disposition arose: the warrior code of might. But mere coercion alone could not have created the relatively stable, largely feudal, society that emerged. Rather, it was the *ethos* of coercion – the mystification of courage, physical prowess, and a “healthy” lust for combat and adventure. It was not might as such, but the belief in the status, indeed, the *mana*, that might conferred on the individual that led to an ideology of coercion, which both the victor and his victim mutually acknowledged and celebrated.

At this point I would like, once again, to draw attention to the fact that what we are getting from Bookchin, fascinating though it is, is a description of (some of) the factors operative at each successive transition in history. What we don't get is a feel for what is leading, or pushing, the process in a single direction. As a result we have little guidance as to what to direct our attention to *now* ... How to intervene in this organic evolution toward our own extinction, carrying the planet as we know it with us.

### *The Emergence of Aggressive Individualism*

There were other supportive developments. To the extent that organic society declined, so did the intense sense of collectivity it had fostered. A new context had to be created for the individual that would render it functional in an increasingly atomised world – an atomised world that eventuated in the random, isolated, socially starved monads who people modern capitalist society. The waning of primordial society placed a high premium on a new type of individual: A resourceful, comparatively self-sufficient, self-reliant, ego that could readily adapt itself to – if not “command” – a society that was losing its human scale and developing more complex political institutions and commercial ties.

Such individuals had always existed on the margins of early collectives. Tribal society made allowances for aberrant sexual behaviour, exotic psychological traits, and personal ambition – allowances that find expression in a high degree of sexual freedom, shamanistic roles, and an exaltation of courage and skill. From this marginal area, society recruited its priests and warrior-chieftains for commanding positions in later, more hierarchical, institutions.

This development had both personal and social components. At the personal level, the arrival of such individuals panic the more composed, tradition-bound, collectivity. The arrival of individuality is stridently announced by the warrior, whose “ego boundaries” are established by transgressing the boundaries of all traditional societies. Valour, rather than lineage, marks his myth-beclouded personal traits.

But mercenary warriors were only one of the groups now emerging. There were also merchants who lived by their wits and cunning. Their self-possession and libertarian spirit stand in marked contrast to the disciplined lifeways of manorial society. They are the harbingers of the intensely individuated rebel who is destined to “turn the world upside down”. But their fortunes depend upon their reception from the, often inert, mass of people. Increasingly, society needs autonomous egos who are free to undertake the varied functions of citizenship. The development of the individual on this social level, in short, is not an isolated, idiosyncratic personal phenomenon; it is a change in the temper, outlook, and destiny of the millions who are to people civilization for the centuries to come and initiate the history of the modern ego up to the present day. Just as the contemporary proletariat was first formed by severing a traditional peasantry from an archaic manorial economy, so the relatively free citizen of the classical city-state, the medieval commune, and the modern nation-state was initially formed by severing the young male from an archaic body of kinship relationships.

### *Patriarchy, Justice, and the Emergence of Conditions Facilitating Further Centralised Control*

Like the blood oath, the patriarchal family constituted a highly cohesive moral obstacle to political authority – not because it opposed authority as such (as was the case with organic society) but rather because it formed the nexus for the authority of the father. Ironically, patriarchy represented, in its kinship claims, the most warped traits of organic society in an already distorted and changing social world. Here, to put it simply, gerontocracy is writ large. It answers not to the needs of the organic society's principle of sharing and solidarity but to the needs of the oldest among the elders. No system of age hierarchy has a more overbearing content, a more repressive mode of operation. In the earliest form of the patriarchal family, the patriarch was answerable to no one for the rule he exercised over the members of his family. He was the incarnation, perhaps the historical source, of arbitrary power, of domination that could be sanctioned by no principle, moral or ethical, other than tradition and the ideological tricks provided by the shaman.

Justice slowly transformed the patriarch's status, first by turning the feared father into the righteous father. Patriarchy, in effect, ceased to be mere arbitrary authority. It became juridical authority that was answerable to certain precepts of right and wrong. By turning the crude, warrior, morality of "might is right" into the rule of equivalence and the *lex talionis* of equity, justice produced the transition from mere arbitrary coercion to a coercion that must be justified. Coercion now had to be explained according to concepts of equity and inequity, right and wrong. Justice, in effect, provided the transition from arbitrary, and even supernatural, power to juridical power. From a tyrant, the patriarch became a judge and relied on guilt, not merely fear, to assert his authority.

This transformation of the patriarch's status occurred as a result of tensions in the societal context. The elaboration of hierarchy, the development of incipient classes, and the early appearance of the city and State combined as social forces to invade the family and stake out a secular claim on the role of the patriarch in the socialisation and destiny of the young. Women were largely excluded from this process; they remained the chattels of the male community. But the young men were increasingly called upon to take on social responsibilities as soldiers, citizens, bureaucrats, craftsmen, food cultivators – in short, a host of duties that could no longer be restricted by familial forms.

As society shifted still further from kinship to territorial forms, from broadly hierarchical to specifically class and political forms, the nature of patriarchy continued to change. Although patriarchy retained many of its coercive and juridical traits, it became increasingly a mode of rational authority. Young men were granted their birthright as citizens. In varying degrees, conditions now emerged for devaluing the patriarchal clan family and for its substitution by the patricentric nuclear family, the realm of a highly privatised monogamous relationship between two parents and their offspring. Under the aegis of justice, the State acquired increasing control over this highly insulated domestic world – initially, by dissolving the internal forces that held the patriarchal family together with its own juridical claims.

The dissolution of the all-encompassing patriarchal "I" into fairly sovereign individuals with "ego-boundaries" of their own gained greater impetus with the expansion of the polis into the cosmopolis – the expansion of the small, self-enclosed "city-state" into the large, open, "world city" of the Hellenistic era. With the growing role of the stranger as craftsman, trader, and sea-faring merchant, the notion of the demos united by blood and ethical ties into a supreme collective entity gave way to the claims of the individual. Now, not merely citizenship but the private interests of the wayfaring ego, partly shaped by the problems of economic interest, became the goals of individuality. (We can trace the individual's fortunes

from the kinship group and the enclave of the patriarch into the “city state,” particularly the Athenian polis, where individuality assumes richly articulated civic qualities and a vibrant commitment to political competence.) From the “brother” or “sister” of organic society, the individual is transformed into the “citizen” of political society, notably the small civic fraternity.

### *On Science, Reason, and the Location of Mind*

Bookchin draws attention to the corruption of science, since Francis Bacon’s time, from an open quest for understanding to authoritarian prescription of the methodology of reductionist science to check insights, and the almost total neglect of end-state (teleological) causes in our thinking about causality.

However, he notes that modern experience has thoroughly undermined scientific images of matter as a merely passive substrate of reality and technics as strictly “technical”. The fact that the natural world is orderly (at least on a scale that renders modern science and engineering possible) suggests the intellectually captivating possibility that there is a logic – a rationality – to reality that may well be indicative of properties to which, in the human sphere, we refer as “design” and “planning”. These we normally take to be characteristics of “mind” and “reasoning”. 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 “pitfall” of metaphysics – the conclusion that an orderly world that is also rational may be regarded as imbued with meaning.

The term meaning is redolent with animism. It is suggestive of purpose, consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity – in short, the qualities we impart to humanity as *distinguished from* nature, not to humanity as *an expression of a nature whose mind is deeply rooted in natural history*. The logical consequences of the very logic of scientism threaten to subvert the distance science has carefully created between itself and the wealth of phenomena it subjects to its analytic strategies. Science, in effect, has become a temple built on foundations derived from the ruins of animistic and metaphysical thinking ... and without which it would sink into a morass of internal contradictions.

Science’s defence against this kind of critique is that order may imply a rational arrangement of phenomena that lends itself to rational comprehension, but that none of this implies subjectivity – the capacity to comprehend a rational arrangement. To all appearances, nature is mute, unthinking, and blind, however orderly it may be. It is not self-directive and self-expressive in the sense in which we ordinarily think of human beings as being. It may be sufficiently orderly to be thinkable, but it does not think.

Nevertheless, subjectivity, even in its human sense, is not a newly born result, a terminally given condition. Sensitivity and “mind” can be traced back through a natural history of its own to its most rudimentary forms as mere sensitivity in all animate beings and the reactivity

of the organic world itself. Although the human mind may be the expression of subjectivity in its most complex and articulate form, it has been increasingly approximated in graded forms throughout the course of organic evolution in organisms that were able to deal on very active terms with highly demanding environments. What we today call “mind” in all its human uniqueness, self-possession, and imaginative possibilities is coterminous with a long evolution of mind. Subjectivity has not always been absent from the course of organic and inorganic development until the emergence of humanity. To the contrary, it has always been present, in varying degrees, throughout natural history, as increasingly close approximations to the human mind as we know it today.

Every layer in the human nervous system, every organ, cell, and even mineral component of the human body “speaks,” as it were, from its given level of organization to the external habitat in organic evolution from whence it came and to the internal habitat into which it has been integrated. The “wisdom of the body”, like the wisdom of the mind, speaks in a variety of languages. We may never adequately decipher these languages, but we know they exist in the varied pulsations of our bodies, in the beat of our hearts, in the radiant energy of our musculatures, in the electrical impulses emitted by our brains, and in the emotional responses generated by complexes of nerve and hormonal interactions. A veritable “music of the spheres” resonates within each living form and between it and other living forms. We are also haunted by the possibility that a different order of subjectivity permeates our own. Is it farfetched 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. In any case, to bring together the natural history of mind with the history of natural mind is to raise a host of questions that can probably be answered only by presuppositions. Here, we stand at a juncture in the long career of knowledge itself. We may choose to confine mentality strictly to the human cerebrum, as a Galileo and Descartes would have done, in which case we have committed mentality completely to the vaults of our skulls. Or we may choose to include the natural history of mind and expand our vision of mind to include nature in its wholeness. The latter tradition includes the era of philosophic speculation from the Hellenic to the early Renaissance. But let us not deceive ourselves that science has chosen its way on the basis of presuppositions that are stronger or more certain than those of other ways of knowing.

Bookchin argues that we need to nurture our capacity to tune in to these wider aspects of mind ... the deeper processes of the world; in a word, to fulfil our human potential. However he notes that 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 realisation. Unfortunately, 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 “intelligence” to assemble all the conditions for the destruction of life on the planet.

He argues that, once society has created conditions in which we are each individually free to pursue what is important to us, we can develop these connections with mind/life and thus fulfil our ethical responsibility to act ethically and intelligently (and thus reasonably) to promote the long-term interests of the planet.

In this context he goes out of his way to criticise retreats from reason into spirituality and the kind of “deep ecology” that views the humanly-constructed environment as “unnatural”. In fact, he argues, it was, and is, *natural* for mankind to construct a human-created world. The question is whether we are going to use our (natural) intellectual capacities to design management arrangements for all nature that will promote the further evolution of first nature. The need is, not to undermine our natural predisposition to intervene in first nature, but to reconsider the ends of intervention. This he sees as “the most important ethical question of our times”. We need to consider the ends of humanity’s social development ... by applying *more* mind, not less. The need is precisely *not* to retreat into mysticism. What we need is more empathy, more aesthetic appreciation, more affinity for first nature, and more morality ... not mystics talking of self-empowerment, spirituality, and so on. Those who promote such notions, Bookchin claims, generally manage to navigate themselves away from the serious social issues that underlie the current ecological crisis. They retreat into personal “self-transcendence” and an “all-loving” pantheism. “Falsehoods and dogmatic beliefs, however benign they may seem at first glance, imprison the mind.” They presuppose and foster a proclivity for faith whose arbitrary nature renders their acolytes easily manipulable by assorted New Age gurus, and their like.

*The Recent Evolution of Destructive/Exploitative Societal Management Arrangements  
(With some comments on their reversal)*

Institutional technics first emerged in the form of the priestly corporation and the slowly emerging bureaucracies that surrounded it. They were later developed by monarchies and military forces. Religious and secular bureaucracies were ever more technically authoritarian. They mobilised the population and directed their energies toward authoritarian ends. But, most importantly, they facilitated the development of a *belief system* that validated the entire hierarchical structure.

According to Bookchin, the most signal achievement of these bureaucracies was not the coordination and rationalization of a newly developed human machine to achieve socially unnecessary ends ...and, still less, to enhance public welfare through, for example, the production of food. It was the effectiveness with which they reduced their vast armies of peasants and slaves to inanimate objects. The main effect of this was to validate hierarchy.

Hierarchies and ruling classes stake out their claims to sovereignty not only by a process of elevation but also by a process of debasement. The vast armies of corvee labour that dragged stone blocks along the banks of the Nile to build pyramids (i.e. to undertake tasks that were not needed for any reason other than inflating the egos and hopeful longevity of rulers) provide an image of inanimate objects upon whom their foremen and rulers could exercise their sense of power.

From the New World to the Old, the stupendous elaboration of centralised 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 labour, the collection of vast material surpluses, and the deployment of a surprisingly simple “tool-kit” for monumental technical tasks, would have been inconceivable.

Bookchin's basic claim here is that it is the psychological "needs" of progressively emerging power groups ... shamans, priestly corporations, and "bureaucracy" ... that leads to the progressive development of a social machine that objectifies labour.

Here he implies that it was the former that produced the latter. And that may indeed have been the case historically. But, as explained earlier, it seems to me more likely that both are outcomes of a poorly understood autopoietic, even organic, process that not only perpetuates itself but even tends toward its elaboration. It seems to me unlikely that priestly corporations *set out* to objectify labour. Objectifying labour, including the bureaucracy in the term, may have been a process, discovered serendipitously, which, when articulated, enabled them to solidify their position. But, bearing in mind the extent of social mobility, the amplification of social division seems to be what might be considered some kind of teleological "aim" of an autopoietic, or, probably better, organic, system.

Bookchin writes:

"Beyond the responsibility of massing huge numbers of human beings into regimented tasks, this system (i.e. the network of armies, bureaucrats, and tax farmers) had three essential goals: to intensify the labour 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 labour from the "masses," reduce labour to undifferentiated labour-time, and transmute human beings into mere instruments of production."

I have many difficulties with this statement: Firstly, I am not sure what the first two of the "essential goals" refer to. Does "intensifying the labour process" mean generating more and more senseless work for the idle hands that the devil might otherwise have deployed in activities designed to bring about social change? Does it mean driving out time for socialising, haircuts, thinking, or participating in activities directed toward social change? Second, what is the evidence that this process was carefully planned? Was there really a plan to reduce labour to a dehumanised condition? Or were these things some kind of epiphenomenon emerging from the spontaneous, autopoietic, even organic, operation of social processes? And, third, what is this about "production"? Production of what? It seems to me that much more important than the reduction of human beings to cogs in a machine that produced material goods and delivered crude services was the invention of new goods and services that were to be produced: junk foods, junk prices, junk econometrics, junk "market" theories, junk marketing, junk security (insurance), junk defence, junk "education", junk research. Differential access to the products of this work itself legitimised hierarchy and a scramble to get out of cog-like roles. Still more important (so far as I can see) was the progressive emergence (invention?) of insecurity and anomie. Security became individualised. The community as a source of security was disbanded. One had frenetically to attend to networking to try to be sure that one would have a job tomorrow. And, in the context of the so-called emancipation of women, personalised career paths led to the break up of the family as a source of security. (One might include junk social prestige in the list of junk products produced.)

Perhaps some of this senseless work was deliberately created to fill time; to stop people thinking; to stop them engaging in civic activities; to make them so insecure that they never dared say anything critical of the social operation of the society in which they lived ... and there is a great deal of evidence to support this position from the activities of the Thatcher government. Nevertheless, the discovery of the possibility of using market rhetoric to create (senseless) work seems to have been serendipitous.



And there is something else: many of these jobs were not as soul destroying as is often claimed. The invention of new products (including insurance and “educational” packages), new services, new marketing arrangements, and new organisational arrangements often called for considerable ingenuity, creativity, initiative, and social contact. Perhaps the most creative of these inventions was the invention of busyness – senseless work produced and legitimised by mythology (e.g. “The efficiency of the market” ... when the market is, in fact, the least efficient way of doing anything, instead creating endless senseless work demanding frenetic activity for its conduct.)

As to the suggestion of a deliberate proliferation of laws and the legal system, a succession of laws was presumably introduced, as in today’s world, as expedient measures to tackle a series of immediate presenting problem. Admittedly many of these so-called “problems” were only problems for, and only visible to, the ruling class. And many of the others were largely mythical problems semi-dreamt up by do-gooders to justify their existence. Indeed, many of these seem to be diversionary in the sense of directing the general population’s attention away from the main problems facing society and almost invariably involving “solution” via the introduction of some draconian authoritarian legislation<sup>7</sup>.

But the point is that virtually all these laws seem to have unexpected, counterintuitive, and even contradictory effects. Well-intentioned public action seems almost inevitably to have the opposite effect to that intended. Thus the introduction of laws to guarantee “rights” to “strangers” highlighted and legitimised certain aspects of diversity ... but simultaneously rendered others not only invisible, but even “deliberately” designated them as “irrelevant” (to justice). Thus it is hard to believe that the system was in some sense designed as a whole by malicious rulers. It looks much more like a succession of expedient decisions taken to deal with emergent problems and alarming situations.

In the end, to reiterate the point, it seems more appropriate to view the overall process as “autopoietic” or “organic” rather than planned by some demons. Social processes, like biological processes, are not merely self-perpetuating. Belief systems do not merely have of “self-fulfilling propensities”. Both are also self-elaborating. They contain elements which lead to the next stage in their evolution however dysfunctional this may be<sup>8</sup>. Things develop further as a result of a constellation of factors that exist at a particular time. Contrary to the current quest for pre-programming in the genes, what happens in organic development is dependent on developments in distal parts of the developing organism and seems to possess, perhaps does possess, teleological properties. Dysfunctional organisms are not always de-selected by natural selection.

Insofar as, at any point in time, the powerful make laws in their own interests, the fact is that those people have been selected and promoted for their role in a system ... in which case these powerful people cannot meaningfully be said to be responsible for the laws they enact.

But even these comments do not seem to me to reflect the main problems with what Bookchin has written here. It seems to me that two much more basic things are missing from the account. These include a description of the socio-technical *process* that led to these visible epi-phenomena that reveal its existence and operation ... How and why was a network of essentially meaningless laws generated “in order” to create work for the “middle classes” ... i.e. to legitimise their creaming off wealth from the rest of the community ... whilst subjecting the rest of the community to increasingly long and demeaning work against the threat of further humiliation, degradation, and imprisonment? How and why were labour

intensive arrangements developed to provide “security” ... pensions, etc. ... How and why were endless senseless products – in insurance, entertainment, tourism, elitist “art” – invented and promoted?

How and why were social arrangements to trap more and more people into frenetic activity invented? How was the notion of debt transformed into a means of trapping people into demeaning and unethical activity against their will invented: debts for education, mortgages, and the purchase of furniture? How was the longing to exercise initiative and creativity harnessed in the service of torturing Jews, or designing attractive and enticing brochures, generating new fashions, selling junk foods, junk toys, junk education, and junk security? How were these potentialities harnessed to create ever more destructive unthinking “education”?

Did those “with power” plan all these things? It seems unlikely, especially given that those occupying positions in which they are said to have “power” are continually changing.

But Bookchin is right: No “revolution” in tools, machines, or scientific understanding was needed to produce these developments. He claims that they “stemmed primarily from the genesis of an institutional technics”. But, again, the kind-of autopoietic nature of this process seems to pass unnoticed. Each phase seemed to evolve with a sense of frightening inevitability out of the last. All components ... the bureaucracy, the creation of senseless work, the compelling social division ... seem to “just grow” of their own accord – growing in the sense in which plants grow (although one has to be careful with the analogy because people these days tend to assume that the growth of plants is pre-programmed by information contained in their genes).

But, in reality, how inevitable was this process? To what extent was there deliberate intervention from those whose interests were threatened, or could be advanced, by certain developments? How much of e.g. the destruction of the Schools Council’s projects<sup>9</sup>, was deliberately engineered? But even if it was, the question remains of whether those who orchestrated the destruction had been somehow selected and promoted for the role they would play in a sociological system.

### *The Emergence of Class Society*

When seeking to account for the emergence of class society, it is important first to note that it is not a creation of humanity as a whole. In its most ruthless form, it is the “achievement” of a numerically small proportion of “advanced peoples” – i.e. those that largely emerged in Europe. By far the great mass of human beings who occupied the planet before the Age of Exploration had developed alternative ways of living that did not rely on a class society, let alone capitalism. 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.

What we so arrogantly call the “stagnation” of many non-European societies (or even the “dark ages” within European society) may well have seen the elaboration and enrichment of cultural traits that were ethically and morally incompatible with the predatory dynamism

Europeans so flippantly identify with “progress” and “history”. To fault these societies as stagnant for elaborating qualities and values that Europeans were to sacrifice to quantity and egoistic acquisition tells us more about European conceptions of history and morality than non-European conceptions of social life.

*The Role of Social Philosophers in Facilitating the “Development” of Class Society and Capitalism*

Bookchin discusses the role of Christianity and 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers in the evolution of modern society at some length, but, although he sees their writings as causal, it is not in fact clear whether it was the philosophies which led to the social developments or whether the statements and writings of the gurus were somehow selected and reinterpreted and promoted by the social process to, in a sense, facilitate and legitimise itself. And what of the word “legitimise” itself? It implies some kind of deliberate action on the part of those who benefited from the process to produce an appropriate mythology. But was the progressive elaboration of social division over millennia and its reinforcement by an “educational” system whose primary function is to legitimise a social division that compels so many against their will to participate in the destructive activities of modern society really the invention of some elite to legitimise their appropriation of the riches of the community?

As to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers, Bookchin asks: Of what does the “common good” consist in a society which celebrates the claims of self-interest and naked egotism, a society in which spiritual ideals have been surrendered for material gain, a society in which progress means nothing more than right to unlimited acquisition? By the end of the eighteenth century, liberal theory had not only been debased to the task of subserving and justifying political economy, it had become merely an 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 personal gain. In a mechanical world of matter and motion, egotism (as we can see most strikingly in the works of Bentham) had become for isolated human monads what gravitation was for material bodies.

In one of the most interesting and depressing sections of the book, Bookchin shows how the work of a whole series of authors who set out to advance the ideals of freedom was, in the end, used to advance centralisation and dominance, with each successive movement away from what most people wanted, securing acceptance as a result of conferring incidental benefits like greater stability in food supplies or a more equal opportunity to compete for the spoils of the “good life”.

*On Requisite Understanding and the Barriers Posed by Current Conceptual Frameworks*

We simply do not now know beyond our own narrow sphere of experience how the most ordinary things we use are produced. So complete is the disjunction between production and consumption, between farm and factory (not to speak of between factory and consumer), that we are literally the unknowing clients of a stupendous industrial apparatus into which we have little insight and over which we have no control.

But this apparatus is itself the “client” of a vastly complex natural world, which it rarely comprehends in terms that are not strictly technical. We think of nature as a nonhuman industrial apparatus. It “fabricates” products, in some vaguely understood manner, that we treat as if they were industrial phenomenon – with our extensive use of agricultural

chemicals, our whaling and fishing marine factories, our mechanical slaughtering devices, and our denaturing of entire continental regions to mere factory departments. We commonly verbalise this industrial conception of nature in the language of mechanics, electronics, and cybernetics. Our description of the nonhuman or natural processes as “regulated by negative feedback” or as systems into which we “plug” our “inputs” and “outputs” reflects the way we have “freaked” the natural world to meet the ends of industrial domination.

What is most important about our denaturing of natural phenomena is that we are its principal victims – we become the “objects” that our industry most effectively controls. We are its victims because we are unconscious of the way, both technically and psychologically, in which industry controls us. *Techne* as mystery has returned again, but not as a process in which the agriculturist or craftsperson totally participates in a mystically enchanted process. We do not participate in the modern industrial process except as minutely specialised agents. Hence we are unaware of how the process occurs, much less able to exercise any degree of control over it. When, we say that modern industry has become too complex, we normally mean that our knowledge, skills, insights, and traditions for growing or fabricating our means of life have been usurped by a stupendous, often meaningless, social machinery that renders us unable to cope with the most elementary imperatives of life. But it is not the complexity of machinery that inhibits our ability to deal with these imperatives, it is the new rules of the game we call an “industrial society” that, by restructuring our very lives, has interposed itself between the powers of human rationality and those of nature’s fecundity. Most westerners now cannot plant and harvest a garden or build a house.

*The Way Forward: Design Specifications for a Sustainable Society*

Bookchin’s discussion of the way forward is much thinner than one might have hoped for, indeed that one might have been led to expect on the basis of what was said earlier in the book.

There is, for example, virtually no discussion of how to intervene in the socio-cybernetic processes he has been at pains to describe ... or even much discussion of the forces that are operative *now* and how one might intervene in or harness them.

Likewise, while he hints at some of the features to be possessed by the kind of free, anarchistic, society he is obviously advocating, there is little discussion of how to get from here to there. Clearly, he advocates the abolition of private property and its replacement by usufruct, the encouragement of a vastly widened concept of diversity of the kind he claims is characteristic of organic societies, the replacement of competition by compensation and complementarity, acceptance of the notion of equity in diversity (the equality of unequals) in place of our emphasis on the inequality of equals, the promotion of participative democracy, a focus on *ethical* decisions grounded in contact with mind and reason *in* nature on the one hand and rational consideration of the long-term consequences of actions on the other, freedom to choose which of our needs we are to satisfy (which means creating niches where satisfaction of those choices is possible) and freedom to work at things of one’s choice (such as the improvement of the community through involvement in participative democracy or research) or to connect with other human beings and life more generally.

In connection with the last two, he notes that, while we have become thrallled to the notion that freedom consists in having a choice of which *material* needs we wish to satisfy, it could and should consist in a choice of life style, of living, working, and social arrangements ..

indeed of arrangements for being in touch with the cosmos. But such choice can only become meaningful if the options are articulable and the individual has the autonomy, moral insight, and wisdom to choose rationally. Further, these wider choices are, in fact, rendered invisible and therefore un-enactable, by pervasive thoughtways ... thoughtways embedded in virtually everything in our culture but especially amplified and exacerbated by the mass media and advertising. However much the consumer is deluded into the belief that he is choosing freely, he is under the sway of contrived necessity.

Bookchin writes: "If the object of capitalism or socialism is to increase needs, the object of anarchism is to increase choice."

But how are all these developments to be brought about? How are we to understand and intervene in the sociocybernetic processes which lead us all to go in another direction?

Bookchin has little to say on these matters. Perhaps this stems from a reluctance to engage in instrumental reasoning ... On the other hand, he clearly and repeatedly implies that one of the most important things for us to do is to apply mind ... reason ... to the enormous problems we face as a species.

As far as the scale of the management operation is concerned, he is at pains to emphasise that, contrary to what many have argued, our problems do not stem from the scale of technical machinery. Rather, they stem from the progressive transformation *of society* into a technical machine for producing, not (unnecessary) technical goods and services, but social division.

The function of most goods and services is not to satisfy human needs but, on the one hand, to make social division visible (and thus fuel competition) and, on the other, to create work to occupy hands that might otherwise have become involved in social transformation.

The question we have to face is how the social technics we have evolved are going to be modified, absorbed into, and used to promote the development of, an emancipatory society. Some of the most dehumanising and centralised social systems were fashioned out of very "small" technologies which bureaucracies, monarchies, and military forces deployed as brutalizing agents to subdue humankind and, later, to try to subdue nature itself. We need to focus on creating liberatory or libertarian, as opposed to authoritarian, arrangements.

A liberatory technology presupposes liberatory institutions; a liberatory sensibility requires a liberatory society. By the same token, artistic crafts are difficult to conceive without an artistically crafted society. It makes no sense to speak of "appropriate technologies" without *radically* challenging the political technologies, the media tools, and the bureaucratic complexities that have turned these concepts into elitist "art forms"<sup>10</sup>.

The questions we can reasonably ask, and which might guide our actions, include: How can we nourish social freedom as a daily activity? How can the design imagination foster a revitalization of human relationships and humanity's relationship with nature? How can it help lift the "muteness" of nature – a problematical concept that we, in fact, have imposed on ourselves – by opening our own ears to its voice? How can it add a sense of haunting symbiosis to the common productive activity of human and natural beings, a sense of participation in the archetypal animateness of nature?

We share a common organic ancestry with all that lives on this planet. It infiltrates those levels of our bodies that somehow make contact with the existing primordial forms from which we may, originally, have derived. Beyond any structural considerations, we are faced with the need to give an ecological meaning to these buried sensibilities. In the case of our design strategies, we may well want to enhance natural diversity, integration, and function, if only to reach more deeply into a world that has been systematically educated out of our bodies and innate experiences. Today, even in alternate technology, our design imagination is often utilitarian, economic, and blind to a vast area of experience that surrounds us.

It is possible to infer that Bookchin may see the way forward as involving the use of the freedom (and time) that could come from an ethical choice of needs to be satisfied, the dissolution of hierarchy, the contraction of senseless work, and security provided by the guaranteed minimum to connect with the wider aspects of mind, life, and reality mentioned earlier. Yet this looks remarkably like the kind of “spirituality” he critiques.

Perhaps because of this, and perhaps because of his critique of “instrumental” reason, he does not discuss many things which I myself regard as crucial ... and which seem to me to follow directly from the issues he does discuss.

One example is that, having, on the one hand apparently implied that participative democracy is crucial to moving forward and, on the other, said that he cannot see how Hellenistic “participative democracy” can be enacted in modern society, one would have expected him to discuss the organisational arrangements he thinks are appropriate. In contrast, I devote almost a quarter of my *New Wealth of Nations* book to developing a framework for new societal management arrangements ... for, without some kind of shared vision – or theory – of these things it seems to me impossible to move. As I see it, it is essential to clarify the organisational arrangements, job descriptions, and staff appraisal systems that are needed ... and to establish this view as a clear alternative to “the market mechanism” to which, as most people currently see things, there is no alternative. Without such an articulated vision or theory it seems to me that, while it is just as easy to say that we need a “participative democracy” as to assert that our primary need is to get rid of capitalism, it is also just as unhelpful, even meaningless. Nor does he say anything about how we are to get from where we are to where we need to get to.

Another is that, having elaborated on the way in which the absence of concepts has prevented us discussing non-materialistic components of quality of life and multiple dimensions of diversity, one would have expected him to have emphasised the need to develop the necessary concepts and appropriate measurement devices. Connected to this, one would have expected him to advocate a move away from reductionist, single valued, science to comprehensive, ecological, science.

Bookchin likewise says nothing about the wider socio-cybernetic process that control the operation of modern society, the loops that remain problematical, and how one might intervene in and harness them. He gives no indication of the almost entirely non-common-sense conclusions concerning the points at which individuals might intervene that derive from such a systems analysis. And he nowhere lists the fundamental research topics that, as I see it, have to be addressed as part of any attempt to move forward.

As I see it, essential research topics include the development of indicators of components of quality of life so that these can become discussable; the assembly of *comprehensive*

information on the personal and social, short and long term, desired and desirable and undesired and undesirable, consequences of possible actions so we are actually in a position to take ethical decisions. More generally, it is essential to break with reductionist science ... and to understand the reasons why it is perpetuated – how it fits into and facilitates the development of the kind of society we have. More specifically, we need to understand the creation, selection, and reciprocating operation of the great myths that facilitate the continued un-progress of our society.

*Tailpiece: Some Disconnected Snippets*

(Most of the entries in this section have been edited and are not direct quotations.)

*On domination.*

One must be wary of thinking of “domination” as some kind of single-factor issue amenable to attack in a linear manner. It is by no means confined to military subjugation, but includes the domination of one ethnic group by another, of the “masses” by bureaucrats who profess to speak in their interests, of the countryside by towns, of the body by mind, of spirit by instrumental rationality, of nature by society and technology, and of quality of life by narrow economic rationality.

*On the presumed human predisposition to compete for wealth.*

We tend to assume that competition for individual wealth is “natural” and that the accumulation of independent wealth is to be prized. But, historically, this has been true for only a very short period of time. Even today, it tends to be highly suspect in preliterate societies.

In many preliterate societies it is taken as evidence that the wealthy individual is a sorcerer who has acquired his riches by a sinister compact with demonic powers. Wealth so acquired is “treasure,” bewitched power concretised, the stuff from which mythology weaves its Faustian legends. The very “independence” of this wealth – its freedom from direct social control – implies a breach with the most basic of all primordial rules: the mutual obligations imposed by blood ties.

The prevalence of the lineage system, as distinguished from “civilization’s” territorial system, implies that, even if hierarchy and differentials in status exist, the community consists of kin; its wealth must be used to reinforce or expand social relations, not weaken or constrict them. Wealth can be acquired only within the parameters of the lineage system, and must often be given away. The rich have obligations to provide gifts when requested and take care of bride-wealth and other important functions critical to the survival of the community.

*The pervasive percolation of notions of “natural scarcity”, “property,” and “rule” into our thinking about a way forward.*

Notions of “Natural scarcity”, “property,” and “rule” are embedded in virtually every critique of class society, exploitation, private property, and the accumulation of disproportionate wealth. By veiling the primordial blood oath that constrains the development of hierarchy and domination into class society, economic exploitation, and property, the class critique merely replaces the constraints of kinship with the constraints of economics instead of transcending *both* by venturing into a higher realm of freedom. It reconstitutes bourgeois right by leaving

property unchallenged by usufruct, rule unchallenged by nonhierarchical relationships, and the perception of scarcity unchallenged by an awareness of the abundance that can be created by ethically selecting the needs that are to be pursued. The more critical substrate of usufruct, reciprocity, and the irreducible minimum is concealed by a less fundamental critique: the critique of private property, of injustice in the distribution of the means of life, and of an unfair return for labour.

*On hierarchy, anarchism and chaos.*

A non hierarchical society need be no less random than an ecosystem.

*On the abdication of power to “authority”.*

“To delegate power (upward, which is central to the operation of states) 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 but with its most important context: the *social* context.”

*Some common and unhelpful confusions.*

Usufruct has been confused with public property, direct democracy with representative democracy, individual competence with populist elites, and the irreducible minimum with equal opportunity to compete in a meritocracy.

The concept of freedom has become inextricably entangled with economic choices, that of a liberated life with the notion of access to “scarce resources”, utopia with techniques to produce an abundance of goods and services, and revolution in the sense of creating conditions for the evolution of the free, ethical, citizen able to freely choose which “needs” to activate with liberating the proletariat.

*On humanity’s place in evolution.*

What is humanity’s place in natural evolution? Instead of seeing humanity as a cancer we have to ask how we can contribute something special.

*More on the workings of primordial society and the way they are hidden from us by the modern mindset.*

Anthropologists tend to describe the magical procedures of organic societies as “primitive man’s” fictive techniques for “coercion,” for making things obey his will. A closer view, however, suggests that it is we who read this coercive mentality into the primordial world. 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 nature is conceptualised at the very outset as a mutualistic community. Prior to the manipulative act is the ceremonious supplicatory word, the appeal to a rational being for cooperation and understanding. Rites always precede action and signify that there must be communication between equal participants, not mere coercion. The consent of an animal, say a bear, is an essential part of the hunt in which it will be killed. When its carcass is returned to the camp, Indians will put a peace pipe in its mouth and blow down it as a conciliatory gesture. Later, to be sure, the word was separated from the deed and became the authoritarian



Word of a patriarchal deity. Mimesis, in turn, was reduced to a strategy for producing social conformity and homogeneity.

By abstracting a bear spirit from individual bears, by generalizing from the particular to the universal, and further, infusing this process of abstraction with magical content, a new epistemology for explaining the external world was developed. If the individual bear is *merely* an epiphenomenon of an animal spirit, it is now possible to objectify nature by completely subsuming the particular by the general and denying the uniqueness of the specific and concrete. The emphasis of the animistic outlook thereby shifted from accommodation and communication to domination and coercion.

This shift was probably the work of the shaman who concomitantly embodied the role of the protector of game – the *master* of their spirits – and the helper of the hunter. The shaman magically delivered the hunted animal into the hands of the hunter. As both elder and professional magician, he established a new, quasi-hierarchical boundary that subverted the old animistic outlook.

It is important to fully appreciate the assumptions and workings of this *preclass*, indeed, *preeconomic*, period in social development. It is not only important, it is also difficult – because the vast ideological corpus of “modernity” – capitalism, particularly in its western form – has somehow been “designed” to conceal it from us. Even such notions as primitive communism, matriarchy, and social equality, so widely celebrated by radical anthropologists and theorists, play a mystifying role in the process of concealment. Lurking within the notion of primitive communism is the insidious concept of a “stingy nature”. This brings with it the notion of a “natural scarcity” which is seen to dictate communal relations – as though a communal sharing of things is exogenous to humanity and must be imposed by survival needs to overcome the “innate” human egotism that “modernity” so often identifies with “selfhood”. The notion of Primitive Communism also contains within it a concept of property, however “communal” in character, that identifies selfhood with ownership. Usufruct, as the transgression of proprietary claims in any form, is concealed by property as a public institution. Indeed, “communal property” is not so far removed conceptually and institutionally from “public property,” “nationalised property,” or “collectivised property” that the incubus of proprietorship can be said to be removed completely from sensibility and practices of a “communist” society. Finally, “matriarchy”, the rule of society by women instead of men, merely alters the nature of rule; it does not lead to its abolition. “Matriarchy” merely changes the gender of domination and thereby perpetuates domination as such.

### Notes

1. He writes (in a slightly edited form) “What is surprising about the course of societal development is not the emergence of despotisms in the New and Old World alike, but their *absence* in large areas of the world. It is testimony to the benign power inherent in organic society that so many cultures did not follow the route to Statehood, mobilised labour, class distinctions, and professional warfare. On the contrary, they often retreated into remoter areas to spare themselves this destiny.”  
One can but wonder whether the drawing power of organic society could have been so powerful after so many other “developments” had occurred. It would have been more than useful to have had some kind of account of the forces that led these societies to pursue such a different path.
2. *Most* work in modern society is highly unethical. As spelt out in Raven (1995) it involves doing such things as:

- Contributing taxes, research, or direct manufacturing activity to a war machine which not only directly takes the lives of hundreds of thousands of people each year but also consumes and/or destroys huge quantities of planetary resources in manufacturing or training exercises or as a result of dumping “waste products” arising from the manufacture or usage of nuclear and other weapons;
- Producing, marketing, or distributing junk foods, junk toys, and junk cars. The manufacture of these unnecessary commodities consumes enormous quantities of irreplaceable resources and generates waste which cannot be effectively disposed of. It therefore contributes enormously to the destruction of the soils, seas and atmosphere. Distributing them involves flying almost identical goods in opposite directions all over the planet and centralised distribution arrangements which depend on trucks, cars, and the construction of highways which also generate enormous pollution. Production also results in massive exploitation of labour and not only in “third world” but also at home. Marketing produces needs which cannot be satisfied and thus leads to debt and dis-satisfaction among huge sectors of the population;
- Offering junk education and junk research. Junk education fails to develop, and, as shown in this article, renders invisible, most people’s talents thereby denying them an opportunity to develop and use them. The neglected talents are those that are most important from the point of view of reforming our way of life so that the species and the planet have a chance of survival. The system also generates feelings of inadequacy in vast numbers of people and labels them as “unemployable”, suitable only for degrading and dehumanising treatment by the so-called “welfare” services. Junk research occupies the time of millions of people – and not only those directly involved in the research or in reviewing grant applications and the resulting publications, but also in building and maintaining the “necessary” buildings, printing presses etc.;
- Contributing to a drugs-based health care system that destroys all caring worth the name and diverts attention away from the societal reforms that are really necessary;
- Contributing to banking and insurance systems which are organised in such a way as to have the maximal effect from the point of view of sucking resources from the third world and exploiting – that is, destroying the lives and livelihoods of – billions of people and also reducing vast numbers of people in our own society to destitution, deprived of adequate communal care;
- contributing to energy-intensive chemicals-based agriculture whose effect is to destroy the soils, the seas, and the atmosphere as well as allocating billions of people to lives of degradation, humiliation and starvation.

In passing, it is important to note that those in the WTO and elsewhere who push through single-factor oriented educational reforms very clearly see the need to have a mythology and a social process which compels so many people to do so many things that they know to be wrong and, indeed, not even in their own best interests because the activities in which they are engaged destroy their own quality of life.

3. In contrast to the economystic account of history (which argues that the coordination of “labour” is required to produce material surpluses), Bookchin claims, though, in this case, he does not provide the evidence, that, historically, the process was the other way round: That there was an increasing surplus goods and labour in organic societies, and that this surplus was usurped by the powerful, not to lead materially affluent life styles, but to exert authority over, and create awe in, others. Labour to build pyramids (and earlier palaces and mortuaries) was not “needed” in any materialistic sense. Thus it is not true to say that the slaves were exploited ... for the object was not to confer material benefit on their rulers. The objective was to create conditions in which authority could be exerted and to exact obedience.
4. For an exposition of this point of view see Lovelock (1979) and Robb (1989).
5. Seeking a way of thinking about and describing this process brings us up against one of the most fundamental problems of modern science and philosophy. For, in reality, the progressive emergence of organic structures, and, indeed, the very conditions that made their emergence possible, has to do with the emergence and development of life itself (see Raven, 2007). Also the

major problem faced by ecology as a science is how to map and understand the endless feedback loops that develop between organisms and their environments ... particularly because, more often than the modern mindset would like to admit, these depend on symbiotic rather than competitive relationships. (Some of these are discussed by Bookchin himself. Others will be found in Goldsmith, 1992 and Waddington, 1969, 1975.)

6. Newton first had to articulate the concept of “force”, show it was *measurable*, and show that the idea was generalisable across the wind, the waves, falling apples, and the planets. (Previously, there had just been the wind and the waves, the behaviour of which was thought to be controlled by the Gods.) Then he had to elucidate and map the forces acting on sailing boats – including the observation that “to every force there is an equal and opposite reaction”. From that followed the entirely counterintuitive notion (which flew in the face of common sense) that the equal and opposite reaction to the impact of the wind on the sailing boat must lie in the sea ... and the still more absurd notion that this could be harnessed to drive the boat *into* the wind. Only after that, was it possible to envisage that it would be possible to harness the overall network of forces (by putting keels on sailing boats) so that the resultant of the network of forces would push the boats to where their captains wanted to get to rather than crashing them against the rocks.
7. At a recent meeting it emerged that company psychologists involved in the assessment of the effects of drugs were employing a methodology that they knew was defective. Questioned about the ethics of this practice, they responded that the commercial interests of the company would be threatened if they revealed this information (and it is, in fact, the case that WTO legislation makes it illegal for anyone to say anything, true or false, which would be likely to damage the long-term commercial interests of a company). But the “solution” proffered at the meeting was interesting. It was proposed to pass the information on to the drug-trial standards committee – i.e. “the authorities” – who were then expected to fix the situation. That “solution”, of course, overlooks the standard problem with authoritarian solutions – the members of “the authority” were, of course, drawn from the very drug companies that were perpetuating the unethical practices.
8. The geological record is replete with records of species which continued on their seemingly self-determined developmental course until they could no longer function and thus became extinct. *The dysfunctional members of the species were not deselected by natural selection leaving the more functional to carry on.* Even more difficult to account for by natural selection are the endless complex symbiotic processes that exist in all areas of life.
9. The *Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations in England and Wales*, which was set up in the early 1960s – and was largely teacher controlled – established a series of major curriculum development projects. Virtually all of these disappeared for reasons known only to a few of those most directly involved. I know at least part of the story about what happened to its *Integrated Science Project*, which was deliberately closed because it was both encouraging pupils to think about what they were doing and ensuring that they could get credit for so doing in the examination system. I am told that similar fates befell the Humanities Project, “*Man, a Course of Studies*”, and a related mathematics project. These processes were by no means limited to the UK. At much the same time, the US Office of Economic Opportunity – *not* the Office of Education – initiated *Headstart* and *Follow-Through* with a view to allowing thousands of sponsors to initiate projects based on their own theories about the causes of the range of problems known to be associated with social and economic disadvantage. Some of these were enormously successful in producing change. This presented the evaluators (e.g. Stanford Research Institute) with a problem, with which they set about trying to cope. But then an apparently extraordinary thing happened. Control of the projects was wrested from the Office of Economic Opportunity and transferred to the US Office of Education. This promptly directed the evaluators to pay no attention to outcomes other than raising IQ, school achievement, and staying out of trouble with the police. This had the effect of forcing most of the sponsors to abandon most of their objectives. But what it is most important to note about the remaining objectives is that, while laudable, they are norm referenced and, as such, logically unobtainable by a cross-section of pupils. IQs are by definition relative to the scores of other children in the same age group. One cannot have “most” children “above average”. And, as Hope (1984) also demonstrated, this particularly applies to “at risk” pupils. As soon as one moves some pupils out of “remedial” classrooms their seats are taken by others. What one sees very clearly here is the role which the educational system, qua system (and not via the “hidden

curriculum”) plays in contributing directly to the cementation of a social structure that has a range of knock-on effects and the willingness of authority to intervene in, and effectively destroy, the educationally-oriented activities created by people with a genuine interest in children, people, education, development, and humane ideals in society to ensure that these sociological functions are performed.

10. The “how to do it” toolkits of “alternative technology” are particularly unsavoury because of what they reveal about their inventors and promoters’ readiness to make “pragmatic” compromises with the political technologies of governmental agencies. These kits reveal that their producers have “bought into” ... not merely accepted ... the assumptions of the system about such things as natural scarcity and the validity of modern “needs”.

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