# BOOKCHIN
## A CRITICAL APPRAISAL
### DAMIAN WHITE

**Bookchin**

# Bookchin

**A Critical Appraisal**

DAMIAN F. WHITE

**PLUTO PRESS**
www.plutobooks.com

*To Mum and Dad*
*Mark and Sarah*

*With Love and Thanks*

# Contents

PART FOUR: ENDINGS

# Abbreviations

*AMFL*  M. Bookchin. *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998.* Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press, 1999.

*BR*  J. Biehl (ed.). *The Bookchin Reader.* London: Cassell, 1997.

*CIOC*  Lewis Herber. (Pseud. M. Bookchin). *Crisis in Our Cities.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965.

*DtE*  Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman (ed. Steve Chase). *Defending the Earth: A Dialogue Between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman.* Boston: South End Press, 1991.

*EofF*  M. Bookchin. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy.* 1st Edition, California: Cheshire Books, 1982. All quotations in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991) unless otherwise stated.

*FUTC*  M. Bookchin. *From Urbanization to Cities: Towards a New Politics of Citizenship.* 1st Edition, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987. All quotations in this book are taken from the 1995 revised edition (London: Cassell).

*LOTC*  M. Bookchin. *The Limits of the City.* 1st Edition, New York: Harper and Row, 1974. All quotations in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986).

*MC*  M. Bookchin. *The Modern Crisis.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986.

*OSE*  Lewis Herber (Pseud. M. Bookchin). *Our Synthetic Environment.* 1st Edition, New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1962. All quotations in this book are taken from the 1963 British edition (London: Jonathan Cape).

*PofSE*  M. Bookchin. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism.* 1st Edition, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990. All quotations in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995) unless otherwise stated.

*PSA*  M. Bookchin. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism.* 1st Edition, San Francisco: Rampart Books, 1971. All quotations in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986) unless otherwise stated.

| | |
|---|---|
| *RE* | M. Bookchin. 'Recovering Evolution: A Reply to Eckersley and Fox' *Environmental Ethics* 12: 3, Fall 1990. |
| *RH* | M. Bookchin. *Reclaiming Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism and Primitivism.* London: Cassell, 1995. |
| *RS* | M. Bookchin. *Remaking Society: Paths to a Green Future.* Boston: South End Press, 1990. |
| *SALA* | M. Bookchin. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm.* Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995. |
| *SEvsDE* | M. Bookchin. 'Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement' *Socialist Review* 18: 3, July–Sept 1988. |
| *TES* | M. Bookchin. *Towards an Ecological Society.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980. |

# Acknowledgments

I first came across the writings of Murray Bookchin in 1988. I was walking through the East Village absorbing the public ballet of New York City, its people and parks, squares and gardens, in all its urban-ecological magnificence, trying to figure out how such extremes of misery and grandeur, urban vibrancy and a palpable sense of civic and ecological possibility could possibly co-exist in the same space, when I came across an open access university library. I popped in and, as one would in those pre-internet days, began working through the library's extensive collection of progressive journals and books, coming to rest on an article entitled 'Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology'. Sitting down to read the piece, I found myself immediately gripped by a sweeping essay written by one Murray Bookchin.

The essay itself was fascinating for its combination of scholarship, high-minded moralism and acerbic polemic. From my speed-reading it quickly became clear that the essay offered a no-nonsense condemnation of misanthropy and racism within the US Green Movement by a self-declared 'leading figure'. But more than this, the author went on to sketch out two distinct tendencies that, he argued, would struggle over the future of ecological thought.

A critical-humanist tendency was identified that drew its inspiration from Peter Kropotkin, William Morris and Paul Goodman, viewed environmental problems as having their roots in social problems, and advanced a 'serious challenge' to the present society. This was counter-posed to an alternative tendency, described by the author as offering a 'bizarre mix' of Hollywood and Disneyland, re-born Christianity, and in some cases eco-fascism. A 'social ecology' that recognised human beings had been constituted to actively, purposefully and rationally intervene in a dynamic nature was counter-posed to an alternative current of ecological thought, which, Bookchin argued, worked with a static, pictorial view of nature and increasingly preached a gospel of a kind of 'original sin' on an accursed species called humanity.

Further research in the library revealed that the said author had, indeed, written a great deal more. Skimming through the various Bookchin texts I could get my hands on that day (and testing the patience of my travel companions to the extreme), I was further

struck, not simply by the confrontational style of these writings, but by the political sharpness of the arguments and the broader intellectual richness of the work.

I had read Rachel Carson and E.F. Schumacher, Rudolf Bahro and André Gorz, yet none of these thinkers worked off as broad a palette as Bookchin, as Aristotle and Hegel, Marx and Critical Theory, ecology and post-industrial thought were all brought to bear to formulate what he referred to as 'social ecology'. What seemed equally interesting was that here was a self-declared 'social ecologist', who nevertheless seemed to have written as many books about urbanisation and the city as about 'nature'. Here was a self-declared ecological thinker whose writings, to be sure, were peppered with 'crisis rhetoric' and talk of the need to incorporate the agency of nature into social theory. Yet these were writings that explicitly rejected the idea that a meaningful politics of the built and natural environment could be framed around narratives of austerity and denial. Rather, Bookchin's writings, drawing inspiration from the anti-authoritarian traditions of social and political thought, sought to celebrate human agency *and* ecological fecundity. In short his work contained an ebullient sense of *reconstructive possibilities*.

To my pragmatic, reformist eyes, even on first encounter Bookchin's writings seemed marked by a worrying perfectionism. Yet, in contrast though to the rather po-faced and thin-lipped environmentalism that I had encountered in the UK, which seemed to delight in embracing the role of the scold, there was equally something refreshing about the celebration of creativity, possibility and agency running through Bookchin's future-orientated radicalism. Moreover, underlying all the polemic, there was something stirring about the notion that a concern for ecological matters and a concern for human dignity were inextricably linked and could not be compromised. The essay 'Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology' stayed in my mind, as did Bookchin.

As an undergraduate I followed with interest the debate that subsequently unfolded in the United States around Bookchin's critique of deep and other anti-humanist ecologies, as numerous academic eco-philosophers reacted with outrage to Bookchin's claims that misanthropy lingered on as a persistent danger in environmental social and political thought. During this period, and as only an over-enthusiastic 21-year-old would do, I wrote to Bookchin enquiring further about his work and his project. He wrote back a friendly letter which enquired more broadly about the state of the UK Green movement. I am embarrassed to say that I never continued the

dialogue, but a few years later, I turned up at the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) in Vermont and had the pleasure of engaging with Bookchin and his associates.

Whilst I kept a certain critical distance during this month from Bookchin and the Bookchinites, nevertheless the experience was an important one. Bookchin revealed himself to be as fascinating and mercurial a teacher as he was a writer. Whether discussing the merits of the Greek *polis* or Hegel's dialectic, the failing of Habermas or the virtues of Mumford, he was a brilliantly fluid, vivid and entertaining lecturer who could be humorous and witty, vainglorious and foul tempered, all within a few minutes. The ISE more generally attracted some brilliant students and faculty. Drawing together scholars and artists, community activists, poets, architects and designers, I found it striking and impressive how all sought to combine ecology with social justice, transformational visions with a positive joie de vivre. It was this trip that planted the seeds for the present book, a work which brings to a close a long journey that has taken me from Ilford to Providence, via Burlington, Colchester and Charlottesville.

Getting to grips with Bookchin's writings as a whole took some time. Grasping and evaluating Bookchin's work in its entirety proved to be a difficult task. Part of the difficulty lies in the simple fact that Bookchin's project provides us with an ambitious example of grand social and political theory in the Enlightenment tradition. As a result of this, any attempt to engage with and evaluate Bookchin's work as a whole will be drawn into an exhausting range of literatures covering different areas: from environmental sociology and political ecology to green political theory and the environmental sciences, from environmental ethics and critical theory to urban sociology and democratic theory. Additional issues emerge from the fact that Bookchin was not only a prolific writer but, as we will see, he changed his mind – sometimes dramatically.

Perhaps a central reason why Bookchin is a difficult social and political theorist to write about is because the debate surrounding his work is remarkably polarised. His work has attracted both disciples and remarkably hostile critics. His intellectual life is littered with disputes and rancorous arguments, many conducted with former sympathisers. I engage with some of these disputes, where they raise substantive issues, but a central aim of this book is to move evaluation of Bookchin and his legacy beyond excoriating critique or hagiography. Rather the aim is to make a balanced critical appraisal of

the main body of his work and his project. Readers will make up their own minds about how successfully I have negotiated these issues.

Having taken a long time to write, this book inevitably incurred a considerable number of debts. I would like to thank Andy Dobson for introducing me to the literature on green political thought, post-industrialism and environmental ethics many years ago. The late, great, Paul Hirst played an important mentoring role in helping me bridge the worlds of social theory, sociology and democratic theory. Ted Benton played a critical role in introducing me to environmental sociology and the philosophy of science. He kick-started this book by supervising an earlier incarnation of this project as a doctoral thesis, and my work has certainly been deeply influenced by our many conversations even when he quite sharply disagreed with my arguments. Tim Hayward and Carlo Ruzza offered salutary remarks on an earlier version of this text. The Department of Sociology at Essex provided a fine place to receive an education in social theory. My thanks to Hugh Ward, Tony Woodiwiss, Rob Stone, Gary Potter, José Lopéz, Lawrence Gilbert, Claire Maher, but particularly to Fethi Açikel, for many stimulating and creative conversations. I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at James Madison University in Virginia for providing such a convivial work environment whilst I reworked this book. I would like to thank numerous cohorts of JMU students who took my courses on the Sociology of the Environment, Cities, Urbanisation and Nature and on Urban Studies for helping me sharpen up my ideas. Ben Merriman did a fine job helping to prepare this text for publication. A British Academy fellowship, a grant from the Lippman-Miliband Trust, and a sabbatical from the College of Arts and Letters at James Madison University all greatly speeded up completion of this project.

Many of the arguments developed here were additionally tried and tested over the years in conversations with friends and colleagues, often unbeknown to themselves. I would like to acknowledge my fellow participants in the Institute of Social Ecology Summer Program 1992 (including Murray Bookchin) for many stimulating conversations amidst a beautiful Vermont summer. Gideon Kossoff, Andrew Lainton, Mike Small, Geoff Robinson, Neil Curry, Dave Castle, Noel Castree, Erik Swyngedowu, Horace Herring, Fletcher Linder, Jennifer Coffman, Liam Buckley, Alan Rudy, Fred Buttel, Tim Forsyth, Richard York, Ariel Salleh, John Barry, Aidan Davison, Les Levidov, Hillary Wainwright and Chris Wilbert all need to be mentioned for

conversations that spurred me to rethink my positions at one time or another. On a more personal note, particular thanks must go out to Nat, Mike, Colin, Dave, Mark, Penny, Andrew and Phillippa, Jan, Liam and Carroll-Anne and the Friels for their endless support over the years. My thanks also to Anne Beech, Tim Clark and all at Pluto Press for helping bring this project to fruition.

My love, Sarah Friel, lived with this book project for too long, helped proofread and assemble the end product, and provided a sounding board for my thoughts and worries throughout. My thanks to her and to our boys, Finbar, Cormac and Xavier for just being themselves.

Finally though, this book is dedicated to my Mum, Mary White, my brother Mark White, and to the memory of my Dad, David White, who passed away before the book was finished. It was they who first got me thinking, and they who supported me every step of the way whilst I struggled with Murray Bookchin and his work. Love and thanks all. All the mistakes in the book are, of course, mine, all mine.

*Damian White*
*Providence, Rhode Island*
*August 2008*

# Part One
# Beginnings

*When the hell are we finally going to create a movement that looks to the future instead of to the past? When will we learn from what is being born instead of what is dying.*

Murray Bookchin, *Listen Marxist!* (1969)

# Introduction

Between the early 1950s and the late 1990s, a torrent of essays, books, manifestos and philosophical reflections poured forth from the pen of Murray Bookchin. Inspired in the first instance by Marx and Hegel, then later Kropotkin, Lewis Mumford and the Frankfurt School, such currents were filtered further through a distinctly North American milieu. Critical theory and the lessons of European social history mingled with memories of the communitarian street life of New York City in the thirties, experiences of foundry work and labour activism in the forties, and the drab conformity of American life in the 1950s. The hectoring, confident figure that emerged from this rich stew of influences first found a mature voice in the 1960s.

Distinct in tone and content, Bookchin's sixties writings demanded attention. They demanded attention for their remarkable ability to situate current events within the context and timescales of much broader historical, sociological and philosophical horizons. They demanded attention for their ability to move from reflections on the virtues of Aristotelian and Hegelian social philosophy to polemics full of juicy prose and rhetorical excess. They demanded attention for their capacity to argue a political point with visceral and dogged seriousness. Perhaps more striking still though is the eerie prescience of these writings and the ambition underpinning all of Bookchin's intellectual labour.

In a series of essays and books written across the sixties, Bookchin argued that cultural shifts and technological changes in the postwar United States had fundamentally altered the terrain for social critique. Identifying the United States and the West more generally as standing on the threshold of 'post-scarcity conditions', Bookchin argued that such developments along with 'class decomposition' and 'cybernation' posed challenges to critical theory that were unlikely to be resolved using the resources of existing frameworks. Renewal would only come about if critical thought and politics grappled with such sociological transformations and reworked its normative horizons along libertarian and post-Marxist lines. However, what marked these writings as unique was Bookchin's claim that, in this process of rethinking, the crisis of the built and the natural environment had to move centre stage.

In writings that significantly pre-date the rise of modern environmental politics, Bookchin maintained that the proliferation of chronic environmental problems in the post-war world suggested social theory needed to place the relationship between society and nature at its core. However, standing out from other early champions of an emerging 'ecological worldview', Bookchin was one of the first voices to warn of the dangers of naturalistic reductionism in ecological arguments and to argue for the importance of bringing ecology into engagement with historical, political and sociological modes of inquiry. He went on to contend that to be useful and effective such a 'social ecology' needed to be rooted in a deep-seated investigation of the relations between environmental degradation, capitalist accumulation, social hierarchy and social domination. Such a social ecology had to reflect deeply not just on 'the environment' in general terms but on the actual environments that people now lived in – notably cities and increasingly urbanised worlds. Finally, to transcend current circumstances, Bookchin maintained that such a 'social ecology' should address 'desire' as well as 'need'. He argued that to move beyond the dreary rhetoric of abstinence and denial so regularly deployed by many other early ecological thinkers, it was of central importance to reflect on the profound possibilities as well as the problems that emerged from addressing the challenge of social, ecological and political restructuring.

In the following decades, Bookchin elaborated on this agenda with a mixture of high intellectualism and populism, displaying near remarkable reserves of brilliance, bombast and bitterness in the process.

The aim of this book is to provide a critical but balanced appraisal of this turbulent journey. It is a journey which begins with a tremendous sense of optimism yet, in some senses, ends in defiance and disappointment. It is a journey marked by an early phase of collective engagement and innumerable attempts to gather allies together to extract the 'rational kernel' from the activities of diverse social movements, and a latter phase that seems to be marked by endless public quarrels and isolation. Yet, despite the fact that Bookchin is presently known more for his unforgiving polemics than his reconstructive social theory,[1] I argue in this book that there is more to Bookchin's writings than this. The tale of Murray Bookchin is one worth telling and one worth engaging with. Where should we start?

## ORIENTATIONS

An engagement with Bookchin invites numerous lines of inquiry. Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals* opens up interesting possibilities when he identifies Bookchin as standing alongside Noam Chomsky and Christopher Lasch as one of the last dissenting intellectuals in the United States who has avoided being neutralised by the academy (Jacoby, 1987). It is certainly the case that Bookchin can be productively read as a distinctly American dissenter. His early ecological and urban writings are deeply embedded in the cultural and intellectual landscape of the United States. His reconstructive thought is defined by an explicit desire to draw from the republican institutions and democratic ethos of the United States to nourish an 'authentic American radicalism' (see *MC*: 135). In terms of political theory, the pre-eminent historian of anarchism, Peter Marshall, has declared Bookchin the thinker who has most renewed the tradition since the Second World War (Marshall, 1992a: 602). Such an acknowledgment is important – despite the fact that Bookchin broke with anarchism in his later years[2] – and it serves as a reminder that Bookchin stands alongside Cornelius Castoriadis, Colin Ward and Henri Lefebvre as one of the most important left-libertarian thinkers of the latter half of the twentieth century. More generally, we could develop an engagement with Bookchin's work in terms of what Boris Frankel has referred to as the rise of post-industrial utopian thought (Frankel, 1987). A sense of post-industrial possibility saturates Bookchin's writings of the 1960s and 1970s.

Engaging with Bookchin within the context of such specific intellectual traditions certainly has value and all these themes have a central place in this study.[3] Yet, in this book, I am specifically interested in exploring how these currents come together in Bookchin's writings to generate a critical ecological social theory. If it is Rachel Carson who is now widely acknowledged as a seminal figure in the evolution of ecocentric thought, I want to suggest in this book that it is Bookchin who should be seen as one of the decisive early figures in the attempt to formulate an explicitly 'political' ecology.[4] Moreover, in a period where it is now widely recognised that the cool winds of revisionism are moving through the environmental debate, I additionally want to suggest that reflecting on Bookchin's project could be insightful for reflecting on the future of the politics of the environment more generally.

There seems little doubt that social movements mobilising around the signifiers of 'nature' and 'the environment' played a central role in the latter half of the twentieth century in literally reshaping the collective self-understandings of people living in the affluent world (Eder, 1996; Beck, 1992). Yet, the politics of the environment in the early twenty-first century, for all its deep cultural influence, is clearly in transition. In a world where the 'nature' of 'Nature' is increasingly open to contestation, where crisis rhetoric has given way to discussions of complexity and uncertainty in the environmental sciences, and where ever more voices are noting the extent to which we are living in a human-modified world (see variously McKibbens, 1989; Braun and Castree, eds. 1998; McNeill, 2000; Forsyth, 2003; Latour, 2004b; White and Wilbert, 2006; Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2007), an engagement with Bookchin seems important and opportune.

Bookchin's critical project cannot be confined to debates surrounding the politics of the environment.[5] At the same time though, a significant proportion of his writings maintain a dialogue with environmental issues and politics across some four decades. What makes Bookchin such an interesting thinker here – to think with and against – is that the trajectory of his thought ends up taking some unusual turns. Specifically, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when few on the political left had any interest in the matter of ecology, Bookchin laboured tirelessly to fashion a progressive, humanistic and democratic social ecological politics. However, by the late 1980s (a period when 'red-green' seemed to define the future of the left), Bookchin's writings took an increasingly critical turn towards other competing currents of ecological and progressive thought.

## BOOKCHIN'S CRITICS

In recent times, the fraught relationship between Bookchin and his critics has increasingly defined how his work has been interpreted and evaluated. Engaging with the secondary literature does throw up a range of issues for any attempt to provide a relatively dispassionate assessment of the value of his work. Bookchin was a harsh and often ungenerous critic and this was often returned in kind (see Heider, 1994; Watson, 1996; Black, 1997; Clark, 2008). Even many of Bookchin's more considered and careful critics (Eckersley, 1989; 1992; Light, ed. 1998) have presented his wide-ranging critiques of

radical ecological advocacy as unhelpful, at best. Matters are made more difficult still by the fact that many of Bookchin's defenders veer close to hagiography in their desire to repel all critics and all criticism.[6]

This book tries to move forward in a different fashion. As we shall see, whilst I acknowledge that much of the existing critical literature on Bookchin contains insights, and that additionally there are issues that emerge with Bookchin's use of polemic, I also want to suggest that there are also limits to this literature to date. What perhaps has often gone missing in the heated interchanges surrounding the failings of Bookchin the man and his mode of address, is recognition that his writings as a whole reflect some of the genuine tensions that emerge for any critical theory that attempts to negotiate between naturalism and humanism; that seeks to acknowledge human agency and appreciate nature's complexity; that attempts to critique capitalist social relations whilst still celebrating the gains of modernity. Bookchin's later writings are also interesting for the extent to which they contain an important set of self-critical reflections on the limitations of his own work and the limitations of the political movements to which he devoted much of his life. Finally, for all the polemic, bombast and bluster, I argue in this book that running through Bookchin's work one as a whole can often find an acute and insightful sense of the genuine dangers posed by environmental determinism, naturalistic reductionism and technophobia to any serious attempt to develop a socially and ecologically progressive mode of critical theory and praxis.

Bookchin's writings seemed to fall out of favour in the late 1980s and 1990s when deep, romantic, and 'ecocentric' currents were in the ascent. His work was frequently deemed too willing to see the social and the historical present in the ecological, too concerned with the possibilities of reclaiming and redirecting technology, too preoccupied with democratising and 'ecologising' the city rather than protecting and expanding 'wilderness', too willing to grant human beings the central role as the dynamic historical agents in a broader social-ecological world. Yet, there is a real sense now that the imaginative force behind ecocentric and other anti-humanist currents of radical ecology has ebbed away over recent times, as debates in the environmental social sciences and critical urban studies have been transformed by a variety of developments. Notably, from the increasingly lively debates that have run through environmental sociology between ecological modernisers and eco-Marxists,

environmental justice scholars and advocates of the 'treadmill of production', concerning the relations between capitalism and ecology (see variously Bullard, 1990; 1993; Gottlieb, 1993; Sandler, 1994; Redclift and Benton, eds. 1994; Harvey, 1996; Buttel, 1998; Foster, 2000; Spaargaren, Mol and Buttel, eds. 2000; Agyeman, Bullard, Evans, eds. 2003; Mol, 2003; Castree 2002; 2007a, 2007b; Wright, 2004); to discussions in science and technology studies, human geography and environmental geography, about the 'production' and 'sociality' of nature (see Lefebvre, 1991; Smith, 1984; 1996; Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993; 2004b; Harvey, 1996; Luke, 1997; 1999; Braun and Castree, eds. 1998; Swyngedouw 1996; 2004; Sandilands, 1995; 1999; Darier, ed. 1999; Massey, 2005); from revisionist currents flowing through environmental history, historical anthropology, scientific and political ecology (see variously: Blackie and Brookfield, 1987; Botkin, 1990; Denevan, 1992; Cronon 1995; Peet and Watts, eds. 1996; Taylor, Halfron and Edwards, eds. 1997; Braun and Castree, eds. 1998; Silliman and King, eds. 1999; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004; Mann, 2005), to industry literatures that have revived interest in eco-technology and industrial ecology (see Weizsäcker, Lovins and Lovins, 1998; Hawkin, Lovins and Lovins, 1999; Milani, 2000), the field and the terms of 'the environmental debate' would seem to have altered considerably. Yet, with a few exceptions,[7] the impact such literatures make to a reading of Bookchin's work has largely remained unexplored.

A further aim of this book is, then, to consider how Bookchin's project stands in relationship to such newer currents. In many respects, I suggest such developments in the environmental social sciences and urban studies present as many difficulties for Bookchin's social ecology as do his radical ecological critics. Yet, what is interesting about Bookchin's work, I want to argue, is that he persistently poses interesting questions even if it is not always clear that he provides the most convincing answers. Where Bookchin is wrong, he is often wrong in interesting ways. We explore these issues and more in the following fashion.

### PLAN OF THE WORK

In Chapter 1, we begin by considering the personal, intellectual and historical/political milieu from which Bookchin's work has emerged. Seyla Benhabib, drawing inspiration from Gadamer, is surely correct to observe:

[i]n general, to understand a philosophical argument and to evaluate its cogency, it is necessary to know the questions and puzzles which such an argument proposes to answer. To understand these questions and puzzles, in turn, it is necessary to reconstruct those social, historical, and conceptual contexts which form the horizons of inquiry of different theories. (Benhabib, 1986: x)

As such, Chapter 1 reconstructs the 'hermeneutic horizons' of Bookchin's enquiry. Social and political theory – if it has anything of lasting value to offer – cannot be reduced to biography or to the broader conditions of production or historical context within which a text was produced. Additionally, a certain caution needs to be demonstrated in giving too much authority to the recollections that a thinker offers in relation to their own work. We all tend to retell our biographies to ourselves and each other whilst smoothing and occluding. Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, it is inescapably the case that Bookchin lived a political as well as an academic life. His writings are situated in place and time and they evolve, posing different questions at different points to different social movements. These social, historical and geographical circumstances, coupled with his understanding of his own project, provide some vantage points on his work. In this chapter then, we begin by fleshing out these contours. We consider his earliest writings, notably 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' (1952), *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962), and his series of classic sixties essays anthologised in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971). Finally, we make an initial attempt to situate his work within the context of critical theory, the anti-authoritarian traditions of social and political theory, ecological thought and neo-Aristotelian currents.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4, are essentially concerned with interrogating the 'explanatory-diagnostic'[8] features of Bookchin's mature social theory. In Chapter 2, we consider Bookchin's historical social theory as outlined in *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) and supplemented in *Remaking Society* (1990). Bookchin's historical social theory provides the broad framework for his understanding of social domination, social hierarchy and the idea of domination of nature. It is richly elaborated and enormously ambitious. We can find here a careful and valuable socio-ecological critique of technologically reductionist versions of Marxism and liberalism. However, what is at stake in this chapter is the extent to which Bookchin's attempt to construct an alternative basis for understanding socio-ecological relations to historical materialism is theoretically and empirically convincing.

We work through the 'domination of nature' debate in social ecology and critical theory. We consider how Bookchin's account of eco-social relations compares with recent empirical research in social anthropology, archaeology, environmental history and historical geography. Additionally, we draw Bookchin's position into engagement with more recent currents of historical-geographical materialism inspired by the work of Henri Lefebvre, Neil Smith, David Harvey and Noel Castree – all of whom maintain that it is less 'the domination of nature' and more attending to the 'production of nature' across time and space that provides the key for grappling with socio-ecological relations.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore social ecology as modern social theory. In Chapter 3, we focus on how Bookchin formulates a progressive socio-ecological critique of the modern era. Bookchin's lack of tolerance for the starting point of many other currents of eco-critique has long been viewed as central evidence for his 'dogmatism'. In this chapter I suggest that such a reading is simplistic. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Bookchin's approach to eco-critique is so exacting because he is well aware of the dangers of modes of critique premised on neo-Malthusian assumptions. I argue that social ecology, in contrast, offers a complex 'social relational' and Aristotelian approach to questions of 'natural limits' and 'scarcity' which focuses on the negative consequences of capitalist social relations on the environment. Once again, I suggest here that while Bookchin's writings are never fully formulated, they are full of valuable insights.

However, the chief critical theme explored in these chapters is the extent to which social ecology, as modern social theory, suffers from an over-generalised quality (like much radical ecological advocacy on the whole). With regard to current debates about the scale of environmental disruptions, in Chapter 3 we take stock of Bookchin's position through an engagement with recent literatures in the sociology of environmental science, new ecology and political ecology. In Chapter 4, we focus on Bookchin's claim that the fundamental crisis of capitalism can be found in its environmentally hazardous 'grow or die' orientation.

If the first half of this book could be considered a reflection on what Bookchin has called 'the legacy of domination' that runs through history, the second part of this book concerns itself with the 'reconstructive utopian' features of Bookchin's work, notably his attempt to recover 'the legacy of freedom' from the human story. For Bookchin, 'freedom', and indeed the 'principle of hope',

is ontologically embedded in the potentialities that endlessly reside in an active and self-organising nature, in the city, as it once existed as a humane community, and as it could be again, and in politics and the active citizen. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, we attempt to reconstruct and assess this 'legacy of freedom'.

In Chapter 5, attention turns to Bookchin's attempt to ground social ecology in an ontology which mediates between naturalism and humanism. Classic critical theory in the fashion of Adorno and Horkheimer's writings may well have concluded that a critical theory seeking to do justice to the utopian dimension of Greek philosophy could no longer make recourse to an ontology of nature (Benhabib, 1986: 7). Bookchin is one of an increasingly vocal current of social theorists who not only reject this notion but argue that a self-organising nature has ethical significance. In Chapter 5, we review this attempt to underpin social ecology with a dialectical form of naturalism and an ecological form of humanism.

In Chapters 6 and 7, we consider Bookchin as an urban thinker and political theorist. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, Bookchin wrote three books on urbanisation and cities: *Crisis in Our Cities* (Herber, 1965); *The Limits of the City* ( 1974/1986); and *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987/1995). All contain rich insights into the current plight of urbanisation, and all offer hope for the possibility of reclaiming the city. But this is the city as a new type of human and eco-community. In Chapter 6, we focus on Bookchin's critique of the unlimited city and compare this to more recent urbanist currents. We then consider the attempts in his latter writings to institutionalise ecological humanism and self-management in a new political and ethical settlement between urbanism, ecology, democracy and technology. In Chapter 7, we focus more specifically on Bookchin's attempt to place democracy at the heart of this new settlement and to recover participatory politics, an active concept of citizenship and a basis for social hope in unpromising times.

Finally, in the conclusion, we consider Bookchin's final writings and we attempt to take stock of his contribution to ecological thought and critical theory as a whole.

# 1
# Environments, Cities and Post-Scarcity Worlds

## THE POLITICAL LIFE OF AN AMERICAN RADICAL

In an era when intellectual life is dominated by a mass university system, the independent intellectual, writer and critic, schooled as much by activism and engagement with the cultural and political milieu of the time as by the formal educational institution, has become almost extinct. In *The Last Intellectuals*, Russell Jacoby has nevertheless argued that such independent radicals played a central role in the development of twentieth-century radical social and cultural criticism in the United States (Jacoby, 1987). As Jacoby notes of American intellectual life: for many of those born before 1940 in the US, the college route was simply unavailable, since colleges were often small and 'closed to radicals, Jews and women' (Jacoby, 1987: 16). To be an intellectual in those days often 'necessitated moving to New York or Chicago and writing books and articles' (Jacoby, 1987: 17). Alternative paths did of course exist. One could simply be born into a radical milieu.

Murray Bookchin was born in 1921 in the Bronx, New York City.[1] The son of Russian-Jewish immigrants forced to emigrate in the aftermath of the failed revolution of 1905, he has talked of being 'thoroughly steeped' in the immigrant world of his parents. As he has noted: 'we lived in cultural ghettos, but intensive creative ones and, economically, very communal ones' (quoted in Jacoby, 1987: 99). With parents working in the sweatshops of the garment industry in the Lower East Side, he was raised by a grandmother who had been active in the 1905 revolution as a member of the Social Revolutionaries.[2] Brought up in a household where pictures of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and the assassins of Tsar Alexander decorated the walls, Bookchin has said that as a young child he knew more about the Russian Revolutionaries than Robin Hood (Heider, 1994: 56).

Whilst Bookchin was 'educated' in the streets, parks and museums of New York City, a wider community drenched in the culture and

radical politics of old Europe would seem to have provided the primary source of stimulation. Bookchin has described New York in the 1920s as an urban world 'made up of a thousand villages' (*AMFL*: 18). Outside the exploitation of the workplace there was an 'intense vibrant neighbourhood world' that had yet to be colonised by the marketplace (*AMFL*: 18–20). As he recalls: 'It is easy to forget how richly articulated the immigrant socialist movement was in that time. ... There were choral groups, lecture groups, educational groups, mandolin groups...' (quoted in Jacoby, 1987: 99); but most of all there was politics: Jewish Socialists, Italian Anarchists, German Socialists. And Bookchin became politically conscious at a very young age.

The Depression apparently left Bookchin and his family near destitute: 'Food was scarce, and my mother would take me to Salvation Army headquarters or a church, where we would get on a breadline ... quite a few times we were evicted, our possessions heaped in a pile out on the sidewalk' (*AMFL*: 23). During this period he joined the youth group of the American Communist Party, the 'Young Pioneers' and later, the 'Young Communist League' (*AMFL*: 23–4). These movements provided structure, focus and sustenance. As a teenager, he sold *The Daily Worker* on street corners in the Bronx, spoke at outdoor meetings in Crotona Park and participated in rent strikes (*AMFL:*30–6; *BR*: 2).

After completing high school, Bookchin went to work in heavy industry as a foundryman and autoworker. Active in various forms of trade-union activity, including helping the CIO[3] with its organising drives, he recalls: 'If we looked old enough, we were ferried across the Hudson River into northern New Jersey where we leafleted plants and were slugged by goons along with the union professionals' (Bookchin, 1987: 182–3). Education into political thought, and Marxism in particular, was conducted outside any official institutions: 'we were very well informed in comparison to the professoriat of the 1980s, not only at classes from the Workers' School on East 13th Street and at the Rand School off Union Square, but in study groups and regular "educationals" that formed an integral part of our weekly meetings' (Bookchin, 1987: 182–3). However, the Popular Front, the Moscow show trials and the Nazi–Soviet pact provoked disillusionment, and Bookchin was expelled from the Communist Party in 1939.

During the early 1940s, in common with a considerable portion of the intellectual left at the time, Bookchin initially moved towards Trotskyism: 'The Trotskyists were the only visible revolutionary left group in New York City that seemed to offer a serious challenge to

Stalinism, at least as far as I could see' (*DtE*: 55). As a trade unionist, he belonged to a 'rank and file faction' which opposed the agreement made between the union bureaucracy and Roosevelt waiving the right to strike during the war. It was concrete experiences in the labour movement, though, as a trade unionist activist that ultimately undermined Bookchin's faith in classical Marxist and syndicalist versions of revolutionary politics.[4]

After a stint in the army during the Second World War – which, ironically, entailed guarding the gold at Fort Knox (see Martin, 2006) – Bookchin ended up back in the factory. As a foundryman and shop steward in the United Auto Workers, he became involved in the General Motors Strike of 1946 (*BR*: 3). Returning from the three-month stoppage, he concluded:

That was the end of the workers movement. When we came back from the strike, we were servants of the government. We had pension plans, we had unemployment insurance ... [and] ... union democracy was destroyed. The presidents of the locals were paid by the company; not the union, but the company. (Quoted in Heider, 1994: 58)

Such experiences dampened Bookchin's view that the workplace could provide the seeds of social transformation. Moreover, a broader recognition that post-war capitalism, far from experiencing an ever greater series of economic crises (as classic Marxist theory had predicted), was actually consolidating itself on a massive international scale, suggested a need for rethinking and retraining. Bookchin thus left the factory and enrolled in a technical school. He studied electronic engineering during the day and read philosophy at night (Bookchin, 2000).

### CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

The 1950s are not remembered by many members of the radical left in the US with any pleasure. While the 1940s saw a certain de-radicalisation amongst leftist intellectuals, the 1950s saw a flood of conversions to the right. As Jacoby has noted:

If Jewish intellectuals gravitated towards radicalism in large numbers, they also hastily beat a retreat. By the 1950s not simply [Nathan] Glazer, [Sidney] Hook, [Lewis] Feuer and [Seymour Martin] Lipset but Irving Kristol, Lionel Trilling, Daniel Bell ... and scores of others traded in their red pasts for blue chip careers. (Jacoby, 1987: 87)

Disillusionment with communism, the impact of McCarthyism and the sheer prosperity of the post-war period all took their toll on radical hopes as the 'red thirties' gave way to a stifling Cold War conformity. Such events clearly had an effect on Bookchin but he did not follow the dominant shift towards neo-conservatism. Rather, such events simply affirmed his belief that the radical tradition needed to be systematically rethought, rather than abandoned.

The late forties saw Bookchin begin an association with a group of New York intellectuals clustered around the German émigré and libertarian socialist Josef Weber and his *Contemporary Issues* journal. Sharply critical of both the US and the USSR, and committed to a rethinking of the radical project along 'democratic lines', *Contemporary Issues* and its German sister publication *Dinge Der Zeit* adopted an eclectic independent leftist position.[5] Bookchin began to circulate with the New York group and to write articles for the journal in the 1950s (van der Linden, 2001).

*Contemporary Issues* sought to grapple with the new challenges of the 1950s in a refreshingly un-dogmatic fashion. With significant improvements in the standard of living of US and European workers, and an economic boom fed by new industrial revolutions in chemistry, nuclear power and electronics, contributors to the journal argued that classic leftist discourse, with its old fashioned commitments to 'workerism', had run out of steam. Yet, where to go next? In general terms the journal was committed to 'unrestricted debate' with a view to developing 'a worldwide movement for a democracy of content' which would arise from, and be under the control of, the public. Using a range of pseudonyms to avoid the attention of employers caught up in the hysteria of McCarthyism, Bookchin embarked on the task of addressing these new circumstances with relish.

### NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

Bookchin's *Contemporary Issues* articles range broadly, but international affairs are the predominant interest and most of Bookchin's writings during this period are preoccupied with the tense domestic and international environment of the early Cold War era. Such early publications, however, reveal Bookchin as an unrelenting and early critic of both Stalinism abroad and McCarthyism at home.

'State Capitalism in Russia' (1950), Bookchin's first known publication written under the pseudonym of M.S. Shiloh, indicates his distance from many currents of the mainstream left. Firstly,

this article seeks to undermine the then widespread reading still lingering on the left, of the 'progressive' effects of nationalisation on the Soviet economy.[6] Countering such arguments, it is maintained that 'mounting indices in heavy industry (little as we are actually permitted to know about them) have been accompanied by abject misery and worsening of conditions for the Russian people. To anyone informed of Russian social life, the contradiction between theory and reality has reached nightmarish proportions' (Shiloh, 1950: 206). Following this, Bookchin draws from conventional Trotskyist thought to claim that in reality the basic structure of the economy in Stalin's Russia – contra left mythology – reveals it to be most accurately understood as a form of 'state capitalism' (Shiloh, 1950: 207) rather than anything resembling Marx's original project. Perhaps the most striking feature of this article, though, is its attempt to draw attention to the existence of slave labour camps in Stalin's Russia (Shiloh, 1950).

A number of Bookchin's subsequent articles in *Contemporary Issues* develop this critique of Stalinism with comparisons drawn between Stalinism and the techniques of genocide used in Nazi Germany (Shiloh, 1952). Critiques are also rendered of Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe (Keller, 1952) and the treatment of Russian Jews and the growth of state sponsored anti-Semitism in the USSR and Eastern Europe (Shiloh, 1952). Such articles culminate in Bookchin's call for arms to be sent to Hungarians resisting the Soviet invasion of 1956 (Keller, 1957).

On domestic matters, no punches are pulled either: the chief topic of concern is the erosion of civil liberties and emergence of a climate of fear (Ludd, 1953; 1954; Keller, 1954; 1956). Articles warn of the rise of a 'fascist bloc' of politicians in Congress 'whose sole legislative purpose seemed to be the maintenance and development of a reign of terror' (Anonymous, 1953: 136). It is perhaps surprising, then, that possibly the most consequential article written during this period is 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' (Herber, 1952).

## THE PROBLEM OF CHEMICALS IN FOOD

'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' appears as a book-length article under the pseudonym of Lewis Herber in the 1952 edition of *Contemporary Issues*.[7] In it, Bookchin offers an account of the expansion of petrochemical technologies in US agriculture and the food processing industries. Drawing from congressional hearings

conducted in 1950 into the growth of artificial substances in food,[8] the essay argues that there has been a massive increase in the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and antibiotics in US agriculture and of food colourants and other synthetic materials in food production. Bookchin provides a review of debates in public health and toxicology concerning the excessive use of insecticide such as DDT, growth hormones and pesticides. He goes on to argue that there is growing expert opinion amongst natural scientists that these developments are poorly regulated, of questionable benefit for public health and increasingly used in a reckless fashion by agriculturalists and food manufacturers. Perhaps the most striking feature of this essay is the attempt to apply an analysis informed by political economy to such problems, as he argues that it is 'the profit system' that is introducing 'more and more irrational uses of man's productive forces' (Herber, 1952: 239).

In a post-war America dominated by corporate slogans such as 'better living through Chemistry', Bookchin's first foray into matters ecological made a modest impact.[9] Yet, most importantly, the article provided Bookchin with the basis of a new research agenda; notably, a concern with environmental degradation at the general level and more specifically with the social, ecological and political crisis of urbanisation. This gave rise to his first two books: *Our Synthetic Environment* and *Crisis in Our Cities*.

## OUR SYNTHETIC ENVIRONMENT

*Our Synthetic Environment* emerged in 1962, and whilst it built on the ground work of 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food', the book provides a much more comprehensive assessment of the degrading of the post-war environment. While Bookchin acknowledges that significant progress has been made in public health in the area of infectious diseases, he now argues that the discipline of human ecology suggests new problems are looming.

The text returns to the problems generated by mono-cultural practices and the excessive reliance on chemicals in modern agriculture. Yet in this work the net is cast wider to examine the detrimental effects on human health of processed foods, sprawling urban development and the pollution of air and water by industrial, urban and radioactive wastes. Concerns are raised about the deterioration of the soil generated by modern agricultural practices. Perhaps the most significant theme that emerges is the suggestion

that previous 'ad hoc measures' for dealing with environmental problems 'will have to be supplanted for lasting ecological solutions' (*OSE*: 210), since, if present trends continue, 'It is not within the realm of fantasy to suggest ... that many of the preconditions for advancing life could be irreparably damaged' (*OSE*: 60).

Bookchin's first major work on the seriousness of environmental problems met with a mixed reception. Whilst positively reviewed by probably the most prominent ecologist of the day, René Dubos,[10] and latterly attracting the attention of a certain E.F. Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful* (Schumacher, 1974: 93–6; 118), a reviewer for the *New York Times* scoffed: 'No one is going to stop the world so that someone who would like to get off will be able to' (Osmundsen, 1963: 28). Timing, of course, is everything in politics and publishing. Five months later, a critique of pesticides emerged from a scientist, Rachel Carson, entitled *Silent Spring*.[11] Carson found herself immediately catapulted onto the best-sellers list. Later still, she was hailed as the instigator of the modern environmentalist movement. Bookchin's text, however, languished in obscurity.

### EMERGING THEMES IN BOOKCHIN'S EARLY WRITINGS

While Bookchin's early writings are in no sense reducible to his biography and context, his thinking clearly constitutes a response to and engagement with the critical dilemmas thrown up by the changing events of the second half of the twentieth century. As for most intellectuals who lived through this period, it is familiar points – the crisis of Stalinism, the close of the era of 'proletarian socialism', post-war boom/conformity followed by the explosion of the 1960s – that are decisive. One can discern an array of shifting theoretical currents moving through these early writings.

Bookchin's *Contemporary Issues* articles are largely works of political or historical analysis, marking a period of transition in his thought. Whilst all the *Contemporary Issues* writings are clearly the product of a leftist voice – if unorthodox and independently minded – in some early articles this independent leftism seems to betray lingering Trotskyist sympathies, in other pieces we can identify what we might now recognise as a proto-ecological Marxism, while in still other pieces, those which linger on the democratic traditions of the United States to provide a critical angle on the present (Ludd, 1953), Bookchin seems to be experimenting with formulating an American form of left populism. This is most notably the case with his book projects.

What is surprising about *Our Synthetic Environment* and *Crisis in Our Cities* is the extent to which they are informed by a distinctly pragmatic and moderate radicalism (in comparison to earlier or later writings). Both texts focus primarily on the detrimental effects of environmental problems generated by urbanisation, 'gigantism' and the rise of the 'modern metropolis', as opposed to focusing specifically on capitalism. There are no explicit references in either book to socialism or Marxism. Indeed, certain passages in *Our Synthetic Environment* actually compliment the 'high standards' (*OSE*: 230) achieved in past decades by US food and drugs legislation. The *lack* of strong enforcement of federal legislation is criticised (*OSE*: 106–7; 226–37); while, in relation to issues of public health, we are informed that the 'United States has by no means exhausted all the possibilities of welfare legislation' (*OSE*: 227) – an odd statement for a future anarchist theorist to make! *Crisis in Our Cities*, is, if anything, even more pragmatic, arguing that certain urban environmental problems such as air pollution, congestion and urban stress could be substantively alleviated by greater public spending, technological changes, more thoughtful municipal legislation and more effective federal regulation (*CIOC*: 173–83).[12]

Both books are interesting for many reasons, not least because they reveal a moderate and pragmatic Bookchin who is cautiously testing the political limits of Eisenhower's America. At this point, Bookchin's social ecology reads like an endeavour to draw together emerging ecological and urban issues with communitarian concerns into something resembling a left-leaning radical populist discourse. Bookchin's writings in both these texts are much more in debt to the work of Lewis Mumford (see Mumford, 1934; 1938; 1961) and the urban ecologist and social organismic thinker, E.A. Gutkind (Gutkind, 1953), than they are to Marx. These writings, though, prepare the grounds for Bookchin's seminal 1960s essays.

## POST-SCARCITY POLITICS AND ECOLOGY AS REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

Whilst the writings of 'Lewis Herber' may well have been decisively overshadowed by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, it is the intellectual, cultural and political explosion of the 1960s which sees 'Murray Bookchin' emerge in his own right, and with his own name, to find his mature voice. Meeting civil rights and peace protesters through the 'Beat' scene in the Lower East Side in the early 1960s,

Bookchin apparently spent much of the decade mixing in political and bohemian circles and criss-crossing the United States speaking at a diverse range of civil rights, anti-nuclear and proto-environmental mobilisations (Bookchin, 1991a). It would appear that he was involved in a range of diverse political groupings during this period such as CORE,[13] the Libertarian League[14] and the Anarchos group (Bookchin, 1991a). Perhaps most consequential though was his involvement with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the latter half of the 1960s, where he sought to galvanise left-libertarian forces through his own faction of SDS, the Radical Decentralist Project.[15]   Three key essays written in this period clarify Bookchin's intellectual and political project, open him up to a new audience, and finally establish him as an innovative, articulate and rigorous left-libertarian social theorist.

In the 1964 essay 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought',[16] the polite writings of Lewis Herber are replaced by combative prose. It is now argued that insights gained from the science of ecology possess 'explosive' critical and reconstructive implications for radical social theory. Bookchin maintains that the very subject matter of ecology opens up a critique of existing social relations 'on a scale that the most radical systems of political economy have yet to attain' (*PSA*: 80). The continued expansion of capitalism is ensuring that 'every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity'. This factor alone though is not the sole or even primary cause of ecological degradation.[17] Attention is also drawn to problems arising from the very structure of modern urbanised and centralised societies. At a more basic level still, it is suggested – in Frankfurt School fashion – that the problematic relationship between humanity and the natural world has its roots in the very existence of social domination itself, since 'the notion that man must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of man by man' (*PSA*: 85).

The second, more hopeful current to 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' stresses the 'reconstructive' conclusions that emerge from ecologically informed critique. It is suggested here that the dismissive attitude adopted to the libertarian tradition by liberals, rightists and the supporters of centralist measures on the left is no longer credible. This is because it is the 'rich libertarian concepts' of a 'humanistic community at one with nature and the needs of the individual', a face-to-face democracy, a liberatory technology and a decentralised society that have become 'the preconditions for human survival' (*PSA*: 91).

If 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' can be seen as the first recognisable statement of social ecology, possibly one of the first attempts to develop a recognisable form of political ecology in the post-war era – and certainly one of the first explicit attempts to introduce ecology to the political left – two further essays of this period flesh out the sociological and political assumptions that underpin Bookchin's critique.

In 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (1965), we get a more concrete sense of the alternative trajectories that might lurk behind 'the affluent society'. Bookchin argues that a simple and direct one-to-one association between technological advance and social progress in the light of Stalinism and the Cold War now clearly lies shattered. Modern attitudes have become 'schizoid, divided into a gnawing fear of nuclear extinction on the one hand and a yearning for material abundance, leisure and security on the other' (*PSA*: 107). However, Bookchin suggests that the tendency to resolve these tensions by presenting technology as 'imbued with a sinister life of its own', resulting in its blanket rejection, is just as simplistic as the optimism that prevailed in earlier decades. If we are not to be paralysed by this 'new form of social fatalism',[18] it is argued, 'a balance must be struck' (*PSA*: 108).

Concerning where exactly the balance should lie, Bookchin argues that there is a need to recover a sense of the *liberatory* possibilities of new technologies, particularly the possibilities for new ecological and micro technologies. One significant argument pursued here is that a radically decentralised society is not only compatible with many aspects of the modern technological world but potentially *facilitated* by new developments. For example, it is argued that technological innovations may have made the need for huge concentrations of people in a few urban areas *less* important, as the expansion of mass communications and transportation has ensured that the obstacles created by space and time are essentially gone. Concerning the viability of industrial decentralisation, Bookchin argues that new developments in miniaturisation, computing and engineering have made small-scale alternatives to many of the giant facilities that dominated industrial societies increasingly viable. It is the smoky steel town and the huge factories inherited from the industrial era that have now become anachronistic, not the call for clean, versatile and compact machinery.

Perhaps the most interesting suggestion that Bookchin makes in 'Towards a Liberatory Technology', though, is the suggestion that the

rise of post-industrial circumstances transforms the nature of social critique in the West. Bookchin argues that virtually all the utopias and revolutionary programmes of the early nineteenth century faced problems of work and want. Indeed, lasting well into the twentieth century, much socialist thinking was so affected by such imagery that one can see the emergence of a virtually puritanical work ethic on the left, a fetishisation of toil and a view of socialism as the industrious society of full employment. However, Bookchin argues that conditions have now developed with 'cybernation' and 'automation' such that the *potential* exists in the First World for replacing a 'realm of necessity' with a post-scarcity 'realm of freedom'. The critical issue now is not whether technology can liberate humanity from want but the extent to which it can contribute to humanising society and human–nature relations.

'Towards a Liberatory Technology' could only have been written by someone with a background in electronic engineering. The essay fizzes with enthusiasm for the new technologies. Yet, equally, it introduces Bookchin as an ecological thinker with a distinctly post-industrial and utopian bent.

Bookchin's final essay of the decade, 'Listen Marxist!' (1969) reveals his (left) libertarian sympathies in full flow. Written initially to ward off the sectarian Marxism and third world voyeurism of student radicals in the latter days of the New Left,[19] the essay is of interest to us today for its brilliant evisceration of 'workerism' and Leninism. In a breathtaking polemic, 'Listen Marxist!' begins by arguing that while economic exploitation may well be as prevalent as ever, it has become clear that the fetishisation of 'the proletariat' is a hopeless strategy to follow in the United States, given that we are entering an era when 'the working class no longer constitute a majority of the population and have seen their strategic position being eroded by new technologies'. Secondly, Bookchin argues that the Marxist left is marked by a broader inability to grapple with the profound processes of 'social decomposition' affecting class relations, the patriarchal family, and issues surrounding race, sexuality and ecology (*PSA*: 209). Finally, he provides us with a brilliant dismissal of Leninist forms of political organisation. The 'revolutionary party' for Bookchin is an entity which structures itself 'along the very hierarchical lines ... [of] the society it professes to oppose' (*PSA*: 196), reduces its members to 'poker-faced, programmed automata', and encourages an utterly instrumental and manipulative engagement with politics. The root

problem is that Marxism has become a deeply conservative force on the left, since:

This pursuit of security in the past, this attempt to find a haven in a fixed dogma and an organizational hierarchy as substitutes for creative thought and praxis is bitter evidence of how little many revolutionaries are capable of 'revolutionizing themselves and things'. (*PSA*: 197)

Bookchin's essays of the mid to late 1960s denote a marked change in style from the writings of 'Lewis Herber'.[20] Like much of the prose of the New Left, his writings brim with a sense of excitement and possibility; revolutionary fervour comes together with a scarcely contained messianic edge. What is immediately striking about these essays is the extent to which the Frankfurt School has now been added to Gutkind and Mumford to flesh out social ecology.[21] Whilst still somewhat loose and propagandistic in form, these essays are important for providing us with an initial sense of the style of socio-ecological critique that Bookchin develops over the subsequent decades.

In stark contrast to emerging currents of neo-Malthusian thought (e.g. Ehrlich, 1968), we can see Bookchin's writings of this period developing a mode of critique that is simultaneously ecological yet futuristic, utopian and socially optimistic, concerned with identifying new dangers but also articulating new possibilities for desire, need and socio-ecological and socio-technological transformations. 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' is essentially attempting to develop a libertarian left engagement with the world described by Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1958), a project not dissimilar in many ways to the themes that subsequently emerge in French post-industrial thought through the work of Alain Touraine (1971) and André Gorz (1975).

Second, it is interesting to note the differences between Bookchin's style of critique during this period and other contemporaneous ecological thinkers such as Rachel Carson (see Garb, 1996). While Bookchin and Carson share similar concerns about the dispersal of chemical toxins into the environment, Carson's work is primarily concerned with how such developments disrupt the 'balance of nature' and with their impact on the ecosystem as a whole. Her writings are informed by an almost transcendental orientation to the value of 'nature' in itself. Bookchin's concerns, in contrast, are distinctly more humanist and urbanist in orientation. As Garb notes, in his fine comparison of *Silent Spring* and *Our Synthetic Environment*, not only

is Bookchin much more sceptical of 'quasi mystical' orientations to nature and unreserved valorisations of 'natural states' as superior, his primary concern is with the effects of environmental degradation on human health and possible political solutions to such problems.[22]

## BEYOND THE NEW LEFT

With the fragmentation of the New Left, Bookchin began to teach at the City University of New York in Staten Island in the late 1960s. He became a tenured Professor at Ramapo College in New Jersey in the 1970s. In 1974, with the social anthropologist Dan Chordorkoff, he founded the Institute of Social Ecology in Vermont. Bookchin combined political engagement as an activist, propagandist and pamphleteer with intellectual work for most of his life. Thus, during the 1970s he was involved in numerous radical ecological groupings, most notably 'Ecology Action East'[23] and the anti-nuclear protest movement 'Clamshell Alliance'. In the 1980s, as his work circulated more widely, he influenced the West German Greens and became an increasingly vocal (and controversial) figure in the US Green movement for a time.[24] Bookchin continued to be a prolific author, writer and essayist until his death in 2006.

## MAPPING THE ARC OF BOOKCHIN'S WORK

While dividing the intellectual career of an author into stages is inevitably somewhat schematic and arbitrary, the trajectory of Bookchin's work can be seen as falling into four broad (and overlapping) phases. If we consider the period 1950–1965, beginning with *Contemporary Issues* and closing with *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965), as usefully marking the initial phase of Bookchin's early writings, I would like to suggest there are three subsequent phases dividing the arc of his work.

*(i) 1964–1982:  Developing the Theoretical Framework of Social Ecology*
Whilst Bookchin's early writings contain important materials which provide core themes for his later publications, arguably the period between 1964 and 1982 marks the defining period, when the essential contours of social ecology are established. Bookchin's writings develop in this period from brilliantly scathing counter-culture essays to increasingly sophisticated works of social theory. The publication of the essay 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought'

in 1964 marks the beginning of his exploration of links between ecology and social theory. Developed across a series of essays in the 1970s, one key purpose of these writings is to distinguish his own libertarian and utopian appropriation of ecological issues – 'social ecology' – from a technocratic, managerial and 'crassly reformist' approach to environmental questions that Bookchin refers to as environmentalism.[25] Social ecology receives its most systematic and rigorous articulation with *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982). Written over the course of the 1970s, this text marks a significant milestone in Bookchin's theoretical trajectory, integrating previous themes into a more systematic and dialectically informed social theory and ecological philosophy. Philosophically, the influence of Aristotle, Hegel, Adorno and Horkheimer, and Hans Jonas comes to the fore, while Bookchin's social theory moves away from Marxist explanatory theory as the influence of Max Weber and Karl Polanyi[26] becomes increasingly apparent in his writings. Bookchin's writings during this period additionally explore two further themes. Firstly, in *The Limits of the City* (1974) and in a series of essays throughout the 1970s, Bookchin extends and enriches his engagement with urban theory and urban planning begun in *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965). *The Spanish Anarchists* (1977) marks a second thread in mapping the history of radical and libertarian social movements.

*(ii) 1982–1990: Consolidations and Elaborations*
Having established the theoretical framework of social ecology, Bookchin's work after *The Ecology of Freedom* refines his ontological and ethical positions in a series of essays collected in *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* (1990/1995). Perhaps the major work of this period is *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* (1987), which explores the history of participatory democracy and the free city but also brings together Bookchin's thoughts on the contemporary relevance of community development and active citizenship.[27]

*(iii) 1987–2006: Revisions and Reversals*
Whilst the final phase of Bookchin's writings is marked by a desire to outline a politics of social ecology, such writings are also dominated by critique. During this period Bookchin distances himself from former allies and from bodies of thought that were previously portrayed as complementary. The starting point for this new phase could be said to be marked by the now (in)famous polemic: 'Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology' (1987).

While neo-Malthusian, 'scarcity-orientated' ecologists and thinkers influenced by socio-biology are criticised by Bookchin throughout the 1970s (see *TES*), until the mid 1980s primary critical attention had been paid to the limits of Marxism/neo-Marxism and of reformist and technocratic forms of environmentalism. Indeed, amongst the various radical ecologies emerging in the US, relations could be characterised by a certain fluid interchange between anarchist, spiritualist, 'deep' ecocentric and bioregional inspired ecologies (see Chase in *DtE*: 8–9). However, by the mid 1980s, Bookchin concluded that numerous currents *within* the radical ecology movement had become utterly reactionary.

In an interview between Dave Foreman (then of Earth First!) and deep ecological theorist Bill Devall, Foreman stated: 'the worst thing we can do in Ethiopia is to give aid – the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve', and went on to claim that Latin American immigrants were putting more pressure on resources in the US (cited in Zimmerman, 1994: 167). Bookchin denounced Foreman and launched a more generalised critique of deep ecology. Bookchin argued that deep ecologists systematically ignored the social roots of ecological problems, blamed an undifferentiated 'humanity' as being a blight on the planet (while ignoring issues of class, race and gender), reduced ecology to a spiritual orientation rather than a systematic social theory, and leaned towards Malthusian and misanthropic positions (*SEvsDE*: 14).

We will examine the substance of Bookchin's dispute with deep ecology in Chapters 3 and 5. Following this essay though, it is striking how many of his subsequent writings are marked by increasing dismay at the direction taken by environmentalism, anarchism and intellectual life in general. Expressed most firmly in *Reclaiming Humanity* (1995), a sustained critique is made not only of deep ecologists but of social biologists, neo-Malthusians, mystics, primitivists, neo-Luddites, relativists, post-structuralists and post-modernists, all of whom are regarded as the manifestations of 'a deep seated cultural malaise' (*RH*: 1). As we will explore further in the Conclusion, the final decade of Bookchin's writings are marked by some notable revisions and reversals.[28]

### INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

How then can we situate Bookchin's work? One temptation would be to characterise Bookchin's thinking as marking a reasonably straight-

forward transition from orthodox Marxism to Trotskyism, and then to anarchism. Yet this fails to grasp the twists and turns of Bookchin's intellectual evolution. Moreover, few of Bookchin's key writings draw from or engage to any great degree with the classic anarchist thinkers. There is certainly a Bakuninist flavour to some of his sixties writings, on occasion a favourable reference to Godwin or Proudhon can be unearthed, and the ghost of Peter Kropotkin unquestionably looms throughout his work.[29] With the exception of Kropotkin though, such currents are more passing than substantive. Indeed, Bookchin has been keen to stress his general ignorance of the anarchist tradition when formulating his own ideas in the 1950s. As he has noted:

To set the record straight: The fact is that Kropotkin had no influence on my turn from Marxism to Anarchism nor, for that matter, did Bakunin or Proudhon. It was Herbert Read's *The Philosophy of Anarchism* that I found most useful for rooting the views I slowly developed over the fifties and well into the sixties into a libertarian pedigree. … Odd as it may seem, it was my reaction against Marx and Engels's critique of anarchism, my readings into the Athenian polis, George Woodcock's informative history of anarchism, my own avocation as a biologist, and my studies in technology that gave rise to the views in my early essays – not any extensive readings into the works of early anarchists. (Bookchin, 1991b: 12–13).

Alternatively, the use of the term 'social ecology' could lead to the assumption that a second significant influence might well be the various early- and mid-twentieth century attempts to synthesise ecological thinking with social theory. The Chicago school of urban ecology, for example, stands as the most obvious candidate here. However, once again, this influential school of sociological thought is barely mentioned in Bookchin's writings. And while 'social organismic' thinking is present in Bookchin's work, this would appear to be derived to a much greater extent from the work of E.A. Gutkind, Lewis Mumford and ultimately Hegel than either Durkheim or the Chicago school. Even here though, such 'proto' ecological thinkers do not capture the central ground of Bookchin's influences.

   John Ely and John Clark have offered some of the most interesting readings of the intellectual lineage of Bookchin's thought to date. John Clark has argued that, in broad terms, social ecology comes out of 'the tradition of social geography and ecological regionalism of Elisée Reclus, Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford, the libertarian communitarianism of Peter Kropotkin, Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber, and the tradition of dialectical philosophy of Aristotle, Hegel

and Marx' (Clark, 2005). Within this tradition, the specific lineage of Bookchin's social theory is found less in anarchism (or, we might add, ecological social theory) than in critical theory, defined in the broadest sense and ranging from Hegel and Marx to the young Hegelians and the first generation of the Frankfurt School (Clark, 1986: 212; additionally see Marshall, 1992a: 603). John Ely (1994, 1996) has drawn attention to the Aristotelian features of Bookchin's normative political theory and focused on the commonalities between Bookchin and Aristotle, Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas and Ernst Bloch. Both currents would seem to offer much in the way of orientating ourselves to Bookchin's mature work. It is the debt to Marx and critical theory that we will focus on in the next chapter as we turn to consider Bookchin's historical social theory.

# Part Two

# The Legacy of Domination

*A hierarchical mentality fosters the renunciation of the pleasures of life. It justifies toil, guilt, and sacrifice by the 'inferiors,' and pleasure and the indulgent gratification of virtually every caprice by their 'superiors' ... This mentality permeates our individual psyches in a cumulative form up to the present day – not merely as capitalism but as the vast history of hierarchical society from its inception. Unless we explore this history, which lives actively within us like earlier phases of our individual lives, we will never be free of its hold. We may eliminate social injustice, but we will not achieve social freedom.*

Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982)

# 2
# Hierarchy, Domination, Nature: Bookchin's Historical Social Theory

In many respects, the core social theoretical foundations of Bookchin's mature work emerge from a social and ecological critique and reconstruction of some of the central premises of Marxism, liberalism and the Frankfurt School. As we have seen, the contours of this critique are anticipated in 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought'. This critique is developed in a series of essays in the 1970s culminating in two major book-length elaborations: *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982) and *Remaking Society* (1990).

Significantly anticipating recent feminist and post-Marxist critiques of economic reductionism,[1] a central theme of this cluster of writings is that a focus on the emergence and consolidation of *social hierarchy* and *social domination* gives rise to a far more profound explanation of humanity's estrangement from itself and from the natural world than can be found in the narrow class focus of historical materialism. This claim is embedded in an historical social theory whose central aim is to challenge what William Leiss has identified as one of the most crucial concepts in the intellectual biography of the modern West – the idea of the 'mastery' or 'domination' of nature (Leiss, 1972: 12). Via a bold re-reading of the history and anthropology of early humanity and a sequential re-ordering of the Frankfurt School's engagement with this issue, *The Ecology of Freedom* contests the view that the antagonism between society and nature is historically inevitable. Rather, Bookchin maintains, the very idea that humanity must dominate nature has its roots in an earlier moment of social domination itself.

In this chapter we consider how Bookchin develops these arguments. Against Marx and Adorno and Horkheimer, Bookchin draws together insights from Max Weber, Kropotkin, Lewis Mumford and various social anthropologists of the 1960s and 1970s to fashion his own historical social theory. Here, I will examine the complexities of Bookchin's historical social theory and the controversies it has generated.

There is no doubt that *The Ecology of Freedom* and *Remaking Society* offer a bold example of grand social theorising. Richly elaborated, subtly executed and with numerous stimulating digressions, they offer a narrative of epic proportions and considerable ambition. Equally, though, I want to suggest that this historical narrative contains theoretical and empirical problems. Specifically, on the key issue of how we can characterise the eco-social relations of pre-capitalist peoples and societies, I demonstrate that recent research emerging from ecological anthropology and archaeology, environmental history, historical geography and historical ecology presents us with a much more dynamic and diverse view of eco-social relations than can be found in *The Ecology of Freedom*.

Bookchin is increasingly aware of the limitations of *The Ecology of Freedom* in his later work. However, as we shall see, much is left unclear by his attempts at repositioning in his later writings. I will argue in this chapter that part of the problem is that, caught within 'the domination of nature' debate, Bookchin's historical social theory never gives centrality to the extent to which human societies have long been involved in what Smith and Lefebvre refer to as the 'production of nature' (Lefebvre, 1991; Smith, 1984). As we shall see in Chapter 5, it is only in Bookchin's later writings, following his critique of deep ecology, that we receive a more dynamic account of socio-ecological relations across time.

## MARXISM AND 'BOURGEOIS SOCIOLOGY'

As we have seen in the previous chapter, while Bookchin emerged out of a Marxist tradition, from the mid 1960s onwards his writings nevertheless take a distinctly critical turn away from the mainstream of Marxist social theory. Bookchin's 1960s essays are particularly concerned with the sociological and political limitations of Marxism-Leninism. Yet, they are still informed by an underlying commitment to the 'seminal insights' (*PSA*: 232) of historical materialism. The task identified in 'Listen Marxist!' is 'not to abandon Marxism or annul it but to transcend it dialectically' (*PSA*: 199). It is only in later writings, most notably in the essay 'Marxism as Bourgeois Sociology' (1979), that we can find a more fundamental critique of Marx's thinking and the Marxist tradition more broadly.

The central aim of 'Marxism as Bourgeois Sociology' is to point out that while Marxism and 'bourgeois sociology' – or liberal social

theory – have invariably been counter-posed, in many respects they share critical weaknesses. Three key weaknesses are identified.

First, Bookchin argues that a central failing of Marx is the manner in which he follows Enlightenment thought in adopting a scientistic conception of social reality. As a result of this, Marx 'objectifies' the revolutionary project, divesting it of all ethical goals and content. Social reality and its trajectory are explained in terms that remove human visions, cultural influences and ethical issues from the social process as the focus turns to objective 'laws' acting beyond human will (*TES*: 198). According to Bookchin, in sidelining normative issues, Marx is left without a credible normative criterion to judge historical development.

A second related moment of reduction in Marx is identified with the conceptualisation of 'man' as *homo faber*. Distinguishing 'man' from other animals simply to the extent that human beings work on nature to produce their means of subsistence is seen as ensuring that Marx essentially ends up dealing with 'man' as a 'force' in the productive process. Citing Marx's declaration in *The German Ideology* that men are 'what they produce and how they produce' (*TES*: 203), Bookchin suggests that this provides a stunningly impoverished view of humanity. Rather than viewing humanity in classic Aristotelian terms as *zoon politikon*, a being possessed of volition and ethical purpose that attains fulfilment in the *polis*, Bookchin argues that Marx sees 'men' as merely the personification of economic categories, the bearers of particular class interests. Humanity is thus reduced to an 'instrument of production' (*TES*: 203). More generally, this adherence to a metaphysics of labour ensures that Marx's social theory provides a technologically and economically reductionist view that remains blind to the importance of culture, ideology and other realms of human experience beyond the production processes.

Thirdly, perhaps the central and most damning criticism Bookchin makes of Marx and historical materialism in this essay is the suggestion that both Marx and his successors in the Frankfurt School tend to reduce *domination* to the status of a natural fact. It is the 'conquest' of a 'stingy' nature that Marx celebrates (and that Adorno and Horkheimer will later lament), and which is viewed as the central and unavoidable feature of historical development. Noting, once again, the remarkable convergence that can be found here between Marxism and liberal ideology, Bookchin argues that domination is 'annexed to liberation as a precondition for social emancipation' (*TES*: 200). Bookchin claims that Marx sees nature as 'simply an

object for mankind, purely a matter of utility' (*TES*: 202) and reduces 'progress' to the maximisation of the forces of production.

According to Bookchin, the consequence of this 'incredibly reductionist framework' (*TES*: 203) is a determinist and Eurocentric view of historic change in historical materialism. As he goes on to note in *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), for Marx, class society remains 'unavoidable' as long as the mode of production fails to provide the material abundance necessary for human emancipation. Consequently, Bookchin (citing Horkheimer in *The Eclipse of Reason*) notes that socialism now involves the subjugation not only of external nature (human and non-human) but of internal human nature also. Revealing 'Victorian arrogance at its worst' (*EofF*: 87), Bookchin argues that we can also find in Marx a disregard for non-Europeans and a neglect 'of the vital "pre-history" that the non-Western world had elaborated over millennia of development' (*EofF*: 87). Thus, the anomaly emerges of capitalism's greatest critic heralding, in the *Grundrisse*, the 'great civilising influence of capital' (*EofF*: 202) as it spreads around the world.[2] It is the underlying idea, though, that 'society must dominate nature' – an ideology that is seen as embraced by Marx and the liberal political economists but found as far back as Aristotle's 'seeming conflict' between the 'realm of necessity' and the 'realm of freedom' – that is seen as needing serious scrutiny. Bookchin argues that this idea has 'been used ideologically to justify domination in virtually every aspect of life' (*EofF*: 10).

## FROM SOCIAL CLASSES AND THE STATE TO SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND SOCIAL DOMINATION

In *The Ecology of Freedom* we find the most comprehensive elaboration of Bookchin's alternative position. Here, breaking from both Marxist *and* anarchist orthodoxies, and registering a growing debt to Max Weber, it is argued that the analytic primacy of both 'social class' and 'the state' now need to be superseded in critical social theory by the concepts of *social hierarchy* and *social domination.*

The concept of hierarchy is introduced by Bookchin as: 'cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command, not merely ... economic or political systems' (*EofF*: 4). Bookchin argues that 'social hierarchy' *includes* Marx's definition of class but goes beyond it. In addressing complex systems of command and obedience in which elites enjoy varying degrees of control over their subordinates – *without necessarily exploiting them in an economic*

*fashion* – these categories are seen as expanding our critical horizons. Bookchin argues that this is the case insofar as they aspire to address some fairly fundamental failings of Marxism and critical theory, notably the failure to recognise that hierarchy and domination could easily continue to exist in a 'classless' or 'stateless' society:

I refer to the domination of the young by the old, of women by men, of one ethnic group by another, of masses by bureaucrats who profess to speak in their 'higher social interest', of countryside by town, and in a more subtle psychological sense, of body by mind, of spirit by a shallow instrumental rationality and of nature by society and technology. (*EofF*: 4)

More broadly, such categories are seen as important for historical inquiry since it is argued there are good reasons to believe that forms of social hierarchy and domination *preceded* class societies. A credible exploration of the roots of the idea that 'humanity must dominate nature' must explore the very roots of *domination*. Yet, to do this, we need to go well beyond anything present in Marx, or in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Returning to the historical roots of these pathologies in early human society will reveal that the very concept that humanity must dominate nature has its origins in the domination of human by human.

Bookchin's essential historical thesis then, articulated in *The Ecology of Freedom* and extended in *Remaking Society*, can be summarised in the following fashion. The notion that humanity is 'destined' to dominate nature is by no means a universal feature of human culture. Indeed, if anything, 'this notion is almost completely alien to the outlook of so-called primitive or pre-literate societies'. As Bookchin states:

I cannot emphasize too strongly that the concept emerged very gradually from a broader social development: the increased domination of human by human. The breakdown of primordial equality into hierarchical systems of inequality, the disintegration of early kinship groups in social classes, the dissolution of tribal communities into the city, and finally the usurpation of social administration by the State – not only altered social life but the attitude of people towards each other, humanity's vision of itself, and ultimately its attitude to the natural world. (*EofF*: 43)

The abstract philosophical thesis of the domination of nature that can be found in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979) is inverted and rendered concrete by Bookchin, in a counter-

narrative of historical development which provides us with an alternative account of humanity at the dawn of civilisation.

## THE OUTLOOK OF ORGANIC SOCIETY

'Organic society' is a term used by Bookchin to refer to 'a spontaneously formed, non-coercive and egalitarian society – a natural society in the very definite sense that it emerged from innate human needs for consociation, interdependence and care' (*EofF*: 5). The term is used in *The Ecology of Freedom*, and later in *Remaking Society*, to refer to his own alternative account of early human communities. In a fashion similar to the concept of 'primitive communism' found in Engels' work, it is argued that we can point to a moment in the development of pre-literate humanity where human relations were marked by 'intense social solidarity internally and with the natural world' (*EofF*: 44). The greater evidence we find is of an outlook towards life 'that visualised people, things and relations in terms of their uniqueness rather than their "superiority" or "inferiority"' (*EofF*: 44).

In basic structural terms, 'organic society' is presented in *The Ecology of Freedom* as existing in a fairly integrated and unified form and based on kinship ties, age groups, and a sexual division of labour. Complete parity, a high sense of internal unity, and an egalitarian outlook mark social relations. Certain defining social practices are also seen as characteristic of this form of society, notably the practise of usufruct (the freedom of individuals to appropriate resources by virtue of the fact they are using them), 'the irreducible minimum' (the unalienable right of each member of the community to food, shelter and accommodation), and the 'equality of unequals' (equal treatment despite unequal abilities). We also find here an avoidance of coercion in dealing with inter-community affairs and a commitment to an 'ethics of complementarity' rather than one of command and obedience. Thus, despite the physical limitations of organic society, Bookchin argues that it nevertheless 'functioned unconsciously with an implicit commitment to freedom' (*EofF*: 143).

Regarding the relationship between organic society and the natural world, we are told 'their outlook was distinctly ecological' (*EofF*: 5), since 'people in pre-literate cultures viewed themselves not as "the lords of creation" ... but as part of the natural world. They were neither above nature nor below it but *within* it' (*EofF*: 5).

A view of inter-human relations as devoid of hierarchy, and of humanity's relationship with nature as marked by a 'deeply embedded

co-operative spirit' (*EofF*: 48), pervades *The Ecology of Freedom*. This richly articulated 'unity in diversity' is destroyed with the incipient emergence of social hierarchies.

## THE EMERGENCE OF HIERARCHY

The breakdown of the 'primal unity' of organic society, and the emergence of social hierarchy and social domination, unfolds at two levels in *The Ecology of Freedom*, the material and the subjective. Materially, it is argued that the institutions of organic society are gradually shattered and then reworked with the emergence of geron-tocracies, patriocentric relations, priest castes, and warrior societies. It is these developments that provide the raw material for the later emergence of class relations and city and state formations. *The Ecology of Freedom* eschews a strictly linear account of this development. Rather, we are provided with a highly elaborate dialectical and processual account that explores this development from numerous standpoints, returning to build on these overlapping pictures.

Moments of incipient hierarchy surface and then fade back into the egalitarian framework of organic society. In dealing with initial points of tension, whether identified as emerging from the sexual division of labour, the elders, the rise of the warrior or the creation of surplus, it is argued that early organic society persistently reworked its institutions to ensure the maintenance of a 'unity in difference'. Nevertheless, it is to 'basic biological facts', and the differences that emerge from these, that Bookchin turns to locate the origins of social hierarchy.

Incipient, potentially hierarchical elites gradually evolve through gerontocracy and the emergence of patriarchal values. Each phase of their evolution shades into the succeeding one, until the first firm shoots of hierarchy emerge and consolidate. As communities begin to increase in size and number, as they differentiate into clans and tribes and make war, a third moment of incipient hierarchy is identified, as young warriors begin to enjoy socio-political eminence. The warrior slowly emerges as the 'big man' of the community, sharing civil power with the elders and shaman. The primordial balance that assigned complementary economic functions to both sexes on the basis of parity, slowly tips 'towards the male, favouring his social pre-eminence' (*EofF*: 78).

The 'subjective' level of Bookchin's account of historical development pays considerable attention to what he refers to as the

emergence of *epistemologies of rule*. This is understood as the shift from animism – which is viewed as typical of organic society – to 'the emergence of a repressive sensibility and body of values which allows the whole realm of experience to be understood along lines of command and obedience' (*EofF*: 90). This is a crucial element in fostering patriarchal, class and anti-ecological relations and a psychic apparatus rooted in guilt, renunciation and a repressive rationality.

The move away from an animistic sensibility (which conceptualises external nature at the very outset as a 'mutualistic community' and is informed by an epistemology which tends to unify rather than divide [*EofF*: 98–9]) is identified as a critical moment. As a communicative and participatory relationship to nature is increasingly ceded to a *manipulative* reason, we see the emergence of a particular form of generalisation and classification, used 'not to achieve wholeness but to produce a diverse antagonism in the objective and subjective realms' (*EofF*: 112). While Bookchin recognises that such a process may have been necessary to allow the individual to discover his or her uniqueness and identity, it is argued we should not assume that it had to manifest itself in 'the socially explosive form' that it did (*EofF*: 97). Drawing from Alvin Gouldner, he argues that other possibilities and epistemologies that 'might have favoured a more "relaxed opening of the self to insight" ... have been ignored in favour of "values centred on mastery and control"' (*EofF*: 112).

Thus reason appears in human societies but in an 'involuted and contradictory form' (*EofF*: 100). It is argued that this (initially) fictive manipulation of nature has its roots in the real manipulation of humanity though shaman and priest cults. It is not the discipline of work but the discipline of *rule* that is seen as demanding the repression of internal nature. This 'repression then extends outward to external nature as a mere object of rule and later of exploitation' (*EofF*: 8).

So, a legacy of domination emerges through the manipulation of primordial institutions and sensibilities. This is supplemented with a hierarchical mentality that justifies toil, guilt and sacrifice. For Bookchin, this ensures:

The vision of social and natural diversity was altered from an organismic sensibility that sees different phenomena as unity in diversity into a hierarchical mentality that ranks the most minuscule phenomena into mutually antagonistic pyramids of 'inferior' and 'superior'. (*EofF*: 8)

## A 'LEGACY OF DOMINATION' AND A 'LEGACY OF FREEDOM'

It is this curse of domination then – which since its inception has profoundly infused virtually every human achievement, from art to 'technics', from social institutions to the most intimate aspect of our daily lives – which is seen as needing to be exposed. Bookchin's critical message, however, is not simply to reiterate Weber's or Adorno and Horkheimer's gloomy analysis of the extent to which domination has seeped into the human project. Rather, drawing inspiration from Kropotkin and Mumford, it is argued we need to recover the counter-movement to this development, the subterranean 'legacy of freedom' that can be unearthed from the grim rise of social hierarchy.[3] As hierarchy institutionalises subjugation, the ambiguity of 'civilisation' emerges – yet, this very development is itself presented as ever pregnant with alternative possibilities and potentialities.

The recovery of this 'legacy of freedom' could be seen as the defining feature of Bookchin's historical writings. In *The Ecology of Freedom*, this legacy is again traced at the material and subjective levels. Within the realm of ideas, numerous points are seen as marking significant eruptions from the dominant path. Bookchin argues that with the rise of the city and most notably the *polis*, the disappearance of the blood group is ceded to the potentiality of a fuller development, as we see the emerging idea of *the citizen*. With the spread of Roman law, the idea of a universal *humanitas* develops (even if this may well have been little more than a political strategy developed for fiscal and ideological reasons). In peasant and folk utopias, we see the preservation of images of a bounteous nature, an image which will survive through medieval times to inform the early communist utopias. It is Christian historicism, with its promise of a utopian future, that informs radical messianic activism and demands for the immediate establishment of a heavenly city on Earth. This, in turn, is seen as feeding into the great chiliastic movements that are to sweep through the medieval world in the fourteenth century.

Instances of libertarian resistance to 'the legacy of domination' are found throughout human history – from the earliest slave rebellions of the ancient alluvial civilisations, to the Quakers, Seekers, Anabaptists and others who are to play such a vital role in giving rise to the dawn of the revolutionary era.

As we will see in Part Three, in Bookchin's urban writings we can see this 'legacy of freedom' being explored from other vantage points, and a similar resistance emerging towards overly economistic

historical explanations. In *The Limits to the City* and *From Urbanization to Cities*, following Weberian and Polanyian themes, Bookchin suggests (contra Marxian orthodoxy) that early cities may well have formed to meet 'cultural rather than strictly economic or defensive needs' (*FUTC*: 32). Moreover, it is argued, we can point to moments where the relationship between town and countryside was not marked by domination but a certain ecological and social balance and a thriving civic sphere. Focusing here on the critical role of the Athenian *polis*, the emergence of politics, and the survival of the civic virtues and notions of active citizenship in the Renaissance city-states, it is argued that such historical forms (while imperfect) nevertheless suggest that alternative possibilities existed. While the dominant path of European development may have been marked by the degeneration of politics into statecraft and the development of centralised oligarchic institutions, we can recover civic republican, confederalist and municipalist moments and identify numerous grassroots forces that attempted to resist centralisation, marketisation and the legacy of domination. Bookchin argues that such alternatives may well have opened up new possibilities had they been allowed to flourish.[4]

### CONSIDERING BOOKCHIN'S HISTORICAL SOCIAL THEORY

 Interrupting this historical narrative at the dawn of capitalism and modernity, it needs to be asked whether this account of historical development is compelling. Does Bookchin provide us with a deeper insight into the historical roots of our contemporary social and environmental dislocations?

While Bookchin has demonstrated some awareness of the pitfalls of constructing meta-narratives in a period marked by a substantial degree of incredulity towards all 'grand narratives' or the project of writing universal 'History' (see, e.g., Lyotard, 1984), the project he defends has become deeply unfashionable.[5] What could be the minimal conditions necessary to convince us that this project had some plausibility?

It would seem that, to be convincing, a viable social theory aspiring to this degree of historical sweep would at the very least need to be intellectually and logically coherent, theoretically sound and steeped in the relevant anthropological, archaeological and historical literatures. How does Bookchin's historical social theory acquit itself here?

One immediate reaction to this historical social theory could be to declare the starting point to be inadequate. Thus, critics could argue that his reading of Marx is insubstantial and essentially polemical, that it deals with the broader tradition in too generic a fashion.

There is no doubt that Bookchin's relationship to Marx's work and to Marxism more generally is complex. While I noted earlier that Bookchin has never sought to hide his debt to Marx, he has a tendency nevertheless to read Marx as providing a mixture of 'scientific' structuralism, Prometheanism and technological determinism. Such an approach is legitimate since such moments are clearly present in Marx's thought. Yet, it might equally be observed that the insights offered by the younger humanist Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts are dismissed too quickly.[6] The weight of more recent scholarship on Marx that has sought to recover his ecological credentials through attention to the 1844 Manuscripts (Benton, 1993) and the theory of metabolic rift (Foster, 1999, 2000; Foster and Burkett, 2000) suggests that a more rounded reading of Marx is perhaps necessary.[7]

It would seem equally important to recognise that many elements of Bookchin's critique of Marx*ism* (more generally) are enlightening. They touch on weaknesses that have run through many formulations of historical materialism (particularly of the more orthodox or vulgar kind) as well as the disastrous practice of political Marxism. As Bookchin argues, the potential for reductionism involved in conceptualising the human subject principally as *homo faber*, the inconsistent and muddled engagement with normative and ethical issues that runs through Marx and Marxism, as well as the dangerously anti-political aspects to Marx's own thought, expose serious weaknesses; a claim which has been echoed by Arendt and Habermas. His attempt to highlight the Eurocentrism of Marx's thought clearly raises a vexatious issue which contemporary critical social theory has hardly begun to address.[8] Moreover, Bookchin's essentially Weberian stress on the role that culture, ideas and the causal efficacy of non-class-based forms of social domination have played on historical development is apposite.[9] Perhaps most striking though, is how contemporary debates on the extent to which Marx and Marxism can usefully inform environmental questions have centred around the very issues Bookchin drew into focus nearly four decades ago – the role of instrumentalism, technological optimism/ determinism and 'the conquest of nature' (see Benton, 1989; 1992; ed. 1996; Grundmann, 1991; Eckersley, 1992; Harvey, 1996; 2000; Salleh, 1997; Foster, 1999; 2000). Bookchin's general assertion of

the bizarre mirroring between the vulgar Marxist view of history and (neo) liberal ideology has been noted most recently by David Harvey (1996: 13).

A glib dismissal of Bookchin's social theory, informed by some notion of the infallibility of historical materialism, would seem entirely inadequate. Yet, is his own resolution of the difficult issues that he raises convincing? To consider this further, it will be useful to return to the issue of organic society.

## ORGANIC SOCIETY I: VAGARIES AND INCONSISTENCIES

Speculation over the 'nature' of early humanity has clearly played a central role in the history of social and political theory and in the development of Western thought. Raising critical questions regarding the origins and 'naturalness' of inequality, gender division and the state, even in the twentieth century, has preoccupied numerous Marxist, feminist and libertarian philosophers, social theorists and social anthropologists. Over more recent decades, critical political issues relating to the rights of 'indigenous' peoples, and re-evaluations of the relative merits of contemporary Western lifestyles, perspectives and ideologies, have given these debates a renewed edge.

It must also be recognised, however, that significant shifts in social anthropology over recent decades have rendered the relationship between social theoretical speculation and anthropology more complicated. Whether due to increasing awareness of the doubtful evidence which informed many nineteenth-century Eurocentric speculations about 'the primitive', post-structuralist suspicions that historical anthropological enquiry rarely surmounts an 'Orientalist gaze', or reservations about the possibility of saying anything credible about a composite human subject over such vast time frames, the notion that we can begin our discussion in social theory in this fashion has become highly contentious. Yet, if we bracket for the moment such meta-theoretical issues, there are problems with Bookchin's organic society thesis even within its own terms of reference.

One immediate problem is a certain vagueness and imprecision that seems to linger around the narratives of *The Ecology of Freedom*. So, while 'organic society' is not presented as a hypothetical 'state of nature', but postulated as an historical actuality (as Mary Mellor and Michael Zimmerman have noted; see Mellor, 1992: 124; Zimmerman, 1994: 156), it is never made clear by Bookchin *when* or *where* this early form of human association actually existed. At points in *The Ecology*

*of Freedom*, references to an 'early Neolithic' village society suggest that organic society can be located at a crossover moment when hunter-gatherers first began to settle down into a horticultural society. Elsewhere, in other writings, one can gain the distinct impression that this society stretched well up to the emergence of the early cities.[10]

Bookchin's narrative in *The Ecology of Freedom* moves between a 'reflexive voice', which appears to accept he is embarking on a highly speculative exercise, and a much more confident tone, which seems to be claiming a God's-eye view. There are frequent examples in his narrative of a carefully qualified and tentative insight being quickly reworked into a substantive proposition a few sentences later, where a speculation on 'pre-literate' practices, values or institutions is suddenly transformed into a detailed account of 'how things really were back then'.[11] Given the time scales being dealt with, and the manner in which these speculations are often unsupported by evidence or are reliant on only one or two case studies, it is difficult to avoid a sense that a certain creative embellishing is going on.

Additional issues emerge when it becomes evident that Bookchin's own understanding of what he has demonstrated does, at times, seem at odds with the actual narrative he provides. For example, as we have seen, one of the boldest claims Bookchin makes of his account of historical development is that it 'radically reverses' central features of historical materialism. Thus, Marx and Engels, Adorno and Horkheimer, are all chastised for their Victorian image of 'stingy nature', and their view that freedom from material want necessitated the 'domination of nature'. Indeed, at various points, Bookchin has emphatically rejected the view 'that forms of domination ... have their sources in economic conditions and needs' (*RS*: 45). On the contrary, we are told that the idea of domination initially arose from within societies as part of the development of social hierarchies '*which are not necessarily economically motivated at all*' (*RS*: 46). However, an implicit recognition of the role that material factors played in the development of hierarchy, and even a sense that the development of hierarchy is inevitable, can also be found in Bookchin's writings.

For example, to return to the emergence of social hierarchy, in *Remaking Society* Bookchin argues at one point that its roots are found in the tensions and ambiguities produced by age. So, we are told: 'Physically the old were the most infirm, dependent and often the most vulnerable members of the community in periods of difficulty. It is they who were expected to give up their lives in times of want' (*RS*: 53). In the tension between vulnerability and being the repositories

of a community's wisdom, the elderly 'may have been more disposed to enhance their status' (*RS*: 53). Elsewhere, we are told:

That age-hierarchies would appear is often merely a matter of time; the socialisation process, with its need for careful instruction, growing knowledge, and an increasing reservoir of experience virtually guarantees that elders would earn a justifiable degree of respect and, in precarious situations, seek a certain amount of social power. (*RS*: 60)

This account does have certain plausibility to it (at least if we accept a pre-existing egalitarian era). What is striking though, is that (despite protestation to the contrary) material factors – i.e. 'times of want' and the emergence of 'precarious situations' – would nevertheless appear to play a decisive role in the emergence of hierarchy. Moreover, while Bookchin complains about the determinist features of historical materialism, we can also find elements of his own position that come close to 'naturalising' hierarchy. For example, at certain points hierarchy is seen as worked out of 'basic biological facts'. Such a claim clearly sails close to determinism if interpreted crudely. To give Bookchin his due, his narrative here is usually more subtle and complex, stressing openness, change and contingency. At other times though, it appears that hierarchy is almost being postulated as a part of the human condition. Thus, we are told: 'the violation of organic society is latent within organic society itself. The primal unity of the early community, both internally and with nature, is weakened merely by the elaboration of the community's social life – its ecological differentiation' (*EofF*: 80). Here, it seems that the rise of social hierarchy is almost a product of the natural development of social life.

Indeed, if we review Bookchin's writings as a whole, we can find a certain vacillation over whether the emergence of social hierarchy was inevitable. Thus, in *The Ecology of Freedom*, when considering whether our ascent into civilisation necessitated the domination of human by human as a precondition for the human domination of nature, it is argued that 'History might well have followed quite different paths of development' (*EofF*: 66). At other times though, and particularly in later writings, Bookchin is less optimistic:

Paradoxically, in its emergence out of barbarism – indeed, out of simple animality – humanity may have had to depend upon priests, chieftains, and perhaps state-like formations to overcome parochialism, lack of individuality, kinship bonds, gerontocracies, and patriarchies. The groundwork for making a

civilizatory process possible ... may have required what we would regard today as unacceptable institutions of social control but that at an earlier time may have been important in launching a rational social development. (*PofSE*: pxvi–xvii)

As a provisional judgment then, Bookchin's account of historical development is perhaps not as radical a reversal of Marx and Engels' position as first appears.

### ORGANIC SOCIETY II: ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

More substantial difficulties with Bookchin's account of organic society can be found at the methodological level. One problem here is that evidence for Bookchin's speculations are not drawn in the main from paleo-anthropological research but rather from *twentieth-century* ethnographic studies of tribal societies and historical accounts of European encounters with the non-European. Thus, his speculation on gender differentiation in organic society is informed by Elizabeth Thomas' studies of the Bantu. Discussions of animism make reference to Edward B. Tylor's observation of Native Americans. Various other accounts of the ecological embeddedness of humanity at the dawn of civilisation draw from Dorothy Lee's studies of the Hopi and Wintu tribes.

This is justified in *The Ecology of Freedom* on the basis that 'the cultural facts of dress, technics, and environment that link prehistoric peoples with existing "primitives" is so striking that it is difficult to believe that Siberian mammoth hunters of yesteryear ... were so dissimilar from the Arctic seal hunters of de Poncin's day' (*EofF*: 57). Yet, this 'reading-back exercise' only makes sense if we assume that the small-scale societies 'discovered' by Europeans had lived in a permanently static state, without change or social development for millennia. Such an assumption is problematic not only for its implicit 'Orientalism' (contrasting dynamic, 'historical' Europeans with the static peoples of small-scale societies) but also because of the growing recognition amongst social anthropologists that many supposedly isolated small-scale societies have been part of wider, often global, systems of exchange for many millennia (see Ellen, 1986: 9).

Establishing the exact nature of eco-social relations amongst the people of small-scale societies would seem further complicated by the fact that – as the historical geographer Ian Simmons has noted – 'the ethnographic picture is rather spotty on this particular topic

so it does not seem possible to give a complete picture for all groups even for near-recent times, let alone the past' (Simmons, 1996: 66; additionally see Zimmerman, 1994: 156).

Indeed, if we turn to more recent anthropological research, Bookchin's account of 'organic society' in *The Ecology of Freedom* becomes even more problematic. Even if we accept the notion that data on more recent small-scale societies provide a legitimate basis for speculation about early humanity, a range of studies suggest that the development of early human societies was probably marked by much more complex and variable social patterns, practices and institutions than can be found in the composite account provided in *The Ecology of Freedom*. Thus, while Bookchin may claim that 'Neolithic artefacts seem to reflect a communion of humanity and nature that patently expressed the communion of humans with each other: a solidarity of the community with the world of life that articulated an intense solidarity within the community itself' (*EofF*: 61), elsewhere we can find substantive evidence which points to the contrary.[12] The claim that organic society was 'strikingly non-domineering not only in its institutionalised structure but in its very language' (RS: 47) has to be considered against anthropological research documenting the role that violence has played in any number of small-scale societies,[13] as does the related claim of an egalitarian sexual division of labour.[14] Nor does Bookchin's claim that relations in organic society were 'distinctly ecological' (*EofF*: 5), find unqualified support in current anthropological research on hunter-gatherers.[15] Indeed, a significant body of research has emerged over the last two decades in disciplines from paleo-anthropology to historical geography and historical sociology which has decisively challenged eco-romantic accounts of hunter-gatherers. Increasingly this literature suggests that diverse pre-capitalist societies were probably involved in much more substantive reshaping of their natural environment than was previously thought. There is now substantial evidence that some early human communities produced substantive environmental degradation.[16]

There would, then, seem to be reasonable grounds to doubt the account of organic society found in *The Ecology of Freedom*. By the early 1990s, Bookchin himself had become less and less comfortable with many aspects of his earlier work. Initially responding to certain currents in deep ecology, committed to what he now saw as 'atavistic celebrations of a mythic Neolithic and Pleistocene' (*EofF*: xxx),[17] Bookchin provided a new introduction in the second edition of *The*

*Ecology of Freedom* which qualified and revised many of his earlier statements. Now ceding to the anthropological evidence that early humanity's relations with the natural world could well have been less harmonious than he had previously assumed, and warning against romanticising early humanity's interconnectedness with nature, he nevertheless attempts to hang on to certain elements of his own organic society thesis. Thus, we are told: '[a]s humanity began to emerge from first nature, possibly in the Pleistocene and certainly in the Palaeolithic, their relation to animals as other was largely complementary' (*EofF*: xlvii).

By the mid to late 1990s however, it was no longer clear that even these revised commitments were still held. Appalled by the growth of 'primitivist' and even 'anti-civilisationalist' currents in American anarchist circles, Bookchin appeared increasingly concerned simply to refute those who would seek 'to substitute mythic notions of a pristine and primitive past that probably never existed' (*RH*: 122).[18]

## AFTER ECOLOGICAL ROMANTICISM

What then can be said about the social and ecological relations of early humans? Perhaps it is useful to historicise the basic epistemological presuppositions that inform this whole debate? By the late nineteenth century, Adam Kuper has noted, the broad characteristics of primeval human communities had been settled with a remarkable degree of agreement in European anthropology. Thus, it was widely believed that 'primitive society' was an organic whole, ordered on the basis of kinship relations which then split into exogamous, corporate descent groups. The original religion was widely believed to be animism and it was further thought that primeval social forms were preserved in the languages and ceremonies of contemporary 'primitive' peoples. Remarking on the contemporary relevance of this series of assumptions, Kuper has argued that 'hardly any anthropologist today would accept that this classic account of primitive society can be sustained'. Indeed, he suggests:

On the contrary, the orthodox modern view is that there never was such a thing as 'primitive society'. Certainly, no such thing can be reconstructed now. There is not even a sensible way in which one can specify what a 'primitive society' is. The term implies some historic point of reference. It presumably defines a type of society ancestral to more advanced forms, on the analogy of an evolutionary history of some natural species. *But human societies cannot be traced back to a*

*single point of origin, and there is no way of reconstituting prehistoric social forms, classifying them, and aligning them in a true time series. There are no fossils of social organisation. Even if some very ancient social order could be reconstructed, one could not generalise it.* If it is useful to apply evolutionary theory to social history, then *it must direct attention to variation, to adaptation, to all sorts of local circumstances and so to diversification. And it does seem likely that early human societies were indeed rather diverse.* Surviving hunter-gatherers certainly do not conform to a single organisational type. Since ecological variations constrain social organisation, especially where technology is simple, there must have been considerable differences in social structure between the earliest human societies. (Kuper, 1988: 8)

Part of the problem with the generalities in *The Ecology of Freedom* is that the attempt to locate a moment of ecological harmony in the distant past (no matter how qualified or nuanced) entails a degree of universalism or singularity that cannot be supported by the anthropological record (Philips and Mighall, 2000). More broadly, the attempt to define certain societies or social practices as more 'organic' than others entails a slide towards naturalistic reductionism. The term 'organic society' is problematic since by definition it fails to recognise, as Benton has emphasised, that 'human beings simply do not have a "natural mode" of relations to nature. We have no single instinctive prescribed mode of life but a range of indefinitely variable "material cultures"' (Benton, 1994: 43). As Kuper has noted: 'the history of primitive society is the history of an illusion. It is our phlogiston, our ether' (Kuper, 1988: 8).

## SOCIAL HIERARCHY/SOCIAL DOMINATION

How plausible is the rest of Bookchin's 'social hierarchy' thesis? Bookchin's empirical claim that, in historical terms, forms of social hierarchy based on gerontocracies, patriarchies, priest cults and warrior groups were probably the precursors to the later development of class and proto-state structures would seem uncontroversial, being confirmed by more recent historical sociologies such as those of Giddens (1981) and Mann (1986), amongst others. The conceptual shift in Bookchin's work – that the central concern of critical theory should be less class than social hierarchy/social domination – is also interesting. Most obviously, an advantage of placing 'social domination' at the centre of critical social theory is that it addresses directly the problem of economic reductionism. Bookchin's call

that we examine social domination, which certainly includes but does not give priority to social class, would seem to offer a more encompassing way of examining multi-layered forms of exploitation, domination, exclusion and silencing than class-reductionist forms of Marxism. Indeed, it is interesting once again how Bookchin's position here mirrors the thinking of Anthony Giddens during his left post-Marxist phases (see Giddens, 1981). Perhaps the central question that remains with Bookchin's thinking here concerns how we might further think about the relationship between social hierarchy and social domination.

The notion that social hierarchies – particularly those based on 'command and obedience' and modes of social domination – are intimately related would seem uncontroversial. Yet, complexities emerge here: there are a range of socially stratified relationships that are in certain senses hierarchical yet do not self-evidently contribute to social domination. As Joel Kovel has noted, temporary quasi-hierarchical relations such as parent/child relations (Kovel, 1998), or student/teacher relationships (Eckersley, 1992), contain elements of hierarchy and invariably involve the exercise of power yet are relations that can also be infused with 'dialogic' features and can be enabling over the long term. Some socially stratified relationships emerge from functionally differentiated social roles and are again hierarchical in a certain sense, but do not necessarily contribute to social domination. For example, the role of the bureaucrat or administrator who scrupulously and honestly attempts to collect taxation revenue, or of the manager of an emergency ward who attempts to maximise the freedom and autonomy of workers whilst also ensuring that patients' needs are met, etc. In this latter category, it could well be argued that any socially complex and politically pluralistic society seeking to avail itself of the gains of high technology is going to be marked by certain forms of social stratification through task differentiation. As long as these 'hierarchies' are open, subject to democratic recruitment, rotation and control, and influence in one sphere of social life is not allowed to accumulate in other spheres (Waltzer, 1984), it does not seem evident that such relations *necessarily* contribute to social domination.[19]

Indeed, the relationship between hierarchy and domination becomes more complex still when we think of many contexts where social domination can thrive in relatively non-hierarchical settings (Hughes, 1989). For example, anthropologists have observed the role that shame, stigma and gossip can play in small-scale societies

alongside more subtle forms of ideological and psychological control to obtain social cohesion. Bookchin is surely correct to argue that economic reductionist forms of Marxism prevent a full rounded account of relations based on command and obedience. However, the Chinese Cultural Revolution – to take an alternative example – equally serves as a warning that a critical theory informed by an indiscriminate denouncement of 'social hierarchy' can exacerbate the sum total of social domination in a society. What seems evident, then, is that between a concern with 'social hierarchy' and 'social domination', as Habermas has long argued, we need a critical theory of authority or legitimacy. A credible critical social theory should distinguish carefully between *coercive* and *oppressive* stratified social relations and representative political forms – which clearly give rise to social domination – and relations based on 'legitimate authority' or 'democratic authority' which do not.[20]

What can we make, though, of the further diachronic link that Bookchin has sought to forge: between social hierarchy, social domination and the 'idea' of dominating nature?

## SOCIAL HIERARCHY, SOCIAL DOMINATION AND THE IDEA OF THE DOMINATING OF NATURE BY HUMANS

The great value of *The Ecology of Freedom* is that it argues in a powerful fashion that any credible modern critical social theory needs to address the links between the domination of humans and the domination of nature. However, Bookchin goes on to formulate this relationship in a rather specific manner. In seeking to explain the *root causes* of the division between nature and society, he elaborates these links not in a general fashion but rather as an historical thesis. As he has clarified in subsequent writings:

As a historical statement it declares in no uncertain terms, that the domination of human by human *preceded* the notion of dominating nature. Indeed, human domination of human gave rise to the very *idea* of dominating nature. In emphasising that human domination precedes the notion of dominating nature, I have carefully avoided the use of a slippery verb that is very much in use today: namely that the domination of nature 'involves' the domination of humans by humans. I find the use of this verb particularly repellent because it confuses the order in which domination emerged in the world and hence, the extent to which it must be eliminated if we are to achieve a free society. Men

did not think of dominating nature until they had already begun to dominate the young, women and eventually each other. (*RS*: 44)

However, this historical sequence is problematic. Bookchin's starting point here, that 'the domination of nature first arose within *society* as part of its *institutionalisation* into gerontocracies ... not in any endeavour to control nature or natural forces' (*PofSE*: 142), is difficult to sustain. The strength of this claim is clearly dependent on the image of a singular organic society that we find in *The Ecology of Freedom* and *Remaking Society*. Now, given (a) the criticisms of this that have been offered above, (b) the cautionary words offered by Kuper about recognising the huge spatial variation that was very likely a central feature of the relationship between human societies and their natures, and (c) the manner in which Bookchin himself later retreats from this position, this claim would seem to fall. Indeed, if we follow the later Bookchin who states that '[i]n the band and tribe societies of pre-history, humanity was almost completely at the mercy of uncontrollable natural forces' (*RH*: 122), then it would seem that, if anything, elements of Marx's basic understanding of the human condition are valid here. That is, as Marx argues in Volume III of *Capital*, 'the associated producers' need to 'rationally regulate their interchanges with nature, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and most worthy of, their human nature' (cited in Smith, 1996: 48–9).

Moreover, Warwick Fox (1989: 15) and Robyn Eckersley (1992) have argued that Bookchin fails to recognise that the relationship between hierarchical forms of social organisation and the actual domination of nature is not straightforward. Fox provides historical examples of hierarchical societies (e.g., Ancient Egypt) that had relatively benign relations with nature. Eckersley conceptualises a relatively non-hierarchical society that is nevertheless extremely exploitative ecologically (Eckersley, 1992, but additionally see Hughes, 1989).[21] These arguments are reasonable enough and suggest that care needs to be taken in attempts to discern simple, one-to-one relationships between hierarchical social forms and environmentally hazardous outcomes. Bookchin has responded to this critique by arguing that it ignores

the fact that my writings focus on the idea of dominating nature not on the actual domination of nature ... I am not concerned exclusively with whether a given

society (be it hierarchical or egalitarian) actually damages the eco-community in which it is located; I am also concerned with whether it ideologically identified human progress with the idea of dominating nature. (*RE*: 202)

This response is interesting, though, because it highlights a further difficulty that emerges from adopting this theoretical approach.

### DOMINANT IDEOLOGIES AND ACTUAL RELATIONS WITH NATURE

A significant problem with the overwhelming attention given in *The Ecology of Freedom* to the 'idea' that human beings must dominate nature is the implicit assumption that in uncovering this moment, the ultimate roots of the society/nature division are then laid bare. Having rooted the emergence of the *idea* that humans must dominate nature in the emergence of social hierarchy, Bookchin concentrates on outlining the rise of various social hierarchies and counter-movements of resistance to this. Along the way, attention is paid to the development of epistemologies of rule and ideological currents that offer either a benign or malign view of nature. One positive outcome is that Bookchin's historical writings provide us with an impressive history of ideas and a social history of resistance. As an attempt to construct a libertarian historical narrative to counter crudely determinist forms of historical materialism, Bookchin's work is certainly suggestive of how things could have been otherwise.[22] However, as far as providing historical insight into social-ecological processes, the discussion remains trapped at the cognitive level. Insufficient attempt is made to integrate theoretical reflection with what is known about the historical geography and environmental history of material practices (cf. Harvey, 1996: 183). Little consideration is given to the fact that concentrating on ideologies and cosmologies of nature alone provides only a partial guide to understanding the actuality of socio-environmental dynamics (Samways, 1996).

Part of the problem with the approach adopted in *The Ecology of Freedom* is that it is unclear how exploring the genealogy of an idea through various classic texts and religious/ideological currents can establish that people or social institutions actually conformed to such dominant ideologies. As Roy Ellen has noted: '[i]deologies often diverge markedly from what actually happens in practise' (Ellen, 1986: 10). And as Anderson notes, while religion and beliefs may stress harmonious relations with nature, this does not prevent people from being involved in 'wholesale ecosystem damage due to pure

economic necessity, in explicit, self admitted violation of their norms and knowledge of final effects' (Anderson, 1969). The analysis of *The Ecology of Freedom* provides very few examples of how the historical growth of the ideology that 'humanity must dominate nature' *actually affected material practices*. This relationship is never really demonstrated with reference to studies of historical societies and their environmental conditions and contexts. Indeed, beyond organic society and its 'fall', there is a tendency in Bookchin's subsequent writings to present the points in the historical development he has chosen to examine – ancient Greece and Rome, the city-state period of the middle ages, and an early agrarian capitalist period – as broadly speaking environmentally benign.

Now, it would be difficult to deny that the emergence and spread of capitalism and modernity has marked a quantitative and qualitative change in human transformations of the natural world (Harvey, 2000; McNeill 2000; Moore, 2000). However, what is lacking in the historical narrative of *The Ecology of Freedom* is any engagement with the substantive evidence that has emerged over recent decades suggesting that, beyond small-scale societies, diverse pre-capitalist societies were also involved in substantive nature-transforming practices. The modern disciplines of historical geography and environmental history now provide copious examples of pre-capitalist societies – sometimes marked by the espousal of benign ideologies of nature – which have nevertheless experienced substantive self-generated ecological problems (see Bilsky, ed. 1980; Hughes and Thirgood, 1983; Worster, 1988; Crumley, ed. 1993; Samways, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Philips and Mighall, 2000; Hughes, 2002).

Donald Hughes and V.J. Thirgood have argued that environmental deterioration was at least one contributing factor in the decline of Classical Greek and Roman civilisations. This was despite the fact that '[t]heir traditional religions taught them to stand in awe of nature and interfere as little as possible in natural processes' (Hughes and Thirgood, 1983: 206). Decline is attributed not to ideological factors but to the lack of ecological insight on the part of Greeks and Romans that, 'due to the advance of research in modern times, we take for granted' (Hughes and Thirgood, 1983: 207). On similar lines, Bilsky (ed. 1980), and more recently Hoffman (2001) in a review of recent literature on social ecological relations in medieval Europe, have argued that, 'medieval Europeans did cause large scale ecological change and environmental destruction, sometimes with

intent, sometimes unaware' (Hoffman, 2001: 148). David Harvey has noted of Chinese civilisation:

The Chinese may have ecologically sensitive traditions of Tao, Buddhism, and Confucianism (traditions of thought which have played an important role in promoting an 'ecological consciousness' in the West) but the historical geography of deforestation, land degradation, river erosion, and flooding in China contains not a few environmental events which would be regarded as catastrophes by modern-day standards (Harvey, 1996: 188; but also see Perdue, 1987).

Samways (1996), surveying a range of pre-capitalist social formations, has argued that many of the difficulties experienced by many pre-capitalist societies had more to do with the *unintended consequences of action* than with the pernicious effects of the 'idea' that human beings must dominate nature.

None of these examples necessarily undermines the validity or indeed the importance of Bookchin's suggestion that we need to investigate the relations between social domination, ideologies, and socially and ecologically problematic transformations of nature through history. Harvey (1996), Worster (1985; 1988), O'Connor (1998), Davis (1998) and Swyngedouw (2004), for example, have all developed this idea. Moreover, David Harvey's assertion that societies tend 'to create ecological conditions and environmental niches for themselves which are not only conducive to their own survival but [are] also manifestations and instantiations "in nature" of their particular social relations' (Harvey, 1996: 183) provides an especially suggestive development of this line of thought which is potentially compatible with social ecology. As Harvey notes, a particular set of social relations (and forms of social domination) can purposefully affect ecological transformations that then require the reproduction of these social relations in order to sustain them. He refers by way of example to Donald Worster's *Rivers of Empire*, which demonstrates how corporate interests sought to assure their own reproduction through the construction of mega dams irrigating the American West in the late nineteenth century, thereby sidelining plans for more decentralised, communitarian irrigation schemes. Harvey's analysis also suggests that contradictions in social relations can create social contradictions in the land and within ecosystem projects themselves. This offers an important means of exploring the links between social domination and environmentally problematic outcomes. Such ideas converge with research projects by Benton (1989), Davis (1998), Fitzsimmons and Goodman (1998), Foster (2000) and Swyngedouw

(2004), who have all demonstrated how particular social relations produce specific 'natures' that can generate crisis tendencies in the agricultural practices, hydraulic systems and agro-food networks they produce. Nor does this literature necessarily undermine the view that (all things considered) societies defined by purely instrumental and antagonistic views of social ecological processes are perhaps more likely to embark on short-sighted, hubristic or reckless socio-environmental transformation.

What this literature does suggest, however, is that given the huge historical time frames we are dealing with and the variety of socio-ecological relations that have existed in different societies, eco-social theory should demonstrate a certain wariness towards the kind of absolutist 'plenary claims' (Castree, 2002), teleological formulae, or super-historical generalisations that are something of a defining feature of both Frankfurt School narratives and Bookchin's work. Let us take these diverse empirical and theoretical observations and see how they can help us rethink the basis for socio-ecological critique.

### TIME, SPACE, SOCIAL PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL ECOLOGIES

To summarise: three limitations can be identified in Bookchin's historical social theory as formulated in *The Ecology of Freedom* and *Remaking Society*.

First, while Bookchin offers us a well-grounded critique of economic reductionism and productive-forces determinism, in making this move and concurrently shifting attention so radically away from how human societies work on nature through labour to survive (to processes of social institutionalisation and the ideologies that emerge therefrom), insufficient attention is paid to the continued material dynamics between society and nature (Rudy and Light, 1998; Light and Rudy, 1996). Max Weber is an important figure for critical social theory for his multi-causal view of history and his emphasis on domination rather than on economic exploitation. Yet, Bookchin's radical swing to Weber as an antidote to vulgar materialism results in a degree of idealism in his historical narrative which (ironically) ensures that nature 'itself' – as an active, continuous 'agent' or 'presence' in historical development (Worster, 1988; but also see Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993, Swyngedouw, 2004)[23] – is not fully drawn out. As we will see in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, Bookchin is well aware of the sociality of nature. Yet, in his historical social theory, too little attention is paid to the sedimented social forms, socio-technological networks

and socio-ecological materialities more generally that merge around human action creating a series of constraints and enablements that resolve themselves in complex and discontinuous ways.

Second, while we can find in Bookchin's writings of the 1970s and 1980s a genuine attempt to grapple with the issue of Eurocentrism and the limits of Adorno and Horkheimer's thinking, his own position is limited by the 'homogenised' temporality that Doreen Massey has argued is 'essential to the Hegelian way of thinking' (see Massey, 2005: 40). Human beings make 'History' in Bookchin's historical social theory and 'History' is a singular and all-embracing process. What seems missing though – as we have seen from our brief review of the anthropological record – is attention to the diverse relations human societies have had with their equally diverse ecological contexts.

This takes us to the related third point which is that the radical historicism underpinning Bookchin's historical vision leaves the importance of geography and spatial variation in historical development underdeveloped. As Harvey (1996) and Soja (1989; 1996) have complained of critical theory more generally, the temporal is not only prioritised but subsumes the spatial in social ecology. Consequently, despite Bookchin's evident interest in dialectics *in* nature (*EofF*, *PofSE*), and his clear recognition – as we shall see in Chapter 5 – that social and natural evolution are a graded continuum, in his historical social theory, the *dialectical interplay* between human societies and their equally active material conditions distributed in space and time, and refined and interpreted through culture – what Soja refers to as the 'geo-historical dialectic' (Soja, 1989; 1996; but additionally see Harvey, 1996; Massey, 2005) – is only partially developed.

We will return to these issues in Chapter 4 when we consider Bookchin's socio-ecological critique of capitalism, but perhaps it is useful here to take stock.

## DOMINATION, LIBERATION, AND THE PRODUCTION, REPRODUCTION AND ENFRAMING OF ACTIVE NATURE(S)

One of the central themes to emerge from this discussion of Bookchin's historical social theory is that major problems face critical social theories and modes of radical ecology that attempt to understand the complex relationships between diverse human societies, social ideologies, and their natures, using homogeneous, unilinear, social evolutionary, grand narratives. In many respects,

the arguments outlined in this chapter conclude that the quest by Bookchin and the Frankfurt School to establish the foundational moment for 'which came first', social domination or the idea of dominating nature, is an unhelpful way to think about this issue. If we reject the notion that the whole of human history can be squeezed into a tale of either 'Eden and the Fall' or its Hobbesian reversal, and accept the likelihood that eco-social relations amongst early human societies were probably *highly diverse* (yet also concede that within this diversity, as Marx and the later Bookchin argue, it is reasonable to assume that all human societies have had to bring *their relations with nature* under conscious, rational control to survive), locating 'where it all went wrong' seems problematic. Theoretical reflection informed by recent developments in social anthropology, historical geography and environmental history suggests the need to recognise dynamism, discontinuity and diversity in eco-social relations. In all likelihood 'all societies have had their share of ecologically based difficulties' (Harvey, 1996: 189).

As a broad organising rubric for thinking about what Marx refers to as the 'metabolism' between society and nature (see Swyngedouw, 2004), an approach that recognises that human societies have always been involved (at one spatial scale or another) in the production of nature (to use Neil Smith's helpful phrase; Smith, 1984; 1996; 1998) has much to commend it. Benton provides a useful supplement to this observation: '[w]hat is required is the recognition that each form of social/economic life has its own specific mode and dynamics of interrelations with its own specific contextual conditions, resource materials, energy sources and naturally mediated unintended consequences (forms of "waste", "pollution", etc....)' (Benton, 1989: 77).

Combining the insights of historical geographical materialists such as Smith, Benton, Swyngedouw, Harvey and Castree with recent developments in environmental history allows us to recognise that human societies have always been involved in the dynamic production of nature organised through labour and technology (a point that resonates with the work of the later Bookchin; see *RH*, *AMFL*), but that this relationship has taken on specific forms in specific societies. Such a dynamic but discontinuous view of social-ecological relations could draw further insights from aspects of Bookchin's work. Bookchin makes a useful addition to the production of nature discussion insofar as it would seem vital to consider how multiple forms of social domination beyond class (e.g., race, gender, sexuality,

bureaucratic power), as well as possibilities for emancipation, flow through the production of nature. However, such a view would also have to stress that a critique of the current processes of production, reproduction and enframing of nature cannot take as its starting point a more 'natural' or 'organic' relationship to the environment from which capitalism is viewed as a departure, as social ecology has sought to argue. Rather, as Braun and Castree contend, such a critique can only proceed relationally, considering 'the different socio-economic and cultural logics organising nature's production and the social and ecological effects these give rise to' (Braun and Castree 1998: 36).

Is a focus on the metabolism of society with nature sufficient for explanatory social theory? Here, Bookchin's warning of how a one-sided materialism can underplay the more cognitive, cultural and symbolic aspects of socio-environmental relations deserves to be heeded. Rather than an historicist concern with locating the source of the idea that human beings should dominate nature, a framework that examines how complex forms of domination flow through the material and the symbolic ordering of society and nature would seem more useful.[24] Such an emphasis highlights how it is not simply an instrumentalist framing of nature that can contribute to social domination. In certain contexts, the attempt by some social groups to impose their own specifically articulated non-instrumental view of 'nature' on other groups can equally result in forms of social domination (see Braun and Castree 1998; Darier, ed. 1999; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004).[25] Recent work in the environmental social sciences influenced by post-structuralist concerns with the significatory realm (Darier, ed. 1999; Luke, 1999) can usefully supplement the insights of materialist historical geography here. Such literature brings home the importance of attending to the processes that ensure that 'particular natures' triumph over others, of how the 'tourist gaze' of particular social groups can ensure that whole landscapes are transformed – sometimes in socially and environmentally problematic ways. More basically still, Haraway (1991) has noted how a further source of social domination that emerges in human societies arises from the capacity to define what is nature and what is unnatural.

Finally, a credible critical social theory clearly needs to abandon the idealist view of nature as simply an inert background to the human story. Nature may well be produced, discursively enframed and symbolically represented: in effect at the productive level we

are always dealing with social natures (Braun and Castree, 1998; Swyngedouw, 2004). The division between the social and the natural may well be drawn and redrawn at different points in time (Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1999).[26] However, as both environmental historians such as Donald Worster (1988) and actor network theorists such as Bruno Latour (1993) have argued, we need to recognise that the various 'materialities' and non-human forces that human societies are constantly producing, reproducing and enframing have agency of their own. They are possessed of their own causal powers and processes (Benton, 1989; Soper, 1995). That is, human societies are always involved with 'disruptive, active and generative' natures (Massey, ed. 1999: 287) that are in a state of constant dynamic change and transformation (Botkin, 1990). These systems can resist, problematise, and sometimes surprise us (Haraway, 1991; Latour, 1993).[27]

## DOMINATION/PRODUCING/APPROPRIATING NATURE

What though of the deeper, normative questions that clearly lurk behind this whole discussion? Are we left with a more nuanced version of the domination of nature thesis? Bookchin's social theory as outlined in *The Ecology of Freedom* may have faults, but he is surely correct to argue that in some manifestations of the domination of nature thesis (for example when filtered through Leninist, Stalinist or modern-day contrarian or neo-liberal ideologies) one can find a breathtaking reductionism, a utilitarian logic of instrumentalism, and a commitment to quasi-theological statements where the role of God has now been simply ceded to that of 'man'. Horkheimer's warning is apposite: that the domination of nature understood in such terms and pursued as an actual project can simply ensure a 'dialectical reversal' whereby 'man makes himself a tool of the very same nature he subjugates' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 91). Eco-feminists (e.g. Merchant, 1980; Salleh, 1997) have convincingly argued that certain Enlightenment articulations of this project that viewed nature as feminine or as woman simply entrenched patriarchal ideologies. Abundant evidence has also been offered of how domination of nature as 'other', entangled with imperialist discourses, has proved a useful ideological tool to support projects to dominate groups that European societies viewed as 'more natural' (Merchant, 1980; Harvey, 1996; Haraway, 1991, Gilroy, 2001).

These are all important insights. Yet, if a critique of the domination of nature thesis is not advanced in highly nuanced terms, it can simply collapse into counter-generalisations about the value of the Enlightenment, modernity and the idea of 'progress' more generally that are every bit as sweeping and problematic and just as capable of collapsing into a regressive ideology as the ideas they oppose.

Part of the problem lies once again with the particular interpretation given to the domination of nature thesis in both *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Ecology of Freedom*. In replacing a focus on the capitalist production of nature with the domination of nature understood as a broader existential struggle between humanity and nature, both texts obscure the historical specificity, complexity and ambiguity of the domination of nature thesis. A tendency to view the domination of nature in monolithic terms from the perspective of the present ignores 'its changing concrete role in action during different periods' (Leiss: 1972: 176). For example, as William Leiss has observed:

beginning in the seventeenth century the idea of the mastery of nature spurred an attack upon outmoded scientific and philosophical dogma and helped to initiate a qualitative change both in the understanding of nature and in the possibilities for the satisfaction of human needs: this was its specific ideological function at the time. The lasting positive aspect of its service was (as formulated so well by Bacon) to break the tyrannical hold of despair over the consciousness of human technological possibilities and to encourage the conviction that man could fundamentally alter the material conditions of existence. Its negative dimensions – so well disguised by Bacon – were its exclusive focus on modern science and technology as the designated instruments for the mastery of nature and its ability to mask the connections between their development on the one hand and the persistence of social conflict and political domination on the other. (Leiss, 1972: 177)

Failings of gender aside, this quotation draws out the historical ambiguities of the domination of nature thesis. In the twentieth century such an ideology, funnelled through post-war corporate-military-industrial capitalism in the West or Stalinism in the East (and more recently still, contemporary neo-liberalism), has taken on far more hubristic and aggressive forms, which have frequently been transformed into 'sterile, mystifying dogma' (Leiss, 1972: 178). Yet, it is surely correct that we must, once again, 'preserve positive elements within the outlines of a new formulation' (Leiss, 1972: 193). While Bookchin's later work (notably *RH*: 214) seems much closer

to Leiss' view, the tensions between his earlier and later positions remain unresolved. How can we move beyond the domination of nature debate without falling back into Prometheanism or ecological romanticism?

I have suggested in this chapter that Neil Smith's emphasis on the 'production of nature' provides one useful way of thinking beyond the domination of nature debate. As Smith observes:

many Marxists and critics alike have argued that human societies generally, and capitalism in particular, attempt a certain 'domination of nature'. For the Frankfurt school on one side of the political spectrum, this was always conceived as an inevitable condition of the human metabolism with nature. On the other hand, deep ecologists, Gaia hypothesists and other ecological essentialists recognize a parallel attempt at domination, but they see it not as inevitable but as a destructive social choice … The *production*-of-nature thesis, by contrast, not only assumes no such comprehensive domination but leaves radically open the ways in which social production can create accidental, unintended and even counter-effective results vis-à-vis nature. In political terms, the domination-of-nature thesis is a cul-de-sac: if such domination is an inevitable aspect of social life, the only political alternatives are a literally anti-social politics of nature or else resignation to a kinder, gentler domination. (Smith, 2007: 24)

Equally, some useful further distinctions on this discussion can be found in the work of Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space* that whilst all human societies may well be involved in the production of space/nature, it is important to distinguish between domination and appropriation (Lefebvre, 1991: 343). As he states in reference to Marx:

For Marx, *nature* belonged amongst the forces of production. Today a distinction is called for that Marx did not draw: namely that between the domination and appropriation of nature. Domination of technology tends towards non appropriation – i.e. towards destruction. This is not to say that such destruction must inevitably occur, but merely that there is a conflict between domination and appropriation. This conflict takes place in space. There are dominated spaces and appropriated spaces. (Lefebvre, 1991: 343)

We will develop these themes further in the next two chapters.

# 3
# Social Ecology as Modern Social Theory

## THE EMERGENCE OF CAPITALISM

As we have seen, while Bookchin's account of historical development is concerned with the growth of a 'legacy of domination' over 'a legacy of freedom', and generally sides more with Max Weber than Karl Marx in the process, with the emergence of the modern era, domination is now presented as 'far more than a legacy' but spreading 'over every aspect of social life' (*EofF*: 134). The development and spread of processes of stratification and centralisation across European societies play a significant role in the final sections of *The Ecology of Freedom*. Thus, considerable attention is given to the manner in which hierarchical administrative and political units increasingly usurp more communitarian social forms, patterns of civic freedom and local autonomy. In many respects though, it is the emergence of capitalism which is presented as the critical development.

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin argues that what makes capitalism unique – compared to other historical societies – is 'the sweeping power it gives to economics' and 'the supremacy it imparts to *homo economicus*' (*EofF*: 134). While markets and commerce have long existed in pre-capitalist societies, countervailing forces existed to restrict such currents. Bookchin suggests that fear of the destabilising effects of capital and the desire to contain it on *ethical grounds* is a central theme running through Western philosophy from Aristotle to Hegel. At a cultural level, numerous examples are offered of pre-capitalist societies raising substantive obstacles to the penetration of state and market into social life. Thus, Bookchin notes the role that 'the gift' played in the pre-capitalist world to create alliances, foster association and consolidate sociality. The complex etiquette followed in the marketplace, gives rise to an exchange process which is communal and often sealed 'by time honoured ethical imperatives' (*EofF*: 136). Even within Christianity, Bookchin argues, strictures against the taking of interest and excessive profiteering are of central importance. The starkness of the contrast between this pre-capitalist

world and the modern era occupies a central place in Bookchin's thought.

In the historical narratives of both *The Ecology of Freedom* and *From Urbanization to Cities*, Bookchin challenges classical Whig and Marxist readings of the medieval world as a retarded 'staging post' that merely awaited the 'inexorable' rise of capitalism. Notably, for all its shortcomings and limitations, Bookchin suggests that critical points in the late Middle Ages saw the opening up of a 'richly textured' social context 'of human-scaled towns, vibrant and highly variegated neighbourhoods, and closely knit villages' (*EofF*: 215). We can find an 'ethical orientation' in these societies, where, we are told, idealistic visions of personal redemption and grace at times gave rise to a revolutionary outlook.

Moments in the history of the medieval commune are highlighted that involved a fierce defence of municipal liberty.[1] Indeed, Bookchin argues, between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries in Europe, we can identify the emergence of a 'mixed economy'. Such an economy is adequately described neither as 'feudal', nor as 'simple commodity production', nor as capitalist, but as containing elements of all three forms. At times 'this mixed economy assumed a very balanced form' (*FUTC*: 179).

A combination of factors is seen as precipitating the economic ascendancy of the capitalist component of this 'mixed economy' over other trajectories and possibilities (*FUTC*: 183). In *The Ecology of Freedom*, attention is paid to emerging ideological currents which prepare the way for the full onslaught of the market on society. Thus, Bookchin notes the emergence of new justifications, from the pens of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, that legitimise private vices as public virtues and explain why economic activity should be increasingly separated from ethics and politics.

Elsewhere, in *From Urbanisation to Cities*, we are offered a more materialist analysis of the social, geographical and economic elements that made the West particularly 'vulnerable' to capitalism. Long-term factors such as the opening up of the New World, the importance of absolutism in undercutting traditional communities, the slow monetarisation of simple commodity production, and the decline of the guilds, are all seen as important. But these trends are presented as combining in a complex and uneven fashion with more conjunctural events such as the emergence of technological innovations and the explosion of the wool trade in Flanders to push this mixed economy in a capitalist direction (*FUTC*: 181–6).

Ultimately though, capitalism is seen as having 'literally exploded into being' (*FUTC*: 181) in Europe, most notably in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The triumph of the commodity over the gift cedes to the 'devastating narration and analysis of capital accumulation' that can be found in Marx's *Capital*. And so, for the first time, competition is 'seen to be "healthy"; trade, as "free"; accumulation as evidence of parsimony and egoism as evidence of a self interest that worked like a "hidden hand" in the service of the public good' (*RS*: 92).

Nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, however, only created a market *economy*. Indeed, Bookchin maintains that, until the first half of the twentieth century, communal pre-capitalist traditions still permeated social life even in the United States (*RS*: 193). It is only in the middle period of the twentieth century, specifically in the post-war era, that this *economy* is transformed into a market *society* and a shift occurs from industrial capitalism to 'the state, corporatist and multi national forms of our own time' (*RS*: 181).

## MAPPING THE CONTOURS OF 'ADVANCED' CAPITALISM

Bookchin's engagement with, and critique of, post-war or 'advanced' capitalism develops from both his historical understanding of pre-capitalist societies and his view that sociological and cultural transformations of capitalism in the post-war era have significantly problematised classic Marxist modes of critique. Three key themes can be identified in his writings on post-war capitalism.

Firstly, in writings dating as far back as the *Contemporary Issues* era, Bookchin argues that the international consolidation and stabilisation of US and global capitalism in the post-war era, and the political management of slumps and booms coupled with the incorporation and shrinking of the proletariat in the US (and elsewhere in the affluent world), have transformed capitalism. Such developments have rendered implausible the classic Marxist claim that advanced capitalism will be undermined through a conflict between wage labour and capital (*PSA*, 1969; *AMFL*, 1999: 46–7, *PSA*, 3rd Edition). All Bookchin's essays of the late 1960s onwards additionally contend that the US is best characterised as experiencing major cultural shifts that have given rise to 'class decomposition' (*PSA*: 208). Class exploitation in the US and the West in general has not disappeared, but the 'traditional class struggle ceases to have revolutionary implications' (*PSA*: 208). 'Social decomposition',

however, is not simply understood as occurring at the level of class. Bookchin argues that it is a process equally affecting the patriarchal family, authoritarian modes of upbringing, and traditional attitudes to sexuality, work, religion and politics.

Second, it is argued (Herber, 1952; *OSE*; *PSA*) that the most advanced sectors of post-war capitalism in the US have experienced significant transformations in their internal composition. Specifically, Bookchin's writings of the 1950s and 1960s focus on the extent to which US capitalism is increasingly dominated by ever larger corporate and multinational entities in electronics, chemistry, nuclear and 'cybernetic' technologies. These developments – prompted in part by Cold War military spending – have re-oriented the basic economic and industrial structure of the US. This has given rise to a 'new industrial revolution' allowing for vast economic growth, but it is now premised on a new project, namely, 'the total industrialization of nature' (Bookchin, 1974: xxxii).

A third theme of Bookchin's writings from the mid 1960s onwards (*CIOC*, *LOTC*) is that any credible critique needs to attend to how US society in the post-war period has experienced further dramatic transformations in the built environment. Specifically, critical attention needs to be paid to the new forms of urbanism, characterised by the growth of vast megalopolises, sprawling suburbs, ex-urbs and even huge urban belts (see *CIOC*, *LOTC*, *FUTC*) that now spread across the US landscape.

How then should we re-orientate our critical engagements in such changed circumstances? Broadly speaking, Bookchin argues that such developments require a new style of critique with five features.

### DEVELOPING A CRITIQUE OF 'ADVANCED' CAPITALISM

The critique deployed in Bookchin's sixties anthology, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, brings to bear post-industrial insights upon the classic Marxist claim that critique should be located in the tension between the forces and relations of production. All the essays collected in this text hang on 'the tension between what-is and what could-be' (*PSA*: 14). Bookchin argues that revolutions in production generated by 'automation' and 'cybernation', coupled with new developments in ecological technologies, have brought the US, and other parts of the First World, to the threshold of a 'post-scarcity society'. This term refers to societies that have, at least in principle, 'opened the prospect of material abundance for all to enjoy – a sufficiency in the means of

life without the need for grinding day to day toil' (*PSA*: 12). A selective combining of such new technologies of abundance with institutional, political, economic and cultural change could open up the possibility of a qualitatively different kind of society. However, deformed social relations, in the fashion of lingering forms of hierarchy and domination, prevent the recognition of this potential.

If Bookchin's first line of critique is to stress the post-scarcity possibilities of 'the new productive forces',[2] a second line of critique – elaborated most clearly in the essay 'On Neo-Marxism, Bureaucracy and the Body Politic' (1978) – outlines his social simplification theses. Whilst Bookchin's thinking is certainly indebted to the modernist aspects of Marx's critique of capitalism, it is argued in this essay that Marx dispenses too quickly with the insights of the anarchist, utopian and romantic critics of capitalist modernity. Bookchin maintains that it may well be the case that the affluent world stands on the brink of 'post-scarcity' conditions. However, a credible critique of advanced capitalism equally needs to attend to the de-socialising qualities that are produced with the inexorable spread of the market. Marx may well have been correct in his analysis of the triumph of the commodity form over all others, but he pays insufficient attention to the extent to which 'the most striking feature of the capitalist market is its ability to unravel this highly textured social structure, to invade and divest earlier social forms of their complexity of human relations' (*TES*: 228). Bookchin's 'social simplification' thesis draws attention to the increasingly impoverished sources of social bonds, and indeed of the self, that are available in advanced capitalism:

the reduction of all social relationships to exchange relations literally simplifies the social world. Divested of any content but the brute relationships of buying and selling, of homogenised, mass produced objects that are created and consumed for their own sake, social form itself undergoes the attenuation of institutions based on mutual aid, solidarity, vocational affiliations, creative endeavour, even love and friendship. (*TES*: 231)

Drawing from Martin Buber's *Paths of Utopia*, Bookchin maintains that a society permeated by competition ensures that:

No longer are we simply confronted with the 'fetishization' of commodities or the alienation of labour, but rather with the erosion of consociation as such, the reduction of people to the very isolated objects they produce and consume. Capitalism, in dissolving virtually every viable form of community association, installs the isolated ego as its nuclear social form, just as clans,

families, *polis*, guilds, and neighbourhoods once comprised the nuclear social forms of precapitalist society. (*TES*: 232)

It is this hollowed-out society, populated by de-socialised individuals, that is seen as so open to administrative interventions and bureaucratic colonisation, because the market 'can never provide society with an internal life of its own' (*TES*: 232). Bureaucracy, then, does not simply provide systems of social control; they are literally 'institutional substitutes for social form' (*EofF*: 232).

A third element of Bookchin's critique of US society is his identification of a tension therein between the rhetoric of democratic engagement and the reality of elite power, statecraft and disaffection. This tension opens the space for immanent critique of liberal democracy and of the democratic revolutionary tradition more broadly. Yet, this critique needs to be rendered in more sophisticated terms than classic anarchist thinking allows. Whilst Bookchin follows the classic anarchists in arguing that the state is ultimately 'a professional system of social coercion' (*RS*: 66), he recognises that state forms vary significantly, and that the US has republican institutions, a separation of powers and a revolutionary democratic tradition. Whilst 'politics' has largely been replaced by 'statecraft', Bookchin argues that the republican institutions of the US are still important insofar as they can act as a limited check on the worse excesses of political elites (*MC*: 134–5). More generally, there is a subterranean commitment to utopianism and radical democracy in US culture which means there is a need to 'participate consciously in the tension between the American dream conceived as utopia and the American dream conceived of as a huge shopping mall' (*MC*: 136).

If advanced capitalism is replacing cities, towns and countryside, classic traditions of urbanism and civic engagement, with vast urban belts and social homogenisation, then a fourth critique central to Bookchin's urban writings involves focusing attention on the tension between the city as it was, as it is and as it could be. Affirming Horkheimer's assertion that 'The city dweller is the individual par excellence' (*TES*: 135), the central theme of *Crisis in Our Cities*, *The Limits of the City* and *From Urbanization to Cities* reminds us of the rich civic, social, democratic and ecological possibilities of city life, and contrasts these possibilities with our current phase of 'urbanisation without cities'. For Bookchin, our emerging urban world not only generates massive social and ecological disruptions but also gives rise to sprawling built environments which lack internal structure,

definition or civic uniqueness (*TES*: 146). Post-war capitalism has speeded up a process rooted in the industrial revolution of using the factory 'with its flat floor, its departmentalization of space, its minute specialization of human labour and thought, and its quantitative criteria of success' as 'the model for our cities and farms'. A result of this is the undermining of 'contoured space, community diversity, roundedness of human activity, and qualitative criteria of excellence' (Bookchin, 1974: xxxii).

The fifth and most consequential feature of Bookchin's critique is to argue that the central contradiction of advanced capitalism is that it is facing a fundamental ecological impasse. The science of ecology has revealed that capitalism has begun to drastically alter the entire environment and it is this process, generating multiple ecological crises, that reveals the fundamental contradiction of advanced capitalism. This is, moreover, a fundamental contradiction because (and here Bookchin returns in part to Marx):

a capitalistic society based on competition and growth for its own sake must ultimately devour the natural world, just like an untreated cancer must ultimately devour its host. Personal intentions, be they good or bad, have little to do with this unrelenting process. An economy structured around the maxim 'Grow or Die', must necessarily pit itself against the natural world. (*RS*: 15)

Indeed, while much of Marx's thought may need to be 'dialectically transcended', it is striking how much Bookchin's central critical claim draws support from Marx. Evoking the 'inner laws of capitalist development' – as outlined in *Capital* Volume I – a persistent assertion running throughout Bookchin's work is that capitalism cannot be converted to ecology. 'Grow or die' is a *fundamental* imperative of capital. Unlimited economic growth, unlimited urban sprawl, a pervasive ideology of domination and a culture that persistently values the quantitative over the qualitative, produces a profoundly socially and ecologically imbalanced society. Suggesting that capitalism, in effect, constitutes the point of *absolute negativity* for social life and the natural world, Bookchin argues:

One cannot improve this social order, reform it, or remake it on its own terms with an ecological prefix such as 'eco-capitalism'. The only choice one has is to destroy it, for it embodies *every* social disease – from patriarchal values, class exploitation, and statism to avarice, militarism, and now growth for the sake of growth – that has afflicted 'civilisation' and tainted all its great advances. (*RS*: 94)

Bookchin's engagement with post-war capitalism marks an important attempt to redraw the contours of critique. Yet, does his thinking stand up to scrutiny? If we firstly briefly consider Bookchin's broad narrative about the transformation of capitalism across the last 300 years (we will return to this matter in more detail in Chapter 6), one of the most notable aspects of his thinking here is the extent to which his narrative – in broad terms at least – demonstrates certain family resemblances with the Weberian influenced historical sociology of Anthony Giddens (1981, 1985, 1994). In terms of starting points, both Bookchin and Giddens break from economic reductionism to place an emphasis on the importance of attending to broad forms of social domination (from military, cultural and political elites), as well as class struggle, in explaining the rise of modernity. Both go on to emphasise the extent to which market activity is significantly constrained by the culturally dense and socially constrained world of the European medieval era and make much of the importance of the city-state era to the re-emergence of new political forms. Both present the subsequent emergence of market capitalism as constituting a sharp ruptural break from all that went before. In terms of the rise and consolidation of modernity, both thinkers map the rise of corporate Keynesianism in the mid twentieth century as critical, but focus on the extent to which it is the mass transformation of nature which becomes a defining feature of the advancement of capitalism. Finally, both go on to deploy the concept of 'post-scarcity' to characterise the post-war West and argue that trends suggest a defining feature of the age has been a degree of social decomposition sweeping through the social structure, affecting class, race, gender and conventional understandings of authority. Bookchin's sixties' writing on the collapse of traditional social and cultural cleavages and cultures in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* is compatible with Giddens' claim that the modern Western world has moved into a period of 'de-traditionalisation' (a world where tradition now has to be defended rather than taken for granted). Such similarities of course should not be pressed too far. We will discuss Bookchin's concept of post-scarcity in more detail in what follows, but it should be noted that Giddens uses the term in a rather more specific sense to refer to the rise of 'life politics', a series of trends occurring which indicate a certain decline in concerns for a politics based primarily around economics and productivity, with greater attention being paid to the rise of the politics of self-actualisation. There are also significant differences between Bookchin's talk of the 'industrialization of nature', and Giddens' argument that we now face

the 'end of nature'. In this chapter and the next, I would like to focus specifically on Bookchin's form of social ecological critique.

## DEFINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

Whilst Bookchin's 1952 essay 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food', and his later cluster of 1960s writings – *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962), *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965), and 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (1965) – made seminal contributions to the 'early warning' literature on environmental problems (see Eckersley, 1992), what is less often noted is that in his *actual diagnosis* of which ecological issues should be taken seriously, Bookchin maintained quite a different emphasis from many other broadly contemporaneous currents, such as Paul Ehrlich's obsessions with 'over-population' (Ehrlich, 1968) or the Club of Rome's concerns with natural limits and 'resource scarcity' (Meadows et al., 1972). Indeed, in essays dating as far back as the early 1960s, over-population narratives are brusquely dismissed by Bookchin as distracting attention from the far greater environmental problems generated by the US economy (*PSA*: 85–6). And later, such narratives are presented as 'the most disquieting, and in many ways the most sinister, to be advanced by ecological action movements in the United States' (*TES*: 37). Concerning the energy and resource depletion arguments of the 1970s – even at the high point of such fears – we find Bookchin dismissing such claims as 'a media myth' (*TES*: 305). What could be behind this?

Bookchin's approach to social eco-critique has been subject to extensive criticism over the years (see Sale, 1988; Fox, 1989; Eckersley, 1992; Murphy, 1994). I want to suggest in this chapter that a tendency to dismiss Bookchin's position, often on the basis of a superficial engagement with his more polemical writing, misses a valuable critique in his work of basic neo-Malthusian ideas and a thoughtful consideration more generally of the progressive and regressive potential of 'ecological critique'. To demonstrate this, let us consider his critique of the work of André Gorz and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* report.

## THE CRITIQUE OF NEO-MALTHUSIANISM

Bookchin's engagement with one of the earliest eco-socialist texts, André Gorz's *Ecology as Politics* (1975), underlines some of his critical differences with other currents of eco-political theory (*TES*: 289–323).

While much of Bookchin's critique of Gorz reads like an act of pique on Bookchin's behalf at Gorz's failure to credit social ecology and acknowledge the value of the anarchist tradition, other elements are more interesting. Specifically, noting how Gorz's attempt to fashion an 'ecological socialism' uncritically appropriates the Club of Rome's claims concerning the 'energy crisis' and 'resource depletion', Bookchin points out a number of difficulties with this particular route to a synthesis of 'red' and 'green'.

First, Bookchin notes that, historically, even the most extravagant estimates of petroleum reserves and mineral resources have proved to be hugely underestimated. Second, he notes that many 'shortages' are the outcome of commercially created interests and oligopolistic market manipulation – rather than a statement of the essential realities concerning oil or other resources. And third, he suggests that premising a progressive ecological critique on such arguments, and on fears of shortages more generally, is much more problematic that Gorz realises. This is because such arguments 'serve the interests of price fixing operations, not to mention crassly imperialist policies' (*TES*: 306). As Bookchin outlines:

There are probably some six trillion barrels of oil in the ground today and even the most extravagant estimates of petroleum reserves have proven historically to be underestimations. Actually, not all of this geological largesse is accessible to us, nor is it likely to be historically ... but a mass of materials can be adduced to demonstrate that the current energy and mineral shortages are the result of oligopolistic market manipulation and controlled petroleum production for price advantages. ... Much the same is true of metals and minerals. Estimates of declining lead, zinc, bauxite, cobalt, manganese, chrome, and similar resources have flooded the press, but much of the data is specious at best and deliberately misleading at worse. (*TES*: 305–6)

The central point Bookchin goes on to develop against Gorz and the 'Limits to Growth' argument is that '"scarcity" is a social problem not merely a "natural" one' (*TES*: 306).

Gorz's Marxist background at least allows him to grasp this – unlike many others in the ecology movement. However, Bookchin argues that on other matters Gorz's analysis dissolves into 'the crudest environmentalism'. Notably, with regard to the notion of 'natural limits', while Gorz recognises that capitalism cannot plunder the planet for ever, neither he nor the Club of Rome recognise that 'the greatest danger these practices raise is *not depletion* but *simplification*', that is,

'the limits to capitalist expansion are *ecological* not *geological*' (*TES*: 306; emphasis added).

If we turn to Bookchin's engagement with 'the over-population thesis', his argument here follows a similar path. Thus, while Bookchin does not side with Julian Simon in believing the larger the number of people on Earth the better, he does argue that a credible *social* ecological critique needs to expose and repudiate neo-Malthusian arguments and question the broader significance that has been attributed to population growth as a primary source of environmental degradation.

As far back as the early 1970s, Bookchin argued that neo-Malthusian environmentalism is, at root, informed by a reductionist methodology. It is this methodology which essentially elides consideration of the complex cultural, political and historical factors involved in population booms and the eminently *social factors* which lie at the roots of hunger and famine. As he explains in the 1974 edition of *Our Synthetic Environment*:

The reduction of population growth to a mere ratio between birth rates and death rates obscures the many complex social factors that enter into both statistics. A rising or declining birth rate is not a simple biological datum, any more than a rising or declining death rate. Both are subject to the economic status of the individual, the nature of the family, the values of society, the status of women, the social attitudes towards children, the culture of the community and so forth. A change in any single factor interacts with the remainder to produce the statistical data called 'birth rates and 'death rates'. (Bookchin, 1974: lviii)

Culled from such abstract ratios, neo-Malthusian demography gives rise to fantastic asocial projections which not only have no bearing on reality but can easily be used to foster 'authoritarian controls'. Bookchin's subsequent writings press more explicitly the links between declarations of over-population and racism and imperialism. Thus, in 'The Power to Create, The Power to Destroy' (1979), he argues:

We must pause to look more carefully into the population problem, touted so widely by the white races of North America and Europe – races that have wantonly exploited the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Pacific. The exploited have delicately advised their exploiters that, what they need are not contraceptive devices, armed 'liberators', and Prof. Paul R. Ehrlich to resolve their population problems; rather, what they need is a fair return on the immense resources that were plundered from their lands by North America

and Europe. To balance these accounts is more of a pressing need at the present time than to balance birth rates and death rates. (*TES*: 37)

Rejecting imminent geological scarcity or Malthusian understandings of 'over-population', Bookchin's own writings present a different series of problems as being the central components of 'ecological crisis'. Notably from 1952 to 1965, when Bookchin is devoted specifically to analysing ecological problems, his work is concerned with the broad effects of a range of socio-ecological transformations on human health. We can see concerns raised with (1) the excessive use of pesticides, insecticides and antibiotics in agriculture; (2) water (including ground water) and air pollution; (3) the proliferation of toxic chemicals, radioactive isotopes and lead; (4) industrial pollution; (5) waste generation and the ever greater production of 'useless, shoddy and even hazardous goods designed to meet irrational needs' (Bookchin, 1974: lviii); and (6) the debilitating lifeways that accompany a sedentary, congested, stressful, urbanised world. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Bookchin additionally argues from the mid sixties onwards that a longer term problem may emerge from the changing proportion of carbon dioxide to other atmospheric gases through the burning of fossil fuel.[3] Bookchin's later writings never return to surveying environmental issues with the encyclopaedic range and attention to detail provided by his work of the 1960s and early 1970s. However, in later works (*EofF*, *RS*), he expresses growing concern at the overall deterioration of 'basic planetary cycles' which 'we depend on for an ecologically viable planet' (Bookchin, 1974: liii). Major concerns in the 1980s and early 1990s include (1) the increase of carbon dioxide to oxygen in the atmosphere; (2) widespread deforestation and soil erosion; (3) the role that chlorofluorocarbons have played in thinning out the ozone layer; (4) simplification of wildlife and plant life. Chemical pollutants, acid rain, harmful food additives and agricultural diseases are also mentioned (*EofF*: 19; *MC*: 99–112; *RS*: 14, *DtE*: 75–6).

## CAUSALITY AND PROBLEM DEFINITION IN SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

Beyond issues of problem definition, on the related issue of causality, Bookchin's social ecology has been characterised by very different causal understandings of the roots of the ecological crisis than those found in competing schools of ecological thought. A variety of 'root'

causes have been offered over the last four decades by various green thinkers to explain the causes of environmental degradation – from the neo-Malthusian emphasis on 'too many people', to the ecocentric emphasis on 'anthropocentricism', to the more general emphasis placed by numerous green thinkers on 'technology'. It should be unsurprising that Bookchin's mode of social-ecological critique has indeed been hostile to such explanations. Indeed, Bookchin's exasperation with ecological thought is most palpable and his polemic most acerbic when 'technology', 'humanity', 'consumption', or various value orientations (in themselves) are wheeled out to explain current problems.

Thus, concerning the emphasis on 'technology' as a 'root' cause of environmental problems, as far back as 1965 one can find Bookchin arguing that while there are technologies and technological attitudes which are environmentally harmful, technological transforma-tion (alongside social transformation) equally has the potential to restore the balance between humanity and nature. The focus on technology as the problem is dismissed in some of his earliest writings as simply 'naive':

History has known of many different forms of tools and machines: some of which are patently harmful to human welfare and the natural world, others of which have clearly improved the condition of humanity and the ecology of an area. It would be absurd to place ploughs and mutagenic defoliants, weaving machines and automobiles, computers and moon rockets, under a common rubric. Worse, it would be grossly misleading to deal with these technologies in a social vacuum. Technologies consist of not only the devices humans employ to mediate their relations with the natural world but also with the attitudes associated with these devices. These attitudes are distinctly social products, the results of social relationships humans establish with each other. What is clearly needed is not a mindless depreciation of technology as such, but rather a reordering and redevelopment of technologies according to ecologically sound principles. (Bookchin, 1974: lviii)

Similarly, responding to the claim that 'mindless consumption' is a fundamental causal factor of ecological problems, he asks rhetorically:

Can we blame working people for using cars when the logistics of American society were deliberately structured by General Motors and the energy industry around highways? Can we blame middle class people for purchasing suburban homes when cities were permitted to deteriorate? … Can we blame blacks,

Hispanic peoples and other minority groups for reaching out to own television sets, appliances and clothing when all the basic material means of life were denied to them for generations? (*TES*: 39)

Regarding the claim that the more general category of 'humanity' can be usefully deployed as identifying the source of contemporary environmental problems, the problem with this analysis is that 'everyone is brought into complicity with powerful corporate elites in producing environmental dislocations' (*RS*: 9–10).

What can we make of Bookchin's thinking here? Does his hostility to conventional modes of explanation deployed in environmental thought provide us with further evidence of his dogmatism?

## SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE *WITHOUT* MALTHUS

Despite the continued influence of neo-Malthusian arguments on many strands of environmentalism, it is now increasingly difficult to ignore the failings of this early strand of eco-critique. For instance, Ehrlich's predictions of 'population bombs' and imminent mass famine in the US were wildly inaccurate. Bookchin is correct to argue that *The Population Bomb* was laced with unthinking racialist undercurrents (as numerous other commentators have also noted). Eric Ross (1998) has extensively documented the role neo-Malthusian demography has played in promoting authoritarian solutions such as enforced sterilization to deal with 'the problem' of 'too many people' (see Hardin, 1974; Ross, 1998 ). The broader regressive role that such alarmist predictions and simplistic understandings of human population dynamics played in feeding both misanthropic currents in environmentalism and Western strategies to police the third world has yet to be fully acknowledged by many environmentalists and radical ecologists (Ross, 1998). Perhaps most important though is the substantial methodological weaknesses that have been raised concerning this whole literature and the extent to which recent demographic scholarship leaves the relationship between population growth and environmental despoliation *remarkably variable*.[4]

Similarly, if we consider the Club of Rome's predictions of rapid resource depletion, the years have not been kind to *The Limits to Growth* assessment either. It is now widely recognised that this report (by Meadows et al., 1972) suffered from substantive methodological flaws and over-pessimistic estimates. Indeed, it is striking how more recent treatments of environmental problems from the Club of

Rome have shifted from the classic 'Limits' positions to something much closer to Bookchin's thinking. For example, in *Factor Four*, the 1998 report to the Club of Rome, it is argued: 'The Limits to Growth was based on a deliberately simple computer model, and the results were also very simple. Some of the input data proved wrong. And technology can indeed do fabulous things.' Indeed, in a striking concession to Bookchin's position, *Factor Four* admits: 'many analysts say that it's not so much scarce resources but the absorptive capacities of the earth for all the pollutants and wastes that is limiting further growth of resource consumption' (von Weizsäcker, Lovins and Lovins, 1998: 257–58).[5]

Bookchin's criticisms of such early currents of eco-critique, then, rather than being the product of an 'inherent sectarianism', in hindsight appear astute and well judged. Indeed, it could well be argued that his diagnosis of which environmental issues should be the subject of greatest concern has stood the test of time somewhat better than the agenda pushed by various neo-Malthusian currents. This is particularly the case if we consider the extent to which the 'Global Environmental Agenda' that emerged in the 1980s, following the UN 'Brundtland' Report *Our Common Future* (1987), became increasingly framed around concerns relating to pollution and ecological simplification (global warming, loss of biodiversity, desertification, deforestation and ozone depletion) as opposed to being narrowly focused on population/resources.[6]

Beyond the empirical limitations of neo-Malthusian demography, let us consider the related matter of causality. Following the 'social ecology versus deep ecology' debates of the 1980s, Bookchin's understanding of causality was sharply critiqued by other green thinkers. Thus, responding to Bookchin's critique of the undifferentiated quality of deep ecology, Kirkpatrick Sale defended the right of deep ecology to treat humanity as a 'collective species' and indeed an exploitative one at that, boldly declaring that 'from this perspective it does not matter what the petty political and social arrangements are that lead to our ecological crisis, or even what dire consequences those arrangements have had for certain individuals, types, nations or races' (Sale, 1988: 672). On similar lines, the transpersonal ecologist and eco-philosopher Warwick Fox declared social ecology 'morally objectionable' on two grounds: scapegoating and inauthenticity. Thus, Bookchin was taken to task for 'scapegoating' complete classes of people, that is, targeting all men, all capitalists, all whites, and all

Westerners, while being 'inauthentic' for excusing 'oppressed' groups for their participation in ecological destruction (Fox, 1989).

On Fox's latter point, one is immediately reminded of Bookchin's warnings of certain ecological explanations descending to the notion of 'original sin' 'that deflects the causes of the problem to the bedroom, where people reproduce, or to the dinner table, where they eat, or to the vehicles, home furnishings and clothing that in large part have become indispensable to ordinary living' (*TES*: 39). What is striking about these responses to Bookchin – beyond their underlying misanthropy – is their profoundly asocial and ahistorical quality. It is notable how a simplistic, naturalistic reductionism collides with a poorly thought-out embrace of methodological individualism in both criticisms. Contra Sale and Fox, what we find in Bookchin's intervention here – amidst all the polemic – is simply the insistence that human beings do not breed like fruit flies or consume because they lack moral instruction or ethical guidance. Rather, production, reproduction and consumption – like any other human activities – take place within complex social, cultural, historical and ecological contexts, marked in the present period by exploitation, social domination and hierarchies which both constrain and enable intentional action. Ecological matters need to be theorised within this context.

Bookchin continued to argue for differentiated modes of ecological critique in the 1990s. It is striking how the debate that occurred between social and deep ecology in the 1980s mirrors the subsequent debate in the US between advocates of environmental justice and 'mainstream' environmentalism in the 1990s. Underlying much of this debate is not only the question of differentiated critique but the role that notions of 'scarcity' and 'natural limits' should play in eco-critique.

## POST-SCARCITY ECOLOGY

In certain quarters, the evoking of absolute natural 'limits' and declarations of states of 'eco-scarcity' have been treated as axiomatic, non-negotiable elements of eco-critique. Thus, Andrew Dobson has observed that the 'foundation-stone' of much green thinking over the last three decades has been the belief that our finite Earth places limits on our industrial growth. This finitude, and the scarcity it implies, has become 'an article of faith for green ideologues' (Dobson, 1990: 73). That Bookchin's writings have never signed up to this

'article of faith' indicates a further interesting break between social ecology and conventional ecological thought. It has ensured that his position has simply been dismissed by prominent political theorists and sociologists such as John Gray (1997) and Raymond Murphy (1994). On this question though, I would like to suggest that what we can find in Bookchin's writings is simply an insistence that talk of 'limits' and 'scarcity' is not unproblematic, that such concepts need to be understood in their social, historical and ecological complexity (paying due attention to how these concepts intertwine in complex ways with hierarchy/domination), and that eco-critique needs to be scrupulous in avoiding careless applications of such concepts since they can as easily *preclude* as allow for critique of existing arrangements.

For example, Bookchin repeatedly argues that the concept of 'scarcity' or a 'stingy nature' has been used historically as an ideology which 'naturalises' existing social relations, states of affairs and outcomes. Thus, 'scarcity' has long served ruling elites as a rationale for 'the development of the patriarchal family, private property, class domination, and the state' (*PSA*: 11).

Second, a central problem with declarations of generalised states of 'eco-scarcity' in *contemporary* society is that such claims can obscure the extent to which the 'absolute scarcities' proclaimed by Malthusians – that we are 'running out' of water, oil, food, etc. – are, on more careful inspection, frequently related to *structural economic and political factors* rather than being simple 'natural facts' (*TES:* 302–5). Indeed, as we have seen, Bookchin argues that, all talk of scarcity aside, such declarations frequently conceal the extent to which technological and economic developments in post-war capitalism, perhaps for the first time in human history, have actually created the potential for all to have an adequate means of life and more. Indeed, he argues that such abundance could be maintained, developed and even rendered much more fecund with socio-political reorganisation and the introduction of a new eco-technological settlement.

A further level of complexity to the concept of 'scarcity' in social ecology emerges from Bookchin's observation that scarcity under capitalism does not just refer to a lack of the means of life, or even to new or exotic wants which social development turns into needs. Rather, it is argued, what cruder forms of environmentalism simply ignore is that certain forms of 'scarcity' are not simply a product of structural economic factors but are additionally generated through a 'socially contradictory hypostatisation of need' (*EofF*: 68). Arguing

that capitalism leads not only to production for the sake of production but also to consumption for the sake of consumption – that 'grow or die' has its counterpart in 'buy or die' – a situation is seen as emerging where:

just as the production of commodities is no longer related to their function as *use-values*, as objects of real utility, so wants are no longer related to humanity's sense of its real needs. Both commodities and needs acquire a blind life of their own; they assume a fetishised form, an irrational dimension, that seems to determine the destiny of the people who produce and consume them. Marx's famous notion of the 'fetishisation of commodities' finds its parallel in a 'fetishisation of needs'. Production and consumption in effect, acquire superhuman qualities that are no longer related to technological development and the subject's rational control of the conditions of existence. (*EofF*: 68)

To return then to the world of neo-Malthusian demographers, the basic problem with their approach is that by the logic of the commodity system:

society would continue to increase its output of garbage even if its population was halved. Its advertising system would be mobilized to sell us three, four or five color television sets per family instead of one or two. Production rates would continue to soar and the switch turned from 'scarcity' to 'affluence' or vice versa depending entirely on the profitability of the commodities that were produced. (Bookchin, 1974: lxx)

How then can ecological critique make a progressive intervention in a culture that is structurally premised around the social creation of insatiability? Bookchin argues that such a critique needs to highlight the manner in which a 'buy or die' culture committed to fulfilling externally generated needs is constructed at the expense of 'the autonomy of the subject'. It is this which is the 'fatal flaw' in the development of modern subjectivity. 'Buy or die' needs to be critically linked to the inability of modern individuals to have 'the autonomy and spontaneity ... to control the conditions of his or her own life' (*EofF*: 69). To break the fetishisation of needs then requires that we recover 'freedom of choice' as political subjects, but also that we ensure that all have a 'sufficiency in the means of life'. For it is only in a context where we have free autonomous individuals that we can envisage a transition from a 'wealth of things' to a 'wealth of culture and individual creativity' (*EofF*: 69).

Underpinning Bookchin's social-ecological critique of consumption then, is a basic Aristotelian assumption that the good life is the

balanced life. A rational person who is politically conscious and has a sufficiency in the means of life will recognise this and aspire towards developing an 'autonomous personality and selfhood' (*EofF*: 69). What follows from this and the availability of choice that post-scarcity conditions could offer is that people will define their needs in terms of 'qualitative, ecological, humanistic, indeed, philosophical criteria' (*EofF*: 69).

Bookchin's theorisation of limits, scarcity and post-scarcity is fascinating. What is most striking is the extent to which his basic assumptions – informed as they are by his own unique blend of libertarian, humanist and Aristotelian impulses – are at variance with the basic ontological and normative assumptions of liberalism, vulgar Marxism and green Malthusianism with their shared economistic views of human being (rational economic man/the purely materialist proletarian/man and woman as the insatiable and irresponsibly profligate producer). Bookchin's scepticism concerning the casual use of green scarcity discourse can additionally draw on an extensive literature in the social and environmental sciences for empirical support. Thus, whether we consider Amartya Sen's observation that famine is very rarely in modern times the product of absolute scarcity but rather a question of the maldistribution of resources (see Sen, 1981, but additionally see George, 1990; Ross, 1998), or Erik Swyngedouw's related observation that the unreliable access to drinking water experienced by one billion human beings 'has very little, if anything to do with absolute scarcity' and more to do with purchasing power, available capital and the direction of capital investment (see Swyngedouw, 2004: 196), or Brian Milani's claim that a green economics needs to start from the recognition of the central role that *the production of material scarcity* plays in a developed capitalist economy (Milani, 2000), all these currents affirm Bookchin's arguments. Similarly, Bookchin's more controversial claim that a humane ecological society and a rational form of consumption is possibly only conceivable under social conditions of abundance is a hypothesis that can draw some support from Ingelhart's (1977) post-materialism thesis. It is, after all, difficult to be concerned with 'high consequence' risks over the long *durée* when your children do not have food in their bellies.

Equally though, it has to be recognised that Bookchin's engagement with the question of scarcity is incomplete. Thus, the role that 'scarcity' has played in human history is never dealt with in an entirely consistent fashion across his writings. The claim that certain

forms of scarcity are the product of a 'social hypostatisation of need' is suggestive but again underdeveloped, evoking difficult distinctions between 'true' and 'false' needs that Bookchin ultimately does not address any more convincingly than Herbert Marcuse. Additionally, as Ted Benton (1993) has observed, even if we can envisage an emancipated society free of capital accumulation and commodification, it is likely that such a society would continue to be characterised by social struggle over a range of 'positional goods'.

The usefulness of the concept 'post-scarcity' needs to be qualified then. Bookchin's general emphasis that scarcity is a social as much as a natural phenomenon, that declarations of scarcity have been used historically as disciplinary measures, and that many existing forms of deprivation are the consequence as much of 'planned scarcity' generated by the market as of anything to do with a lack of natural resources are vital insights that have been woefully absent from many versions of eco-critique.[7] As a broad observation about the prosperity delivered by the US economy in the 1960s, which has been subsequently generalised across the advanced capitalist world, Bookchin's claims are reasonable. However, the idea that we live or could live in societies that have abolished scarcity in general (and therefore we could undermine the need for a mechanism to allocate goods and services and a clarification of the just norms that would inform the distribution of goods and services) would seem more problematic. Clearly technological change, the existence of positional goods, and indeed varying cultural and generational appraisals of what constitutes higher needs, make this assumption difficult to sustain.

## THE VIRTUES OF BOOKCHIN'S APPROACH TO SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

To summarise, whilst Bookchin's disputes with many other currents of green thought have been widely read as an example of his sectarianism, this chapter has argued that a more careful reading of his approach to the environmental question reveals more to be at stake. Specifically, Bookchin's critiques of neo-Malthusian, technocratic and liberal reformist versions of eco-critique are actually based on deep-seated empirical, epistemological, ontological and normative differences with such positions.

At the basic 'problem definition' stage, Bookchin's form of eco-critique is primarily concerned with pollution, waste and the dangers

of broader processes of 'ecological simplification', rather than the population/resources issue. Where Bookchin's social-ecological critique does talk of 'limits', this is understood not in a geological but in an ecological fashion.

Second, ecological critique as *differentiated socio-ecological critique* is a central feature of social ecology. Bookchin insists that environmental degradation has to be understood in ecological/scientific, social, cultural and political terms and that progressive modes of eco-critique must recognise how hierarchy and domination are intimately bound up with environmental destruction. What follows from this is the need to attend to the *different roles* that diverse social institutions and social groups play in contributing to environmental problems.

Third, central to Bookchin's approach to socio-ecological critique is informed by the sense that a one-sided Malthusian emphasis on 'limits' is inadequate. We need to counterbalance our sense of 'constraints' with an emphasis on 'enablements', agency, possibility and potentiality. Bookchin's interest in 'enablements' is present in his optimistic emphasis on the positive potential that technological and scientific change has for re-directing our impact on the natural world. Progressive modes of socio-ecological critique need to attend not simply to the fragility of ecosystems but to 'the conscious imperatives that drive people to insightfully change their environment and render it more safe, secure, abundant and comfortable with minimal toil' (*RH*: 246).

Finally, Bookchin's mode of socio-ecological critique is humanist. Bookchin is not presenting us with a reductive humanism, but it is unmistakably the case that his understanding of what constitutes an 'environmental problem' and of questions of causality is ultimately informed by deep commitments to philosophical and ethical humanism. Environmental problems at the end of the day are *problems for us* and the species that we wish to share the planet with.

When one considers these four elements of Bookchin's approach to developing a social-ecological critique of modernity, it is striking how rigorous his approach is, in comparison to the simplicities of neo-Malthusian thought. In the next chapter we will examine how he goes on to execute this critique via his thesis on the 'grow or die' imperative of capitalism.

# 4
# Capitalism and Ecology

In the last chapter, we saw that Bookchin's writings provide us with a sophisticated critique of neo-Malthusian or 'austerity orientated' modes of eco-critique and offer an intriguing attempt to formulate a 'post-scarcity' style of social-ecological critique. In this chapter, we consider how Bookchin develops his own substantive position.

Central to Bookchin's critique of advanced capitalism is his 'grow or die' thesis. This maintains that modern environmental degradation needs to be understood not only in a fully social and differentiated fashion but within the broader context of capital accumulation. Thinking 'ecology' within the context of these dynamics reveals that capitalism is ultimately unsustainable.

In this chapter, we trace the development of Bookchin's 'grow or die' thesis and consider its relationship to other currents of left-green social theory. We then consider the merits of his thesis against three key debates that have moved to the centre of the environmental social sciences over the last decade. Attention is paid to: (i) debates running through political ecology and the sociology of environmental justice concerning the matter of how we can measure, evaluate and conceptualise contemporary environmental dislocations; (ii) the debates surrounding ecological modernisation; and (iii) debates surrounding climate change and the rise of green neo-liberalism. Working through these literatures, I suggest that whilst Bookchin's form of socio-ecological critique is impressive for its time and for the manner in which it anticipates (often with stunning prescience in the case of climate change) what have now become widely shared concerns about the relationship between the global expansion of capitalism and the dangers of ecological simplification, there are also certain limits to his approach. Specifically, I want to argue that there are certain inconsistencies between his advocacy of an open-ended and complex form of eco-critique as outlined in the last chapter, and his discussion of capital/ecology relations which tends towards closure and a simple linear, crisis narrative. Following this,

I argue that if we follow through with Bookchin's mode of social-ecological critique, it becomes apparent that rather more diverse scenarios in the capital/ecology relationship can be imagined than Bookchin allows.

## THE 'GROW OR DIE' THESIS

The claim that since capitalism is fundamentally based on continual accumulation, it must necessarily undermine its own ecological base is probably the most persistent theme of Bookchin's mature work. As we have seen in Chapter 1, it is a claim that Bookchin first tentatively suggests in 1952 (Herber, 1952). The 'regressive simplification of the environment' is central to 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (1964), but from the 1970s onwards it moves to the centre of Bookchin's writings. Indeed, it is the very *inevitability* of this dynamic, and the inability of reformist forms of environmentalism to recognise this, that Bookchin highlights to define his social ecology against liberal and technocratic forms of environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

Bookchin, of course, is not the only social theorist writing during the 1970s to argue for the merits of a political economy of the environment. Barry Commoner (1971), Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1974), André Gorz (1975) and Allan Schnaiberg (1980) all make important contributions to an account of the relationship between capital and ecology. It is interesting to note, though, that when we look at these early attempts to formulate a distinctly 'left-green' critique of capitalism we can detect notable differences of emphasis between Bookchin and these thinkers.

We noted in the last chapter Bookchin's disagreement with Gorz over the extent to which geological understandings of natural-limits discourses can be productively deployed in social ecological critique. Other issues also divide Bookchin and his 1970s contemporaries. For example, Enzensberger, in 'A Critique of Political Ecology' (1974), follows Bookchin in arguing that it is important to exercise caution in embracing certain class-laden 'orthodox' environmental narratives. Yet, Enzensberger goes on to argue – contra Bookchin – that environmental problems potentially constitute both a *threat* and an *opportunity* to capital. As the environmental costs of production are off-loaded on to the state, new capitalist opportunities could be created, potentially giving rise to what he refers to as an emerging 'eco-industrial complex' (Enzensberger, 1974). Schnaiberg's *The*

*Environment* (1980) reworks 'grow or die' arguments in terms of a 'treadmill of production' discourse. *The Environment* also emphasises 'the critical uncertainty' (Schnaiberg, 1980: 41) surrounding many evaluations of the scale of global environmental problems and entertains a range of diverse scenarios through which 'the treadmill' might be brought under control. André Gorz similarly argues in *Ecology as Politics* that capitalism might 'assimilate ecological necessities as technical constraints and adapt the conditions of exploitation to them' (Gorz, 1975).

In contrast, in *Towards an Ecological Society*, Bookchin criticises Gorz's *Ecology as Politics* for failing to recognise that:

If any serious ecological conclusion is to be drawn from *Capital* Vol. I, it is from Marx's compelling demonstration that the very law of life of capitalist competition, of the fully developed market economy, is based on the maxim, 'grow or die'. Translated into ecological terms, this clearly means that a fully developed market economy must unrelentingly exploit nature. (*TES*: 293)

Recognition of 'grow or die', then, is central to the programme of social ecology. Such a thesis argues for a revolutionary rather than a reformist politics of nature. Moreover, something of a bite is restored to the directionality of history. Rather than turn to the working class as embodying the gravedigger of capitalism, it is 'nature' that now occupies this role. How is this claim elaborated?

## BOOKCHIN'S MACRO ECO-CRISIS THEORY

Running through virtually all of Bookchin's writings we can find a range of suggestive comments which elaborate why it is reasonable to believe that in principle modern capitalism is marked by an ecologically hazardous dynamic. His early writings (see *OSE*, *CIOC*) suggest that the sheer scale and complexity of modern living make the practice of careful ecological stewardship difficult. His urban writings stress the ecologically malign effects of capitalist urbanisation and the pathologies that emerge from the divorce between town and country. Again, attention focuses on the sheer scale of modern urban forms and their tendencies to develop distinctly asocial and energy inefficient forms of sprawl (see *CIOC*, *LOTC*, *FUTC*, Chapter 6). We have seen how Bookchin, in *The Ecology of Freedom*, pays considerable attention to the various cultural pathologies of capitalism that further promote ecologically irrational modes of behaviour. The manner in which authentic subjectivity as the self-managing active subject is replaced

by consumption, and indeed a profoundly social and ecologically antagonistic mode of 'consumption for the sake of consumption', is a central theme of *Towards an Ecological Society*. Additionally, as we have seen in Chapter 2, persistent attention is given in Bookchin's writings to the manner in which capitalism promotes an instrumental and highly antagonistic view of the necessary relations between society and nature. The 'domination of nature' is seen as the only viable mode of engagement between humanity and the natural world. Bookchin ultimately relies on Marx's observation that capitalism must accumulate or collapse to suggest that not only incessant growth but growth at any cost is inherent to capitalism and hence leads to ecological crisis.

Bookchin's arguments here are suggestive and they potentially identify underlying causal mechanisms that explain the anthropogenic, or more accurately, the social structural forces driving phenomena such as global warming, deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Additionally, Bookchin has cautioned against excessive use of apocalyptic imagery in ecological critique. For example, in the introduction to the second edition of *Our Synthetic Environment* (1974), Bookchin states:

True, the natural world's recuperative powers should not be discounted; the biosphere has survived tremendous catastrophes in the past – ice ages, epochal climate changes, major shifts in wind and rainfall patterns that have totally desiccated once luxuriant areas, and seismic activities that profoundly changed the face of entire continents. These severe shocks imposed by nature itself, far from destroying the world of life, served in many ways to foster its development towards a greater diversity of forms, flexibility of adaptive and survival mechanisms, and the elaboration of increasingly intelligent behavioural patterns. The resilience of the biosphere in dealing with damage caused by modern society is cause for considerable hope; it may well provide us with the lead time to rework our social relations and the lines that will serve to harmonize our relations with nature. A parallelising 'doomsday syndrome' to use John Maddox's phrase, that leads to hopeless fatalism in the face of an unalterable social tendency towards immolation could be as harmful as a roseate optimism that naïvely preens itself on a mindless commitment to 'progress' and 'growth'. (Bookchin, 1974: lv–lvi)

Nevertheless, it would have to be recognised that as a whole Bookchin's ecological writings of the 1970s and 1980s rely on a macro and fairly general narrative of an ever worsening 'eco-crisis'. This understanding of 'ecological crisis' of course needs to be understood in its historical

specificity. Bookchin began to raise the alarm about the excessive use of chemicals and pesticides in the United States in the early 1950s, when few countries had regulatory bodies to monitor the impact of such activity on human health or ecosystems, let alone environmental social movements to campaign against such developments. The alarmist tone in these writings is understandable. Even eco-sceptics (see Easterbrook, 1995: 60) have conceded that the early post-war period marked a high point in the United States for indiscriminate, completely unregulated and even wanton environmental despoliation through the overuse of chemicals and pesticides – just as *Our Synthetic Environment* argued at the time. More generally, it is striking to note that it was only between 1968 and 1973 that many industrialised nations even began to establish separate agencies or departments to deal with environmental problems (Jamison, 1996). The manner in which the environmental agenda expanded over subsequent decades – as seemingly endless scientific studies and UN reports from Bruntland (1987) to Stern (2007) raised concerns about much broader global problems (notably ozone depletion, desertification and climate change) – lends support to Bookchin's position. Finally, it must be recognised that social ecology is eco-critique formulated under the shadow of the bomb. The whole arch of Bookchin's writings on environmental problems from the early 1950s to his final substantive work on the environmental question in 1990[1] corresponds with the duration of the Cold War and possible nuclear annihilation lies as a backdrop to his thought.

It is also important to note that Bookchin's understanding of 'the crisis' is multi-dimensional. *The Modern Crisis* (1986) is concerned with a crisis of ecological simplification, a social crisis of meaning, a democratic crisis of participation and the looming threat of nuclear extinction. From this, we can see that Bookchin's eco-crisis theory is rather more complex than the early Malthusian currents that have been so extensively critiqued by contemporary contrarians (e.g., Easterbrook, 1995; Lomborg, 2001, etc.).[2] Nevertheless, issues remain here.

One of the first issues with Bookchin's assessment of the scale and impact of environmental change is that while his detailed assessments of environmental dislocations are conducted in his studies of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, neither Bookchin nor any of his theoretical associates (Biehl, 1991; Clark, 1986; 1990; 1997; Heller, 1990; 1993; 1999; Fotopoulos, 1997) review or extend the analysis of 'ecological crisis' in any substantive and detailed fashion. Thus,

in Bookchin's writings of the 1980s, it is difficult to find anything more than a fairly perfunctory 'adding to the list' of environmental problems which are viewed as self-evidently exponentially worsening and giving rise to 'the ecological crisis'.[3] Beyond the longstanding critique of neo-Malthusian and scarcity narratives, little attention is paid to the rise and institutionalisation of global environmentalism in his later writings. We get very little sense of how Bookchin's understanding of environmental issues may have changed over time or how legislative factors may have affected certain issues.

Second, and as we have seen in Chapter 3, while Bookchin draws attention to the different causal role played by different groups in generating a general 'Ecological Crisis', what is less clearly explored is the very different vulnerabilities that different groups display to specific environmental problems or the differential capacities that exist to define and mobilise around issues of environmental change.

Third, it could be observed of Bookchin's elaboration of the capital/ecology relationship that, beyond the writings of the early 1960s (and suggestive comments thereafter), we can find little sociologically informed elaboration of his 'grow or die' thesis in detailed empirical case studies which demonstrate the efficacy of his position. As such, the notion that different capitalisms (whether the US liberal model, the variety of European welfare state models or the diverse East Asian models), with their very different histories of state intervention, market relations and different degrees of political openness, might respond to the rise of environmental problems and the challenge of environmental reform in different ways, is never seriously examined. Nor is there any extended examination of the successes as well as failures of the environmental reforms and the attempts to implement ecological modernisation strategies that swept across most of the OECD countries following the rise of environmentalism in the early 1970s (see Mol, 2003). More generally, beyond Bookchin's critique of 'Northern' neo-Malthusian currents, Bookchin's work has surprisingly little to say about how the dynamics of North/South relations and combined and uneven development play out, at a material and semiotic level, as the environmental debate becomes increasingly globalised in the 1990s and beyond.

Finally, Bookchin is so insistent that green capitalism is a contradiction in terms (over the long run) that his writings barely consider the diverse ways in which global capitalism could green itself. I will suggest in what follows, however, that these factors are important because they all point to the considerable complexity in

attempts to develop a progressive, humanistic and libertarian mode of socio-ecological critique.

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY, POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

For example, if we read Bookchin's social ecology against recent literatures on political ecology (Blackie and Brookfield, 1987; Peet and Watts, 1996; Taylor, Halfron and Edwards, 1997; Braun and Castree, 1998; Silliman and King, eds. 1999; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004) and literatures on environmental justice (Bullard, 1990; 1993; Harvey, 1996; Gottlieb, 1993; Agyeman, Bullard, Evans, eds. 2003), we can see a series of interesting convergences and divergences. At the level of convergence, it is striking how both Bookchin's writings and the literature on political ecology and on environmental justice emerge from a very similar critique of the limitations of conventional environmentalism. Whilst these literatures have had rather different foci ('third world' political ecology until recently focusing on society–environment dynamics in the Global South, while empirical work on environmental justice has developed primarily but not exclusively in reference to the US),[4] they are all concerned with the class, gender and racial bias of conventional environmentalist arguments. All have been sharply critical of neo-Malthusian and romantic environmentalism. Additionally, much recent work in political ecology – with its stress on the importance of differentiated critique, viewing environmental problems in terms of socio-ecological processes, rejecting methodological individualism, recognising the heterogeneous impact that humans have on their environment, and bringing political economy, cultural and historical analysis and analysis of the state into modes of socio-ecological explanation – directly corresponds with Bookchin's thinking.

However, certain differences remain. Notably, whilst Bookchin places a global eco-crisis narrative at the centre of progressive socio-ecological critique and maintains that the fact of 'Ecological Crisis' potentially creates a general human interest (see *RS*: 169), many currents of political ecology now strongly pull against such assumptions. Specifically, a central theme of many studies in political ecology has been the very different interests that emerge not just in terms of who contributes to environmental problems but of how such problems impact and the power relations involved in how they are defined, prioritised and experienced (see Taylor, Halfron and Edwards,

1997; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004). At one level, this difference of emphasis emerges due to the vantage points of these discourses. Bookchin, like much radical ecology discourse more generally, is attempting to construct a meta-discourse, a critical theory of society–nature relations. Political ecology in contrast is grounded in discrete attention being paid to the local case. And much of this research suggests that when you attempt to understand environmental problems in their geographical specificity, whilst the detrimental effects of market relations frequently play a major role in explaining environmental degradation, there are also many more actors and many more interests working at a multitude of scales (local, regional and international) that can give rise to environmental problems (see Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004).

Second, many currents of political ecology are also much more wary of generalised global eco-crisis narratives than currents of radical ecology. In a world where there are now numerous groups and institutions deploying 'crisis' narratives in the developing world to achieve often diverse aims – from the World Bank and the IMF to NGOs, from tribal elders to local social movements – political ecologists have demonstrated that such narratives can have progressive and/or regressive outcomes depending on the context, the empirical facts on the ground, and the power relations that are facilitated by such discourses.

For example, whilst the vast majority of work in political ecology emphasises that environmental problems in the global South (from air and water pollution to resource shortages, from loss of biodiversity to urban housing) are of an order of severity well beyond anything that exists in the North, there is now an extensive literature documenting the problems created by over-generalised eco-crisis narratives, and the role that such claims can play in facilitating 'coercive conservation'. Research by Thomas and Middleton (1994), Leach and Mearns (1996) and Leach and Fairhead (1998) for example, has questioned UN estimates of the scale of desertification in Africa. Leach and Fairhead note that dominant theories of desertification in West Africa maintained that population pressures forced peasants to expand onto marginal lands, leading to overgrazing, fragile soils and deforestation. While such narratives lead certain state agencies and international organisations to support coercive conservation strategies, Leach and Fairhead's analysis found that not only had desertification been overestimated but that local people had been cultivating more forestry not less. In relation to soil erosion, Blackie

and Brookfield (1987) have argued that generalised crisis narratives used by state agencies can obscure interpretive complexities in mapping these processes. One farmer's soil erosion can provide another farmer's soil fertility. Forsyth (1998) has tracked the decline of Himalayan environmental degradation theory in the mid 1980s where the assumption of rapid deforestation occurring in this area was simply inaccurate (being based on faulty neo-Malthusian premises), underestimating normally high rates of soil movement under monsoon rainfall. Leach and Mearns (1996) have pointed out that numerous environmental programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have been premised on records made by colonial park rangers which tended to romanticise the state of the African landscape prior to European settlement and underestimate the adaptive practices of people living in drylands.

Many more studies in political ecology (in contrast to much radical ecological discourse) have increasingly drawn from stochastic or 'non-equilibrium' models of ecology which emphasise dynamic change as a central feature of ecosystem health (Botkin, 1991; Zimmerer, 1994; Forsyth, 2003). The recent 'cultural turn' in environmental history (see Cronon, 1995) has additionally drawn attention to the central role that culture and power play in relation to how we read a particular landscape as optimal. Work drawing from these currents has rendered understanding of socio-ecological change more complex.

Political ecology is not without problems. An excessive 'localist' orientation can ensure tendencies to leave under-examined systemic tendencies and attention to macro contexts (Peet and Watts, 1996).[5] However, a close reading of the literature provides a much greater appreciation of the complexities involved in understanding and defining environmental degradation. As Forsyth's survey of the field notes: 'It is important to reiterate that these discussions ... do not deny the importance of environmental degradation, but illustrate the inadequacy of the concepts we use to define it' (Forsyth, 2003: 36).

If 'Southern' political ecologists have frequently drawn our attention to complexities that emerge in North/South environmental engagements, scholars exploring the sociology of environmental justice in the North have added a further level of spatial and cultural complexity to this discussion. Much of this latter scholarship has drawn our attention to the manner in which 'environmental problems' in the North, such as 'pollution', not only impact on different groups in very different ways (Bullard, 1990; 1993), but also affect our very definition of which environmental problems should

rank as priorities, ensuring that the capacity for agenda-setting is heavily influenced by hierarchy/domination. As a result, it is now recognised that the environmental concerns of dominant social groups in the US (for example 'wilderness' preservation) tend to get prioritised over environmental issues which more directly affect the working class, minorities and women (issues of health and safety at work, local pollution concerns, etc.). 'Northern' framings of the environmental agenda (the singular focus on climate change) tend to triumph over the immediate socio-ecological concerns of many people living in the global South (e.g., woodfuel pollution, malaria, lack of clean drinking water). More generally, much of the literature on environmental justice in the North has sharply demonstrated how environmental problems rarely generate simply 'universal interests' because environmental problems impact on very different social groups in very different ways.

If, rather than challenging Bookchin's thinking, recent literatures on environmental justice and political ecology suggest that socio-ecological critique needs to be more disaggregated not only at the level of causation but at the level of impacts, a further set of issues emerges with the theorisation of the relationship between capitalism and ecology in Bookchin's work.

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION AND ITS CRITICS

Whilst, as we have seen, Bookchin provides us with trenchant critiques of economism and determinism, when his analysis moves from historical to contemporary times, it is striking how it tends towards a determinist reading of the dynamics or 'logics' of capitalism culminating in a general eco-crisis. There are a number of general concerns that could be raised with this framing of the capital/ecology relationship (see Sandler, 1994; Buttel, 1998; Castree, 2002; 2007a; 2007b; Wright, 2004).

First, in formulating his argument in an 'emphatic' fashion, Bookchin quickly rules 'out of court' the possibility that a new 'green' environmental regime could emerge whose primary purpose is to facilitate the rise of 'green' accumulation (see Sandler, 1994). Yet, as Blair Sandler has observed, a problem that surfaces with emphatic versions of the 'grow or die' thesis that capitalism necessarily commodifies, internalises and destroys its 'conditions of production', is that it can discount too quickly the notion that an environmental regime could be constructed at the level of the firm and beyond that

would offer capitalist enterprises opportunities to *reduce* ecological degradation as well as increase profit (see Sandler, 1994: 39–40).

Second, Bookchin's tendency to view the state as self-evident partner in crime here introduces a rather functionalist analysis of state dynamics into his thinking (Buttel, 1998). What seems to be missing is attention to the manner in which states play a role in *societal rationalisation* as well as *capital accumulation*. For as Buttel reasonably observes: 'just as there is a structural incentive for capital to externalise environmental and other costs onto the rest of society, there is also a capitalist logic of conservation and efficiency' (Buttel, 1998: 269).

Moreover, the notion that different capitalisms alongside different international, state, regional and market structures might actually be more or less flexible in dealing with environmental problems than Bookchin allows can draw partial empirical support from the recent sociology of ecological modernisation.

Ecological modernisers such as Mol (1996; 2003), Paehlke (2003) and Dryzek, Downes, Hunold, Schlosberg and Hernes (2003), have all drawn from a diverse set of case studies and an extensive empirical literature on environmental policy making over the last decade to argue that international diplomacy and/or domestic policy changes at certain times and in certain places – in the international arena and in certain OECD nations over the last two decades – have led to some important environmental improvements in the affluent world. Arthur Mol has argued that there are now grounds for believing that 'actual institutional transformations aimed at the preservation of the *sustenance base* are now taking place in industrial societies; *transformations which can no longer be interpreted as mere window dressing, as they were seen in the 1970s*' (Mol, 1996: 303). Focusing in particular on developments in Northern Europe, the US and Japan, ecological modernisers chronicle transformations in the environmental policies of all these countries from the 1980s onwards. Following this, Eco-modernisers have argued that we can see important shifts occurring in environmental policy in all these nations in the 1980s and 1990s, as simple 'end of pipe' resolutions to environmental difficulties are increasingly replaced by 'more advanced environmental technologies that not only redirect production processes and products into more environmentally sound ones' (Mol, 1996: 307) but also trigger ecological restructuring in key industries. Mol has provided a detailed account of such changes in the Dutch chemical industry in the 1980s and has gone on to identify examples of affluent 'core'

societies responding to key environmental issues, from air and water pollution to deforestation and soil erosion. Thus, Japan's remarkably quick response to its notorious air pollution problems in the 1970s, the comprehensive nature of Dutch environmental policy, recent legislative developments in Germany and the European Union's environmental programmes, particularly the Fourth Environmental Action Programme, are all cited as paradigmatic examples of how well thought-out legislation in liberal democratic regimes can respond to environmental problems with relative ease (Mol, 2003).

Additionally, ecological modernisers (e.g., Dryzek et al. 2003) have extensively documented the growing interest in environmental management systems in many European and US multinationals. Industrial ecology in the EU and Japan indicates an interest amongst certain sections of capital in forms of recycling, and energy and natural resource saving (see Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999).

The literature on ecological modernisation, then, provides us with another level of complexity for understanding contemporary society–environment relations. In certain contexts (specifically within affluent liberal democracies), and with certain environmental issues, it seems that markets, the capitalist firm, government and social-movement pressure can operate with more room for manoeuvre than is often appreciated. Reductions in air and water pollution in the OECD, coupled with the Montreal Protocol that successfully banned ozone destroying CFCs, stand as the strongest examples. However, there are some limitations to this literature.

Most notably, critics of the sociology of ecological modernisation have argued that there are problems with the spatial/temporal scale of ecological modernisation, with the units of analysis used in ecological modernising studies to demonstrate environmental improvements, and with the way in which we can attribute causality to environmental improvements (Harvey, 1996; White, 2002; York and Rosa, 2003). Specifically, while there might be much breathless talk of the benefits of dematerialisation in the business press, evidence of such developments remains partial and contested. It is increasingly evident that pro-environmental policy shifts in the OECD do not necessarily generate lower emissions (Fisher and Freudenburg, 2004). More broadly, empirical studies suggest that optimistic literatures (either of the contrarian or eco-modernising variety), have paid insufficient attention to distributional issues related to environmental change. Beyond the claims of environmental justice scholars that environmental improvements within the OECD can

take place whilst environmental 'bads' still disproportionately impact on poor communities or people of colour (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, eds. 2003), studies increasingly indicate that environmental gains in the OECD more broadly have been achieved through a degree of displacement of such problems across, time, space and other media. There is growing evidence (see Jorgenson 2003; 2004; Jorgenson and Rice, 2005; Roberts et al., 2003; York and Rosa, 2003) to suggest that 'the more affluent nations can reduce their impacts on their environment within their borders through the importing of resources and the exporting of wastes' (Jorgenson and Rice, 2005: 61). Andrew Jorgenson and James Rice suggest that this 'uneven ecological exchange' is a key feature of the structural dynamics of international trade.

With the emergence of high tech eco-capitalism, it may well be that *key sections* of capital are now pressing for the development of environmentally efficient technologies or even embarking on ecological restructuring. However, it is also clear that critical sectors are much less enthusiastic about this agenda. Different industries, different factions within industries, and even different economic regions are taking quite different positions on the need for ecological restructuring.

Similarly, while countries might generate profits selling new eco-technologies, there are clearly going to be transitional as well as perhaps longer-term costs involved in dealing with environmental problems. And in a period of heightened global competition, it remains far from clear whether periphery or semi-periphery nations will suffer short-term uncompetitiveness to gain longer-term savings. As should be apparent from the fact that millions currently die in these areas from preventable illnesses, the fact that there may well be solutions to current problems (whether vaccines or new eco-efficiency technologies) does not mean that those who need them will receive them. The extent to which the still hypothetical promises of 'the green industrial revolution' (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999) can be fulfilled under existing socio-cultural-economic relations without generating rebound effects and other social or ecological pathologies is unclear (White, 2002).

Once again, the debates between eco-modernisers and world systems theorists hardly discredit Bookchin's work. Both currents are essentially negotiating around the validity of his central thesis. Yet, once again, if we read these literatures together, they seem to

suggest the need for generalised crisis theories to attend to the more spatial complexities of the modern environmental debate.

## CLIMATE CHANGE, GREEN GOVERNMENTALITY AND NATURE AS AN ACCUMULATION STRATEGY

Let us turn to a final twist in this story. Political ecology and environmental justice, ecological modernisation and world systems theory, require that we tell a rather messier tale about the relationship between capitalism and ecology than Bookchin would allow. What then can be said about climate change?

If there is one central environmental problem that would seem to confirm Bookchin's basic thesis, it is climate change. The scientific consensus on the reality of global warming (see IPCC, 2007; Stern, 2007), alongside the inability of 'the international community' to address this issue (compared to ozone depletion), would seem to draw us directly back to the world that Bookchin describes. Indeed, when mainstream sources such as *The Stern Report* (2007) are now declaring that climate change threatens to be the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen, risking major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the twentieth century, it could be argued that the debate has turned sharply back to Bookchin's 'grow or die' thesis. However, further complexities, as always, emerge.

Perhaps the first complexity to emerge in considering the relationship between climate change and the onward march of global neo-liberalism is that whilst the response of the inter-state system to global warming has been sluggish, there are nevertheless signs that concerns over global warming and loss of biodiversity are transforming the core socio-economic relationship with nature (Smith, 2007: 17). If Bookchin in 1974 observed that we were seeing nothing short of 'the industrialization of nature', Neil Smith in 2007 has argued that, over the last two decades, we have seen an explosion of 'new ecological commodities' and the construction of entirely new markets in ecological 'goods' and 'bads', from pollution credits to wetland mitigation banking industries, from 'debt for nature swaps' to 'carbon trading'. What emerges from this, according to Smith, is indeed a form of 'green capitalism' generating the 'production of nature all the way down'. Green capitalism may indeed play numerous roles:

Green capitalism may be touted as a means of softening the environmental impacts of the capitalist exploitation of nature, or criticised as simply environmental veneer for sustained exploitation, yet whatever the truth of these propositions, the significance of 'green capitalism' is far more profound. It has become nothing less than a major strategy for ecological commodification, marketization and financialization which radically intensifies and deepens the penetration of nature by capital. (Smith, 2007: 17)

Second, it is increasingly clear that one means through which the greening of neo-liberalism is sustaining and expanding itself is through the construction of ever more complex alliances of NGOs, banks, governments and private capitalists, and the construction of ever more elaborate technologies of monitoring, accounting and control. Rather than focus on some abstract crisis far down the road, Smith recommends we attend to how such altered arrangements have the capacity to deepen uneven development, generating perverse incentives and intensifying poverty in the here and now.

In contrast to Bookchin's hope that the 'grow or die' dynamics of capitalism would generate clear dividing lines in the environmental debate, all we see are messy complexities and multiple ways in which social domination becomes embedded in what Smith refers to as 'the production of nature'. Moreover, we increasingly find ourselves in a world where diverse projects are negotiating different relations with capital, the state, civil society and the broader ecosystem. We see 'environmentalisms of the poor' informed by environmental justice discourses increasingly rubbing up against coercive conservation projects and 'environmentalisms of the rich'. We find grassroots alternative ecological practices from below, sometimes running alongside, sometimes running against, forms of international green diplomacy placing their faith in international treaties. Advocates of government-directed attempts to kick-start a 'Green Industrial Revolution' (in essence advocates of green social democracy; see Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999) exist alongside both defenders of 'business-as-usual' grey capitalism and modes of green neo-liberalism involved in the production of nature all the way down. How this will resolve itself is difficult to say. Perhaps the lesson to be learned from this discussion of the capital/ecology relationship, though, is that a progressive socio-ecological critique needs to develop rather more imaginative modes of engaging with the rise of green capitalism than relying on macro crisis narratives as the 'delivery mechanism' to generate socio-ecological transformation. If we return to Bookchin's

observation in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* that critique should locate itself in 'the tension between what-is and what could-be' (*PSA*: 14), perhaps what is required are modes of engagement that differentiate between two forms of green capitalism: those that merely further embed relations of social domination and forms of environmental injustice and those which might actually open up possibilities for rather different socio-ecological futures, for more socially and environmentally just 'productions of nature' (see White, 2002).

# Part Three
# The Legacy of Freedom

*What justifies my utopian emphasis is the near total lack of material on the potentialities of our time.*

Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1970)

# 5
# Ethics and the
# Normative Grounds of Critique

While substantial portions of Bookchin's writings are devoted to elaborating an explanatory social theory which maps the rise of the 'legacy of domination', his political and ethical writings aspire to recover the 'legacy of freedom' from the human story. Central to this reconstructive project is the articulation of a basis for social hope. As we shall see in the chapters ahead, social hope and the 'legacy of freedom' are found by Bookchin in the potentialities that abound both in human ingenuity and in the utopian possibilities for other socio-ecological worlds. They are found in the claim that a different type of urbanism, a different type of city, a different type of 'technics' and a different type of politics is possible. Yet, Bookchin's writings also find hope in the fecundity and self-organising properties of 'nature in the large'.

Peter Marshall has argued that running through much of the left libertarian and anarchist traditions is a kind of 'cosmic optimism', a view that libertarian and self-organising potentialities are not only the 'natural' qualities of social life but might also exist more generally in the ontological nature of things (Marshall, 1992b). Bookchin's 'dialectical naturalism', affirms such sentiments.

Possibly more than any other area of his work, it is Bookchin's ontology and ethics that have generated extensive critique. Indeed, the debate between Bookchin and his deep ecological critics in the late 1980s and early 1990s generated one of the most heated periods of discussion in eco-philosophy. Although a good deal of attention has focused on the polemical aspects of this discussion, the debate equally generated a serious set of reflections about the extent to which ontology can inform ethics, the relationship between humanism and naturalism, and the existential relationship that we should adopt to the natural world, which deserve to be engaged with.

In this chapter, we attempt to get to grips with the philosophical underpinnings of social ecology and the debate that unfolded in the light of Bookchin's critique of deep ecology and ecocentric thought.

We begin by tracing the development of Bookchin's eco-philosophy, from early attempts to draw philosophical and ethical implications from ecology, to later writings which increasingly present a more dialectical view of nature as a 'meaningful natural history'.

## ECOLOGY AND REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

While the earliest accounts of environmental degradation in Bookchin's writings draw from a variety of scientific disciplines to establish the scale and contours of environmental problems, it is the science of ecology that is seen as deserving particular attention. Presented as a central unifying and integrating discipline, the merits of ecology are initially stressed in a very general fashion in Bookchin's early writings. The 'total view' that an ecological viewpoint aspires towards – with its stress on the *interrelated* nature of organic processes and the manner in which this challenges tendencies towards scientific reductionism – is commended in *Our Synthetic Environment* (*OSE*: 30). More explicitly, in 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought', science is placed centre stage and presented as having 'explosive' social and political implications.

Identified as being essentially concerned with the 'balance of nature' and 'the harmonisation of nature and man' (*PSA*: 82), at a critical level scientific ecology, Bookchin argues, reveals the complexity of natural processes, the extent of existing environmental damage, and the sheer hubris underlying the project of achieving 'mastery' over the planet. Perhaps more controversially though, it is argued that the central significance of ecology is the manner in which it can offer a 'reconstructive message', since, '[i]f humanity is to live in balance with nature, we must turn to ecology for the essential guidelines of how the future society should be organised' (*PSA*: 29).

This idea, that the science of ecology can inform specific values and political imperatives, is a recurring theme in Bookchin's essays of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet such claims are developed in a more suggestive than substantive fashion, asserting similarities between various ecological themes and certain strands of the anarchist tradition (*PSA*: 23; 99–104) or inferring commonalties that could be further explored between ecological and dialectical modes of thinking (see *TES*: 59; 271–2). A number of concrete claims about the 'wisdom' of ecology, however, do emerge from Bookchin's first extended attempts to outline the theoretical basis for his work in *The Ecology of Freedom*.

## HOLISM, SPONTANEITY, NON-HIERARCHY

In the early part of *The Ecology of Freedom*, the defining orientation of ecology is identified as convergent with *holistic* ways of thinking. Understood as conceptualising relationships in terms of their mutual interdependence, holism is presented as the 'conscious effort to discern how the particulars of a community are arranged, how its "geometry" ... makes the "whole more than the sum of its parts"' (*EofF*: 23). Although holism has been associated with various totalitarian modes of thinking, Bookchin argues that such interpretations are 'sharply at odds with what ecologists denote by the term'. An *ecological* wholeness does not stress homogeneity or standardisation but rather understands wholeness as being achieved through a dynamic *unity in diversity*, since, in nature, 'balance and harmony are achieved by ever greater differentiation, by ever expanding diversity' (*EofF*: 24).

A second, vitally significant, tenet of ecology is the emphasis on the importance of *natural spontaneity*. Bookchin suggests here that an ecological understanding of natural processes, in all their kaleidoscopic complexity, allows for a high degree of spontaneity, yielding a variegated ecological situation.

Perhaps the most distinct claim that Bookchin makes for ecology, though, is the suggestion that ecology provides 'strong philosophical underpinnings for a non-hierarchical view of reality' (*EofF*: 24). Stressing the extent to which ecology uncovers the interdependence of all living things and emphasising the general importance of *symbiotic mutualism* in fostering ecosystem stability, Bookchin argues that ecology knows no 'king of the beasts' or 'lowly creatures'. Attempts by ethnologists to describe ecosystems in hierarchical terms or to uncover relations of domination and subordination in animal behaviour are dismissed as 'anthropomorphism at its crudest' (*EofF*: 26). Indeed, the widespread use of hierarchical metaphors to describe the natural world is seen as not only denying the 'integrity of nature' (*EofF*: 27) but as an insidious means of implying that human social hierarchies are somehow part of the 'natural order'.

Ecology is presented as profoundly important, at the ontological level, in that it radicalises our image of the natural world. In contrast to the marketplace view of nature as merely a 'resource dump', Marxian and Freudian understandings of nature as a 'harsh realm of necessity', or the dominant modernist image of nature as a realm entirely devoid of ethical significance, we are offered an alternative

vision of nature as, most notably, the 'image of unity in diversity, spontaneity and complementary relationships free of all hierarchy and domination' (*EofF*: 352).

In considering the social and political implications of these insights though, it is never made clear in Bookchin's early formulations as to how this attempt to develop a 'social ecology' avoids the most obvious accusation that could be levelled against it – that is, of reductionism.

In *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* (1990/1995) Bookchin develops the philosophical underpinnings to social ecology in greater detail. Now drawing more explicitly from the dialectical tradition and currents in modern evolutionary theory, Bookchin's ontology of nature is historicised and rendered dynamic. Rather than understanding 'nature' as a constellation of ecosystems, a more historical and dynamic understanding of 'nature' as a 'cumulative evolutionary process' emerges. With Bookchin's developed synthesis of 'dialectical naturalism', we are presented with a processual and organismic philosophy of nature. From this, he argues we can gain an understanding of humanity's relationship with the natural world and advance the ethical guidelines for a libertarian ecological society (*PofSE*: 87).

## DEVELOPING DIALECTICAL NATURALISM

Perhaps the most striking feature of Bookchin's 'mature' ecological philosophy is the extent to which the 'dilemmas' of the first generation of the Frankfurt School once again return to prompt Bookchin's elaboration of his own position. Specifically, in the latter part of *The Ecology of Freedom*, the metaphysical and ethical impasse reached by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* receives particular attention. As Bookchin notes, for Horkheimer, reason was once understood as an immanent feature of reality, as the *logos*, the organising and motivating principle of the world that imparted meaning and coherence to reality. A key theme of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, is the tracing of how this promise is abandoned as reason is transformed into instrumental rationality, science into scientism, logos into logic. Adorno and Horkheimer conclude that the historical reduction of 'objective reason' to instrumental reason is part of the very dialectic of rationality itself. They maintain that to achieve the high ideals of freedom and autonomy formulated by objective reason, humanity must obtain sufficient control over nature

(internally and externally) to transmute an ideal into a material and psychological reality. According to Bookchin, a crucial ambiguity emerges in Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis here, notably, that '[t]he precondition for freedom is domination – specifically, the domination of the external world by man; the precondition for personal autonomy is also domination – the domination of external psychic nature by a rational apparatus of repression' (*EofF*: 271). And so, Bookchin argues, the critique of reason undertaken by the first generation of critical theorists ultimately lapses into despair.

As was suggested in Chapter 2, Bookchin's social theory and understanding of historical development are an attempt to contest the notion that domination is in some fashion a necessary part of the human project. His developed ecological philosophy could, in similar terms, be viewed as an equally sharp reaction against this assumption and indeed the broader declining faith in the possibility of recovering an emancipatory conception of reason in critical theory. Yet, in contrast to Adorno's turn to 'negative dialectics' or Horkheimer's gradual turn to theology, Bookchin suggests that another way forward is possible, most notably, by turning to nature to recover the notion of 'an immanent world reason'.

Within the context of Western philosophy and social theory, Bookchin develops this argument against two dominant currents. In common with numerous other strands of ecological thought, various forms of nature–culture dualism are critiqued for either reducing the natural world to merely a mechanistic image of dead matter in motion (empiricism), or 'denaturing nature' to nothing more than the product of human subjectivity (Kantianism). Bookchin argues that such traditions, which leave 'nature inert and mind isolated from the world around it' (*PofSE*: 66), are profoundly anti-ecological. In contrast, though, to certain currents of green theory, Bookchin places just as much emphasis on the dangers of naturalistic reductionism, of too quickly collapsing society into nature (*PofSE*: 105). Whether referring to natural law theory, social Darwinism or contemporary neo-Malthusian currents in environmentalism, the 'dark history' of nature philosophy is recognised and firmly repudiated. Noting that 'serious political ambiguities persist in nature philosophy' (*PofSE*: 101), Bookchin argues it is nevertheless imperative to develop an ecological sensibility towards the natural world and hence nature philosophy has to be re-engaged with. However, the development of such a move, Bookchin insists, requires no concessions to 'Taoist moods, Buddhist homilies,' or 'New Age platitudes' (*PofSE*: 98).

Rather, Bookchin maintains that the most promising source for reworking a philosophy of nature is to be found in the *Western organismic tradition.*

What then is the Western organismic tradition? A number of elements are identified, with Hellenic themes in particular weighing heavily. In their *orientation*, pre-Socratic speculations that 'the universe has in some sense a moral character irrespective of human purposes' (*PofSE*: 42), and the Aristotelian notion of nature as 'purposive', are considered immensely valuable points of inspiration. More recent attempts to recover organicist thought – for example in Hans Jonas' (1968) philosophical biology or Lewis Mumford's claim that 'nature' reveals 'complicated interdependencies, manifold co-operations and immanent purpose, evolving towards higher levels of differentiation and integration' (see Mumford, 1961: 302) – are also important. However, it is ultimately to Diderot, Hegel and recent developments in the biology of self-organisation that Bookchin turns to resist the image of humanity as an accidental spark in a meaningless void.

Bookchin argues that the crucial significance of Diderot is the manner in which he proposes a developmental and directed understanding of matter, with the notion that matter has an internal 'nisus' or *sensibilité*. Marking a 'radical breach' with Renaissance and Enlightenment mechanistic thinking, Bookchin argues Diderot's *sensibilité* suggests the immanent fecundity of matter, implying that matter is active and yields increasing complexity.

Yet, it is Hegel who is of central importance to Bookchin. Bookchin rejects Hegel's absolute idealism, his teleological culmination of the subjective and objective in a God-like absolute, and the specific analysis of his logical categories (see *PofSE*: 14). Nevertheless, he argues that dialectical reasoning provides the basis for a decisive criticism of 'conventional reasoning'[1] and a profoundly liberatory and ethical account of causality. In contrast to 'conventional reasoning', with its focus on the fixity of things, Bookchin argues dialectical reasoning offers a much broader, more 'organic' understanding of rationality. Conceptualising reality as profoundly historical and acknowledging its developmental nature, Bookchin argues that dialectical reason not only looks at how phenomena are organised at a particular moment, but also considers what they are structured to become. It considers the *potentialities* in phenomena and the manner in which these might be actualised into a greater whole. For Bookchin, such a form of reasoning not only furnishes an extraordinary degree of coherence, it also possesses a complementary means of understanding an ecology

rooted in evolutionary development. Shorn of Hegel's quasi-mystical idealism and the mechanistic and scientistic leanings of Engels, Bookchin suggests that 'dialectic may be rendered naturalistic and ecological' (*PofSE*: 15).

The final source of inspiration for Bookchin's ontology emerges from developments in the modern life sciences. Exploring the 'new biology' of self-organisation, pioneered by the work of evolutionary biologists such as Trager (1970) and Margulis (1981) in particular, Bookchin argues that their cutting edge work can provide empirical support for a dialectical and naturalistic view of the world. Bookchin observes that not only is it the case that the new biology represented by Trager and Margulis directly challenges traditional dualisms between the living and the non-living worlds, but they additionally provide reasons for rejecting an ontology based on the notion that inert matter fortuitously aggregates into life in favour of recognising that 'the universe bears witness to a developing – not merely moving – substance, whose most dynamic and creative attribute is its unceasing capacity for self-organization into increasingly complex forms' (*PofSE*: 59–60).

What follows, Bookchin argues if we follow this line of thought, is that evolution is inadequately conceptualised when viewed as a passive process in which species merely adapt to external forces. Rather it is better understood as *participatory* and *creative*, marked by *directionality* and *purpose*. He suggests that as diversity and complexity increase in the evolutionary process, this gives rise to life-forms 'that exercise an ever widening latitude of choice' and what is ultimately viewed as 'a nascent form of freedom' in developing themselves (*RS*: 37).

## HUMANITY AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Bookchin suggests, then, drawing together the Western organismic tradition with the biology of self-organisation to argue that it is reasonable to infer that *reason* exists in nature, as the pre-Socratics once believed, but that this can be understood in eminently modern scientific terms, as the *self-organising* attributes of substance. The 'latent subjectivity' in the inorganic and organic levels of reality reveals an inherent striving towards consciousness and, in humanity, this subjectivity reveals itself as self-consciousness. Robyn Eckersley (1989: 102–3), in a careful reading of Bookchin's work, has observed that in some senses we are presented with a view of subjectivity

residing in nature which 'stands midway' between Bergson's vitalism, as constituted by a specific force, an *élan vital*, and Aristotle's view of nature as 'self moving' and exhibiting 'nisus', or striving for a goal. However, as she notes, Bookchin's position is nevertheless distinct from Aristotle's by being open-ended and evolutionary – as opposed to being cyclical and deterministic. Nature is marked by a general directionality – as opposed to any unswerving and predetermined telos (Eckersley 1989: 102–3). Questions remain as to how such a resolutely naturalistic approach can avoid accusations of reductionism – and how this ontology can inform our ethics.

### FIRST NATURE, SECOND NATURE AND FREE NATURE

The aim of Bookchin's ontological position, developed in *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* is to transcend classical humanism and naturalism by arguing that society and nature, or more precisely, social and natural evolution, need to be understood less as distinct spheres and more as a *graded continuum*, within which they are united, not in their particulars, but in sharing the same *dialectical logic of development*. To further clarify this, Bookchin has recourse to the classic distinction between 'first' and 'second' nature.

While humanity emerges, he argues, out of 'first' or biotic nature, human beings have created a unique 'second nature', that of culture, institutionalised human communities, technics and languages. 'First nature' is not presented as standing apart from 'second nature' as some kind of 'untouched wilderness'. Rather, 'first nature', as an evolutionary process, is conceptualised as being in constant dynamic engagement with 'second nature'. They are nevertheless viewed as conceptually distinct entities.

The current engagement between 'first' and 'second' nature, however, is diagnosed as clearly set on a 'de-evolutionary path'. In order to rectify this, we need a clear understanding of humanity's place in nature which recovers not only humanity's *continuity* with the creative process of natural evolution but, just as importantly, recognises human *distinctiveness*. Possessing 'unprecedented' capacities for self-reflection, conceptual thought and the ability to consciously change the whole realm of 'first nature', human trans-formative capabilities, Bookchin argues, are not only a fact of life but *immanently natural*. Indeed, from an evolutionary perspective:

humanity has been constituted to intervene actively, consciously, and purposely into first nature with unparalleled effectiveness and to alter it on a planetary

scale. To denigrate this capacity is to deny the thrust of natural evolution itself towards organic complexity and subjectivity – the potentiality of first nature to actualise itself in self-conscious intellectuality. (*PofSE*: 31)

The critical task then is not to ponder whether to intervene in nature, but rather for humanity to recover a genuine ethical sensibility rooted in the processes of natural evolution when doing so. Bookchin follows Fichte, in referring to humans as 'nature rendered self conscious'. We need to recognise which of our acts serve the *thrust* of evolution and which impede it. Following this will allow us to facilitate the development of 'free nature', a radical integration of first and second nature along rational and ecological grounds.

## 'NATURE' AS THE GROUNDS OR MATRIX FOR ETHICS

Dialectical naturalism thus suggests that we can turn to nature for the 'grounds' or 'matrix' for a socio-ecological ethic anchored in the reality of ecology and the thrust of evolutionary development. If we would only permit nature 'to open itself out to us ethically, on its *own* terms' Bookchin maintains we would see that it reveals 'a self-evolving patterning, a "grain", so to speak, that is implicitly ethical', since '[m]utualism, freedom, and subjectivity are not strictly human values and concerns. They appear, however germinally, in larger cosmic and organic processes that require no Aristotelian God to motivate them, no Hegelian spirit to vitalise them' (*EofF*: 365).

Certain difficulties present themselves in elaborating the specific consequences of Bookchin's ethical ontology. His philosophical work, for one, focuses primarily on meta-philosophical issues; notably establishing the superiority of his ontology and dialectical method over rival intellectual currents as opposed to working out in any detail the applications of his ethical theorising. Additionally, Bookchin's interpretations of the consequences of his 'objective' ethics have not remained entirely consistent over the years. Robyn Eckersley (1989: 104–5) has, however, carefully drawn out the general implications of Bookchin's ethics.

Given that nature is marked by a certain directionality towards greater complexity and diversity, as Eckersley observes, the ecological dimension of Bookchin's ethics stresses the need for humanity to further foster such tendencies. A preference is demonstrated, in Bookchin's ethics, for forms of human interaction with ecosystems which facilitate a flourishing of biotic variety, diversity and complexity and

retard moves that reduce ecosystems to more simplified systems. This 'interventionist' emphasis is, however, to be qualified. Recognition of the complexity and spontaneity of nature does necessitate 'a prudent re-scaling of man's hubris' and a call for 'caution in disturbing natural processes'(*EofF*: 24–5). In the same breath though, we are warned against interpreting these notions in terms of humanity 'surrendering itself to a mythical "Nature" that is beyond all human comprehension and intervention' (*EofF*: 25). Bookchin's ecological humanism thus leads him to a defence of human stewardship as the appropriate relationship between humanity and the natural world. Yet Bookchin's view of human stewardship is dynamic rather than passive. As we have seen, he argues that human beings have 'been constituted to intervene actively, consciously and purposely into first nature with unparalleled effectiveness and to do so on a planetary scale' (*PofSE*: 31). This responsibility of stewardship, moreover, is something that we cannot avoid because, as Bookchin argues:

There is no part of the world that has not been profoundly affected by human activity. … Nearly all the non-human life forms that exist today are, like it or not, to some degree in human custody, and whether they are preserved in their lifeways depends largely on human attitudes and behaviour. (*PofSE*: 31)

What follows from this is that it 'is the responsibility of the most conscious of lifeforms – humanity – to be the "voice" of a mute nature and to act to intelligently foster organic evolution' (*PofSE*: 32).

For Bookchin then, '[m]utualism, self-organisation, freedom and subjectivity, cohered by social ecology's principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and non-hierarchical relationships', are not simply subjective preferences, but 'constitutive of evolution's potentialities' (*PofSE*: 66). And actualising these potentialities in a more concrete fashion is viewed as yielding to certain specific imperatives – namely, those of a non-hierarchical, participatory, ecological society.

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY, SCIENTIFIC ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Is this attempt to reclaim 'nature' for emancipatory ends convincing? What can we make of this call for critical social theory to embrace something like a neo-vitalist ontology? Are we merely falling back on pre-scientific archaisms? Whilst Bookchin's dialectical naturalism is critical of certain 'high Enlightenment' attitudes to nature, and his work makes a positive assessment of the *orientation* of certain pre-Socratic and organicist currents in *The Philosophy of Social Ecology*, he

nonetheless distances his own project from pre-modernist positions. Indeed, rejecting any suggestion that dialectical naturalism entails a revival of 'pre-scientific' archaisms, he stresses that his own position is supported by 'an extensive literature' which is 'derived mainly from the scientific community itself' (*EofF*: 11). It would seem reasonable to begin an evaluation of dialectical naturalism by considering the extent to which it can meet Bookchin's own criteria.

Let us begin by considering how Bookchin's understanding of ecology relates to debates in scientific ecology. Some complexities emerge here, not least because Bookchin's formulations of ecology have shifted over the years and, as Donald Worster (1994) has observed, the discipline of scientific ecology has itself been marked by a highly disputatious history involving substantive methodological, theoretical and even ideological conflicts. If we turn to more recent discussions in the modern science of ecology, one problem that emerges for Bookchin's thinking is that there have been certain discernable shifts *away* from the organismic and holistic themes that pervade Bookchin's early formulations. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, an emphasis on equilibrium, harmony and order has increasingly been supplemented in contemporary scientific ecology with growing interest in the role that disequilibria, instability, and even chaotic fluctuations, play in the evolution and development of biophysical environments (see, Botkin, 1990; Zimmerer, 1994; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004). Contemporary ecology is also marked by a much more cautious engagement with classic themes of earlier ecological science, such as the 'balance of nature', the diversity/ stability postulate, and traditional ideas concerning ecological succession. It is rather the 'disharmonies' of nature and recognition of the vital role that natural disturbance, the erratic, and the unpredictable play in ecosystems that have preoccupied scientific ecology in recent years.[2]

Aspects of what has come to be known as 'the new ecology' or 'non-equilibrium ecology' are, then, at variance with Bookchin's reading of ecology found in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, it also has to be noted that other features of what is sometimes referred to as the 'new paradigm' in ecology actually converge with Bookchin's recommendations for a 'social ecology' elaborated in his later work such as *The Philosophy of Social Ecology*. Much of the 'new ecology' is motivated by a rejection of the static, ahistorical ecosystems ecology pioneered by Eugene Odum. This is a variation of ecology of which Bookchin has always been critical. A similar hostility to Cartesian

mechanistic forms of thinking and a questioning of empiricist ontologies is also common to social ecology and the 'new ecology'. Furthermore, both currents seek to encourage a more interdisciplinary ecology and to avoid isolating ecosystems in their pristine states by factoring historical and social factors in to the analysis. The move in Bookchin's later work towards a more dynamic view of nature, with the focus increasingly on change, natural spontaneity and diversity, could also be seen as bringing these currents closer together.[3]

Let us consider in more detail the relationship between the dynamic evolutionary version of dialectical naturalism in Bookchin's later work and more recent debates in evolutionary theory. To what extent can Bookchin's view that evolutionary processes are marked by some kind of directionality towards increased ecological complexity, diversity and ultimately subjectivity be substantiated? A challenge for these basic premises of dialectic naturalism – as Zimmerman (1997: 189–90) has observed – lies in contemporary palaeontology and evolutionary theory associated with Stephen Jay Gould. Gould's position, that evolution is best understood as 'punctuated equilibrium', has made him one of the most vocal defenders of the role that contingency plays in natural evolution. His now famous analysis of Canada's Burgess Shale leads him to the conclusion that life is emphatically *not* ascending a ladder towards ever-increasing diversity, complexity and excellence. As Zimmerman notes, while Gould does argue that biological diversity has increased *within* species belonging to extant phyla, he nevertheless suggests that the loss of phyla at the beginning of the Cambrian period means that, overall, life has become *less* diverse (Zimmerman, 1997: 189). Punctuated equilibrium then replaces a gradualist understanding of evolution with the notion that life has arisen in a series of rises and falls in complexity and variety. Rather than being 'nature rendered self conscious', Gould maintains that humanity is better understood as 'an afterthought, a cosmic accident'.[4] Bookchin may well direct us to the fossil record to emphasise a sequential presence implying directionality in evolution towards subjectivity and humanity. Yet, Gould has argued, in *Wonderful Life*, that if we replayed the evolutionary tape of life, it is just as possible that our world would have become 'the unchallenged domain of insects and flowers' (Gould, 1989: 318).

Once again, however, it is difficult to dismiss Bookchin simply because one school in evolutionary biology takes this position. Other evolutionary biologists have argued that Gould pushes the case for contingency too far. John Maynard Smith, for example,

has suggested – contra Gould – that if we 'replayed the tape', while it would be 'enormously unlikely' that human beings emerged, it is much more likely that some type of self-conscious, tool-using organism would have evolved (Smith, 1992; see also Zimmerman, 1997; Albrecht, 1998). The recent work of Stuart Kauffmann (1995) and Brian Goodwin (1995) in the area of complexity theory suggests that there are principles of order governing evolutionary processes which place certain constraints on evolutionary outcomes. Kauffman has also argued that complexity theory does support a type of law of increasing complexity and emphasises a more fecund and self-organising view of the universe which maintains life is ever capable of emergence – given appropriate conditions. Such ideas do bear a greater resemblance to some of Bookchin's speculations, as Takis Fotopoulos (1997: 329) and Glenn Albrecht (1998) have observed. Albrecht, in a spirited defence of Bookchin's later eco-philosophy, has suggested that in addition to complexity theory, the complementary field of non-equilibrium dynamics represented by the work of Prigogine and Stengers opens up further points of engagement with the ontological commitments of the later Bookchin. In such currents there is 'an emerging perspective that dissipative structures develop in an irreversible way through self organization to states of increased complexity' (Albrecht, 1998: 103).

Scientific support for Bookchin's ontological position then is mixed. Many currents of modern ecology would agree with Bookchin that history, geography and cultural studies need to be incorporated into ecological analysis (Zimmerer, 1994). However, as ecologists move to a more 'social ecology' in the general sense, and incorporate disturbance into their modes of ecosystems, they have moved away from overly emphasising balance and equilibrium (as found in Bookchin's earlier writings) towards a much more dynamic and 'disharmonious' view of ecosystems. Bookchin's later, more dynamic dialectical naturalist ontology in part addresses some of the weaknesses of his earlier work. In biology and ecology, there is some support for a broad metaphysics of nature, with a neo-vitalist emphasis on the self-organising properties of matter, and there are some currents in modern biology that argue we can discern patterns towards growing complexity (see Goodwin, 1995).

## 'NON-HIERARCHICAL' AND 'MUTUALISTIC' NATURE?

If Bookchin's ontology can draw partial support from other sources, further questions loom. Notably, to what degree, and in what form,

can an ontology of the biosphere or even the cosmos prove ethically instructive? How can attempts to 'know nature in the large' with a view to developing a naturalistic ethics avoid the classic dilemmas of reductionism that have bedevilled the 'lessons from nature' school of ethical thought from Plato to Hayek (Worster, 1994; Eckersley, 1989)?

Let us consider what Bookchin seeks to achieve with his nature ontology by reflecting on the political claims he derives from that ontology. Bookchin makes strong ethical and critical claims for his ontological position. For example, he has argued that what 'renders social ecology so important is that it offers no case whatsoever for hierarchy in nature and society; it decisively challenges the very function of hierarchy as a principle in both realms' (*EofF*: 24).

To evaluate this claim, it is useful to retrace the steps taken by Bookchin to demonstrate it (*EofF*: 24–30). He first suggests that if we recognise every ecosystem can also be seen as a food web, we are presented with a view of nature as a circular interlacing network of interdependence, marked by the centrality of symbiotic mutualism as a major factor in organic evolution. The extent to which 'socially charged values' are behind various alleged hierarchies of nature is then posed as an issue: the existence of insect hierarchies is presented as a clear case of anthropomorphism. In turning to the more difficult question of the existence of animal hierarchies, Bookchin considers, and grudgingly accepts, that the ethnological evidence on primates supports the existence of relations of dominance and submission in baboons. However, he then deals with this deviation from 'non-hierarchical nature' by redefining the terms. We are thus informed that '*specific* acts of coercion by *individual* animals can hardly be called domination' (*EofF*: 29). There is no hierarchy and domination in nature because such terms must be viewed as strictly *social* terms, requiring intentionality and social structures. Hence Bookchin goes on to claim that he has elaborated a standpoint for a libertarian critique, since humanity's continuity with (non-hierarchical) nature 'suggests that a non hierarchical society is no less random'.

The development of Bookchin's argument here reveals his great debt once again to Kropotkin, whose emphasis on mutual aid has come to play an increasingly important role in evolutionary theory (see Gould, 1989; Robbins, 2004). As such, Bookchin's desire to refocus our attention on mutual relations in nature can draw on some weighty support, with the qualification that most neo-Kropotkinians merely want to suggest that Kropotkin's mutualism supplements

rather than supplants the Malthusian-Darwinian view of nature as 'red in tooth and claw' (see Albrecht, 1998; Rudy and Light, 1998). Perhaps the more pressing issue that still stands for Bookchin's ethical theory is to what extent metaphors from the natural sciences can be drawn on to substantiate ethical issues in the social world (Eckersley, 1989; Benton, 1994; Kirkman, 1997).

For example, if we follow Bookchin and agree that ascribing the terms 'hierarchy' and 'domination' to nature constitutes a category mistake – using terminology to refer to the natural world that is only really meaningful in the social world – the question clearly arises as to how Bookchin's own redescription of nature as 'non-hierarchical' makes any greater sense or achieves ethical significance. 'Non-hierarchical nature', following the logic of Bookchin's own argument here, would seem to be an oxymoron rather than a credible, ethically charged redescription of nature (Eckersley, 1989; Zimmerman, 1997). Second, even if we accept that 'nature in the large', in all its infinite complexity, could be meaningfully described as 'non-hierarchical', it does not logically follow either that this discredits the intellectual justification for hierarchy in the social world. What Bookchin can claim here is that his argument discredits social hierarchies *which justify themselves by recourse to crude analogies between the social and the natural world.* Social hierarchy could, however, be justified on many other bases – efficiency, custom, preference, genetic disposition, etc. – which are left unscathed by this argument. Furthermore, it could well be noted that whether it be 'competitive' or 'mutualist', 'hierarchical' or 'non-hierarchical', Bookchin provides no strong argument as to *why* we should follow the dictates of 'nature'.

One need not invoke a rigid positivistic separation between 'facts' and 'values', or ascribe to the 'naturalistic fallacy', to recognise a problem here. Bookchin's claim that we should treat specific characteristics of nature as offering ethical insight into how human beings should organise their social and political arrangements because human societies are, in certain senses, continuous with the natural world, as Eckersley (1989), Hughes (1989), Marshall (1992a) and Fotopoulos (1997) have all argued, is at variance with the careful attempt made elsewhere by Bookchin to avoid naturalistic reductionism, and seems to be in tension with his broader aim of offering normative justification for a project that places radical democracy, citizenship and the *polis* at its centre. Part of the tension here lies in whether it is credible for a politics which aspires to support participatory and libertarian outcomes to seek to ground itself on a meta-ethical

ontology which effectively suggests that to act ethically is ultimately to act in accordance with the directionality of the natural world. Or, might an ethical act be more credibly understood as an action freely chosen after reflection, rational deliberation and intersubjective communication? At root, Bookchin would seem to advocate the former position here and this would seem to bring dialectical naturalism rather dangerously closer to natural law theory or eco-theology than Bookchin allows.[5]

Real difficulties emerge in the attempt to move from ontology to ethics in social ecology, and it is not clear that Bookchin answers his critics here. Thus, in response to criticisms made by Robyn Eckersley and Warwick Fox, that his mutualistic nature is simply 'one more anthropocentric projection' (Eckersley, 1989: 107), Bookchin introduces a distinction between viewing nature as ethical and conceiving nature as the 'grounds' or 'matrix' for ethics:

> By using the term grounded in relation to ethics, I am trying to say, following a long philosophical tradition, that values are implicit in the natural world, not that first nature is an arena for ethical behaviour. There is no ethical non-human nature as such. ... The difficulties deep ecologists are likely to have with my view ... stem from the static image they have of non human nature. That it can be a nascent arena for the emergence of ethics seems beyond them. By contrast, my view is evolutionary – that is, I am concerned with how an ethics evolves through the gradual emergence of human agency over aeons of evolutionary development. Insofar as the evolution of human beings from a non human nature is simultaneously a continuum and a disjunction, one can argue from a developmental viewpoint that the human ability to function as moral agents has its objective origins in their evolution from non human nature. Hence, nowhere do I speak of an 'ethics in nature' but rather of a nature that forms the grounds for a human ethics. (*RE*: 255)

Part of the problem with this clarification though is that it conflates a number of different ways in which nature could plausibly be seen as the 'grounds' for ethics. For example, the notion that the emergent properties that human beings have developed – such as cognitive abilities and psychological facilities that allow for ethical reasoning – are premised on an earlier evolutionary history would seem reasonably uncontroversial. Our human ability to function as moral agents clearly has its origins in our evolution.[6] 'Nature' could also be seen as a 'ground' or 'matrix' for ethics in the sense that it is plausible to argue that no ethical theory can now proceed by ignoring or abstracting from the natural conditions of its existence

and reproduction. The problem arises though, when Bookchin conflates these 'weak' senses of 'nature' being the grounds for ethics with another much more contentious one – that *specific* values, norms and political imperatives are 'implicit' in the natural world.

## METAPHORS AND NATURE

There is no doubt that Bookchin's ethical theory is brave and fascinating, yet what seems to be ultimately missing from this aspect of his writings is a *consistent* engagement with the relationship between the material, the symbolic, the ideological and the historical, and a concurrently *consistent* recognition of the sheer ambiguity and complexity surrounding the idea and reality of nature (Williams, 1980; Haraway, 1991; Marshall, 1992a; Soper, 1995). There is a clear recognition of the historicity of our understanding of 'nature', and even a recognition of the historicity of the concepts and metaphors used by the natural sciences in social ecology when arguments are presented for the merits of an organismic world view over a mechanistic one. Similarly, Bookchin is aware of the extent to which the natural sciences are influenced by ideological, cultural and historical factors when he critiques neo-Malthusianism and social biology. Yet, when he turns to ecology and evolutionary biology to develop his ethical ontology, this more cautious and contextualised approach to science is largely abandoned. What is missing here is attention to the role that metaphor plays in scientific enquiry. Robert Kirkman has argued that, whilst the use of metaphor is central to science, scientific metaphors nevertheless 'offer specific solutions to specific problems, and they take their meaning from the context in which they operate; outside of that context, they are something like fish out of water' (Kirkman, 1997). As such, we need to be aware that words like 'community', 'mutualism' and 'symbiosis' in the science of ecology do not necessarily mean the same thing when they are used in political discourse. Indeed, *even within ecology*, these terms *can have entirely different meanings in different sub-disciplines*.[7]

Further complexities emerge when we recognise that the metaphors used in science are not simply 'innocent', but clearly mediated by historical, cultural and political factors. Recognition of the socially grounded quality of metaphor in scientific enquiry does not necessitate an embrace of the 'strong programme in the sociology of science'. We can recognise the influence that stock breeding, Malthus and the broader Victorian milieu had on the imagery that Darwin employed

in *The Origin of Species*, without becoming sceptical about the material practices he was attempting to describe. However, sensitivity to this issue does make it difficult to avoid Benton's scepticism concerning the use of 'nature' as a basis for a direct objective socio-cultural ethic, given that 'nature may be viewed as a symbiotic system or as red in tooth and claw: rival human cultural and political traditions are as much involved in constructing these views of nature as they are in drawing congenial lessons from them' (Benton, 1994: 4).

Perhaps more problematic still for any attempt to thematise the properties of 'nature in the large' is the non-reductionist argument that even nature known by the natural sciences is never singular but clearly refracted and stratified. Our understanding of the natural world is clearly shaped *by the level we are exploring and the questions we are asking of it*. One of the problems with Bookchin's holistic metaphysics is that the desire to present a determinate and singular reading of 'nature' ensures that the *specificity* of the insights of the natural sciences, *at their different levels of analysis*, are essentially collapsed together. Thus, it is assumed that because ecology and evolutionary biology display certain properties, so must it be with all of nature. Consequently, while Bookchin's ontological writings are suffused with rhetoric on the value of holism, the end result is reductionist. Anti-reductionist scientists resist this explanation by arguing that the nature explored by the natural sciences is best understood as a *hierarchy* of independent levels.[8] Insisting that entities exist at different levels (biological, chemical, physical, etc.) which have *unique explanatory principles*, anti-reductionists such as Steven Jay Gould and Stephen Rose have argued that *no level is an ultimate reality or a reference point for extrapolation* – 'all are legitimate aspects of our natural world'.[9]

### THE ECOLOGICAL ETHICS OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY

If we turn to the normative content of Bookchin's philosophy, it is the ecological aspects of his ethics that have received the most attention over recent years. Following the publication of Bookchin's 1987 polemic 'Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology', his writings not only received extended critical scrutiny for their ontological claims and methodological premises but also for the substantive norms that emerge. In relation to these substantive norms, the persistent charge levelled against the ethics of social ecology is that they are ultimately too anthropocentric and interventionist.

Whilst there were many contributors to the deep ecology/social ecology debate (see Fox, 1989; Hughes, 1989; Marshall, 1992b; Zimmerman, 1997; Bookchin and Foreman, in *DtE*), in some respects the Bookchin–Eckersley interchange is one of the most interesting moments. Eckersley's critique of Bookchin's dialectical naturalism (1989; 1992) is extensive and well developed. In this chapter thus far we have largely followed her emphasis on the ontological limitations of Bookchin's approach. Her normative critique of the ethics of social ecology equally raises broader issues about the ethical limitations of Bookchin's position. In turn, it generated one of Bookchin's more careful and extended responses where he elaborates on his dialectical approach, indicates his sharp differences from analytic modes of inquiry, and even clears up a few matters in relation to his views on society–nature relations.

The core of Eckersley's 'ecocentric' critique of Bookchin's ethics focuses on his defence of human stewardship. First, she argues that Bookchin fails to specify the extent to which humanity should speed up evolutionary processes. Querying where the line is to be drawn in fostering evolutionary diversity and complexity, she asks: 'should we enlist the aid of computers and the latest biotechnology and step up selective breeding of plants and animals so as to foster the development of more complex ecosystems and more intelligent species?' (Eckersley, 1989: 111). Noting the 'troublesome implications' of this position for those concerned with the preservation of native ecosystems, the placing of humanity at the apex of evolution in social ecology is seen as 'arrogant' and 'self-serving'. Second, evoking two 'litmus issues' (Eckersley, 1992: 157), namely, wilderness preservation and human population growth, she argues that social ecology fails on both counts. Thus, Bookchin is taken to task for having very little to say about wilderness preservation, while on population issues, Bookchin's persistent hostility to the whole discourse of 'over-population' is seen as yet another indication of his anthropocentricism. Because the ecological ethics of social ecology fail 'to offer the widest realm of freedom to all life forms', they need to be superseded by an ecocentric philosophy committed to 'biocentric egalitarianism'. Such an alternative ecological ethics would 'practise humility in the face of complexity' and recognise that the wisest course of action is, 'wherever practicable, simply to let beings be' (Eckersley, 1989: 116).

In his response to Eckersley, Bookchin has resisted these charges. Emphasising the extent to which his own work has always rejected

an instrumental attitude to nature, and the manner in which his writings have always advocated prudence when dealing with nature's complexity, his call for the synthesis of first and second nature into a free, rational and ethical nature seeks to place human conceptual thought 'not over nature but in the service of natural and social evolution' (*RE*: 259). His conception of 'free nature' is intended to 'transcend all notions of centricity'. Returning on his critics, Bookchin argues that ecocentric thought is itself riddled with inconsistencies. Three aspects of Bookchin's critique of deep ecology and ecocentrism can be isolated. First, he argues that deep and ecocentric thought essentially preaches an 'absurdly minimalist' ecological ethic which bears little relationship to ecological realities. Second, he contends that more generally such currents are underpinned by a static, ahistorical and romanticised conception of nature. Third, perhaps the most serious charge against ecocentric thought, and deep ecology more generally, is that a commitment to such notions as 'biocentric egalitarianism' coupled with an uncritical engagement with neo-Malthusian 'over-population' discourses, has created an anti-humanist mood in ecological circles, which is minimally misanthropic and maximally heading towards eco-fascism.

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY VERSUS DEEP ECOLOGY

The debate between deep and social ecology in the late 1980s and early 1990s generated a good deal of controversy. Bookchin's initial essay was certainly polemical and sharp. His opponents hit back hard, variously suggesting that Bookchin was simply being 'sectarian', displaying 'sour grapes', promoting just another 'old paradigm', leftist ideology, or – even more bizarrely – a 'Faustian ambition to seize control of evolution' (see Chase in *DtE*: 11). In retrospect this debate marked an important moment in eco-political thought. A degree of clarity emerged from the discussions, polemics and tirades concerning the relative strengths and weaknesses of both deep and social ecology.

For example, Robyn Eckersley would seem to be on firm ground in arguing that the meta-norms Bookchin defends as offering an objective and universal ethical orientation have limitations. Bookchin's elaboration of universal human stewardship of the natural world is unclear. Yet, Eckersley's ecocentric notion that a useful universal maxim for informing ecological ethics would be 'wherever practical, simply to let beings be' (Eckersley, 1989: 116) is perhaps

more problematic. The additional selection of 'over-population' and 'wilderness preservation' as 'litmus issues' is also troubling. Not only is it unclear that 'non-intervention' represents the universal interest of 'the Earth' (because the earth does not tell us this), but this 'earth-centred worldview', this view from nowhere and everywhere, is of course, more accurately, a view from somewhere. What is being defended in ecocentric political theory is not the 'needs' of 'universal nature' but a specific construction of nature and its central problems as understood and framed from quite specific vantage points.

Let us consider Eckersley's 'litmus test' issues in more detail. In Chapter 3, we discussed Bookchin's views on 'over-population'. We demonstrated Bookchin's case that neo-Malthusian demography has long been empirically faulty. We additionally pointed to a range of studies in the environmental social sciences which suggested the impact of human population growth on the environment remains remarkably variable and contested, with some studies indeed showing a positive correlation between human population growth and environmental protection.

Let us turn though to the second 'litmus test'. The notion that a credible environmental ethics should prioritise the defence of 'wilderness', and that the appropriate attitude to such 'pristine' forms of nature is to 'leave well alone', has come to occupy a central place in ethical literatures informed by deep ecological and ecocentric perspectives. This advocacy is clearly underpinned by a series of further assumptions: that nature left alone is normatively optimal; that 'wilderness' essentially constitutes 'nature left alone'; that tropical savannas and rainforests, woodland and prairie, can be adequately and unproblematically understood in terms of the concept 'wilderness' and that 'wilderness' itself is a neutral scientifically verifiable description that exists outside class and power, sex and race, colonialism and imperialism. All of these assumptions though have been seriously problematised of late by developments in non-equilibrium ecology, political ecology, ecological anthropology and environmental history.

For example, it would appear that the increased interest in mapping 'non-equilibrium' or 'stochastic' processes occurring in ecological science presents challenges not only to aspects of Bookchin's social ecology but to ecocentric thought as well. For example, the ecologist Daniel Botkin, in *Discordant Harmonies* (1990), provides multiple examples of how non-interventionist conservation strategies in the twentieth century – informed by what Botkin argues is a profoundly

mistaken image of nature as essentially stable or benign – have been *completely counterproductive* in practice. His work offers evidence to suggest that many conservation projects in the twentieth century that have followed the ecocentric maxim 'let nature be' have, on occasion, produced absolutely disastrous results for attempts to maintain biodiversity and wildlife.

Botkin's foregrounding of the dynamic nature of ecosystems also demonstrates the difficulties involved in generating straightforward norms for wilderness protection drawn from ecocentric ethical theory, given the evolutionary nature of what we now understand as 'wilderness areas' and the extent to which such areas have varied – often dramatically – in vegetation and topography over time. For example, in discussing the Boundaries Water Canoe Area – a million acre landmass which has been designated 'wilderness' stretching between Minnesota and Ontario – he cites the evidence of pollen deposits which demonstrate that the area has gone from tundra, to spruce forest, to jack pine, red pine, and so on. Botkin then asks which state of forest should be preserved, given that it has no 'natural state'? Noting the extent to which many conservation decisions are bound up with *human* ideas of place, history and memory, Botkin notes: 'It is my impression that what most people really want from a visit … is the sense of wilderness as it was experienced by the voyageurs 200 to 300 years ago' (Botkin, 1990: 59).

If Botkin's work points to the complexities of conservationism at the local level, at the broader bio-spherical level, ecologists such as Haila and Levins have argued that it is by no means apparent that 'letting "nature" be' offers any kind of useful ecological guidance given that 'the evolution of the biosphere *is no guarantee that conditions favourable for any particular species, including us, will persist*' (Haila and Levins, 1992: 7). The Earth after all was not made for us and there is no reason why it should look after our needs or the needs of any other sentient species.[10] Indeed, it is interesting how many currents in non-equilibrium ecology have stressed the importance of disturbance and disruption in generating new evolutionary niches for species.

Our understanding of the history, culture and politics of 'wilderness preservation' has also been transformed by recent work in environmental history and historical anthropology. Let us consider here two fascinating studies: the work of William Denevan on the pre-Columbian Americas and Clark L. Erickson's research on that most rarefied of 'wilderness areas', the Amazon.

Standard (Euro-American) understandings of the 'New World' prior to Columbus maintain that it was indeed a sparsely populated wilderness, containing primeval forests, where humans lived lightly on the land. Drawing from nearly three decades of archaeological field work and historical research, Denevan has argued that there is now substantial evidence that this is more accurately a Eurocentric myth, an invention of nineteenth-century romanticism. Denevan demonstrates that the 'native American' landscape that existed at the time of Columbus was in fact a humanised landscape 'almost everywhere'. Populations were large – Denevan estimates a population of between 43–65 million. He observes 'forest composition had been modified, grasslands had been created, wildlife disrupted, and erosion was severe in places' (Denevan, 1992: 369). The great grasslands and savannas of the New World were actually anthropogenic rather than climatic in origin (Denevan, 1992: 371, citing Sauer), and native peoples made a substantial mark on their land through agriculture, fire and the development of a built landscape.

Let us turn to the complementary work of Erickson on the Bolivian Amazon. The Amazon rainforest stands as the ultimate image of pure, pristine nature in the imagination of ecocentric political thought. Erickson's work turns such an assumption on its head. As he notes:

Historical ecologists working in the NeoTropics now argue that the present natural environment is a historical production of human intentionality and ingenuity, a creation that is imposed, managed, built and maintained by the collective multi-generational knowledge and experience of Native Americans. In the past 12,000 years, indigenous peoples transformed the environment creating what we now recognize as the rich ecological mosaic of the neo-tropics. (Erickson, 2000: 190; but additionally see Botkin, 1990; Denevan, 1992; Cronin, 1995)

Not only is 'wilderness' – like many of our ideas of nature – something very different to the romantic landscapes of ecocentric, deep ecological and primitivist thinking; it is also saturated with cultural assumptions, power relations and active human and non-human bodies.

## HYBRID NATURES AND ACTIVE SUBJECTS

What can we conclude from our engagement with the ethical debate that has surrounded social and deep ecology and our consideration of the challenges posed to radical ecology more generally by more recent developments in the environmental social sciences? Whilst

Bookchin's attempt to develop an ecological worldview premised on a dynamic and self-organising nature and society interacting has much to recommend it, I have argued in this chapter that his more ambitious attempt to generate an ontology that seeks to both clarify the normative grounds of critique and more specifically to justify a libertarian ecological politics through recourse to an ontology of nature is less compelling. Equally, whilst Bookchin's critics have demonstrated, in important ways, where he overreaches, his work equally points to serious conceptual, ethical and normative deficiencies in ecocentric thought.

What is striking about the recent work of Botkin, Denevan and Erickson is the extent to which their research supports Bookchin's assertion that the image of humanity and nature found in deep ecology and ecocentric thought is highly problematic, displaying marked tendencies to romanticise a pristine and Eurocentric image of the natural world. Underpinning many manifestations of deep ecology is the notion that 'real nature' is what is left over when the human subject is extracted (Sandilands, 1995: 87, citing Thompson). Additionally, a further assumption informing much of this work seems to be that 'Nature' that has mixed with humans is somehow inferior or less valuable (Soper, 1995). Erikson's Amazonia, the ultimate ecocentric symbol of 'pure nature', not only suggests that this worldview is incoherent but also offers a much more vital and dynamic possibility, notably that human beings have actively metabolised with nature to create remarkably fecund and mutually beneficial ecosystems for millennia.

It is additionally striking how much of the contemporary literature in environmental history, non-equilibrium ecology, historical ecology, political ecology and science and technology studies is pulling against the ecocentric worldview. Rather than support a unified metaphysics of nature, a singular nature, much of this work seems to affirm that we are persistently engaging with multiple 'natures' and these multiple natures need to be recognised, as we have suggested in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, as 'produced' natures. This 'multinatural' (Latour 2004b) understanding of 'social natures' ascendant in the contemporary social and environmental sciences offers us an image of diverse humans surrounded by equally diverse, dynamic material and historical natures which are themselves the product of multiple agencies (human and non-human), technologies and cultures intermixing and hybridising across space and historical time.

Where, however, might a recognition that we live in hybrid, complex dynamic worlds leave questions related to ethics? If the 'socio-ecological' project cannot be framed in terms of universal meta-norms to 'follow the thrust of evolution' or 'let beings be', how should we engage with the diverse nature-cultures or social natures (Haraway, 1991; 2000) we find ourselves entangled with? Where can we turn, ethically and philosophically, to ground such a project?[11] I will try to sketch one possible way forward which is at least compatible with the spirit of Bookchin's concerns, if not the letter and the spirit of the literature on socio-natural hybridity.

First, given that we increasingly find ourselves (or recognise ourselves) as living in a world that is made not given, perhaps Bookchin (following Aristotle and Fichte) is correct to argue that it is useful to think of human beings as 'nature rendered self conscious'. This may be a result more of chance than design, one of the multiple contingent but nevertheless fortuitous outcomes of a dynamic yet random evolutionary process. However, 'as nature rendered self conscious', we clearly find ourselves, in a unique position of stewardship over the diverse hybrid social diverse natures we find ourselves inhabiting. Second, a progressive social ecology perhaps then needs to be less concerned with the question 'how can we recover more organic or natural ways of being?' than with 'what kind of socio-environmental arrangements do we wish to co-produce, how can this be achieved, and what sort of natures do we wish to inhabit?' (Swyngedouw, 2004; cf. Smith, 1998; Braun and Castree, 1998). Reformulating this in less anthropocentric terms, we might want to ask: how can we imagine a democratic social production of nature that allows human being(s) and other beings to 'be' or 'become' within a dynamic, ever changing, socio-ecological context?

To begin to answer such a question, perhaps a progressive socio-ecological politics needs to champion not a specific ecological ethics that is compatible with democracy but a democratic ethic that opens up debate about the production of nature (Haraway, 1991; Sandilands, 1995; Dryzek, 2000). Perhaps we need less prescriptive modes of ethical engagement than procedural modes which, as Seyla Benhabib (1992; 2002) argues, allow for deliberation rather than fixity, are contextually sensitive rather than situationally indifferent, and foster a broader 'enlarged mentality' rather than a parochial perspective (Benhabib, 1992: 10). Following this, as Donna Haraway has observed (1991; 2000), perhaps we additionally need ethical orientations that can capture the 'processual relatedness' of 'nature-cultures' (Haraway,

2000: 92), that guard against anthropomorphism, that force us to confront the semiotic-material complexities of the world, and that allow us to explore breached boundaries and potential affinities. Such an ethical orientation according to Haraway is about 'the manner in which we are responsible for these worlds. But not in a simplistic "I'm for it or against it". What has to happen is that literacies have to be encouraged, as well as many kinds of agency' (Haraway, 2000: 146). In short, Haraway is arguing for an enlarged mentality but also extending Benhabib's understanding of the term, for a sense of responsibility towards nature-cultures by attending to the processes of making 'nature-cultures' and asking *who benefits*? (Haraway, 2000: 147).

# 6
# Urbanisation, Cities, Utopia

If 'fecund nature' provides a 'first moment' of utopian possibility in Bookchin's reconstructive thought, a second moment that sustains 'the principle of hope' can be found in his writings on urbanisation, technology and the city. Between 1965 and 1995, Bookchin wrote three substantive books on cities and urban life – *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965); *The Limits of the City* (1974); and *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987/1995)[1] – and published essays on city planning, urban energy use, eco-technology and future urban habitats in the 1970s (see *TES*). All these writings are intimately concerned with the built environment, its problems and possibilities, and they play a central role in Bookchin's critical and reconstructive project. Yet, Bookchin's urban writings have received very little attention from either admirers or detractors.

In these final two chapters, we seek to get to grips with this work. In Chapter 7, we focus on Bookchin's political theory and his defence of participatory democracy (most substantially developed in his writings on libertarian municipalism). In this chapter, however, we begin by examining Bookchin's early critique of post-war US urbanism. We consider his attempt – as a counterpoint – to 'recover the humanist concept of the city' in history (*LOTC*: viii). We then trace how this project unfolds into writings that brim with a sense of utopian possibility, a sense that the humanist city can be reclaimed and a new relationship formed between land and city, society and nature, in a new type of urban human community, an eco-community.

### 'CRISIS IN OUR CITIES'

A core theme of Bookchin's 1960s urban writings is that the United States is facing, not simply an approaching environmental crisis but an interrelated 'urban crisis'. *Crisis in Our Cities*[2] – Bookchin's first full-length engagement with urban issues – attempts to ground such a claim by providing an exhaustive empirical survey of post-war urban trends. *Crisis* opens with the observation that in little more

than half a century, the US has gone from being a predominantly rural to an overwhelmingly urban community. Bookchin suggests that what is striking about this development is not simply the rapid growth of cities in the US, but the fact that cities of all sizes are coalescing more broadly into 'vast urban complexes'. Some urban conurbations are 'the size of entire states' (*CIOC*: 8). New 'megalopolitan' cities are spilling out into the countryside, merging with suburbs, villages, towns and the overflow of nearby cities to form 'huge urban belts' (*CIOC*: 10).

The consequences of such developments are various. Whilst Bookchin insists in *Crisis* that the cultural and political riches of city life are central to the human experience (*CIOC*: 3), current patterns of urbanisation threaten to 'destroy the very urban world on which our intellectual and physical well being depend' (*CIOC*: 4). Moreover, this urbanisation of the human population is becoming a global phenomenon (*CIOC*: 4): the 'unlimited city' stretching interminably over the land for thousands of square miles is 'something new on the face of the Earth' (*CIOC*: 166).

Much of *Crisis in our Cities* consists of a survey and commentary on the emerging urban public health literature of the 1950s. Reviewing research on the growth of urban air pollution, noise, new patterns of urban disease, growing problems with urban water treatment and sewage, it is argued that the weight of scientific evidence suggests that new modes of urbanisation are having a markedly negative effect on the human body (*CIOC*: 19–20). We are presented with a range of literatures suggesting that urban congestion and the social density of development is giving rise to greater stress and anxiety in urban man (*CIOC*: 3–4). An increasingly sedentary way of life is creating individuals who are more overweight, and susceptible to chronic illnesses and heart disease. Bookchin informs us that the emphasis placed by urban planners on the motorcar, rather than public transport, is not only contributing to air pollution but is self-defeating. Vehicular progress in the New York metropolitan area has dropped 'from a galloping rate of 11.5 miles per hour in the horse and buggy era of 1907 to a crawling 6 miles per hour in the jet propelled era of the 1960s' (*CIOC*: 14). City life then is 'grossly unbalanced; it oscillates between two devastating extremes – excessive nervous activity and virtually a total lack of physical activity' (*CIOC*: 173).

However, beyond public health matters, Bookchin argues, we need to be aware that the 'unlimited city' is now generating a range of

larger scale ecological effects. Bookchin contends that beyond the human effects of urban pollution, urban sprawl is ensuring that highly productive and irreplaceable agricultural land is being lost (*CIOC*: 167). New patterns of urbanisation are proving to be a drain on fresh groundwater. Indeed, it is observed that larger cities are having such an impact on their local ecologies that they are now generating their own micro-climates (*CIOC*: 187). And one problem identified with these new 'micro-climates' is that the pollution generated by urban fossil fuel usage opens the potential to generate a blanket of carbon dioxide over the atmosphere which could raise the atmosphere's temperature (*CIOC*: 187).

## REIFICATION AND THE UNLIMITED CITY

The rise of the 'unlimited city' thus poses a range of public health and ecological issues. An important sub-theme of *Crisis in Our Cities* explores the 'existential challenges' that the new patterns of urbanisation pose for 'urban man'. One of the more invidious features of the new 'megalopolitan' cities, Bookchin claims, is that they are losing 'every vestige of geographical and civic meaning' (*CIOC*: 8). As such, the greatest danger of the unlimited city is that it is potentially transforming the urban into 'an incomprehensible and possibly uncontrollable force, an agency that is slipping from man's grasp' (*CIOC*: 167).

What follows from this? Bookchin maintains that present trends towards the development of formless, urban agglomerates, increasingly characterised by a hollowing out of all civic life and civic institutions, are problematic; however, so too are nostalgic and romantic ideas that we could resolve such issues by returning to some pre-industrial and pre-technological rural past. Firmly rejecting any 'back to the land' solutions to urban problems, he states emphatically that:

The solution to this problem, of course, does not lie in a return to an agrarian society – any more than an answer to our technological problems lies in a return to the stone ax. Western civilization is totally committed to an urbanized way of life and a highly developed machine technology. Both the city and industry provide indispensable bases for the advance of modern life. (*CIOC*: 4)

A new urbanism thus will thus require radically new approaches and radically new ways of thinking.

### 'THE LIMITS OF THE CITY'

The Limits of the bourgeois city can be summed up in the fact that the more there is of urbanism, the less there is of urbanity. (*LOTC*: 113)

In comparison to the crisp empiricism of *Crisis in Our Cities*, Bookchin's second book on urbanisation, *The Limits of the City* (1974), is a dense, theoretical affair. Bringing together essays written across three decades, the tone is uneven and the argument sometimes wayward.[3] Yet, despite this, *Limits* deepens and extends Bookchin's urban critique by examining the failings of contemporary urbanism from the vantage point of social philosophy and historical sociology. Moving on from the primary concern of *Crisis* with public and environmental health, it is ethical and aesthetic concerns that predominate in *Limits*.

*The Limits of the City* begins once again with Bookchin affirming the centrality of the urban experience to the human condition: 'Cities embody the most important traditions of civilization' (*LOTC*: 1). However, the nature of our current crisis is given a new emphasis. Our present predicament is not simply that our modern cities are actively being degraded but that we lack standards to judge the urban form.

A central theme of *Limits* is that one of the great ironies of the present age is the rise of forms of urbanisation which are not only anti-ecological but *anti-urbane*, hostile to the classic traditions of urbanism in history and to the forms of social and political identity that have shaped the finest moments of city life.

It is this preoccupation then with the lack of 'form', 'definition' and 'meaning' (*LOTC*: 90) of the modern unlimited city – and indeed the lack of a public discourse that would fully champion the virtues of the city – which provides the most interesting theme of *Limits*. What resources are there, though, that might guide our thoughts on urbanism?

Bookchin begins his exploration of the urban by first exploring the limits of both critical and conventional literatures on urban planning. While it is argued that Marx potentially opens up suggestive possibilities for understanding the importance of cities – with the claim in *Capital* that the whole of economic history can be summed up in the 'anti-thesis between town and country' – Bookchin argues that such thoughts remain undeveloped within the Marxian tradition. Indeed, Bookchin suggests, with the notable exceptions of Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Castells (*LOTC*: 8–9), much Marxian

urban analysis has ended up reducing urban issues to questions of 'who owns what' in the modern city and 'who exploits whom' (*LOTC*: 5).

Literatures on city planning stand as a counter-discourse to Marxist urban analysis. Yet, Bookchin argues this tradition has distinct limitations of its own for guiding our thoughts on urbanism since it is invariably 'crassly institutional' and utilitarian (*LOTC*: ix). Indeed, it is argued, despite the fact that 'the city has always been the most immediate human environment that people experience', and is 'the terrain that gives authentic meaning to the word "environment"'(*LOTC*: 7), modern environmentalism does not engage seriously with urban problems or the potentialities of remaking the urban (*LOTC*: 8). This is indeed a serious imaginative and political failing because, Bookchin argues:

Aside from acid rain, our greatest environmental concerns are urban ones, not those that are related to rural areas and wilderness. What impresses us most as environmentally concerned individuals is the cultivation of gardens *in* the city or the use of solar collectors on urban dwellings … What fascinates people most is when we attempt to bring the countryside into the city as gardens or when we use alternative energy sources on apartment houses. The failure of environmentalists to see this distinctly urban bias has done much to marginalize many of their ideas and efforts. (*LOTC*: 8)

How then can we develop the basis of an urban social ecology that can productively address the city? Bookchin suggests that part of our current confusion about urbanism is a product of the fact that we have lost a historical sense of the importance of the city in history and the central role it has played in the development of the human story. More broadly, part of the problem is that we are 'slowly losing a humanistic concept of the very meaning of the word "city"' (*LOTC*: vii).

## THE HUMANIST CONCEPT OF THE CITY IN HISTORY

Why then is the city important? Why have cities occupied such a central place in the human story? Whilst it is recognised in *The Limits of the City* that cities are historical products of human–natural interaction and reflect, in part, the social relations therein (*LOTC*: 30), Bookchin argues that the city is more than simply an arena or space for class conflict – as historical materialists would have us believe. The city is more than an epiphenomenon of the division of labour

and commerce (*LOTC*.6). Rather, and drawing inspiration from the writings of Karl Polanyi, Max Weber and Lewis Mumford, Bookchin argues that the city needs to be additionally understood in cultural terms as the rise of a unique 'implosion' of human energy. Cities 'collect those energizing forces of social life that country life tends to dissipate over wide expanses of land and scattered populations' (*LOTC*: 1). As such, the city is not simply a nexus of market relations. Cities are also characterised by other essential urban traits, notably attempts to formulate creative human communities.

Bookchin argues in the first part of *Limits* that we can find many examples in urban history where we can legitimately infer that human beings came together in cities not simply for defensive reasons but to be part of *an ethical community*. *Limits* substantiates such a claim by taking us on a grand survey of pre-modern urban history to refine the point. Without some sense of how the city has been the generator of intense social solidarities, it is argued, it is hard to understand how temple cities could have constructed such fine monuments as the pyramids, or how Renaissance cities could have built such marvellous cathedrals. To grasp such motivations, we need to understand that the people who built these places were not simply worshippers manipulated by priestly corporations; they were congregations with a highly cohering sense of religious solidarity and richly articulated systems of mutual aid (*LOTC*: 11).

A second theme of *Limits* contests the claim that urban history can be understood simply in terms of the antagonism between town and country. Bookchin argues that whilst 'town and country' have often been in antagonism, we can find moments in urban history when a certain degree of balance existed between the two. Early cities, be they horticultural clan cities, Asian cities, feudal cities or even peasant/yeoman cities, were largely the foci of surrounding agricultural relations. Yet we can find moments of communal and ecological balance in urban history (*LOTC*: 30). Bookchin argues that the Athenian world at the time of the *polis* – despite slavery and a 'severe patriarchal dispensation for women' (*LOTC*: 51) – offered an 'intensely well rounded, balanced and intensely social nature' (*LOTC*: 52). With its human scale and concern for rationality, there were moments when the Athenian *polis* offered a remarkably advanced urban form in a world where town and country equally existed in a delicate balance (*LOTC*: 55). Turning to the rise of the independent cities and towns in the later medieval period of Europe, it is also suggested that at the finest moments in the medieval commune:

The concrete nature of the labor process, the directness, indeed familiar character of nearly all social relations, and the human scale of civic life which fostered a high degree of personnel participation in urban affairs all combined to retain a natural core to social life which the cosmopolises of the ancient worlds had dissolved with the passing of the polis. (*LOTC*: 73)

Yet, the urban is not simply an artefact of the distant past. Even in modern times, Bookchin argues, we can point to cities such as New York that evoke 'civic loyalty' (*LOTC*: 95), have 'distinct ethnic neighbourhoods', 'a worldly outlook' and rich cultural spaces that create niches for 'sophisticated professionals and creative eccentrics'. Bookchin argues that as recently as the Second World War, New York City still preserved 'a vital relationship between its cultural centers in Manhattan and its outlying residential districts', whilst '[t]he periphery of the city, where the subway and elevated lines terminated, formed a green open area which clearly demarcated the city proper from the towns to the north and rural Long Island' (*LOTC*: 96).

If the city at its best reveals the existence of human habitats which have aspired to being 'integrated ethical communities' and communities that are demarcated from the rural but have some semblance of balance between society and nature, part of the central problem with post-war urbanisation is that we are essentially seeing a breaking down of the 'self constitutive restraints that traditionally gave city life its culture and vitality' (*LOTC*: 113). Reflecting on the extent to which the 'city without limits' is giving rise to social, civic and political withdrawal and social atomisation, Bookchin observes we are seeing certain ironic inversions of the town/country relationship, notably:

even as the urban sprawl continues, it deurbanizes the urban dweller by restoring in him all the parochial qualities of the rural dweller without the compensations of a community life; even as historical densities increase – particularly in the bourgeois city's historical locus, the commercial and manufacturing district – they diminish the cultural effects of contiguity by substituting atomization for communication. The colonization of space by modern urban entities, far from producing the heterogeneity that made the traditional city a feast of visual and cultural stimuli, yields a devastating homogeneity and standardization that impoverishes the human spirit. (*LOTC*: 113)

Finally, a third theme that emerges in *The Limits of the City* is that, at their best, urban communities generate a social space where the stranger can become transformed into the citizen. Bookchin argues

that the city at its best gives rise to a world 'in its own right'. This is most crucially a world that goes beyond the familial and the tribal to establish a 'unique political universe'. It is the manner in which the city, at its finest, can nurture human beings as citizens; as active agents in a political community, which is the critical emancipatory gain of urbanism. It is this theme – which lies at the core of Bookchin's final book-length contribution to urban studies, *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987/1995) – which we will discuss further in the next chapter.

### THE CITY AS A HUMAN[E] COMMUNITY: ENVISAGING ECOTOPIA

Where then are we left with the city? In the essay 'Towards a Vision of the Urban Future' (1978), Bookchin argues that the 'shallow modern obsession' with the immediate present coupled with an 'entirely mediocre' culture ensures that the preconception that guides our view of the modern city is 'entirely entrepreneurial' (*TES*: 173). As such:

The city has become a problem not in social theory, community or psychology but in bookkeeping. It has ceased to be a human creation and has become a commodity. Its achievement is to be judged not by architectural beauty, cultural inspiration, and human association but by economic productivity, taxable resources, and fiscal success. (*TES*: 175)

In contrast to such a mediocre view, Bookchin argues that what is required is a vision of an urban future that 'fulfils our most advanced concepts, of humanity's potentialities: freedom and self consciousness' (*TES*: 186). This is a vision that equally needs to allow an emancipated humanity to fulfil its creative and rational potential – *in harmony with*, rather than set against the natural world. Such an account by necessity needs to be 'vague, perhaps, and broad but hopeful' (*TES*: 189), as Bookchin elaborates:

A libertarian vision should be a venture in speculative participation. Half-finished ideas should be proffered deliberatively, not because finished ones are difficult to formulate but rather because completeness to the point of detail would subvert dialogue – and it is dialogue that is central to civic relations, just as it is *logos* that forms the basis of society. (*TES*: 190)

Whilst Bookchin's reconstructive thinking does actually take on rather different forms in different writings, there are certain broad features of his vision of an urban future that reoccur.

First, drawing inspiration from Aristotle and the Hellenic world more generally, a persistent theme of Bookchin's reconstructive urban

thought from the early 1960s onwards is that to recover the humanist concept of the city we need to reclaim the human scale of urban life (*OSE*, *PSA*, *CIOC*, *LOTC*, *TES*). There may well be logistical or technocratic reasons why 'small is beautiful' because it allows the conservation of energy, but for Bookchin, attention to the human scale in urban design is primarily important for *humanist* reasons. Understanding 'the human' in Aristotelian terms of self-activity and self-administration in the public sphere, Bookchin argues the human scale is vitally important because it opens the potential to render the city *comprehensible* and hence *controllable* by all. In contrast, Bookchin argues, trends towards gigantism and centralisation of urban form merely produce a 'a mind numbing quiescence' (*TES*: 105). To achieve a human scale, we need to institutionally and ultimately physically decentralise our vast urban worlds.

Second, Bookchin's futuristic vision of a new urban future is centrally underpinned by the '*liberatory*' possibilities of a reclaimed, democratised and ecologised technology. Bookchin argues in writings dating back to the 1960s that decentralisation cannot be seen as a form of regression but as compatible with and augmenting many existing technological developments. For example, in *Our Synthetic Environment*, it is argued that technological innovations may have actually made the need for huge concentrations of people in a few urban areas *less* important as the expansion of mass communications and transportation have ensured that 'the obstacles created by space and time are essentially gone' (*OSE*: 241). Concerning the viability of industrial decentralisation, it is suggested in 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (1965) that new developments in miniaturisation, computing and engineering have ensured that small-scale alternatives to many of the giant facilities that dominated industry societies are now increasingly viable. It is the smoky steel town and the huge factories inherited from the industrial era that have now become an anachronism, not the call for clean, versatile and compact machinery. More generally though, it is speculated that the sheer scale of the labour-saving possibilities that 'cybernation' and 'automisation' have created, suggests that, perhaps for the first time in history, a toil-less future is now imaginable. The critical issue then is not whether technology can liberate humanity from want but the extent to which we can construct a new technological settlement that is 'restorative of the environment and perhaps, more significantly, of personal and communal autonomy' (*TES*: 130).

To achieve such an aspiration, though, will not simply involve sifting the progressive from the regressive features of existing technologies but generating a path change in the nature of technological innovation. As Bookchin notes:

If anything, we need a new industrial revolution, one which will replace a patently obsolete, highly centralized wasteful technology designed to produce shabby, short-lived junk commodities in immense quantities by long lived, high quality, useful goods that satisfy rational human needs. (*OSE*: lxx)

Bookchin argues that such a liberatory and ecological technology should not only 'reawaken man's sense of dependence on the environment' (*PSA*: 136) but restore selfhood and competence to a 'client citizenry' (*TES*: 130). Contra eco-luddism, what is needed 'is not a wholesale discarding of advanced technologies ... but indeed a shifting, indeed a further development of technology along ecological principles' (*EofF*: 37).

Third, there is what we might call an important qualitative dimension to Bookchin's reconstructive writings. Bookchin argues that struggles for emancipation giving rise to urban revolutions have frequently been cast in terms of demands for 'justice', for 'fair play' and a share in the benefits of life that are commensurable with one's contribution (*RS*: 96). It is argued, however, that a future society needs to be informed by broader, richer ethical commitments. Specifically, there is a need to prioritise a commitment to 'freedom' – understood as 'a commitment to spontaneous organization and full access to the means of life' (*PSA*: 116) – over mere 'justice' and its concerns for the rule of equivalence. Moreover, central to any credible concept of freedom, Bookchin argues, is a commitment to 'the equality of unequals'. Such a position recognises that people are born unequal in many respects yet need to be compensated for inequalities. This is not simply concerned with compensatory mechanisms but 'an outlook that manifests itself in a sense of care, responsibility, and a decent concern for human and non human beings whose suffering, plight, and difficulties might be lightened or removed by our interventions' (*RS*: 99).

Fourth, the sensibilities implicit in Bookchin's view of the good life are not the po-faced and thin-lipped ecological vision that delights in preaching the puritanical virtues of belt-tightening, cutting back and the need for humanity to 'know its place in nature'. On the contrary, it is the potentially creative role that humanity could play in the natural world that is affirmed and celebrated. Once again,

rather than turn to Marx and Engels, it is Rabelais and Fourier who are admired for 'their sensuousness, their passion for the concrete, their adoration of desire and pleasure' (*EofF*: 326).

Fifth, central to this vision of a new urbanism is a view that the division between humanity and nature should be transcended. Rather than celebrate humanity's estrangement from nature, Bookchin argues, 'we need to recover our own fecundity in the world of life' (*EofF*: 315). An urban community that has re-established a balance between humanity and nature would demonstrate a 'new appreciation of the region in which a community is located' (*CIOC*: 194). We should make humanity's dependence on the material world a 'visible and living part' of culture (*PSA*: 134), through bringing the garden into the city. More broadly, it is argued that we should aspire to live balanced lives, lives that allow for intellectual, physical, civic, sensuous and ecological modes of being. Ultimately – and as we have seen in the previous chapter – this would give rise to a world that has transcended first and second nature to give us 'Free Nature'.

Finally, and as we will explore in the next chapter, at the centre of this vision of the recovery of the humanist city is the idea that politics – understood in its Hellenic sense as participatory democracy and viewed as a sphere of ethics – needs to be restored to its Aristotelian primacy in the order of things.

## BOOKCHIN'S CRITIQUE OF THE LIMITLESS CITY

Bookchin's critique and reconstruction of urbanism is, like his other works, vast, and the agendas he raises are sweeping. We will focus here specifically on two issues. First, we will consider the extent to which Bookchin's urban critique is empirically reliable and compelling. Second, we will begin to explore Bookchin's reconstructive imagination by mapping what I will argue are a fairly diverse and shifting range of visions that can legitimately be drawn from his urban ecology. Let us turn first though to the critique of the existing city.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of Bookchin's 1960s and 1970s writings on urbanisation is that they anticipate to a remarkable degree both the trajectory that urban development has taken in the US over the last four decades and some of the central debates that have run through urban studies in the light of this. Empirically, Bookchin would seem to have got much right. The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen the emergence of a world where

a majority of the human population – for the first time in human history – live in urban areas (see Davis, 2004). The unlimited city has indeed come to pass. And – as Bookchin anticipated – within this context, the question of how we can deal with the social-ecological and civic problems thrown up by urban sprawl in the North, and the rise of mega-cities in the South, has moved centre stage.

Second, Bookchin deserves credit for being one of the first ecological thinkers to recognise the anti-urban bias of much environmentalist discourse. His insistence that a credible social ecology should attend to the vast socio-ecological effects of urban sprawl on productive land, groundwater, air and water pollution and carbon dioxide emissions again anticipates the concerns of environmental justice activists and recent currents of urban political ecology (see Heynen, Kaika and Swyngedouw, eds. 2006).

Yet, beyond this, can Bookchin's urban writings usefully inform us? To try to provide some initial response to this question it is instructive and enlightening to compare the style of urban critique developed by Bookchin with more recent literatures that have emerged from the urban sprawl debate.

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY AND THE NEW URBANISM

Let us consider certain odd parallels that emerge between social ecology and new urbanism. At one level, Bookchin's urban social ecology, with its investment in the revolutionary tradition and the utopian reclaiming/transformation of the urban, is very far apart from the pragmatic, policy-orientated and, to a degree, market-friendly advocates of 'smart growth' who populate the new urbanist movement and now constitute the principal contemporary critics of the unlimited city. Yet, there are also points of overlap between the more progressive and radical currents of the New Urbanist movement and Bookchin's thought. For example, if we consider a new urbanist classic, *The Geography of Nowhere* – James Howard Kunstler's visceral critique of the massive suburban build-out of the US, which gives rise to his nightmare vision of a 'drive-in utopia' – much of this text could almost be read as a sequel to some of Bookchin's writings of the 1970s. Kunstler's concern with the spread of a thoroughly boring and slap-dash landscape across the US, and his more general concern for a loss of knowledge, tradition, skill, custom and vernacular wisdom in the art of city-making, resonates strongly with core themes of Bookchin's urban writings of the 1960s and 1970s. Equally, there

are some striking similarities between Bookchin's concern with the loss of 'form' and 'definition' of the modern city and Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck's bald assertion in their New Urbanist manifesto *Suburban Nation* that:

for the past fifty years, we Americans have been building a national landscape that is largely devoid of places worth caring about. Soulless sub-divisions, 'residential communities', utterly lacking in communal life; strip shopping centers, 'big box' chain stores, and artificial festive malls set within barren seas of parking; antiseptic office parks, ghost towns after 6pm; and mile upon mile of clogged collector roads. (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck, 2000: x)

The communitarian interests of new urbanists, with their concerns for the loss of 'traditional neighbourhoods' after the Second World War, their worries about the lack of spaces for any kind of social and civic engagement in a world of gated communities and homogenised 'big box' shopping malls, and about the more general disappearance of civic and public space in the contemporary urban landscape, do continue the type of urban critique (albeit in highly reformist guise) made by Bookchin. In part, of course, these linkages are not entirely coincidental. Both social ecology and the new urbanists are partially inspired by the work of Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford and Ebenezer Howard. Moreover, both these literatures raise powerful and politically important themes. The new urbanist critique of the American landscape continues to have resonance in the present, where a real-estate investment bubble has given rise, in growing parts of the US, to a privatised, automobile-dependent, utilitarian, socially segregated and indeed just plain ugly urban landscape that lacks even a modest commitment to civic engagement, urban aesthetics and the craft of city building displayed by urban champions of the past (such as the 'city beautiful movement'). Bookchin's additional stress on the civic and political passivity that such landscapes can induce offers complementary insights here.

Proximities between social ecology and new urbanist writings additionally reveal some tensions in this mode of urban critique. For example, both Bookchin's writings and new urbanist arguments are informed by an interest in 'authentic urban community'. Yet, in both discourses this concept remains somewhat undeveloped, it is often understood in naturalistic terms, 'organic ties, etc.', and it is then asserted a priori as a normative good. We have seen in Chapter 2 how *The Ecology of Freedom* is replete with claims about 'organic societies' as the first 'authentic' human communities; likewise *The*

*Limits of the City* repeats such claims, with much talk about the rich 'cultural nexus' that people were tied into in many pre-capitalist urban communities such as the Renaissance city, and the 'web of relationships, rights and duties that permeated their lives'. Such claims linger around Bookchin's writings on the city, with his talk of the integral nature of early twentieth-century ethnic communities of New York City and the need for future urban forms to restore 'the organic bonds of community' (*FUTC*: 40).

Now, the standard response to such claims from orthodox Marxists and Whiggish liberals – who would declare any attempt to reflect on the possible virtues of pre-capitalist social forms, traditions and social practices as 'atavistic' and 'regressive' – is well known. David Harvey's critiques of new urbanism, communitarianism and eco-communalism comes close to such a position (see Harvey, 1996: 427). And, as Bookchin has pointed out in various places, such reactions can both misread what he, at least, is trying to do and underestimate the importance of allowing our imaginations to draw from the full range of social practices in human history. Bookchin's reflections on urban history are not an attempt to resurrect ex-nihilo institutions and social forms out of the historical past untouched. As a modernist, he is certainly aware of the gains to urban public health that modernist practices have delivered. Rather he is essentially arguing that across history and culture, certain social practices have existed in other places and spaces that could inform thoughts on alternative urban futures.

Yet, critics of urban communitarian discourse such as Iris Marion Young (1990), David Harvey (1996) and Doreen Massey (2005) would seem on firmer ground in arguing that problems can still emerge with the naturalising assumptions of such discourses. Political discourses framed around community and 'community values' can generate politically productive and progressive outcomes. But they can also be dangerous when they gravitate towards a 'design fix' mentality which leaves under-examined the extent to which 'community' and 'community values' are themselves concepts and material realities bound up with power relations of inclusion and exclusion. The ties that bind can also be the ties that strangle. Nostalgic visions of the supposed virtues of the American small town of the early twentieth century can often evade the extent to which such strong communities, up until very recent times, were built on exclusion and a denial of heterogeneity (Harvey, 1996: 426). Bookchin is, of course, well aware of these issues. His commitments to examining

hierarchy and domination in all its forms, his explicit rejection of the technocratic orientation of urban planning and his view of the good society as preferably based on the 'principle of unity in diversity', make his urban communitarian discourse a rather more complicated target for critique than many currents of new urbanism. Yet the holist, social organicist and naturalistic elements features of his urban discourse certainly do ensure that rhetorics of 'organic community' and 'authentic neighbourhoods' tend to emphasise the virtues of cohesion and integration above dynamic pluralism and heterogeneity.[4]

It could additionally be observed that for all the insight contained in Bookchin's critique of 'urbanisation without cities', his depictions of post-war urbanism are – like some New Urbanist writings – sometimes rather limited. The ethnic neighbourhoods of the Lower East Side during Bookchin's childhood are constantly returned to as examples of mini-worlds in themselves, offering culturally rich communitarian experiences. Bookchin tries to recover early twentieth-century New York City as a world which offered some kind of balance between town and country. Yet, there are moments in *Crisis in Our Cities* where Bookchin's complaints about the noise and congestion of post-war New York, and his hostility to the density of development of Manhattan, simply read like the views of a man who has fallen out of love with the city of his youth. His analysis, in *The Limits of the City*, of New York and Los Angeles in the 1970s is apocalyptic. More generally, there is something shrill and myopic about the Frankfurt School-type claim that the modern metropolis constitutes a vast force of homogenising impulses and, indeed, 'the complete negation of city life as it was conceived during the more civilized eras of the past' (*LOTC*: vii).

Economic, cultural, ecological and political processes are clearly brought together in capitalism to give rise to highly uneven and deeply unjust urban landscapes (Harvey, 1996; Heynen, Kaika and Swyngedouw, eds. 2003). It would seem beyond dispute that such neo-liberal urbanisation is giving rise to urban forms marked by social inequality and exclusions, alienation and injustice, but also to often complex forms of environmental displacements and injustices. As David Swatterthwaite has observed:

the fact [is] that businesses and consumers in wealthy cities can maintain high levels of environmental quality in and around the city (and the nation in which [they are] located) by importing all the goods whose fabrication implies high

environmental costs. Thus, the goods that require high levels of energy, water and other resource use and generally involve dirty industrial processes with high volumes of waste (including hazardous waste) and hazardous conditions for the workers, are imported. (Satterthwaite, 1997: 223; but additionally see Bai, 2007)

Yet, neither Bookchin's urban writings, nor those of the new urbanists, quite seem to appreciate all the qualities that make 'megalopolitan' cities so exciting (cf. Harvey, 1996: 24); notably, as Harvey observes, the element of the unexpected, the conflicts, the cosmopolitan complexity (additionally see Massey, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991), or, as even Koolhaas notes, the sheer spontaneity that is still a definitive quality of life in London and Lagos, Los Angeles or Lahore. Bookchin makes important observations about the relationship between gigantism and quiescence, between scale, controllability and democracy, but these observations need to be set beside a recognition that, even in contemporary times, global cities such as London, New York, Los Angeles and the like, whilst embedded in social and environmental injustices, are still vast centres of cultural and social innovation and creativity – places for people with stigmatised sexualities and ethnicities to discard 'organic communities' and embrace processes of re-making and re-invention. Such cities are marked by dynamic flows of old communities disaggregating and new communities forming, creating urban landscapes that are constantly in process of dynamic transformation (Massey, 2005). Bookchin's defence of a broadly Aristotelian urban aesthetic is often deployed in a powerful and insightful fashion in his urban writings. This style of critique allows him to pose vital questions about the purposes and ends of human and urban life, questions that have been almost entirely evacuated by contemporary currents of urbanism obsessed with difference. The style of critique deployed in *Crisis in Our Cities* and *The Limits of the City* often resonates strongly with Richard Sennett's very similar (and equally brilliant) humanist and ethical critiques of modern cities, as developed in *The Fall of Public Man* (1977) and *The Conscience and the Eye* (1990). Yet, perhaps what is sometimes lacking from Bookchin's urban aesthetic is Sennett's or even Jane Jacobs' (1961) appreciation of the socially contradictory nature of modern urbanism, of the manner in which social disharmony and conflict can generate the new, the spontaneous and the unexpected, let alone any appreciation of the sheer beauty of the city without end, the post-modern city at night, a neon-stripped Shinjuku, Tokyo or Shanghai. We get very little sense

in Bookchin's work of the seductions of the post-modern city, the sense of marvel and excitement that emerges from moving between the vast colonnades of skyscrapers that emerge like new pyramids from the modernist city, or indeed the thrill of encountering the vast heterogeneity and messiness of contemporary global cities. In ultimately championing (like Aristotle) the city that can be taken in at a single view, there are times when Bookchin's urban imaginary seems to be working with a rather too limited vision of appropriate spatial scale. This discounts too quickly the possibility that ecological living could be compatible with a range of diverse if bounded urban forms operating at a diverse set of spatial scales, and that we might desire to live urban life and (possibly future eco-urban lives) at multiple spatial scales at different points in our lives.[5] For a theorist who is so interested in discussing spontaneity and self-organisation in the abstract, it is surprising how far Bookchin's urban writings seem to hunger for an urban world that is rather tidy and harmonious, balanced and integrated.

This should draw our attention to how there are also some missed articulations in Bookchin's critique/recuperation of the urban. It is striking to note, for example, that for a thinker who is so sensitive to the ways in which the power dynamics of ecological questions are always bound up with issues of race and class, *Crisis in Our Cities* explores the theme of 'urban crisis' in 1965 with no substantive discussion of racial division. It is striking to reflect that two years after the publication of this text, racial discrimination and segregation caused cities across the US to explode into violence. Indeed, whilst there are obvious connections to make between social ecology (with its attempt to view environmental and urban questions through the lens of social hierarchy and social domination) and questions of environmental justice (as we have seen in Chapter 5), Bookchin rarely engages with issues of race and urbanism in his urban writings.[6]

### SUBURBS, EX-URBS AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Yet, at the same time, Bookchin's work on the urban persistently demonstrates how complex and provocative his thinking can be. Thus, whilst we have seen that Bookchin offers us an urban critique rooted in a critique of the unlimited city, unlike certain urbanist literatures that defend the city with a sneering and snobbish disregard for suburbia,[7] Bookchin makes a more interesting reading of such developments. We can find notable moments in Bookchin's writings

where the positive potential of suburbanisation is acknowledged. For example, as far back as *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962) we find reflections on the demographic shifts occurring from the cities into the suburbs and ex-urbs strikingly at odds with many new urbanist currents. While Bookchin notes in this text that much energy has been spent by various social critics ridiculing the exodus of urban man into new suburbs and ex-urbs, he argues that this shift and the cultural changes that have followed – such as the rise in interest in camping and handicrafts, and the take up of such suburban 'vices' as home maintenance, gardening and carpentry – should not be derided. Such developments, indeed, are presented as the consequence of a perfectly understandable impulse to escape the reification at the heart of modern life. The 'average American' is making an attempt 'to reduce his environment to a human scale'. He is 'trying to re-create a world that he can cope with as an individual'. At root, Bookchin argues, the rise of suburbia reflects 'a need to function within an intelligible, manipulatable, and individually creative sphere of human activity' (*OSE*: 238).

Some five decades later, Bookchin returns to the problems raised by suburbanisation and ex-urbanisation. Seeking to address a question raised by Janet Biehl concerning the difficulties of possibly imagining institutional and physical decentralisation occurring in a world of megacities, he responds:

A very important phenomenon is that when many urban belts reach a large size, they begin to recreate themselves into small cities. ... And this is actually happening now, although it's being ignored in many discussions of urbanism. In the U.S. – and I'm more knowledgeable about this country that I am about other parts of the world – American megacities that seemed physically like the huge urban conglomerations that are now forming elsewhere are, in fact, wrinkling internally into smaller and smaller city centres. The suburb in the traditional sense ... many of those are becoming nucleated now and are increasingly turning into fairly self contained cities in the sense of having their own downtowns and their own industrial as well as commercial areas. In places that for years there was nothing but residential tracts, a regrouping is taking place in which office buildings appear, institutional buildings, schools, government buildings, and even new kinds of industries. People no longer go to the old 'city centre' – they now go to new 'downtowns', that have been recreated out of their suburbs. So what were originally bedroom communities are becoming relatively viable towns. (*BR*: 151)

It is interesting, then, for an 'ecological thinker', that it is the rise of the 'polycentric city', the bane of new urbanist writings, that is considered in Bookchin's later work as potentially generating new openings for a more benign mode of urbanisation.

More generally, what is constantly provocative about Bookchin's urban critique as a whole is that however much his work might resonate at a surface level with contemporary 'new urbanist' writings, his critique of the urban present is given much more weight and depth due to the grounding of his thought in an ecological humanism. What is striking about Bookchin's 1970s writings on the city is the extent to which, underpinned by a deeply Aristotelian sensibility, they make a normative argument, a plea that we move beyond simple relativism to make more considered humanist ethical judgments on our present urban habitats. As he states:

If our values are not to be entirely arbitrary and relativistic, they must be rooted in certain objective criteria about humanity itself. What clearly unites an Aristotle with a Kropotkin, despite a historical span of more than two millennia, is their emphasis on self consciousness as the most distinctive of human attributes, notably the capacity of human beings to engage in self-reflection, rational action, and foresee the consequences of their activities. Human action is not merely any action by human beings, but action that fosters reflexivity, rational practice, and foresight. Judging a habitat by this criterion, we would be advised to look beyond the mere presence of human artifacts and inquire into whether or not the habitat promotes distinctly human traits and potentialities. Clearly a habitat that is largely incomprehensible to the humans who inhabit it would be regarded as inhuman. Whether by reason of its size, its centralization or the exclusively of its decision making process, it would deny the individual the opportunity to understand key social factors that affect his personal destiny. Such a habitat by closing to the individual a strategic area for the formation of consciousness, would challenge the integrity of consciousness itself. (*TES*: 105)

It is this normative search for a human habitat, which would allow us to become fully human, that is at the core of his grappling with the city as it is and his attempt to imagine the city as it could be. What then can we make of his reconstructive imaginary?

## ECO-COMMUNALISM OR A PLURALIST ECO-URBANISM?

Bookchin's reconstructive writings, like many utopian visions, are marked by striking insights, beautiful themes, and rationalist and

perfectionist excesses. We will explore these issues further in the next chapter and the conclusion to this book. One of the features of Bookchin's utopian imagination I would like to draw out here is the extent to which we find, not a single vision of 'the ecological society', but fairly diverse utopian visions which proliferate throughout his writings at different points.

For example, it is striking how his utopian imagination seems to see-saw between advocacy of what we might call a long-term 'eco-communalist' vision and a more socially and spatially differentiated ecological urbanism. If we consider the vision of 'the ecological society' (frequently discussed in the singular) that can be found in 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (1964), emphasis is placed here on the virtues of the 'small decentralized community' (*PSA*: 97) that is relatively self-sufficient and carefully tailored to the characteristics and resources of the region. This would appear to be a society that has transcended the division of labour. While the futuristic emphasis on new technologies is present, decentralisation is conceptualised in terms of urban communities being 'reduced in size and widely dispersed over the land' (*PSA*: 97). *The Ecology of Freedom* follows similar contours with 'the commune' identified as the central core institution of social and ecological life in the ecological society (*EofF*: 344). In such writings, we appear to be presented with a distinctly eco-communalist vision which clearly seems in line with the classic countercultural impulses of the 1960s, and with what we might consider are 'classic' green and anarchist visions (see Dobson, 1990; Barry, 1999; Eckersley, 1992).

Yet, in other writings, a rather different vision emerges. Thus, it is declared in *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965): 'Our entire culture has emerged from the nourishing contact of thousands of people in a moderate sized community', and from this it is argued: 'To fragment the human community, to scatter the thousands over the countryside, or to diminish the contact provided by an urban arena would result in a social barbarism as devastating to the human spirit as congestion and pollution are to the human body' (*CIOC*: 4).

Indeed, Bookchin speculates here that some of these 'moderate sized communities' might well accommodate up to a million people (*CIOC*: 196). Subsequent urban writings provide a further pluralisation and spatial differentiation of this vision. At the centre of these later writings is the city as a human-scale, self-governing municipality situated in a broader city-region and confederally associated with surrounding towns, villages and communities through bottom-up

political arrangements. Moreover, this is only one chain in a multi-tiered set of confederal networks that would move in scale from the local to the global (*FUTC*).[8]

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

A second set of interesting variations that emerge from Bookchin's reconstructive writings concern his attitude to technological innovation. Whilst, as we have seen, all Bookchin's writings take developments in technological innovation seriously – though simultaneously arguing for a careful examination of such developments in terms of the extent to which they open up relations of liberation or of domination – the degree to which his utopian muse has been open to greater or lesser degrees of technological rationalisation over the decades is striking.

There are moments where Bookchin's writings tend towards a vision of an 'ecological society' where technology – and mostly appropriate and locally controlled 'alternative technology' at that – is used, and used sparingly. *The Ecology of Freedom* reflects such a mood as it declares: 'It is no longer a "new age" cliché to insist that, wherever possible we must "unplug" our "inputs" from a depersonalized, mindless system that threatens to absorb us into its circuitry' (*EofF*: 335). Here, and in other places, Bookchin can be read as a soft techno-sceptic (see *DtE*: 34–5).

Elsewhere though, we can find rather different socio-technical arrangements being entertained. As we have previously seen, many of Bookchin's sixties writings are notable for being marked by something of a fascination with the 'white heat' of technology. The final pages of *Crisis in Our Cities* provide us with detailed observations of the possibilities that exist for emerging new energy sources such as solar, wind and tidal power, new transport technologies such as electric cars, and for decentralised, automated clean factories. It is argued in this text that although such energy sources may not meet all the needs of an advanced industrial economy or a new urban settlement, combining such energy sources in a 'carefully planned structure', whilst making very careful and judicious use of nuclear[9] and fossil fuels (*CIOC*: 193), could bring us closer to a more balanced energy future. 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' advocates a highly rationalised form of sustainable agriculture which champions not only the virtues of 'augmatic' feeding of livestock (*PSA*: 138) but the 'extra-ordinary advances in the genetic improvement of food'

(*PSA*: 138). Moreover, it would be wrong to dismiss such positions as 'sixties slippages'. It is interesting and valuable to quote at length Bookchin's thoughts on the biotechnological revolutions in particular – outlined in one of his final extended interviews:

This society is already able to manipulate these two basic forces – matter-energy on the one hand and life on the other. Science and industry can already transform matter into energy and energy into matter. And people who engage in bioengineering are on the threshold of making enormous innovations in agriculture and medicine that will affect all spheres of life. They are even beginning to introduce human genes in animal chromosomes and are cloning mammals. Unfortunately, the knowledge of how to control natural forces is, at present, in the hands of the bourgeoisie and its scientific servants, who use it to serve the interests of capital. The searing question we face is: How would people use this knowledge in a free, rational, ecological society? In fact, in a rational society, we *must* control the forces of nature, if for no other reason than to create, restore and maintain ecological areas for non human life forms. First nature has been remade to such an extent that a free, rational, ecological society would have to engage in widespread ecological restoration, and this cannot be done without the use of science, technics, and our active intervention in the biosphere. We could even use genetic engineering, for example in such a way as to 'restore' wild areas. Ironic as it may seem, in a rational society we would have to exercise control over natural forces precisely in order to restore first nature. (*AMFL*: 289)

Such observations not only demonstrate how far Bookchin's final writings take him from the Bookchin of *The Ecology of Freedom*, they also demonstrate further complexities in his view of 'free nature'.

### FREE NATURE: BLENDING OR MAINTAINING DEMARCATIONS?

Steve Chase has observed, drawing from the work of Roderick Nash, that US environmental thought has long been divided between advocates of 'wilderness' and 'garden' visions of the future. If we place deep ecology at the extreme end of the 'wilderness' vision, and Rene Dubos' vision of an entirely humanised earth at the extreme end of the 'garden' version, Chase argues that Bookchin can be read as a moderate advocate of the garden vision. Whilst Bookchin is predominantly concerned with a humanised landscape, Chase notes that his writings have stressed the importance of guarding and expanding wilderness, cherishing natural spontaneity, and exercising caution in disturbing natural processes (see Chase in *DtE*: 11–13). Chase's fine essay offers us an interesting reading of Bookchin's vision

of 'free nature' at a particular time and place. It can certainly be supported by textual evidence (particularly writings that emerged in the early 1990s, when Bookchin was under pressure from deep ecologists to address issues of wilderness preservation). However, I would like to suggest that if we view Bookchin's work in the large, we can once again see interesting variations and shifts of emphasis in terms of what might constitute 'free nature' and what might constitute an appropriate reworking of the relationship between 'town' and 'country'.

For example, many of Bookchin's urban writings argue that the city reaches its high point when there are clear demarcations between cities and their surrounding countryside. A failing of modern urbanisation, then, is the transgression of all demarcations. One could legitimately infer from this that the future should herald – in the recovery of the humane city – a return to demarcations. At times, this is what Bookchin seems to be advocating. He seems to be defending a rejuvenation of the city based not only on projects to radically democratise the city, to facilitate human-scale institutions and technologies that would enable self-management, but also on a recovery of the humane city that would allow 'the garden to come back into the city'. In this respect, in *Defending the Earth*, Bookchin provides one of his most substantive images of such a settlement as he talks of cities being surrounded by small farms 'that practice diversified organic agriculture for the local area' and are 'linked to each other by tree belts, pastures and meadows'. Additionally, 'each city and town should contain many vegetable and flower gardens, attractive arbors, park lands, streams and ponds which support fish and aquatic birds. In this way the countryside would not only constitute the environs of the city but would also directly infuse the city' (*DtE*: 79). Furthermore, beyond the city, '[i]n rolling hills, or mountainous country, land with sharp gradients should be left covered by timber to prevent erosion, conserve water, and support wildlife', and, '[r]elatively close by, sizable wilderness areas would safely co-exist with human habitats and would be carefully managed to enhance and preserve their evolutionary integrity, diversity and stability' (*DtE*: 79–80).

Yet, there are other moments in Bookchin's writings when he seems to be open to more 'socio-natural blending' than to maintaining or reordering demarcations. Thus, in *The Limits of the City*, Bookchin argues that 'the immense development of industry over the past century has created a remarkable opportunity for bringing land and

city into a rational ecological synthesis. The two could be blended into an artistic unity that would open a new vision of the human and natural experience' (*LOTC*: 3). Indeed, there are times when Bookchin has even spoken of a future where the possibility might exist to go 'beyond the city' and produce a new type of human community (*LOTC*: xi), one that 'combines the best features of urban and rural life in a harmonized future society' (*LOTC*: xi). There is, nonetheless, something of an elusive quality to this vision. At one level, it might be asked, 'does the blending of city/countryside into a new type of human community not ultimately end up eradicating the city, the urban and the urbane'? Is not the difference between the two exactly what makes them unique? Bookchin's vision of 'blending', coupled with his final thoughts on the need to consider the potential of biotechnology, does at times sound rather closer to René Dubos than has been previously recognised.[10]

### DISSOLVING OR RETROFITTING THE MODERN METROPOLIS?

A final tension we can identify in Bookchin's reconstructive thinking is that his writings of the 1960s and 1970s are ultimately marked by distinct apocalyptic and pragmatic moments in relation to the future of the modern metropolis. In some writings, Bookchin seems to give up on the modern city. We are told at such moments 'New York, Chicago, Los Angeles – or Paris, London, Rome – are cities in name only', and that the modern megalopolis must be 'ruthlessly dissolved' (*TES*: 168). The only hope then would seem to lie with a chiliastic revolutionary scenario that could give rise to 'the possibility of the generalised revolution, complete and totalistic' (*PSA*: 55).

Yet, in less apocalyptic and arguably more interesting moments, we can find in Bookchin's urban writings a defence of the ever-present possibilities that the modern metropolis throws up. Contemporary London and New York are both viewed as cities of a thousand villages (*FUTC*), and there are also moments where Bookchin is full of admiration for a broad range of pragmatic reformist and civil society strategies that would both make existing cities more livable, and open the scope for further social and ecological experimentation. In such alternative moments, it seems that the modern metropolis – even on the scale and complexity of New York or London – can be reclaimed.

For example, it is interesting to note that for all the revolutionary bluster of much of Bookchin's prose, *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965) is

full of straightforward pragmatic public policy recommendations that attempt to demonstrate how large metropolises like New York could be rendered more ecological and convivial in the here and now. Bookchin argues in *Crisis* that while some health hazards 'are unavoidable features of life in a metropolis', many threats to public health 'could be eliminated with only a small measure of civic foresight and concern' (*CIOC*: 174). He suggests that underground transportation systems, rail networks, pedestrianisation, effective air pollution devices, and staggered working hours could all reduce 'automobile, industrial and domestic pollution' in Manhattan and elsewhere (*CIOC*: 178).

Indeed, it is striking how Bookchin's urban writings of the 1970s are marked by further pragmatic moments as a diverse range of civil societarian strategies are championed as potential means to facilitate a social and ecological 'retrofit' of the inner city, and through this create possibilities for further change. In *The Limits of the City* we are told that what impresses us most as urban dwellers is the cultivation of gardens in the city or the use of solar collectors on urban dwellings, and Bookchin speaks with warm regard for countercultural planners in Berkeley who are seeking to develop new methods of popular planning (*LOTC*: 153–8). In 'The Concept of Ecotechnologies and Ecocommunities' (*TES*), Bookchin champions the strategy followed by the Institute for Local Self Reliance which promotes roof-top gardens, social energy units, waste recycling and retrofitting projects 'in the very mid East of Washington DC' (*TES*: 109). In 'Self Management and the New Technologies' attention is drawn to the appropriation of French intensive community gardening techniques by ghetto dwellers in the gutted neighbourhoods of New York City (*TES*: 130), and to the potential that the rise of 'block committees' in the city might offer in expanding neighbourhood governance. In 'Towards a Vision of the Urban Future' (*TES*), Bookchin provides glowing commentary on the emerging neighbourhood alliances between young radicals and community activists that emerged with the East Eleventh Street movement in the late seventies. He notes how such alliances brought together radical activists with the Puerto Rican neighbourhood organisation to not only rebuild a tenant building but to retrofit it 'with energy saving devices, insulation, solar panels for reheating water and a Jacobs wind generator for some of its electrical power' (*TES*: 184).

Indeed, even up until the early 1990s, one can find Bookchin championing a further range of cultural and political experiments

and modes of urban community development as a necessary first step in generating any further moves towards a more ecological and socially just future. As he states:

community organizing is a key element of a radical new politics, particularly those forms of association where people meet face to face, identify their common problems, and solve them through mutual aid and volunteer community service. Such community organizations encourage social solidarity, community self reliance, and individual initiative. Community gardens, block clubs, land trusts, housing co-operatives, parent run day-care centres, barter networks, alternative schools, consumer and producer co-operatives, community theatres, study groups, neighbourhood newspapers, public access television stations – all these meet immediate and usually neglected community needs. But they also serve, to greater or lesser degrees, as schools for democratic citizenship. Through participation in such efforts we can become more socially responsible and more skilled at democratically discussing and deciding important social questions. (*DtE*: 82)[11]

## UTOPIAN DIALOGUE AS 'PUBLIC EVENT'

Unearthing the more pragmatic and civic societarian moments of Bookchin's reconstructive urban thought is important for a number of reasons. *Towards an Ecological Society* (1980), in particular, arguably reveals one of the most fecund and creative moments in his writings, in its attempt to envisage an urban social ecology that grants a central place to the creative role urban neighbourhood movements could play in developing new modes of community development, to experiments in developing bottom up eco-technologies, and to new cultures of self-management and new participatory institutions. Such writings mark an opening up of social ecology during this period as new influences and points of convergence flood in. Bookchin's essays in *Towards an Ecological Society* clearly have material and political resonances with cross-class political movements such as the Madrid Citizens movement analysed by Manuel Castells' in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983). Additionally, one could refer to the experiments in neighbourhood government championed by Karl Hess (1979), or the wild and wonderful experiments in eco-technology being developed by diverse counterculture technologists from Amory Lovins to Nancy and Jack Todd.

It is also notable how, during this period, one begins to see strong lines of commonality emerging between Bookchin's reconstruc-

tive thinking and the writings of such libertarians and anarchist thinkers as Paul Goodman (Goodman and Goodman, 1960) and Colin Ward (1973). All are linked in this period by a common interest in rethinking utopianism and libertarian politics through exploring and championing the radical potential of diverse social and ecological practices of urban dwellers that expand the realm of self-management in everyday life in the here and now.[12]

It is additionally important to recognise that in Bookchin's case the final pages of *The Ecology of Freedom* seek to give theoretical coherence to such an approach by pluralising and democratising the utopian project. It is not a static use of utopian speculation that Bookchin ultimately defends in this text but an open-ended use of the utopian imaginary, crossing the political and cultural realms, the technological and the personal. Thus, in relation to utopian thought it is stated:

Now, when the imagination itself is becoming atrophied or is being absorbed by the mass media, the concreteness of utopian thought may be its most rejuvenating tonic. Whether as drama, novel, science fiction, or as an evoking of tradition, experience and fantasy must return in all their fullness to stimulate as well as to suggest. Utopian dialogue in all its existentiality must infuse the abstractions of social theory. My concern is not with utopian 'blueprints' (which can rigidify thinking as surely as more recent governmental 'plans'), but with the dialogue itself as public event. (*EofF*: 334)

Moreover, the attempt to democratise society at large is similarly thought through in an open-ended fashion. Recovering the terrain 'necessary for the personification and formulation of a body politic' will require that we 'defend society's molecular base – it's neighbourhoods, public squares, and places of assembly' (*EofF*: 335), with a view to recovering a public sphere that could be colonised by libertarian institutions.

It is notable that following in the wake of this writing, we start to see a slow opening up of the intellectual space of social ecology as a diverse range of thinkers, activists and practitioners – from eco-philosophers such as John Clark and Joel Kovel, to anthropologists such as Chaia Heller and Dan Chordorkoff, ecofeminists such as Ynestra King and Janet Biehl, political theorists such as John Ely, Howard Hawkin and Brian Tokar, and eco-technologists such as Nancy and John Todd – in varying ways begin to engage, appropriate and develop Bookchin's social ecology (see Clark, ed. 1990). Related journals emerge, such as John Clark's *Mesechabe: The Journal of Surregionalism*, committed

to developing 'the ecology of the imagination' by drawing together Bookchin's utopianism with bioregionalism, surrealism and various other currents of anarcho-situationist creativity. Takis Fotopoulos' *Society and Nature: The International Journal of Political Ecology* was set up as a forum for wide-ranging debate about the possibilities for critical engagement between Bookchin's social ecology, eco-socialism, left-libertarian currents inspired by Cornelius Castoriadis, and other complementary left-green movements. It is equally striking how, the potential for a rich, diverse and open-ended discussion of an urban social ecology with utopian intent having been opened up, much of this space for discussion seems to close down in the final decade of Bookchin's life.

# 7
# Citizens, Politics, Democracy

We have lost sight of the historic source and principle arena of any authentic politics – the city. We not only confuse urbanization with citification, but we have literally dropped the city out of the history of ideas – both in terms of the way it explains the present human condition and the systems of public governance it creates. Not that we lack any valuable histories of the city or attempts to evaluate it sociologically. But our urban literature generally neglects the relationship between the city and the remarkable phenomena of citizenship it produces ... The notion that the city is the source of immensely provocative political, ethical and economic theories – indeed that its institutions and structures embody them – is generally alien to the modern social theorist. (*FUTC*: 60)

Bookchin's political and urban writings in the late 1980s and 1990s are marked by some notable shifts. Specifically, the ecotopian writings of the 1970s and early 1980s recede to the background, as does Bookchin's interest in the potentialities that could emerge from forms of bottom-up community development and civil societarian strategies. Instead, his explorations of the city in history increasingly focus on question of politics and citizenship. Writings emerge which are more strategic in orientation and programmatic in nature. *From Urbanization to Cities* (1995) provides a good example of this shift.

This text, in its initial manifestation as *The Rise of Urbanization and Decline of Citizenship* (1987), provides a synthesis of Bookchin's interests in urbanisation, ecology, community development and democratic theory. Yet, in the third revised edition, the text is re-titled (as *From Urbanization to Cities*) and reworked in significant ways. Many of the ecological components of the text are now in large part taken out and, reflecting on the 'dismal failure' of diverse civil societarian strategies to avoid co-optation by capital, Bookchin draws a firm line under this aspect of his past work. The discussion is refocused around materials that elaborate Bookchin's preferred political strategy – libertarian municipalism.[1]

Deepening his critique of contemporary patterns of urbanisation explored in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s, *From Urbanization to Cities* offers a broader account of the hidden history of experiments

in participatory democracy, and a further elaboration and defence of a non-determinist view of urban history. The book closes with a series of substantive and concrete proposals for recovering 'an enhanced classical vision of politics' (*FUTC*: 225).

## THE *POLIS* AND THE POLITICAL

The primary critical aim of *From Urbanization to Cities* is to link the desiccation of the 'modern megalopolis' to citizens' disempowerment and the desiccation of politics. Bookchin argues that what is truly lacking from contemporary urban civilisation and the dominant 'entrepreneurial' concept of the city is the notion of a civic culture that could emerge from a distinct public and political body (*FUTC*: 20). We lack a conception of selfhood that could reach beyond the 'thoroughly mundane' and passive sense of human beings as 'taxpayers', 'constituents' or 'electorates'. Most notably, it is argued, we lack any sense of politics beyond the Weberian focus on statecraft: the bureaucratic manipulation of elites. The citizen, 'such as he or she is defined at the turn of the twenty-first century,' is 'losing any sense of identity or power over everyday life' (*FUTC*: 1). The central reconstructive aim of *From Urbanization to Cities* is to recover the hidden history of civic empowerment and active citizenship, the moments when the city emerged as the central space for the rise of the body politic and the public sphere.

In contrast to liberal and Marxist urban histories with their 'determinist proclivities' for announcing the inevitable rise of the nation state and political centralisation, Bookchin maintains that the suppressed histories of the *polis*, the commune, the neighbourhood assembly, the free city, the region and the confederation open up a different historical vantage point. They demonstrate that possibilities existed in the past for alternatives to political centralisation and they could once again reopen in the future.

*From Urbanization to Cities* begins by mapping the evolution of this democratic impulse. Whilst it is recognised that the institutions we associate with participatory democracy can be found in many tribal social forms, such as tribal assemblies (*FUTC*: 38), Bookchin argues that the idea of politics as a phenomenon which is distinguishable from the state and social life emerges at 'rare moments' in history. These moments are intimately linked with the history of the city. Politics receives one of its most 'authentic' articulations with the rise of Athenian democracy in the middle of the fifth century BC.

Despite all its limitations and exclusions, its elitism, its toleration of slavery, warfare and patriarchy, Bookchin suggests that it is still hard to do justice to the high level of 'consciousness, civicism, comment and aesthetics' achieved by the Athenian system of Democracy at its high point (*FUTC*: 44). Whilst the Athenian *polis* is often translated as 'city-state', Bookchin argues that this is in many respects misleading. A *polis* is not to be confused with a state in any modern sense. It is a 'consciously amateur system of governance' which is based 'on almost weekly popular assemblies, a judicial system structured around huge juries that represent the assemblies on an attenuated scale, the selection of civic officials by sortition, that is, the use of the lot, and the absence of any political professionalism or bureaucraticism' (*FUTC*: 44). Indeed, if we are to concede state forms to Athens, we would have to recognise that this was so in a 'very limited and piecemeal sense' (*FUTC*: 43). What is seen as most significant about the Hellenic experiment is the unique institutions it gives rise to and the underlying civic humanist philosophy that underpins this world, articulated most clearly in the writings of its most 'renowned theorist', Aristotle.

### *ZOON POLITIKON*, *PAIDEIA* AND *PHILIA*

Bookchin notes that for Aristotle, the idea of politics is intimately related to the idea of the human. We are reminded that Aristotle famously viewed human beings as animals, but specifically as political animals – *zoon politikon* – who fulfil their true nature through living in a *polis* (*FUTC*: 46). Bookchin notes the Aristotelian view that Man transcends his animality insofar as he has reason, speech or logos (*FUTC*: 46). But additionally:

these abilities do not guarantee that man has reached or even approximates the fulfillment of his potentialities. Institutions must exist that constitute the means for achieving human self fulfillment; a body of ethics must exist that gives the required institutions substance as well as form; a wealth of social activities must be cultivated in the civic centre or agora of the polis. ... to nourish interaction and discourse. (*FUTC*: 46)

Bookchin informs us that the Athenians saw citizenship as a process 'involving the social and self formation of people into active participants in the management of their communities' (*FUTC*: 9). He notes that this involves character development and education, personal or social training, civic schooling or *paideia* for producing

citizens. Aristotle lays emphasis on human solidarity or *philia*. Whilst this is usually translated as 'friendship', Bookchin suggests it is a rather more far-reaching concept: 'philia implies an expansive degree of sociality that is a civic attribute of the polis and the political life involved in its administration' (*FUTC*: 46).

The city then provides us with politics. Politics brings together *phronesis* (practical reason) and *praxis* (action) into a community. Bookchin argues that Aristotle's approach to the *polis* is emphatically 'developmental'. The *polis* is 'the culmination of a political whole from the growth of a social and biological part, a realm of the latent and the possible' (*FUTC*: 47), but it is in the form of the citizen, in 'his or her activities as a self governing being', that the political sphere 'becomes a living reality with the flesh and blood of a palpable body politics' (*FUTC*: 62).

While it is granted that Aristotle had a rather elite view of the best ordered *polis*, Bookchin nevertheless notes that historically the Athenian *polis* stabilised around 'a face to face democracy of the most radical kind' (*FUTC*: 48). In addition to the *polis*, we can identify a variety of public spaces in Athens where citizens gathered to discover public and practical affairs. Additionally, Athenian democracy at its best offered a remarkable centre for *paideia*:

The polis was not only a treasured end in itself; it was the 'school' in which the citizens' highest virtues were formed and found expression. Politics, in turn, was not only concerned with administering the affairs of the polis but with also educating the citizen as a public being who developed the competence to act in the public interest. (*FUTC*: 64)

Bookchin argues that the *polis* and Aristotle's view of human being as *zoon politikon* provide central reference points. Moreover, the realm of politics and active citizenship is not extinguished with the decline of Greek civilisation. Rather, Bookchin suggests, at various points across history the democratic impulse resurfaces. While it is argued that none of these moments match either the duration or the richness of Athenian democracy, Bookchin maintains that the 'patterns of civic freedom' we can go on to trace through the historical record testify to a 'legacy of freedom' running through the human story.

## THE LEGACY OF FREEDOM

With the collapse of Athenian democracy, the democratic imaginary receives a considerable blow. Yet, this was not fatal, and *From*

*Urbanization to Cities* goes on to map how the notion of the 'body politic' and 'popular rule' continue to surface at numerous points. Turning to consider Rome, Bookchin argues that the Roman Republic does indeed elaborate a hierarchically structured system of popular governance. Whilst acknowledging that the early Roman Republic offers a much more attenuated vision of democracy compared to the Hellenic model, Bookchin contends that during the more fervent moments of the Republic, even Rome displays radical democratic potential, and suggests that the Republican institutions are marked by tensions between oligarchic and popular moments (*FUTC*: 50). What ultimately emerges from Rome, though, at its most democratic, is a Republican theory of governance; and Bookchin stresses this is ultimately very different from the Hellenic concept of participatory democracy. Whilst the Hellenic model involves the exercise of power directly by the people, the Republican vision is representative. Power is delegated to surrogates 'who then *reconstitute* the political realm ... into a distinctly separate and usually professional power at its summit' (*FUTC*: 51). The Roman view of *libertas*, Bookchin maintains, is structured around personal freedom as opposed to the Hellenic vision of *eleutheria* on equality.

Athens and Rome, then, give rise to two very different understandings of democratic governance in Western political thought – a *participatory democratic* tradition and a *Republican* tradition. Bookchin argues that whilst there is a clear bias amongst social theorists for favouring the Republican model (the model that ultimately informs American and French constitutionalists in the eighteenth century), ideas of 'popular rule' do not disappear (*FUTC*: 49) but exist almost as a subterranean counter-current to the rise of oligarchy, centralisation and domination.

In Bookchin's narrative the desire for a more direct democratic society is sidelined with the rise of oligarchic tendencies in the Roman Empire, which ultimately consolidate themselves around the Papacy. Yet, it is suggested that we can also identify persistent forces that seek to reclaim or institutionalise more radically democratic visions of civic freedom. Bookchin argues that village democracies keep alive tribal ideas of popular assembly in many rural parts of Europe in the early medieval era (*FUTC*: 55). Ideas of civic freedom equally persist in the 'popular underground' in the deviant anarchic Christian sects of the Middle Ages such as the Anabaptists, and in 'blatantly anarchic conventicles' during the Reformation. He suggests, however, that it is more common to see Roman and Republican theories of governance

slowly hybridised with Athenian themes in the late Middle Ages. Specifically, he argues, in Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *The Discourses* we find 'a fascinating mixture of republican and democratic ideas' (*FUTC*: 55), and in the late Middle Ages in Europe we see a second flowering of interest in self-governance.

## THE RISE OF THE FREE CITIES, NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNES AND CITY CONFEDERATIONS

Bookchin argues that the overlapping and contested jurisdictions between landed nobles, bishops, papal legates and insecure monarchs in the late Middle Ages, coupled with the explosion of artisan towns characterised by the rise of new social institutions such as guilds, systems of mutual aid and civic militias (*FUTC*: 122), ensures that many European towns in the late Middle Ages start to experience new levels of autonomy. Indeed, for brief periods we can see the emergence of Italian, Flemish, German and French city-states. Following Mumford and Kropotkin, Bookchin argues that these city-states evolve into highly decentralised and spontaneous societies, and it is in these places and spaces that we see the re-emergence of politics.

In the Italian case in particular, Bookchin contends that even when city republics vie with, and sometimes replace, civic democracy, we can uncover remarkable experiments occurring in urban governance. Specifically, in many city-states we see the rise of autonomous neighbourhood 'communes' which are unlike anything seen by Athens or Rome. Bookchin concedes that these neighbourhood communes can in one sense be viewed as 'high localist' oligarchies (*FUTC*: 99). Yet, he also argues that such a flat reading ignores the extent to which many such neighbourhood communes create spaces and places that acquire a degree of autonomy that is at times 'truly spectacular' (*FUTC*: 99).

A central theme, then, of *From Urbanization to Cities* is that we can identify a diverse range of historical actors – from rebellious villages, and 'roused artisans', from peasant rebellions to diverse urban and municipal revolutionaries (*FUTC*: 150) – that defended 'communal liberties' against state centralisation. Indeed, Bookchin argues, '[a] belief in autonomy, regional and local identity, and citizens' empowerment ran very high between the late Middle Ages and fairly recent times' (*FUTC*: 136).

Whilst Bookchin gives a good deal of attention in *From Urbanization to Cities* to the ebb and flow of these currents (in the form of village democracies, town meetings, and popular assemblies in the Italian city-states, Flanders and the German states), he also argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the larger-scale political institutions these grassroots developments frequently constructed. Notably, grassroots experiments in direct democracy invariably had to develop alliances with other such ventures in the form of city leagues and confederacies to resist the rise of the nation state (*FUTC*: 136–7).

Bookchin notes that confederacies and city leagues were rife in Ancient Greece. While they went into abeyance with Rome, he suggests that their subsequent history has been 'badly neglected' (*FUTC*: 141). Drawing from Kropotkin's work in *Mutual Aid*, it is observed that Europe saw a range of confederations burst on to the scene from the 1200s onwards. In Italy, Germany and most enduringly in Switzerland, we can identify moments in the histories of all these countries where city-states band together in confederations to protect their autonomy and liberty from encroaching centralising forces and also to promote trade and share in prosperity (*FUTC*: 143). Indeed, Bookchin argues, even in face of the rise of the nation state, the city persists as the nuclear arena for politics and an active citizenry (*FUTC*: 109).

For example, he notes, even as we move from the late medieval period towards the early modern era we can identify the important role 'town meetings' in pre-Revolutionary New England play in fuelling the American Revolution. Traditions of confederalism and direct democracy endure in the Swiss confederation. But perhaps most impressive, Bookchin argues, is the rise of the sectional assemblies in the French Revolution – which for a brief period saw the explosion of face-to-face city assemblies aspiring to 'the complete restructuring of France into a confederation of free communities' (*FUTC*: 111). Indeed, Bookchin maintains that even at the high point of industrial capitalism, in Britain, France, Germany, the US and elsewhere, we can find municipal movements playing a central role in the attempt to reconstruct the public sphere and galvanise active citizens. Thus, it is argued, the labour movement of the industrial era, in all its different forms – with its clubs, trade union centres, land co-operatives, mutual aid societies and educational groups, libraries and public lectures – contributed to creating 'a public space' and a civic culture (*FUTC*: 190–1). Bookchin argues that a 'partly municipal, partly domestic

domain' allowed a richly fecund, highly diversified, co-operative and innovative strand of social and political life to exist, which not only helped workers to develop a shared sense of citizenship, but 'kept politics alive'. Indeed, this alternative public sphere formed 'a strong countervailing force to the impact of an industrial economy and the nation state' (*FUTC*: 192).

## THE MUNICIPAL ROUTE TO MODERNITY

So, what does this history of municipal movements and uprisings tell us? And how might it inform contemporary struggles to expand participatory democracy? Bookchin's reconstruction of the legacy of civic freedom essentially pushes forward three broader arguments. The first is designed to defend an open-ended and non-determinist view of historical development. Whilst standard Marxist and Whig histories view the decline of the autonomous city and the rise of state-centralisation and the nation state as both inevitable and 'historically progressive', Bookchin suggests that, if we take the broader view, this can be questioned. If we take into account the sheer range of municipal confederacies that existed in Europe during the eleventh century and in the centuries that followed it, then 'the certainty so prevalent in present day historiography that the nation state constitutes a "logical development" of Europe out of feudalism can only be regarded as a bias, indeed as a misuse of hindsight that verges on a mystical form of historical predetermination' (*FUTC*: 144). This is because:

How Europe might have developed – whether towards confederal communities or towards highly centralized nation states – is an open question. One might single out many reasonable alternatives European towns and cities might have followed that were no less possible than the one that became prevalent in fairly recent times. No single course of development was 'inevitable' or 'predetermined' by the economic, social and political focuses at work. (*FUTC*: 118)

Second, Bookchin argues that, during the late Middle Ages, continental Europe existed on the edge of a new dispensation. Possibilities existed for numerous trajectories and, he maintains, it was a 'special' and essentially contingent conjuncture of forces that pushed this moment towards capitalism and the nation state. The rise of nation states and nation cultures, and the shifting of politics from the city to the state, is presented in *From Urbanization* as having been a very uneven affair.

Moreover, Bookchin maintains, in many countries the memory of municipal control remains strong and culturally embedded.

Third, Bookchin argues that whilst the nation state is now seen as the 'basic and most elemental unit of social life', such a situation could well be in flux. Drawing from Jane Jacobs' *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, it is noted that our economic well-being still depends on cities. Cities are, in short, still important political actors and potentially the basis for a new politics that could resist the slide of contemporary life into ecological and urban decay, atomisation and privatisation.

If the main bulk of *From Urbanization to Cities* constitutes an attempt to construct a civic humanist and civic republican historical narrative, perhaps the most interesting aspect of this text is the manner in which it seeks to develop this final thought by addressing in fairly concrete terms the question of how we could move from statecraft to politics 'conceived of as an activity' involving 'rational discourse, public empowerment, the exercise of practical reason, and its realisation in a shared, indeed participatory activity' (*FUTC*: 221).

## LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM: FROM HERE TO THERE

In the final section of *From Urbanization to Cities*, Bookchin argues that in order to recoup politics and the public sphere what is required is a movement that will 'educate, mobilize and, using the wisdom of ordinary and extra-ordinary people alike, initiate local steps to regain power in its most popular and democratic forms' (*FUTC*: 229). He suggests a new radical politics needs to start by building grassroots citizens' movements, which will need to intervene at the local level to create or revitalise local democratic structures such as community assemblies, town meetings and neighbourhood councils. The aim of such movements, in the first instance, will be to reopen the public sphere and develop a political culture that invites the widest possible participation. We need to recover humans – not as 'taxpayers', 'constituents' or 'consumers', but as citizens. This will additionally involve recovering a public sphere that will 'inculcate the values of humanism, co-operation, community, and public service in the everyday practice of civic life' (*FUTC*: 232). Most notably though, such a project needs to be informed by the cardinal principle that 'all mature individuals can be expected to manage social affairs directly – just as we expect them to manage their private affairs' (*EofF*: 336).

Over time, however, so Bookchin argues, such citizens' movements should aspire to taking over local power centres and gaining democratic control of municipal governments, with a view to beginning the physical and political decentralisation of urban areas. This will facilitate the transition from cities and the urban megalopolis into human-scale, controllable communities that allow for a 'stable and viable form of city life' (*FUTC*: 223).

In the short to medium term, the aim of this politics – what Bookchin refers to as libertarian municipalism – is to create popular municipal assemblies structured around direct, face-to-face relationships. Such relationships, Bookchin argues, need to be based on participation 'and a sense of citizenship that stresses activity', not based on 'the delegation of power and spectorial politics' (*FUTC*: 234). Such a political movement will additionally need to move economic discussions beyond the 'threadbare debate' of 'private versus nationalized property' (*FUTC*: 234). Rather, drawing inspiration from the municipalisation of property that occurred in the British socialist tradition of the early twentieth century (*FUTC*: 216–17), it is argued that the move towards a municipalisation of the economy will be of central importance for such movements. This would ensure that economic decision making becomes part of the civic domain as part of a politics of self-*management*.

Ultimately, however, the aim of a politics of libertarian municipalism should be to create a situation of dual power. Bookchin argues that if assemblies confederate with other municipal ventures, a confederation of communes could ultimately stand as a viable 'alternative to the centralized nation state and to an economy based on profit, competition and mindless growth' (*FUTC*: 224).

### THE HISTORY/HISTOR(IES) OF CIVIC FREEDOM

*From Urbanization to Cities*, like all Bookchin's books, is vast in ambition, raising questions across the realms of radical history, political theory and political economy. If we initially focus our discussion on Bookchin's historical narrative, two lines of criticism can be immediately anticipated and will need to be addressed. First, to what extent might we characterise Bookchin's 'legacy of freedom' as a romantic narrative that obscures more than it reveals? Second, to what extent is the basic premise of the text – that there might be 'lessons to be learned' from ancient, medieval or early modern worlds

in relation to questions of politics, selfhood, citizenship and public life – essentially atavistic?

To be sure, *From Urbanization to Cities* can be read as a 'romantic' narrative, an attempt to recover a tale of the heroic multitude which fails to systematically explore the exclusions of the Hellenic world and the endless quarrelling and warring that bedevilled the city-state era of the European Middle Ages. Perhaps David Harvey is right to remind us that the medieval commune would be viewed as a sanitary disaster by modern eyes (Harvey, 1996); likewise the 'sturdy yeoman farmers' meeting in the New England town hall would no doubt be viewed by contemporary radicals as religious fanatics, informed by a frightening degree of theological absolutism. Such a critique is easy to make. Nonetheless, the book is more carefully developed than Bookchin's other writings in its attempt to assess the strengths and limitations of democratic ideas, institutions, and movements across historical time. It begins with Bookchin explicitly stating:

I am only too mindful of the defects of the past, few of which alas have been completely overcome. The Athenian polis was riddled and ultimately poisoned by slavery, patriarchalism, and imperialism. The finest of the medieval democratic cities were partly, and eventually became completely, oligarchical. The cities of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment had strong authoritarian traits. (*FUTC*: 8)

The basic premise of the text is that 'the past reveals rational practices that were actually lived despite formidable obstacles that stood in their way. That they did not "work" well enough to survive the onslaughts of later, often very irrational developments does not disprove their efficacy' (*FUTC*: 241).

We need to recognise, then, that Bookchin is well aware of both the failings and limitations of the urban forms in each of these eras. What is certainly being contested in his historical narrative – in a similar fashion to the narrative of *The Ecology of Freedom* – is a Whiggish or Marxist modernism. *From Urbanization to Cities* is thus probably most productive read as an attempt to construct a non-determinist, humanist and normative mode of historical scholarship that emphasises agency, praxis and alternative possibilities. It is perhaps best understood if we place it within the context of a broader tradition of historical/political sociology and urban history that has followed the same path. We might include Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* (1904/1981) and Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958); Mumford's *The City in History* (1961); Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of*

the Public Sphere (1962); Benjamin Barber's The Death of Communal Liberty (1974), Richard Sennett's The Fall of Public Man (1977), Colin Ward's Anarchy in Action (1977) and Paul Hirst's Associative Democracy (1994). What all these texts share with From Urbanization to Cities is an interest in exploring counter-narratives to the hegemonic Marxist and liberal tale of the inevitable rise of centralised industrial capitalism, state centralisation and the emergence of mass society. While the similarities of these works should not be over-emphasised, they all converge with Bookchin in their attempts to reflect on what Mumford refers to as 'vanished possibilities' which 'once existed and remained available over a much longer period than people realize' (Mumford, 1961: 334).

Perhaps a more striking aspect of the historical narrative of the book is that whilst Bookchin overlays his work with Hegelian claims to 'universal history', rather more evident is the fact that this is a tale told of the unfolding of civic freedom and radical democracy from a specific space and place. Bookchin's reconstruction of the history of democratic institutions sees them rippling out from the Hellenic world to the free cities of late medieval Europe, to the age of European Revolutions, and then to the United States. Such a narrative is, of course, the conventional narrative of Western political theory and no less valuable for that. Yet, if we read Bookchin alongside recent reflections on the challenge post-colonial thought poses to democratic theory, we might add that it is a narrative that can be rendered more rich and complex still by attending to the cultural and philosophical interchanges, the porous boundaries and seepages, that have occurred between 'West' and 'the rest' over millennia (see Benhabib, 2002: 24–5; Massey, 2005; Sen, 2006).

It is interesting to note that From Urbanization to Cities begins by recognising the roots of democracy in tribal and village communities. What we might want to add to this narrative, however, is a fuller sense of how 'the West', and ideas of 'Western' democratic theory are constituted by the dynamic tension between 'the West' and its other (both within 'the West' and between 'the West' and its others) across millennia. We can trace such seepages and cultural mixings from the Hellenic world (Benhabib, 2002) to the complex genealogies of ideas of democracy, publics, participation and insurrection that emerge from the interplay between the age of European Revolutions and insurrections against colonialism amongst the colonised. Additionally, it would seem equally important to fill out our understanding of the diverse 'legacies of freedom' that can be found outside the remit of

the West. Amartya Sen's recent work here is interesting in suggesting the importance of recognising that while the Athenian experiment seemed to have little immediate effect in countries to the west of Greece, such as France, Britain or Germany,

in contrast, some of the contemporary cities in Asia, in Iran, Bactria, and India – incorporated elements of democracy in municipal government in the centuries following the flowering of Athenian democracy. For example, for several centuries the city of Susa (or Shushan) in Southwest Iran had an elected council, a popular assembly, and magistrates who were proposed by the council and elected by the assembly. (Sen, 2006: 52–3)

Indeed, Sen goes on to argue that if we consider democracy to be about public deliberation and reasoning, or government by discussion, we can think of many further examples of such practices flourishing in several other ancient empires. Some of the earliest open general meetings aimed at the settling of disputes took place in India in Buddhist councils (Sen, 2006: 53). Elsewhere, Middle Eastern history and the history of the Muslim people 'also include a great many accounts of public discussion and dialogue' (Sen, 2006: 54), as did African township democracy and moments in early Japanese history. Such observations hardly invalidate Bookchin's own attempt to unearth a 'legacy of freedom' from the story of the rise of the West, yet they do suggest many further possibilities that would enrich and pluralise this story.

Such observations additionally draw our attention to the situatedness of Bookchin's political project. Whilst Bookchin has, at times, sought to universalise the politics of libertarian municipalism (see *RS*: 184), it is striking how his political project nevertheless constantly refers back to a theme that resonates through some of his 1960s essays, notably the desire to uncover an 'authentic American radicalism'. Central to the critique Bookchin makes of the New Left in the 1960s is that 'American revolutionaries have yet to find a voice that relates to American issues' (*PSA*: 28). This theme remains in later writings, as Bookchin muses on the kind of politics that might have some hope of connecting with the US public. For example, it is interesting to note how, in *The Modern Crisis*, Bookchin argues that the very tradition of 'immigrant socialism' (from which Bookchin himself originated) is one of the key limitations to defining a viable American radicalism. 'Irish direct action, German Marxism, Italian anarchism, and Jewish socialism' may well have provided the backbone of American radicalism for a century, yet Bookchin maintains that such currents

were 'always confined to the ghettos of American social life' (*MC*: 137). Speaking in the language and drawing from the imaginary of old Europe, one theme of Bookchin's political writings has been to focus on the failure of radical currents in the US to connect with the 'indigenous radical traditions'. Bookchin's libertarian municipalism in its earliest formulations is explicitly formulated as a project that can 'participate consciously in the tension between the American dream conceived as utopia and the American dream conceived of as a huge shopping mail' (*MC*: 136), to recover the revolutionary origins of American political life and the importance of the New England Town Hall meeting. As Bookchin states in *The Modern Crisis*, there is a need for a movement that 'speaks to Americans in their own tongue' and that appeals to 'Yankee democracy, frontier individuality, a popular mistrust of governmental power, a dedication to grass roots democracy' (*MC*: 154).

If we view Bookchin's libertarian municipalism in this light, we can see that in many respects it is clearly an attempt to formulate a distinctly 'Americanist' politics, and a discourse that can work with the grain of the cultural landscape of the United States. Such a project perhaps has something to recommend itself. Yet again, we might want to add the caveat here that capturing a discourse that can speak to the cultural landscape of the United States in the twenty-first century is perhaps is a little more complex than Bookchin's North Eastern perspective can acknowledge. For example, as David Watson has observed, a celebration of 'Yankee values' may well have some resonance in New England and perhaps further afield. But it is not clear how effectively such discourses might speak to Arab Americans in Detroit or Latino communities in South Los Angeles, to Korean Americans in Northern Virginia or African-American communities in Atlanta, without expanding and further pluralising the histories of civic freedom. As Watson argues:

We have to speak in ways that radicalize what democracy we can find, no doubt, but that means not only retrieving radical democratic traditions found in Tom Paine and the New England town meetings, but the examples of Tecumseh, Harriet Tubman, Wobbly direct action, immigrant anarchists, Hispano-indian revolutionaries like Zapata and Reyes Tijerina. (Watson, 1996: 177)

While Bookchin's historical narrative in *From Urbanization to Cities* is clearly valuable, he is providing us with one possible point of departure for constructing a history of radical democracy. *From Urbanization to Cities* is a contribution to a history which in broad

terms – terms that reflect the full experience of experiments in democracy and self-management among the diverse peoples of the globe – is a project still in its infancy. We might say that Bookchin provides us with an important account of a legacy of freedom amidst what are most likely multiple legacies of freedom (Sen, 2006).

Let us turn to consider how Bookchin uses this historical narrative to embed his political project. To organise the discussion here, we will concentrate on what I will argue are four points of tension that can be found in Bookchin's political thought: (i) *Dionysus* and *Philia*; (ii) *Polis* and *Cosmopolis*; (iii) *Transparency* and *Complexity*; (iv) the *Heroic* and the *Imminent*.

## FROM DIONYSUS TO PHILIA

Perhaps one of the first observations one can make of Bookchin's writings on the concrete politics of libertarian municipalism is that they manifest a significant shift in tone from his utopian writings of the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst we can find advocacy of forms of participatory democracy dating back to *Our Synthetic Environment*, it is striking how his major publications of the 1960s and 1970s accent strong 'anarcho-Dionysian' currents. All his writings of this period celebrate the commitment to sensuousness, desire and the 'utopistic quest for pleasure' (*EofF*: 9) represented by the counterculture. *The Ecology of Freedom* speaks highly of Fourier's hedonist phalanstery, and Schiller's idea of authentic individuality is presented as 'the expression of joy, play, and fulfillment of the aesthetic sensibility' (*EofF*: 324). In the later urban and political writings, it is notable how the tone shifts and how much more focus is given to the virtues of developing a civic morality, on the important role that *philia* and *paideia* should play in shaping character, and on the need for active processes to train citizens into self-management. Indeed, compared to the hedonistic visions of the earlier works, Bookchin's writings of the late 1980s and 1990s are much more enamoured with the traits of 'obligation' and 'duty' than with what is often now viewed as the childishness of the counterculture.

Now if we return to one theme of the last chapter, what is apparent here is the plurality of reconstructive visions to be found in Bookchin's writings (despite his numerous assertions of consistency). The future in utopian thought is always a projection of the perceived potentialities of the present (with all its baggage), and Bookchin's utopianism of the 1960s and the 1970s is clearly an attempt to 'work with the

grain' of progressive potentialities within the counterculture, drawing out their 'rational kernels'. Later writings on libertarian municipalism are written in a radically changed context. This is a context in which electorally orientated green movements, and indeed Green political parties, have entered the political scene. Indeed, Bookchin engaged with the West Germany Green Party for some time (see Bookchin, 1986b), and his later writings can also be seen as an attempt to address and radicalise this electoral impulse.

Reflecting on these differences of emphasis in Bookchin's reconstructive thought also points to certain tensions in the politics of social ecology between *Dionysus* and *Philia*, but also and more broadly the tension between 'libertarianism' and 'municipalism'. We might formulate this issue in the follow fashion: in what sense is there a tension, in Bookchin's writings, between a politics concerned with character development and the cultivation of a strong civic morality and a politics that seems equally concerned to root itself in a libertarianism that at some core level presumably must, by definition, be committed to the principle that people should chose their own ends for themselves?

In some respects, we are here re-working one of the central themes of the liberal/communitarian debate that ran through political theory in the late 1980s and 1990s. Bookchin does address this issue by maintaining that such a tension between libertarianism and municipalism is overstated. Associating the 'autonomous individual' with a rather desiccated liberalism, Bookchin cites Horkheimer's assertion that 'individuality is impaired when each man decides to shift for himself' (*FUTC*: 225). He argues that the type of 'rugged individualism' championed by many liberals and so-called libertarians is in fact a juvenile form of selfhood. Such tensions are thus negotiated in Bookchin's thought through foregrounding the virtues of an Aristotelian view of the self and the good life. For Bookchin, it is independence within an institutionally rich and rounded community 'which fleshes out the individual with the rationality, solidarity, sense of justice, and ultimately the reality of freedom that makes for a creative and concerned citizen'. It is the municipality that is the 'irreducible grounds for genuine individuality'. The municipality constitutes the 'discursive arena in which people can intellectually and emotionally confront one another, indeed, experience one another though dialogue, body language, personal intimacy, and face to face modes of expression'

(*FUTC*: 226). Such an Aristotelian view of the self is attractive; if we turn to consider Bookchin's description of civic mindedness in the Athenian *polis*, he notes that the developed notion of citizenship in the *polis* emerged as an idea of self-expression, not an obligatory burden: 'Citizenship became an ethos, a creative art, indeed a civic cult rather than a demanding body of duties and a palliative body of rights' (*FUTC*: 75). However, he goes on to mention that this 'civic cult' often took on quite an extreme form in the Hellenic world. Thus, we are told: 'in a world where the city produced a deep sense of ethnic and cultural identity that compares with the modern world's most strident form of nationalism, the conquest of one city by another often terminated in the sheer annihilation of a people as a distinct community' (*FUTC*: 57). As such, it would seem that Hellenic civic mindedness and civic duty was often indistinguishable from what we would understand as radical patriotism.

Bookchin's attempt to reconcile Aristotelian and libertarian thought is not necessarily undermined by observations about the intensity of Hellenic civic mindedness. Such observations do though suggest that a credible attempt to structure a liberal-libertarian approach to participatory democracy has to honestly engage with the potential tensions that emerge between a politics committed to cultivating 'civic duty' and a politics that seeks to facilitate the validity of a variety of forms of life. It is interesting to reflect on the extent to which such a focus on 'civic duty' amongst supporters of the *polis* in the history of political thought has often ensured a pulling against libertarian themes. It is worth remembering that both Aristotle (1986) and Arendt (1958) ultimately viewed a functioning *polis* as necessarily a rather elitist affair. Shelley Burtt notes that both Machiavelli and Rousseau 'insisted that virtuous citizens were products of a virtuous founding, and that a virtuous founding required a severe legislator imbued with divine authority who shaped a regime's constitution so as to bind citizens emotionally and materially to the republic' (Burtt, 1993: 363). More recent civic republicans, of a communitarian nature, have looked long and hard for the basis of the 'social glue' that could ground such a project, and have come up with answers ranging from state-developed 'political education' or 'civics' to various forms of national service (either in the military or the voluntary sector) whose state-orientated and prescriptive nature would send shivers down the spine of most libertarians (see Quill, 2006 for an overview of such proposals).

### *POLIS* AND *COSMOPOLIS*

A second tension we should explore in Bookchin's political thought concerns the relationship between the Athenian focus on *philia* – involving civic commonality in the *polis* – and what might be viewed as a more Stoic defence of a primary commitment to the *cosmopolis*, to being a citizen of the world. While Bookchin is very much committed to enlightenment universalism, it is striking how his preferred institutional design for radical democracy nevertheless grounds power firmly at the level of the local. The central issue here is: to what extent does a politics that so bullishly defends grassroots autonomy and a place-based populism, that abandons all ties to liberal constitutionalism, or to a separation of powers and representative relations, make itself vulnerable to parochialism and an inward defensiveness? (See Miller, 1985; Hayward, 1994: 197–9; Barry, 1999.) With the *polis* or local municipal assembly empowered as the final arbitrator of action, we might wonder how responsibilities to the cosmopolis would hold up. Moreover, in the absence of central coordinating and legitimating institutions and constitutions how could commitments to universal civil rights and liberties, or to social and ecological justice, be maintained? How, for example, are inter-regional and inter-communal imbalances in wealth and resources to be dealt with? What redistributive mechanisms could be employed to ensure that richer regions do not simply triumph over poorer ones? How are we to deal with municipalities that adopt an understanding of civil rights informed by the ideology of the Klu Klux Klan, or autonomous cities controlled by the Lega Nord? Indeed, concerning ecological matters, how could such radical forms of decentralisation stop autonomous provinces, cities or municipalities from simply displacing their own ecological problems on to other communities?

Three moves to counter these criticisms can be discerned in Bookchin's writings of the 1980s and 1990s. First, while conceding that radical decentralisation and direct democracy cannot guarantee humane, rational and ecological outcomes or the cultivation of cosmopolitan sensibilities, Bookchin maintains that in a society heading towards a more decentralist, participatory democracy, guided by communalist and ecological principles, 'it is only reasonable to suppose that people would not choose such an irresponsible dispensation' (*FUTC*: 249). As such, libertarian municipalism is a project that has to be constructed politically. He argues that an

effective citizens' movement, seeking to bring this project about, needs to be involved in forms of struggle which are educative and challenge the broader political culture.

A second check on parochialism is seen as emerging from the impossibility of autarky and inevitably of economic interdependence. Thus, Bookchin has argued, '[e]conomic interdependence is a fact of life today, and capitalism itself has made parochial autarkies a chimera. While municipalities and regions can seek to attain a considerable measure of self-sufficiency, we have long left the era when self-sufficient communities can indulge their prejudices' (Bookchin, 1991b: vii). A final safeguard against parochialism, isolation and the infringement of social and ecological justice, is seen as attainable through confederalism. It is confederal networks operating at city, regional or even continental levels that are seen as ultimately offering an alternative coordinating framework to that of the nation state. So, regarding civil rights and liberties, social and ecological justice, it is argued:

> If particular communities or neighbourhoods – or a minority grouping of them – choose to go their own way to a point where human rights are violated or where ecological mayhem is permitted, the majority in a local or regional confederation has every right to prevent such malfeasances through its confederal council. (Bookchin, 1990: 5)

There is a need then for a 'shared agreement by all' to recognise civil rights and maintain the ecological integrity of a region (Bookchin, 1990: 5).

The introduction of confederalism would seem to ease some of the more difficult issues that emerge in relation to libertarian municipalism. Yet, as John Barry notes, it could well be asked whether this is achieved by essentially re-introducing something like the state back into the picture. Barry himself has argued that the confederal council could well be viewed as a state-like structure, given that Bookchin cedes legitimate rights for it to use coercion within a specific territory. As he notes, this does amount to a rather 'novel form of anarchism' given that '[l]imiting the scope of communities to go their own way marks a decisive break with traditional anarchist thought which took the communal right to self governance as its principal and highest political norm' (Barry, 1999: 91). Further questions remain. For example, given that Bookchin invests the confederal council with quite substantial powers to maintain civil rights and liberties and address matters of ecological justice, this begs the further question as

to how the interventions of this council are to be controlled. If points of dispute arise between the confederal council and lower tiers, what mechanisms could be turned to arbitrate between such tiers and how often could such interventions take place? One might further ask to what extent the confederal council would be allowed to regulate the private behaviour of the citizen and, if such regulation were not allowed, how the relative balance between the rights and responsibilities of the citizen and the radically democratised non-state would be delineated. Underlying these concerns with Bookchin's libertarian municipalism are worries, once again, about the authoritarian potential of a purely populist vision of radical democracy that does not build in safeguards such as judicial structures and constitutional mechanisms separated from political mechanisms.

## TRANSPARENCY AND COMPLEXITY

A third issue that clearly emerges in considering libertarian municipalism relates to the tension between the need for transparency in social and economic life in order to achieve democratic control, and the reality that post-scarcity societies, underpinned by advanced technologies, a complex division of labour, and social differentiation at multiple scales, are going to be marked by very high degrees of political, technological and economic complexity. Appiah's observation that the population of Athens around the time of Socrates' death 'could have lived in a few large skyscrapers' in contemporary New York City gives some sense of the challenges we face here (Appiah, 2006: xii). Let us take the issue of political complexity first.

Bookchin defends a maximalist model of direct democracy. Power needs to be rooted at the lowest level – the neighbourhood or village assembly. Such assemblies, he argues, should be represented at other levels by 'strictly mandated delegates' (not representatives) 'who are rotatable, recallable, and above all rigorously instructed in written form to either support or oppose whatever issue that appears on the agenda of local confederal councils' (*FUTC*: 224). Now, it could be noted that one need not share traditional doubts about the capabilities or desirability of individuals being involved in collective management of public affairs to nevertheless wonder at the wisdom or viability of dissolving *all* matters to the lowest possible level of the neighbourhood assembly.

For example, it is interesting to note how Bookchin's fellow social ecologist John Clark has raised significant doubts about the practical

viability of such arrangements. Given Bookchin's preference for the Parisian sections, Clark turns to consider the logistics that would be involved if the municipal alternative were seriously embraced in contemporary Paris. Noting that metropolitan Paris has roughly 8.5 million people, he argues that if it were decentralised into the kind of neighbourhood assemblies allowing 'face-to-face relations' in accordance with Bookchin's maximalist demands (i.e., areas of a few blocks covering a thousand or so people), then there would be 8,500 Parisian assemblies. Taking into account that these assemblies at the lowest level are concerned with policy making and only those higher up with administration, Clark quite rightly asks 'could the chain of responsibility hold up, and, if so, how?' (Clark, 1998: 178).

A further set of issues that emerge here revolves around questions relating to the economics and technological infrastructure that would underpin this project. As we have seen (in Chapter 5), Bookchin provide us with a powerful critique of the ecological, social and psychological dis-benefits of market relations and the advanced division of labour under capitalism. Yet, following this, he moves on to the claim that a rational ecological society would need to eradicate market relations in their entirety – without falling back on central planning. Moreover, we need freedom from the tyranny of toil and rationalised labour. Productive activities should not simply be socialised to facilitate self-management, but rendered convivial and ecological. Yet, what is unclear is how a society that has totally eradicated market mechanisms is going to align production with the needs of consumers or co-ordinate the activities of different productive units. The central question that looms here is clearly: what are the modes of coordination and signaling that would replace market mechanisms? Bookchin has argued in general terms that we need to recover a 'moral' than a market economy (see *MC*: 77–97), where the ethical dimension of transfers between goods and services is recovered. In other writing (see Bookchin, 1986a), he has argued that in order to avoid the failings of state central planning, market exchanges or the problems that can be generated by syndicalist strategies, one necessary step is for the economy to be decentralised and municipalised. If the economy is municipalised, the reasoning goes, a general interest is created where all can be involved in decision making. If control of economic matters is placed in the hands of citizens in the municipal assembly, coordination between producers and consumers can be achieved through all members of the community meeting to decide future plans.

Yet, once again, rather than resolving Bookchin's difficulties, it would seem that this proposal only exacerbates the previous concern with democratic overload and a lack of time. If Bookchin's maximalist version of direct democracy seems logistically difficult to imagine for reasons of time, interest and complexity, it does seem that adding the burden of direct economic management to the model is likely to place further severe strain on institutions. One could envisage such a society reaching a point of democratic overload quickly. Indeed, to add to Bookchin's logistical woes here, we might further ask: how could transfers of goods and the huge array of components which virtually all modern technology is assembled from be coordinated across regions if money and accounting systems are abandoned? How are the problems of incentives that plagued the economies of actually existing socialism to be resolved in this scenario?

## BETWEEN THE HEROIC AND THE IMMINENT

Bookchin poured an enormous amount of energy into developing libertarian municipalism in his writings of the 1980s and 1990s, and ultimately we are offered a heroic vision of the reconstituted *polis* as the only hope for 're-enchanting humanity'. Yet, whilst we have lingered on the (substantial) limitations of this project, as cast in Bookchin's characteristically absolutist terms, it is perhaps worth concluding our discussion by focusing on some of the more valuable aspects of Bookchin's political thought and the multiple ironies that surround his political writings more broadly.

Bookchin's persistent attempts to re-focus the progressive and radical imagination on political spaces beyond the nation state – such as the neighbourhood, the municipality, the city, the city-region and the confederal network – seemed, for much of his life, a hopeless project. However, it is interesting to note how talk of the potential for post-national politics has gained new traction of late. The explosion of work in global, urban and regional studies (see Castells, 1996; 2005; Smith, 2007) suggests that we increasingly live in worlds marked by the re-emergence of the city, the region and indeed city-regions as major political actors in their own right, in an increasingly complex world of local/global flows (of people, culture, images, symbols, finance and politics). As Neil Smith observes, cities have moved from being mere 'cogs' in sub-national regional economies to become central players in a new global economy. It is cities, and more accurately city-regions, that have become the 'centres of production' and 'fortified nodes'

for the global economy (Smith, 2007: 43). The recent rise of such post-national sociologies and geographies does indeed contain odd resonances with the worldview of past anarchists and libertarians. Consider, for example, Manuel Castells' rather surprising comments on the enduring value of anarchist political imaginaries in the age of the network society:

Anarchism's great difficulty has always been reconciling personal and local autonomy with the complexities of daily life and production in an industrialized world on an interdependent planet. And here technology turns out to be anarchism's ally more so than Marxism's. Instead of large factories and gigantic bureaucracies (socialism's material base), the economy increasingly operates through networks (the material foundation of organizational autonomy). And instead of the nation-state controlling territory, we have city-states managing the interchange between territories. All this is based on the Internet, mobile phones, satellites, and informational networks that allow local–global communication and transport at a planetary scale. (Castells, 2005)

Indeed, the actions of the 'global justice movement' could be interpreted as, broadly speaking, aspiring to construct something like a set of post-national counter-networks to the political networks of neo-liberalism and the nation state. The broader vision that seems to inform the more radical currents of the global justice movement – of an alternative mode of globalisation to the current order, envisaged as a multi-tiered and multi-scale network of democratic bodies from city-states down to village and neighbourhood assemblies – does bear some resemblance with Bookchin's writings. Yet, as James O'Connor has observed, one critical difference between Bookchin's libertarian municipalism and many contemporary social movements is that, while the state no long holds the central fix on the political imagination of such movements, it is inescapably the case that most are trying to find means of democratising both the state and the market economy rather than replacing or challenging them head on.

A second, and more disappointing observation one could make of Bookchin's political writings in the 1990s is that in becoming increasingly obsessed with defending a maximalist, abstract and hyper-rationalist vision of direct democracy, they become increasingly didactic and introverted. What goes missing in his democratic theory is not only a dialogical engagement with actual actors and their struggles but any engagement with broader debates on radical democracy. Concurrent with the explosion of interest in post-national

politics, important literatures emerged in the 1990s that documented alternative 'discursive designs' (Dryzek, 2000) and limited, but nevertheless important, experiments occurring in democratic self-management and urban participatory democracy across the world. Examples include Benjamin Barber's (1984) credible, imaginative and rigorous attempt to argue for the virtues of a national system of neighbourhood assemblies as part of a systematic programme of participatory reform to supplement existing liberal democracy; Colin Ward (1973) and Paul Hirst's (1994) pragmatic attempt to reclaim decentralist, municipal and associative socialisms in order to rethink collective welfare provision; unfolding literatures concerning how green democracy could be established; the Real World Utopias series, overseen by Erik Olin Wright, which has attempted to examine in concrete terms the possibilities that exist for extending modes of self-management in the workplace, community and welfare state.[2]

Despite important differences, all these currents have argued that a credible model of participatory democratic governance capable of addressing social pluralism and social complexity would by necessity need to combine elements of the 'Roman' and the 'Republican'. Interest in the theory and practice of radical democracy has emerged alongside a significant growth in literatures developing critiques of urban sprawl, as well as a large body of work suggesting that significant opportunities exist for rethinking productive systems, technological arrangements, urban forms and the built environment more generally along more ecological lines (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999). It could be argued then, that in these developments we can see the glimmering of a potential realignment of progressive thought, sharing a set of emphases not too distant from those of 'social ecology'. Yet, the pronounced sectarianism and revolutionary purism of Bookchin's thought in his final years not only prevents any open-minded engagement with his later writings, but increasingly prevents any engagement with old allies and comrades.

# Part Four
# Endings

*I think neither Marxism nor anarchism alone is adequate for our times: a great deal in both no longer applies to today's world. We have to go beyond the economism of Marx and beyond the individualism that is sometimes latent, sometimes explicit in anarchism. Marx's, Proudhon's, and Bakunin's ideas were formed in the nineteenth century. We need a left libertarian ideology for our own time, not for the days of the Russian and Spanish Revolutions.*

Murray Bookchin (2000).

# Conclusion

## RE-ENCHANTING HUMANITY, DISENCHANTED BOOKCHIN

Murray Bookchin died on 31 July 2006. Having spent the last decade of his life mired in various controversies, there was a strange period of introversion, and then silence. For such a politically engaged intellectual, it seemed odd that with the dawn of the new century there were no new writings on the events of Seattle or the emerging globalisation debate. The rise of the environmental justice movement and even the explosion of new literatures on eco-technology, industrial ecology and a potential 'Green Industrial Revolution' (see, e.g., Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999; Milani, 2000) – a discourse Bookchin had anticipated four decades before[1] – passed without comment. Whilst the publication of a fascinating book-length compendium *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left*, consisting of essays and interviews dating from 1993 to 1998, clearly demonstrated that Bookchin in the nineties was as politically engaged as ever,[2] it seemed evident that in heading towards his eighth decade, and gripped by ill health, his work was increasingly concerned more with the long durée than the immediate 'conjuncture'. Writings that emerge during this period – whilst not uninteresting – are marked by a new tone. Somewhat unusual for a thinker who constantly tried to search for the potentialities in social and natural phenomena, the final writings mix Bookchin's enduring commitment to 'the principle of hope' with an increasing concern about the rise of an 'era of dark pessimism' (*RH*: 232).

In the case of *Re-enchanting Humanity* (1995), we are offered a grim summary of the various forces that rail against the human project. This book brings together Bookchin's longstanding critiques of Malthusians and technophobes, primitivists and social biologists, with a few newly chosen enemies, notably, 'post-modern nihilism' and the social studies of science. Yet, it also provides a broad critique of contemporary culture.

Diagnosing the times as now marked by a 'sweeping failure of nerve', evident in the politics of both the left and the right, *Re-enchanting Humanity* argues that we face a cultural malaise. At

the surface level, this malaise is identified by the proliferation of numerous 'intellectual fads' and 'regressions' informed by a near cartoonish understanding of the Enlightenment and a complacent disregard for its achievements. Bookchin argues that this moment is centrally grounded in a 'waning belief in our species' creative abilities' (*RH*: 1).

At one level, *Re-enchanting Humanity* can be read as a bold attempt to confront the cultural and political influence of the sixties. If a celebration of the spirit of the counterculture is central to *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, *Re-enchanting Humanity* is in part a reflection on its wayward legacy. As Bookchin states in characteristically bold terms:

Within a span of less than twenty-five years, I have seen … a militant if theatrical social radicalism, influenced by anarchic and cultural socialists, given way to a political quietism that is almost unprecedented in this century. … The cry 'the personal is the political' has been reversed to read 'the political is the personal'. Where the former once linked the fate of the individual to the broader society and called for social intervention as a form of personal self realization, the latter has displaced the social by the personal and calls for social withdrawal as a form of personal redemption. (*RH*: 228–9)

More broadly though, the text is notable for marking something of an important shift in Bookchin's central concerns. Rather than extend his critique of capitalism, *Re-enchanting Humanity* can be read as essentially offering a defence of modernity and a broad critical humanism in the face of *fin de siècle* despondency. Like much of Bookchin's later writings, the end result provides a strange mix of provocative readings of the cultural landscape, serious ethical reflection and some rather less compelling engagements.

*Re-enchanting Humanity* is arguably at its strongest when Bookchin is pulling apart the juvenile world of anarcho-primitivism, articulating the dangers of social biology and the broader 'biologisation' of social life, or debunking the more nihilistic moments of post-modernism. The general argument running through this part of the book – that the modern culture of the West is increasingly marked by a mixture of hedonism and misanthropy, a celebration of consumerism yet a denial of political agency – is well made. In other places though, the reading Bookchin makes of social trends is rather more limited.

Bookchin provides us with a reading of the post-modern landscape which places much emphasis on this moment being a product of a 'loss of nerve'. Such an analysis clearly has some insight and, in this respect, the text resonates with a broader wave of 'cultural

declinist' literatures that emerged in the late 1990s from the pens of disappointed Hegelian Leftists (see Jacoby, 1990; Furedi, 1997). However, like much of this literature, *Re-enchanting Humanity* attends to pathologies, frustrations and disappointments but has surprisingly little to say about deeper-seated cultural, sociological and economic processes that have transformed the West in the last four decades. Thus, if one reads *Re-enchanting Humanity* against Castells' (1996) or Beck's (1992; 1995) similar attempts at end-of-millennium 'stock taking', it is striking how little *Re-enchanting Humanity* actually engages with a range of phenomena that both these insightful sociologists have reasonably argued are central for grasping our changing political worlds, for good and for ill: from cultural, economic and political globalisation to the spread of informational and bio-political forms of capitalism, from the systematic transformation of attitudes to gender, sexuality and 'race' that has occurred across much of Europe and North America to the spread of de-traditionalisation, reflexivity and risk consciousness. *Re-enchanting Humanity* thus makes much of the rise of 'eco-mysticism' and 'angelology' as signs of 'cultural decline' in the West. The analysis, though, struggles to deal with arguably much more important phenomena such as the challenge that post-colonial thought has made to the traditional Western canon or the challenge that the rise/re-emergence of East Asia represents more generally for 'the West'.[3]

In the case of Bookchin's final project, pessimism about the present is ultimately combined with a degree of defiance and hope. Yet, hope is secured this time not through an assessment of the post-industrial possibilities of the present, but through a return to the past. Bookchin's final substantial scholarly work, *The Third Revolution*, provides a four-volume history of popular movements in the revolutionary era. The series moves from documenting medieval uprisings and peasant revolts to the American and French revolutions; from revolutions in Russia to Spain. This is indeed a *grand finale* to Bookchin's writing career. The series demonstrates the energy and vitality of Bookchin's scholarship until the last. The value of the work itself perhaps lies less in its originality than in its attempt to provide a popular and accessible introduction to revolutionary history.

Bookchin's reading of such movements can be faulted for his tendency to offer a rather voluntaristic and romantic reading of such struggles. Yet, the central theme of the series – that 'ordinary people' have been capable of extra-ordinary things, and that at many points in history, human beings have displayed desire, wisdom and courage

to implement institutions of self-management, direct democracy and self-governance – is a historical lesson worth retelling.

However, whilst 'rousing', it could also be observed that *The Third Revolution* marks something of a curtailing of the vastly ambitious project to 'build something new' that had been audaciously announced by Bookchin back in 1971 with *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Notably, if we see the central aim of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* as an attempt to oust the tired old sociologies and politics of the old left – in favour of pushing forward a project involving a new sociological mapping of the post-industrial horizon and a new politics unabashedly futurist and optimistic, libertarian and anarchic, humanist and ecological – then it seems rather odd that Bookchin's final book project should return us to that hoary 'old left' obsession with defending 'the idea' and 'the memory' of the revolutionary tradition.

## BREAKS, TRANSITIONS, EXCOMMUNICATIONS

If we view the final decade and a half of Bookchin's diverse writings, it is also clear that they are characterised by some remarkable shifts, transitions and breaks. Perhaps most striking is how the environmental movement – a movement with which Bookchin maintained a dialogue for over four decades – fades from view after the publication of *Remaking Society* in 1990. It almost seems that having spent so many years critiquing deep ecology, green technophobia and neo-Malthusians, Bookchin simply lost interest in the attempt to extract the 'rational kernel' from the 'core' of the green movement. Whilst the commitment to social-ecological critique, the concern with 'ecological crisis' and reconstruction, remain till the end, it is notable how in Bookchin's writings of the 1990s the 'ecological society' as the high point of the aspirations of social ecology is increasingly 'reframed' in more encompassing but also more opaque terms as 'the rational society' (see *AMFL*). Discussion of the trials and tribulations of environmentalism or radical ecology either nationally or globally largely disappear from view. New editions of Bookchin's classic writings on social ecology are marked by firm attempts to distinguish his work from any possible overlap they might be perceived to have with 'deep' and spiritual ecologies. Indeed, *Re-enchanting Humanity*, with its swipes at the crudities of green primitivism and over-generalised environmentalist dismissals of the Western 'mechanistic' tradition, can be read as an auto-critique of his previous work.

As noteworthy is Bookchin's divorce from anarchism. From 1964 onwards, Bookchin had publicly self-identified as an anarchist theorist and located social ecology within the anarchist tradition. In the late 1990s though, Bookchin announced his 'break' from anarchism (see Bookchin, 2002; Biehl, 2007). Initially declaring his preference for the term 'communalism' to name his 'post-anarchist' political position (a rather problematic term given its associations with violent ethnic populisms in India), his final writings are marked by a distinct preference for his body of work to be referred to as a form of 'libertarian socialism'. As Bookchin states in the third edition of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*:

Social ecology it should be emphasised, is not anarchism any more than it is individualism. It is decidedly a new form of libertarian socialism: libertarian in its concept of an organic and 'from-the-ground-up' mode of praxis; socialist in its belief that power must be conceived as confederal communities. (Bookchin, 2004: xl)

Three factors could possibly account for this break. First, it would seem that following Bookchin's increasingly bitter set of running battles with diverse US anarchist currents – from individualists and 'primitivists' in the early 1990s to what Bookchin dismissively referred to as 'lifestyle anarchists' in the mid 1990s (see Purchase, 1994; Heider, 1994; Watson, 1996; Black, 1997; *SALA*) – he simply concluded there was no longer room in contemporary anarchism for his technologically optimistic, post-scarcity and increasingly pro-modernist views.

Second, it is evident that Bookchin's re-evaluation of the merits of contemporary anarchism is in part informed by an historical re-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of anarchist theory and anarchist social movements in history (see Biehl, 2007). In the final volume of *The Third Revolution*, for example, Bookchin offers a much more critical assessment of the role that syndicalist militants such as the CNT-FAI played in the Spanish Revolution than is present in his previous work on the Spanish anarchists. His writings more generally are marked by growing doubts about the intellectual coherence of anarchism as a political philosophy.

Yet, thirdly, it is also apparent that Bookchin's turn from anarchism is a product of longstanding internal tensions within the political project of libertarian municipalism. For example – in what would seem to mark a further concession to critics of libertarian municipalism

such as Robyn Eckersley (1992) and John Barry (1999) – in an interview conducted in 2000, Bookchin states:

unlike many anarchists, I don't think a particular individual or municipality should be able to do whatever it wants to do at all times. Lack of structure and institutions leads to chaos and even arbitrary tyranny. I believe in law, and the future society I envision, would also have a constitution. Of course, the constitution would have to be the product of careful consideration, by the empowered people. It would be democratically discussed and voted upon. But once the people have ratified it, it would be binding on everyone. It is not accidental that historically, oppressed people who were victims of the arbitrary behavior of the ruling classes – 'barons,' as Hesiod called them in seventh-century B.C. Greece – demanded constitutions and just laws as a remedy. (Bookchin, 2000: 2)

The recognition that a form of libertarian municipalism compatible with the maintenance of human rights, the protection of minority rights and the practice of ecological justice is only conceivable if such a future society is governed by the rule of law, and that this is expressed in a democratically decided but nevertheless binding constitution (where municipal entities would not have rights of exit following an agreement to join the confederation), makes for a remarkable and important shift in Bookchin's political thought. In essence, it could be argued, it marks a shift from anarchism to the incorporation of basic insights of liberal-constitutionalism into Bookchin's libertarian socialism.

Further questions are clearly begged by this important but necessary shift, notably: who is going to have powers of enforcement of this constitution? What venue would arbitrate between contested understandings of the constitution? What would be the separation of powers between different political bodies within such a political framework? The liberal-constitutional turn in Bookchin's political thought is to be welcomed, but it begs a range of questions which remain unanswered.

In addition to the books, Bookchin continued to be a prolific essayist, pamphleteer and polemicist to the end. Yet, a dark shadow seemed to hang over many of his final political interventions. Locked in a series of bitter and ever more unhelpful squabbles with former colleagues and allies, from the mid 1990s onwards Bookchin became an increasingly isolated figure. Many of his more polemical writings in this period not only tested the patience of his most loyal followers

but ensured that at his death discussions surrounding the merits of his work had become distinctly curtailed.[4]

## (HARSH) JUDGMENTS

How then can we explain the constraining of the conversation around Bookchin's writings? More generally, for someone who was responsible at one time for such a rich and imaginative series of interventions in ecology, urban studies, alternative technology, libertarian history and social philosophy, why so little application? With some notable exceptions (Clark, 1986; Clark, ed. 1990; Biehl, 1991; Fotopoulos, 1997; Heller, 1999; Tokar, 2008), why do we find, as yet, so little explicit building on and creative development of Bookchin's work?

There are numerous reasons why Bookchin's social ecology did not sustain a rich, wide-ranging, plural and extended conversation (in contrast for example to the veritable cottage industries that sprang up around ecocentric, eco-Marxist or eco-socialist political theories in the 1990s). Perhaps the most obvious reason for the stunting of discussion around social ecology is simply that Bookchin cast a very heavy presence over his own body of work.[5] A brilliant and sharp polemicist, he engaged with critics, opponents and even partial sympathisers in the fashion of a Bronx street corner speaker, with a merciless eye for inconsistency and a desire to dispatch them bloodied and damaged. As I have argued in this book, sometimes this was all to the good. In addition to standing implacably opposed to capitalism, Bookchin made mincemeat of misanthropes and authoritarian Marxists, nihilists and 'primitivists'. He had a brilliant ear for the cant of well-fed Northern environmentalists who enjoyed all the benefits of modernity whilst preaching a gospel of austerity for everyone else. He dispensed with 'academic radicals' in a language rarely heard in the seminar room. Bookchin was not of the academic type and he did not play by its rules of engagement. Yet, having said all this, it has to be recognised that his mode of address clearly generated pathologies.

As Colin Ward has observed, Bookchin's writings are at times marked by a troubling reading strategy 'of grinding other authors into the ground' (Ward, 1997: 170). The manner in which Bookchin ruthlessly policed the boundaries of social ecology with an endless eye for digression also constrained more speculative engagements and more open-ended conversations. A generous reading of this

activity could point to the strong strand of 'political perfectionism' running through all his writings. A less generous interpretation might simply argue that one of the more unfortunate features that surface in Bookchin's writings is that alongside the rich defence of the ethical, the participatory and the utopian, there is a distinct commitment to orthodoxy running through much of his work.

In Bookchin's later writings in particular, polemic is frequently used as a cudgel. Assertions of 'political integrity' obscure a refusal to engage in dialogue. Somewhat ironically, for a thinker who produced some of the most insightful libertarian critiques of Marxist authoritarianism, this generated a stifling atmosphere for creative engagement. Whilst Bookchin may have greatly admired the Athenians and their capacity to 'learn the art of compromise, and to develop a political etiquette that fostered a sense of commonality rather than social conflict' (*FUTC*: 73), there seems little doubt that he never mastered this in his own writings.

Yet again, death is both the final fore-closer and the point at which possibilities emerge. The force of personality recedes and all we have left are the writings. After Bookchin had gone to meet and debate Marx and Kropotkin, the obituaries came. And far from offering an ending mired in controversy or worse still obscurity, they suggested other endings and other possible openings. Lengthy obituaries emerged in all the serious newspapers of the Anglo-Saxon world, from *The Times* and the *Guardian*, to the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Almost to a person, the obituaries were respectful, appreciative of his political contribution, and served as a reminder of the sheer achievement of his intellectual endeavour. Such a situation finally seemed to open up space for more considered reflections on his legacy. How then can we weigh up Bookchin's work? What is its value? What is its future?

### NEW BEGINNINGS, OR MORE CONSIDERED JUDGMENTS

Weighing up Bookchin's legacy is an extraordinarily difficult task since, as our engagement with his writings in this book has revealed, reading Bookchin is an experience in which one persistently encounters an odd and unsettling mix; a mix of deeply prescient insights and rationalist excesses, remarkably perceptive critiques and dogmatic polemics. Bookchin's work is additionally interesting because on a number of issues – as we have seen – he simply changed his mind. Such shifts and transitions have been treated by critics as

weaknesses, as sources of incoherence. Yet, a more generous reading suggests they merely demonstrate that, despite Bookchin's desire to make a highly rationalist reading of his work (as largely continuous and consistent), we are ultimately left with writings which are much more dynamic and fluid than Bookchin's critics or his supporters would allow us to believe. Bookchin's five decades' worth of writings provide us with a body of work that evolves and changes over time, as new influences emerge and older currents recede, and as social and political circumstances change. In short, we can only conclude (in a fashion that Bookchin would probably detest!) that there are numerous 'Murray Bookchins' and numerous potential legacies.

The manner in which the different stages of Bookchin's writings allow for multiple possible readings will undoubtedly ensure that his work will be appropriated by diverse currents in the years to come. Without wanting to imperialise over this interpretive landscape, this book has clearly suggested that of the differing 'Bookchins' some are perhaps more useful and viable than others.

Let us turn first to the 'Bookchin' that seems to speak least to contemporary times. We have already dealt with Bookchin as a polemicist. As a social theorist, I would suggest that the 'Bookchin' perhaps least useful to the specific circumstances we find ourselves facing in the early twenty-first century is Bookchin as eschatological revolutionary. As 'natures' prophet', to use Joel Kovel's stinging but partially accurate phrase (Kovel, 1998), perhaps one of the most dramatic but problematic aspects of Bookchin's thought emerges when his writings reiterate the messianic, apocalyptic and indeed totalising qualities of Hegelian Marxism and critical theory at its most utopian. The experience of reading this Bookchin is, in part, so shocking because of the absolutism of his rationalism and his political perfectionism. As I have argued throughout this book, to the extent that these rationalistic aspects of social ecology are allied with meta-theoretical commitments to a smothering holism and social organicism, we are left with an explanatory social theory which – like the social philosophy of Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse – is endlessly suggestive, fascinating and intriguing, but also deeply problematic.

The broad sweep of Bookchin's social theory in *The Ecology of Freedom* is thrilling, but we are often left with a view from everywhere and nowhere. What goes missing in this mode of 'civilizational critique' is a fine-grained attention to historical, sociological and geographical complexities. For example, in Chapter 2, I suggested

that Bookchin's historical social theory offers a fine post-Marxist critique of economism and an important defence of a multi-layered concept of social domination. Yet, his subsequent exploration of the 'domination of nature' thesis is pursued in such a broad-brush fashion that it locks Bookchin into a type of 'Eden and the Fall' narrative which much of his latter work scrambles to rectify. We saw that what is missing in *The Ecology of Freedom* is a consistent recognition that diverse human societies have been involved in diverse and discontinuous ways in the production, reproduction and en-framing of diverse natures across time and space. As we saw in Chapter 5, the more dynamic and dialectical view of eco-social development that emerges in Bookchin's later work, which presents us with a dynamic process of first and second nature interacting, in some respects rectifies Bookchin's more static earlier social organicism. Yet, in Chapters 3 and 4, we considered how these theoretical commitments emerge in Bookchin's critique of contemporary capitalism and argued that a key limit of his thinking here is (again) the totalising quality of his critique.

I suggested that in terms of the ecological critique of capitalism – even given Bookchin's commendable critique of neo-Malthusian thought – it is evident that a credible social ecology has to factor many more material and semiotic complexities and uncertainties into the capital–ecology relationship than he allows. In short, we need a much more disaggregated, multi-layered and historically specific understanding of the dynamics of states, capitalisms and social movements that Bookchin provides (see, for example, Sandler, 1994; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Buttel, 1998; Wright, 2004; Castree, 2007a; 2007b).

That capitalism possesses an ecologically destructive dynamic is now widely recognised by even the political elites of the West (e.g., Stern, 2007). However, much has changed since Bookchin wrote his last substantive study on ecology. We now live in a world of 'coercive conservation' and 'carbon trading', serious industry-sponsored research into industrial ecology, and debt for nature swaps (see Luke, 1997; 1999; Smith, 2007). Following this and contra Bookchin, it could reasonably be argued that green capitalism is not simply some impossible abstraction but potentially an ascendant social form. Any reasonably informed and honest engagement with the contemporary environmental debate has to recognise these issues and other complexities still, such as the uncertainties that continue to underlie our current understandings of the impacts and effects

of global climate change or mass loss of biodiversity; the profound disputes emerging between different groups in the North and the Global South concerning which environmental problems should be prioritised; and the fact that, rhetoric aside, it is still very unclear at present the extent to which markets, state actors, corporations, international regimes and so on can accommodate the ecological challenge (see Luke, 1997; 1999; Braun and Castree, 1998; Forsyth, 2003; White, 2002; White and Wilbert, 2006). Additional complexities emerge when it is recognised that in some areas – such as air and water pollution in the affluent world and stratospheric ozone depletion – environmental reform strategies pursued though the conventional channels of liberal democracy have achieved rather more than radical ecologists of the 1970s and 1980s considered possible (see Mol, 2003; White, Wilbert and Rudy, 2007). In areas where rather less has been achieved to date – most obviously in relation to climate change, given that virtually all current scenarios suggest a certain degree of warming is probably inevitable – the question of how we will adapt to climate change has become as pressing a political issue as the question of how it can be mitigated.

The rise of green capitalism then, clearly significantly alters the terrain of eco-critique in often unexpected ways. Most notably, in contrast to Bookchin's attempts to shore up the relations between ecology and *revolutionary thought*, rather more pressing would seem to be exploring the relationship between ecology and reformist thought. This for two reasons. First, it would seem evident that different fractions of capital are adopting rather different attitudes to the desirability of 'green capitalism' and that, strategically, in many respects it is only through social movements forcing the construction of eco-modernising alliances between capital and the state that we are likely to see the infrastructure emerge for a post-carbon economy. Second, we live in societies that resist total critique not because, as Bookchin suggests in *The Third Revolution*, we have simply lost a sense of human agency, but for rather more concrete sociological reasons. Notably, because – as the Bookchin of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* broadly recognises – we now find ourselves negotiating qualitatively very different worlds to the societies he looks back to in *The Third Revolution*. Contemporary societies are characterised by social pluralism and stark inequality, commodification and reflexivity, possibilities for post-scarcity affluence and for alienation. Ongoing processes of capital accumulation, cultural differentiation and technological innovation generate, as Alan Rudy

and Andrew Light observe, not some simple triumph of domination but both 'homogenization and differentiation, neither of which is unambiguously suffused with domination or freedom' (Rudy and Light, 1998: 328).

What follows from this is not that all Bookchin's insights can be dispensed with, but that the value of these insights is radically altered and, consequently, a social ecology, a critical theory committed to a humane and democratic altering of social ecological relations, needs a different approach. Just as Bookchin responded to the rise of post-industrial capitalism in the 1960s by suggesting that critique should not simply damn all but be located in 'the tension between what-is and what could-be' (*PSA*: 14), so perhaps the first move of a viable social ecology in the twenty-first century is to develop an immanent critique of green capitalism and the emerging green state (Dryzek et al., 2003) which asks not whether 'nature' should be produced (for it is always being produced in the dynamic interaction that occurs between humans, non-humans, diverse ecosystems and artefacts) but (i) for whom is it being produced and with what consequences?, (ii) in what senses are such developments opening up or closing down possibilities for more socially and ecologically just relations, opportunities for expanding autonomy, self-management and deepening democracy?, and (iii) can such developments be re-appropriated to fashion alternative socio-ecological relations?

In terms of Bookchin's normative project, again we confront multiple complexities. One of the most striking features of engaging with this aspect of Bookchin's work is how prescient much of his thinking is. Bookchin's writings of the 1960s and 1970s – in attempting to weave together the themes of a post-scarcity ecology that focuses on 'desire' as much as 'need', a liberatory technology, a new ecological urbanism and a new participatory democracy – offer a political imaginary which in many respects refashions and reworks some of the most inspiring themes that have run throughout the progressive traditions of political thought over the last two hundred years. Yet, I have also suggested that, as given concrete form, Bookchin's hyper-rationalistic and perfectionist tendencies ensure that his project becomes much less compelling. Bookchin's deployment of the enduring libertarian insights of the dangers of political and economic centralism is valuable. And yet, until his final 'liberal-constitutional' turn, it is left unclear how social and ecological justice could be made compatible with the type of radical decentralisation he ultimately defends. We can find no extended

examination in his work of the modern liberal democratic state as a point of enablement and constraint. The extent to which a world of post-scarcity abundance can be maintained by abandoning all market forms and radically simplifying the division of labour in favour of embracing a 'moral economy' is assumed rather than established. Finally, to the degree that Bookchin's politics are premised on revolutionary romanticism and the aspiration of Hegelian Marxism to the restoration of totality as a harmonious community (Jay, 1988), we are left with a troublingly mono-logical politics and a particular framing of the normative goal of critical theory which seems to have decisively lost its appeal or relevance for the secularly minded. In a world where it has become commonsense on the left to observe that the politics of the total too often seems to turn into the very thing that it sought to oppose (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Amin and Thrift, 2002), such a framing of politics no longer seems attractive or relevant.

As such, then, it has to be recognised that Bookchin's work does contain substantive 'holes', 'holes' which are invariably 'filled' via the deployment of polemic. There are, however, other 'Bookchins', and other possible legacies of his social ecology. I will conclude by focusing on four possible positive legacies of Bookchin's thought.

### LEGACIES, LESSONS AND TRACES

Perhaps the first legacy of Bookchin's work which does deserve more attention is Bookchin as one of the forefathers of political ecology. I have argued throughout this book that perhaps the most impressive aspect of Bookchin's social ecology is that it stands as one of the first attempts in the post-war period to formulate a thoroughly social and historical understanding of social-ecological relations which both avoids Malthusian myths and is firmly grounded in a sense of the connections between diverse forms of social domination and socio-ecological relations. To be sure, recent developments in the literature on political ecology have suggested that the development of this project needs to capture in more de-totalising and plural ways the dynamic production of social natures and nature-cultures across space and time (see Castree, 1995; Braun and Castree, 1998; Katz, 1998; Smith, 1998; Latour, 1993; 2004a; Haraway, 1991; 2000; Gandy, 2002; Forsyth, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004; Robbins, 2004). Beyond the rise of green capitalism, it would seem apparent that such approaches will need additionally to capture how, between first and second nature,

we seem to be experiencing the rise of a 'third' nature, a technologically saturated and mediated nature populated, for good and bad, by diverse 'cyborgs', 'hybrids' and impure nature-cultures. Finally, while such approaches converge with Bookchin in emphasising (if more cautiously) the overwhelming force in current times that 'capitalist ordering' (Braun, 2006) imposes on such nature-cultures, and the environmental injustices and dangers that frequently result from this, rather more attention has been given of late in political ecology to modes of engagement which examine the (semiotic and material) power relations that become embedded in these processes. Yet, if we see Bookchin as one of the first post-war social theorists to come close to formulating such a political ecology, it has to be recognised that this is no modest achievement. Rather than involve ourselves in artificial claims for Bookchin's originality, perhaps it is more honest simply to argue that his work is best viewed as the most developed representative of what we might identify as a 'social ecological tradition' within the broader traditions of political ecology; a tradition that ranges from Kropotkin, Reclus and Geddes to Ebenezer Howard, and Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright and E.A. Gutkind. Notwithstanding all the limitations of this social ecological tradition (see Gandy, 2002), contemporary currents in political ecology could learn from its insights.

For example, for all the conceptual sophistication of contemporary discussions of 'social nature', it is striking how little current forms of political ecology have to say at the reconstructive level. While the core concern of political ecology is to open up discussion about 'the democratic production of nature' (Smith, 1998; Braun and Castree, 1998, Swyngedouw, 1996; 2004; Gandy, 2002), what this might mean in concrete practice is for the most part unclear. It could be observed that advocating a radicalisation of democracy at such a high level of philosophical abstraction does not get us very far if there is not even the glimmer of an attempt to think through or outline the institutional, ethical, infrastructural, technological and political economic basis for what a progressive metabolism of society and nature might look. Without attending to what we might substantively argue for, desire or even dream about within the horizon of a new radical ecological democracy, and without any attempt to formulate some kind of 'discursive designs' (Dryzek, 2000), 'the parliament of things' (Latour, 1993, 2004b) is in danger of descending into a form of fantasy politics. Contemporary political ecologists could do well to heed Bookchin's injunction that 'The serious thinker must look

beyond the real to speculate on *what should be* rather than validate what is' (*RH*: 258).

A second 'Bookchin' who perhaps deserves a little more extended reflection than has been received to date is Bookchin as ecological humanist. Bookchin lost a good deal of his green audience following his critiques of neo-Malthusians, primitivists and deep ecologists in the late 1980s. His claim that forms of ecological politics that failed to ontologically theorise humanity's and nature's agencies as dynamic processes were on very shaky grounds at the explanatory and ethical levels was widely mocked. His claim that much 'green thinking' deployed discourses of 'limits' and 'austerity' too easily, that it dispensed with the issues raised by ethical humanism too quickly, and too easily descended into misanthropy, was viewed by many as outrageous. Yet, two decades on from 'Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology', and as I have demonstrated in this book, we can point to vast literatures in the environmental social sciences that have confirmed the value of Bookchin's interventions. Literatures in environmental history, cultural geography and new ecology have systematically demonstrated the importance of understanding the impact that human and non-human agencies have had in the historical production of diverse landscapes from agricultural land to wilderness. Political ecology has scrupulously documented the role neo-Malthusian rhetoric and romanticised views of wilderness have played in ensuring that modes of 'coercive conservation' are regularly imposed on people of the South. It is now increasingly recognised that forms of ecological politics premised simply on discourses of 'limits' and 'austerity' are not only questionable in ontological and empirical terms but are mostly self-defeating (Ross, 1998; Sandilands 1995; 1999; Milani, 2000). Indeed, much of the recent debate concerning the 'Death of Environmentalism' (see Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2007) mirrors in part some of Bookchin's central critiques of green anti-humanism made in the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast then to the largely dismissive critical reaction that followed Bookchin's critique of radical ecology in the 1980s and 1990s, I have tried to demonstrate in this text that many of Bookchin's intuitions here were well grounded. It is striking how quickly ecological politics descends into a scolding, mean spirited, rather self-righteous and often misanthropic discourse when humanism is dispensed with and human agency is defined solely in problematic terms. Bookchin warned of this danger in all of his later writings and he deserves praise for doing so.

A third Bookchin who also arguably deserves a little more attention in the context of this discussion is Bookchin as a green post-industrial visionary. As the most pre-eminent social theorist of the green left to demand that a viable political ecology be ultimately informed by some kind of compelling, optimistic and attractive post-scarcity vision of the future, Bookchin's reconstructive thought – whilst sometimes marred by a utopian perfectionism – is seminal and invariably full of insights. Let us consider what we might call the reconstructive infrastructural demands to be found in his work; for example: the championing of the need for a new sustainable form of agriculture in the early 1950s (Herber, 1952; *OSE*), which Bookchin insisted must be ecologically rational but also avoid increasing back-breaking toil; the championing of a liberatory technology in 1964 that argued we needed to exploit the full ecological and self-managing potential of post-industrialism; the advocacy in 1974 of 'a new industrial revolution' that would 'replace a patently obsolete, highly centralised, wasteful technology designed to produce shabby short lived junk commodities in immense qualities' with a qualitative revolution involving new ecological energy technologies and building materials and new forms of urban infrastructure that together would provide the material basis for Bookchin's preferred society. Bookchin's writings of the 1960s and 1970s are remarkable for the extent to which they anticipate more recent literatures in industrial ecology, urban ecology and sustainable technological innovation, literatures which have argued with increased confidence that the technical, infrastructural and organisational shifts that are now required in energy production, building, transportation, and agriculture in order to shift societies towards a de-carbonised, post-industrial regenerative economy are perfectly viable (see Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins, 1999; Milani, 2000). It is equally striking how disinterested most of the green left and contemporary currents of either social or political ecology are in this discussion.

A final legacy of social ecology that I would suggest could productively be engaged with is Bookchin as the open-ended utopian ecological urbanist. Whilst Bookchin the 'eschatological radical' dominates our image of social ecology, in Chapter 6 we came across a more Aristotelian Bookchin, a Bookchin closer to Mumford's reconstructive visions than to Marx, and essentially preoccupied with the question 'what might constitute the optimal built environment to ensure the flourishing and humans and other diverse ecologies?' Again, whilst acknowledging that at many moments Bookchin

has a distinct tendency to present his radically democratic urban solution in absolutist and perfectionist forms, I also suggested that we can unearth pragmatic and civic societarian moments in his urban thought, from *Crisis in Our Cities* to *Towards an Ecological Society.* The latter text in particular is interesting for the extent to which it is more influenced by concerns with 'prefiguring' and facilitating self-organising tendencies in the here and now – reminiscent of the political thought of Martin Buber (1958) and Colin Ward (1973) – than is the static abstract utopian rationalism of later works. There are moments in this collection of essays where one can glimpse the contours of a much more dynamic, open-ended and innovative urban social ecology than the fixities that emerge with Bookchin's writings on libertarian municipalism in the 1980s and 1990s. The image of an urban social ecology that can be found in *Towards an Ecological Society* grants a central place to the creative role that urban neighbourhood movements and active citizens could play in developing cultural and political projects across multiple scales. There is an attempt to envisage new modes of community development, cultural creativity, experiments in developing bottom-up eco-technologies, community gardening, new cultures of self-management and a diverse range of new participatory institutions. What is present in Bookchin's urban writings here is less a politics of 'the rupture' than of democratic experimentation and social, cultural and ecological regeneration based on exploring and championing the radical potential of urban dwellers to expand the realm of self-management and ecological rationality through diverse social, ecological and cultural practices in the here and now. It is a politics that seeks not simply to recover the public sphere but to infuse the urban with utopian dialogue 'as public event' (*EofF*: 334).

Utopian dialogue as 'public event', community development to 'generate schools for democratic citizenship', new modes of urban eco-technological innovation that move us beyond austerity-orientated environmentalism to give rise to new post-scarcity modes of metabolising society and nature – it is striking how Bookchin's writings from *Crisis in Our Cities* to *Towards and Ecological Society* and *The Ecology of Freedom* burst with ideas for developing a pragmatic, open-ended utopianism. What most characterises Bookchin's social ecology at this point is the attempt to develop a complex multi-tiered politics of the built and natural environment, a politics of community re-engagement, a politics of technology, and a politics of pleasure. We might say that hovering around some of Bookchin's best work is

the image of an experimental 'Dionysian Republicanism'[6] celebrating the potentialities of both human and natural agencies, and premised on the belief that we might collectively and democratically fashion dynamic and diverse future social ecologies. Perhaps this is the social ecology that is most worth preserving.

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

1. The secondary literature on Bookchin remained slim for many years with a surprisingly limited number of extended treatments of his work (for exceptions see Ferkiss, 1974; Whitebook, 1982). Following the publication of *The Ecology of Freedom*, interest in Bookchin's writings picked up (see variously: Yeobright, 1982; Aronowitz, 1982; Wolfe, 1982) with probably the most impressive engagements of this period being Fekete (1983) and Clark (1986). Yet, it was only in the 1990s that Bookchin's work began to receive a more extended discussion. Of this literature, two edited volumes emerged in the 1990s with dramatically varying agendas. Clark (ed. 1990) provides a celebration of Bookchin's work, whilst Light (ed. 1998) draws together a highly critical series of essays and polemics against Bookchin. These collections outline the contours of the increasingly polarised reception of Bookchin's writings in the 1990s. The supportive literature on Bookchin would include Daniel Chodorkoff's development of social ecology in the realm of reconstructive anthropology (see Chodorkoff, in Clark, ed. 1990) and community development; Ynestra King (see King in Clark, eds. 1990) and, most original, Chaia Heller's attempt to develop a 'social eco-feminism' by drawing together Bookchin's early work on desire, need and pleasure with the more life-affirming elements of libertarian eco-feminism, (see Heller, 1990; 1993; 1999). Janet Biehl's numerous writings on social ecology include a critique of eco-feminism from a social ecological perspective (Biehl, 1991), a valuable socio-ecological critique of eco-fascism (Biehl and Staudenmaier, 1996), important elaborations of libertarian municipalism (Biehl, 1998) and recent writings which clarify and defend Bookchin's later work, but unfortunately shade towards hagiography (see Biehl, 2007; 2008). John Clark's writings on Bookchin are marked by an earlier period of work warmly supportive of Bookchin's project (the aforementioned books Clark, 1986 and ed. 1990), and a latter series of engagements which are increasingly critical of Bookchin's rationalism, perceived Prometheanism, political dogmatism and his hostility to spirituality (see, Clark, 1997; 1998). Clark's final assessment of Bookchin is entirely hostile and dismissive (see Clark, 2008). Clark's own attempt to develop a social ecology beyond Bookchin can be found in Clark, 1997 and Clark and Martin, 2004. The work of Takis Fotopoulos – editor of the journal *Society and Nature*, then *Democracy and Nature* and now *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy* (see http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal for information on this journal and for a full biography of Fotopoulos' expanding corpus) – is similarly marked by an early period of general sympathy for Bookchin's project and a latter period where differences

between Bookchin and Fotopoulos become much more clearly drawn out. Fotopoulos' disputes with Bookchin differ from those of Clark. For a key statement of his thought see Fotopoulos (1997). This text provides probably the boldest and most serious attempt to address the limitations of Bookchin's rather vague thoughts on economics (additionally see Hawkins, 1993). Whilst Fotopoulos is largely supportive of Bookchin's libertarian municipalism, he rejects Bookchin's dialectical naturalism for the democratic rationalism of Cornelius Castoriadis. In contrast, Clark's work seeks a future for social ecology by transcending Bookchin's dialectic naturalism in favour of a dialectic holism whilst abandoning libertarian municipalism in favour of an eco-communitarian politics (see Clark, 1997). John Ely has done an impressive job of locating Bookchin within a broader civic republican and left-Aristotelian set of traditions (see Ely, 1994; 1996). Shaun Huston provides an imaginative comparison of Bookchin's thinking with the utopian science fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson (see Huston, 2002). Finally, supportive discussion of all aspects of Bookchin's work can be found on the website of the journal *Communalism: The International Journal for a Rational Society*, edited by Eirik Eiglad, which can be found at http://www.communalism.org. The existing critical literature on Bookchin has varied enormously in quality and depth and, unfortunately, has been dominated by highly polemical interchanges. Most notably, this would include Graham Purchase's (1994) anarcho-syndicalist critique of Bookchin; Ulrike Heider's (1994) bizarre misreading of Bookchin as US patriot and latent eco-fascist; Bob Black's *Anarchy After Leftism* (1997) which gives some insight into the strange world of contemporary 'post-left' American Anarchism if little else, and David Watson's more serious *Beyond Bookchin* (1996). There is a growing critical literature on Bookchin which includes more considered and rigorous attempts to engage with his work. The latter category would include Robyn Eckersley's ecocentric critiques of social ecology (see Eckersley 1989; 1992), Marshall (1992a and 1992b); Zimmerman, (1994); the contributors to Andrew Light's edited collection of essays on Bookchin (Light, ed. 1998). Additionally one would have to mention Alan Rudy and Andrew Light's various rigorous eco-Marxist interrogations of social ecology (see Light and Rudy in Macauley [ed. 1996] and Rudy and Light 1998 [in Light, ed. 1998]), the polemical and trenchant critique of Bookchin's libertarian municipalism by John Clark (in Light, ed. 1998), Steve Best's balanced, sharp and mostly fair appraisal of *The Ecology of Freedom* (Best, 1998), and Tim Luke's broadly sympathetic engagement with Bookchin's utopian vision (Luke, 1999). Bookchin's relationship to Marcuse (see Light in Light, ed. 1998), Kropotkin (Macauley, [in Light, ed.1998] and Padovan, 1999*)* and eco-feminism (Salleh 1996) have all been explored. Yaakov Garb has compared Bookchin to Rachel Carson in an insightful essay (see Macauley, ed. 1996). Outside debates in contemporary anarchism and green political theory, Bookchin's writings have slowly begun to attract the interest of social and political theorists. For example, Bookchin is discussed, if briefly, in Giddens (1994), Gray (1997), Gilroy (2000), and Young (1990). For a comprehensive bibliography of Bookchin's work and the commentary surrounding it, see Janet Biehl's

exhaustive bibliography (Biehl, 1992) which can be found at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html. I attempt to engage with these critical literatures in greater detail in the chapters ahead.

2. For an extended discussion of Bookchin's break with Anarchism, see Biehl (2007). I discuss this matter further in the conclusion.

3. I address some of these matters in Chapter 1 and in the remaining chapters.

4. I use the term 'political ecology' in an expansive fashion in this text to refer to a range of approaches to exploring socio-ecological relations that have emerged out of both development studies/geography over the last thirty years (see Peet and Watts, 1996; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004) as well the broader neo-Marxist, neo-Weberian post-structuralist and post-naturalistic currents that have emerged out of sociology and critical theory that have sought to grapple with the politics of ecology (such as the work of Bookchin in *PSA*, *TES*, *EofF* and *RS*; Enzenberger (1974); Gorz (1975), Commoner (1971), etc. Whilst there are significant differences between and within these diverse political ecologies , I would suggest that at the least all maintain a common point of departure in a critique of neo-Malthusian and market liberal approaches to the politics of ecology. All these schools are informed by a desire to marry political economy and some degree of reflection on the sociology of science with ecological analysis. All these approaches are motivated by a desire to explore the differential power relations embedded in the environmental debate. Finally, all share a normative terrain of commitment to exploring the possibilities that might exist for constructing more egalitarian, democratic, and just social ecologies.

5. Beyond his explicitly ecological writings, Bookchin's interests range from four volumes on urban theory to four volumes on the history of revolutionary movements to essays on urban planning, technological development and advocacy of popular self- management.

6. Compare for example Biehl (2008) with Clark (2008) for two entirely polarised accounts of Bookchin's work.

7. See the excellent critical engagements with Bookchin in Zimmerman, 1994; Rudy and Light, 1998 and Light and Rudy, 1996.

8. I take this term from Benhabib, 1986.

## 1  ENVIRONMENTS, CITIES AND POST-SCARCITY WORLDS

1. Bookchin has reflected on his childhood and early years in a variety of places, notably Jacoby (1987); Heider (1994); Biehl (1997); Bookchin (2000), but most extensively in *AMFL*. Additionally, see 'A Short Biography of Murray Bookchin' by Janet Biehl, available at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/bookchin/bio1.html.

2. The Social Revolutionaries have been described by Janet Biehl as a quasi-anarchist populist movement (Biehl 1997: 2).

3. The Confederation of Industrial Organisation was established by the American Federation of Labor to organise workers outside craft unions.

4. The complex relationship between Bookchin and the Marxist tradition is explored later on in this chapter, and discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3 and in the Conclusion.

5. The essay 'The Great Utopia' in *Contemporary Issues* Vol. 1, No. 5, 1950 (no author given, but written by Josef Weber) is interesting in giving some indication of the theoretical orientation of the journal. With its libertarian Marxist currents, rejection of 'worker-ism', anarchistic suspicion of bureaucracy and the state, and its remarkable passage on ecological degradation (p. 7), the article has strong resonances with Bookchin's later work. Indeed, Bookchin's first collection of essays is dedicated to Weber, whom he acknowledges as formulating 'the outlines of the utopian project developed in this book' and refers to his influence: 'for me he was a living link with all that is vital and libertarian in the great intellectual tradition of German socialism in the pre-Leninist era' (*PSA*: 32). Similar general themes can be discerned from the editorial in the first issue (see *Contemporary Issues* Vol. 1, No.1: 1–2). For an analysis of Josef Weber's thinking and a consideration of its relationship to Bookchin see van de Linden (2001). Biehl (2008) has contested van der Linden's emphasis on the impact of Weber on Bookchin's thought, drawing largely from interviews with Bookchin in his later years about the *Contemporary Issues* group.

6. Bookchin's writings in *Contemporary Issues* use 'Russia' 'Stalin's Russia' and the Soviet Union/USSR interchangeably.

7. Bookchin provided a follow up to this article in 1955 (see Herber, 1955).

8. Specifically, 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' draws from the 'Hearings Before the House Select Committee to Investigate the Use of Chemicals in Food Products', conducted by the 81st Congress between 14 September and 15 December 1950.

9. In the US, 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' generated a mild wave of interest in the correspondence pages of *Contemporary Issues*. Outside the US, it provoked more of a stir as it led to questions being asked in the House of Lords about the state of food management in the UK (see *OSE*, Introduction). In Germany, the article generated more interest still and in collaboration with Gotz Ohly, Bookchin expanded this article into a book, which was published in West Germany in 1955 as *Lebens-Gefährliche Lebensmittel*.

10. Bookchin (1974: xiv) refers to Dubos as 'the grand old man of social ecology'.

11. For an interesting re-evaluation of the relative merits of Carson's writings in contrast to Bookchin's see Garb's fine essay in Macauley, ed. 1996.

12. Odder still, is that *Crisis in Our Cities* comes with a stamp of approval from the Johnson Administration, being prefaced with a warm foreword by Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior, who generously suggests that 'Herber' 'deserves accolades for this courageous contribution to public understanding' (*CIOC*: ix).

13. The Congress of Racial Equality was a Northern based civil rights group which organised the 'Freedom Rides' where blacks and whites travelled

together on buses in the Southern states to try and break the segregation patterns.

14. The Libertarian League was an anarchist-syndicalist organisation active in New York city for much of the 1960s.

15. For an example of Bookchin's thinking in SDS, see 'Toward a Post-Scarcity Society: The American Perspective and S.D.S: Radical Decentralist Project Resolution #1'. This pamphlet was written anonymously by Bookchin and distributed by the Radical Decentralist Project at the last SDS Conference in May 1969. It is republished in Ehrlich, Ehrlich, DeLeon, and Morris (1979).

16. 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' was, like most of Bookchin's 1960s essays first published in the underground magazine *Comment* in 1964. It was subsequently republished in numerous places throughout the 1960s and finally anthologised in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (see Biehl, 1992, for a full bibliography).

17. Indeed, in this particular essay, it is the physical structure of society rather than capitalist relations of production which are viewed as causally more significant in promoting ecological degradation (see *PSA*: 84 – 'But a more serious problem than the attitude of the owners is the size of the firms themselves...').

18. Bookchin argues in this essay that fatalist attitudes are particularly prevalent in the writings of social theorists of technology such as Jacques Elul and Friedrich Juenger.

19. In its initial manifestation 'Listen Marxist!' was written as a pamphlet directed at critiquing the growing influence of Marxist-Leninist currents such as the Progressive Labor Party on Students for a Democratic Society.

20. Bookchin used the pseudonym of Lewis Herber up until 1965 and the first edition of 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought'. As such my sentence here involves some dramatic licence. This essay was, though, subsequently republished in Bookchin's own name and, stylistically, it is very different from  'Herber's' previous writings.

21. As is usual with Bookchin, such a claim is not without controversy. Andrew Light first drew attention to Bookchin's relationship to Marcuse in 1993 (see Light, 1993a). This insightful essay drew a furious response by Bookchin. See Bookchin, 1993b) and Light's response (Light 1993b). For additional reflections on Bookchin and Marcuse see Blanke (1996).

22. See Garb, 1996.

23. Bookchin wrote the manifesto of this group – 'The Power To Create, The Power to Destroy' – in 1969. An updated version of this can be found in *TES*.

24. Bookchin co-founded the 'Left-Green Network' within the US Greens in the late 1980s.

25. Bookchin distinguishes between 'social ecology', or sometimes just ecology, and environmentalism in a number of different formulations throughout the 1970s and 1980s. One of the earliest formulations argues as follows: 'Ecology, in my view, refers to a broad, philosophical, almost spiritual outlook towards humanity's relationship to the natural world, not merely to a scientific discipline or pragmatic technique.

"Environmentalism", by contrast, is a form of natural engineering that seeks to manipulate nature as mere "natural resources" with minimal pollution and public outcry' (Bookchin, 1974: xv).

26. I refer here to Karl Polanyi whose classic work *The Great Transformation* (1944) has also proved important in the development of James O'Connor's influential attempt to develop an ecological Marxism (see O'Connor, 1998).

27. Some of the themes explored here are first raised in Bookchin's 'The Concept of a Libertarian Municipalism, Part 1' in *Comment*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1980.

28. The new introduction to the 1991 edition of *The Ecology of Freedom* significantly retracts a range of comments that were now deemed too close to New Age or deep ecological currents (see *EofF*: xiii–lx). The second edition of *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* exorcises favourable references to the Frankfurt School and Adorno: 'I have come to regard much of Adorno's work as intellectually irresponsible, wayward and poorly theorised, despite the brilliance of his style (at times) and his often insightful epigrams' (*PofSE*: ix).

29. The relationship between Bookchin and Kropotkin could certainly be explored in further detail since there are clear resonances between the two thinkers. Most notably, both thinkers turn to evolution for ethical insight, draw lessons about human society from accounts of pre-literate humanity, and share a common vision of a future society that has harmonised urban and rural life, integrated work and pleasure, and decentralised its industrial production. For an recent interesting comparison between the two thinkers see David Macauley, 'Evolution and Revolution: The Ecological Anarchism of Kropotkin and Bookchin', which can be found in *SEAB*. Marshall (1992a) additionally provides a more rounded discussion of Bookchin in relation to the anarchist tradition.

## 2   HIERARCHY, DOMINATION, NATURE

1. For example, Giddens, 1981; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Fraser, 1997.

2. For example Bookchin draws attention to Marx's *The Future Results of British Rule in India.* Bookchin suggests that in this essay Marx virtually celebrates the utter destruction of all Indian ways of life under the Raj as unquestioningly progressive.

3. This account of human history as a 'legacy of freedom' versus a 'legacy of domination' would seem to been in debt to Kropotkin's observation that 'Throughout the whole history of civilisation two opposed tendencies have been in conflict; the Roman tradition and the republican; the imperial tradition and the federalist tradition; the authoritarian and the libertarian' (Quoted in Macauley, 1996: 23 fn 51).

4. As Bookchin notes: 'Whether the European continent "necessarily" would have been changed from a loose confederation of towns, cities, baronies, duchies, and the all presiding, if ineffectual, Holy Roman Empire into a clearly articulated group of nation-states is a problem in divination, not in social analysis. How Europe could have developed – whether towards

confederal communities or towards highly centralised nation-states – is an open question. One can single out many reasonable alternatives. European towns and cities might have followed that were no less possible than the one that became prevalent in fairly recent times. No single course of development was "inevitable" or "predetermined" by the economic, social and political forces' (*FUTC*: 118).

5. Bookchin indicates an awareness of the problem. For example, he has stated in an interview: 'In *The Ecology of Freedom*, I played two "legacies" against each other: "the legacy of domination" and "the legacy of freedom", partly to remove any myth that history has been a grand narrative of progress pure and simple' (1993: 105).

6. See Marx (1844/1977). Bookchin has been largely dismissive of this side of Marx, as he observes: 'Even if one views Marx's ethical proclivities as authentic, they are marginal to the core of his writings. The attempt to redeem Marx and fragments of his writings from the logic of his thought and work becomes ideological because it obfuscates a thorough exploration of Marxism as practice' (*TES*: 207–8). There is no doubt that Bookchin's very complex relations to Marx and Marxism need much more developed consideration than can be given in this study. For a hostile polemical assessment see Joel Kovel's 'Negating Bookchin' (in Light, ed. 1998). Elsewhere, John Clark captures these complexities quite nicely when he notes of Bookchin's work 'On the other hand, Marx is recognised [by Bookchin] to be one of the few great theorists of human liberation and one of the towering figures of human consciousness ... It is easy to allow Bookchin's critique of Marx and the Marxists (a critique which sometimes rises and falls, depending on your point of view, to the level of invective) to the degree he shares their problematic' (Clark, 1986: 212).

7. Interestingly enough, Bookchin's later work (*AMFL*: 243–98) does denote a distinct softening of his attitude to Marx although this does not extend to a rapprochement with contemporary currents of eco-Marxism. As Bookchin notes: 'I still think when I say Marx was not an ecologist, even in the sense of genuine stewardship, I'm far more accurate than the eco-Marxists, who, even today, are still going through Marx's works and trying to snip out statements here and there that they can piece together to stimulate an ecological world view' (*AMFL*: 269).

8. See for example, Wallerstein (1997) and the later exchange with Gregor McLennan (1998). Wallerstein's work is certainly not unproblematic as McLennan perceptively notes. However, the reading of historical development he has recently defended does bear remarkable similarities to the position Bookchin defends in *The Ecology of Freedom*. This is notably the case when Wallerstein argues: 'The fact that capitalism had this kind of breakthrough in the European arena, and then expanded to cover the globe does not however mean that this was inevitable, or desirable, or in any sense progressive. In my view, it was none of these. And an anti-Eurocentric point of view must start by asserting this' (1997: 105). By the time of *Re-Enchanting Humanity* (*RH*: 249–57), Bookchin had significantly rethought his position and appeared close to reneging on his critique

of Eurocentrism to return to a defence of the progressive features of European historical development.

9. For example Nancy Fraser's recent work brings into sharp focus the sheer complexities that face critical social theory in simultaneously addressing struggles of redistribution and recognition, the cultural and economic, in a synchronic analysis – let alone dealing with the complexities raised by diachronic analysis. See Fraser, 1997.

10. In *From Urbanization to Cities* we are told: 'I would like to emphasise that the earliest cities were largely ideological creations of highly complex, strongly affiliated, and intensely mutualist communities of kin groups, ecological in outlook and essentially egalitarian and non domineering in character' (*FUTC*: 35).

11. For example, at certain points in *The Ecology of Freedom*, there is a somewhat reluctant admission that any account of human communities at the dawn of civilisation will tend towards the speculative. We are told at one point, with an uncharacteristic degree of uncertainty: 'How close the early neo-lithic world may have been to that of the early Pueblo Indians ... may never be known. Yet the thought lingers, at the dawn of history a village society had emerged in which life ... [had] a procreative relationship to the natural world' (*EofF*: 61). This tentative defence of his thesis contrasts rather strongly with accounts found elsewhere, which do tend to be much more strident, formulaic and less nuanced (see *RE*: 46–54).

12. A large literature has significantly undermined eco-romantic accounts of early humanity. In considering the early environmental history of the British Isles for example, Oliver Rackham has argued that Neolithic people had quite an extraordinary impact on the countryside (Rackham, 1987: 71–3). Prior to the early Iron Age, Rackham argues, the British Isles was largely covered by deciduous woodland. However, with the spread of Neolithic communities, quite quickly almost half of England ceased to be wild wood. Commenting on this development, David Samways has suggested that this 'probably represents the greatest single ecological change in the British Isles since the last Ice Age' (Samways, 1996: 60) and that, moreover, 'by modern standards, these people were extremely wasteful of the trees they felled' (90). Earlier still, significant debate in paleo-anthropology has also been generated by the 'Pleistocene overkill' hypothesis. Asserted most rigorously by Paul S. Martin (Martin and Klein, eds. 1984, but also see Simmons, 1996: 71–7; Lewis, 1992: 59–63; Samways, 1996: 187–90), it has been argued that between the last phases of the Pleistocene and the early Holocene, two thirds of the mammals and fauna disappeared in North America due to the activity of early humans. Martin's 'blitzkrieg' position is admittedly controversial and other advocates place more emphasis on climatic factors. The debate would still seem to be characterised by considerable fluidity. As Martin notes, it is characterised by 'no solution and no consensus' (Martin and Klein, eds. 1984: 785). Yet the majority of specialists emphasise that early humanity had some influence on these events. Indeed, evidence from the settling of islands (such as New Zealand, Madagascar, Easter Island and the Hawaiian Islands) that remained isolated from humanity until 1,000 to 2,000 years

ago, would suggest that when humans did arrive, mass extinction of large animals and even substantial deforestation subsequently followed. See R. Cassell, 'Fauna Extinction and Prehistoric Man in New Zealand and The Pacific Islands', who notes that the disappearance of the Moa occurred within a few hundred years of human beings occupying the island; S.L. Olson and H.F. James, in 'The Role of Polynesians in the Extinction of the Hawaiian Islands', similarly suggest that Polynesian settlers may have destroyed over half of the endemic bird population (both of these studies can be found in Martin and Klein, 1984). Elsewhere it has been suggested that Easter Islanders contributed to substantive deforestation (see Bahn, 1992).

13. For example, on the role of violence in small-scale societies see Knauft, 1987: 457–500.

14. See Mary Mellor (1992: 130–50) for an interesting and much more sceptical reading of the 'non-hierarchical' nature of gender relations in clan societies, and Lewis (1992: 72) for examples of the mixed gender relations that can be found in small-scale agriculture societies.

15. Perhaps most notorious here is Robert Brightman's study of the Rock Kree of North America's Boreal forest, which suggests that this group not only lacked a conservation ethos but evidently had a 'proclivity to kill animals indiscriminately in numbers well beyond what was needed for exchange or domestic use'. Robert Brightman, 'Conservation and Resource Depletion: The Case of Boreal Forest Algonquians', in B. McKay and J. Acherson (eds. 1987: 123). Elsewhere, Rambo's recent study of the Semang Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia stresses that 'they achieve respectable pollution levels in terms of the immediate life space of the individual and the household' is interesting; see Rambo, 1985: 79. More vividly, regarding the relations between certain tribes and their indifference to the suffering of animals, see Turnbull, 1961.

16. For useful general overviews of this area see Simmons, 1996: 36–86; Lewis, 1992: 43–81; Samways, 1996: 177–96; Rambo, 1985; Denevan, 1992; Philips and Mighall, 2000.

17. Bookchin (1991: xxx). Perhaps the most extreme advocate of the merits of the Pleistocene emerging from deep ecology circles is Manes (1990). For those who would quickly dismiss Bookchin's critique of deep ecology, Manes' text deserves serious scrutiny.

18. See *RH*: 122; for an account of the dispute between Bookchin and his anarcho-primitivist and neo-Luddite/anti-authoritarian critics, see Bookchin, SALA, and the furious responses by Watson (1996) and Black (1997).

19. Indeed, contra certain currents of libertarianism, it clearly needs to be recognised that certain democratically controlled representative structures or socially differentiated roles might actually ameliorate social domination. Conversely, one could imagine certain non-hierarchical societies (perhaps most strikingly the kind of neo-primitivist fantasies advocated by some eco-anarchists) that would surely exacerbate social domination of humans *by nature* and perhaps through the 'tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman, 1970) further facilitate domination of some humans by others.

20. The point of making these distinctions of course should in no way be viewed as a defence of existing hierarchical forms of parenting/teaching/ the advanced division of labour. It may well be the case that we could reconfigure these roles in qualitatively different ways.

21. Eckersley proposes that Marx's communist utopia could be viewed as an example of a society that is non-hierarchical but ecologically destructive. Such an example focusing on Marx's own work is to say the least contentious, particularly if we consider the contribution of more recent scholarship on Marx (Benton, ed. 1996; Foster, 1999; 2000). Her general point is valuable though. Perhaps a better example of a non-hierarchical but ecologically destructive society can be found in the utopias premised on productive-forces' determinism aspired to by vulgar Marxists and Stalinists.

22. This general non-determinist position that Bookchin defends is, moreover, not without supporters. For a fascinating study claiming that more decentralised and democratic alternatives existed to mass production in the late nineteenth century, see Piore and Sabel, 1984.

23. Max Weber rarely receives a direct mention in Bookchin's writings, although he is acknowledged at the beginning of *The Ecology of Freedom*. Weber's emphasis on the importance of ideas and cultural factors shaping historical development clearly has had a significant influence on Bookchin's thinking. It is interesting to note though that while Bookchin used Weber to escape Marx's perceived reductionism and anti-ecological orientation, within environmental history it is Marx and the broad tenets of historical materialism that have proved most influential over the last few decades. Cronon (1995) and Worster (1985), for example, both make (selective) use of concepts from historical materialism but do not take anything from Weber. For one of the few authors who have recognised the similarities between Bookchin and Weber, see Murphy, 1994.

24. See Orville Lee (1998) for an interesting attempt to draw out a theory of cultural domination from Foucault and Bourdieu which is not unsympathetic to critical theory more generally.

25. De-historicised and Eurocentric attempts to protect the 'pristine' nature of Africa by some currents of Northern environmentalism provide a useful example of this issue. And such themes once again are compatible with Bookchin's critically underestimated critique of deep ecology.

26. This deeply non-dualistic assumption that 'the social' and 'the natural' are themselves at root merely ways of organising and framing materiality which change over time has been brilliantly captured by Haraway (1991) and Latour (1993). Such currents have been drawn together most effectively through a Lefebvrian–Latourian historical-geographical materialism by Swyngedouw (1999). As he insightfully notes: 'we must insist on the need to transcend the binary formulations of nature and society and develop a new language that maintains the dialectic unity of the process of change as embodied in the thing itself. "Things" are hybrid or quasi objects (subjects and objects, material and discursive, natural and social) from the very beginning. By this I mean that the world is a process of perpetual metabolism in which social and natural processes combine in a historical-geographical production process of socio-nature,

whose outcome (historical nature) embodies chemical, physical, social, economic, political and cultural processes in highly contradictory but inseparable manners' (Swyngedouw, 1999: 6). Attention then needs to be given to how the intertwined transformations of society and nature are 'both medium and expressive of shifting power positions' that become materialised in new socio-natures.

27. As such then, I am arguing here against the view that a critical social theory of the environment needs to choose between realism and constructionism. On the contrary a dynamic agental materialism needs to embark on the difficult task of combining the insights of both. For one of the most interesting attempts to pursue this project in recent times, and to which this chapter is considerably indebted, see Castree, 1995; 2002.

## 3   SOCIAL ECOLOGY AS MODERN SOCIAL THEORY

1. See Chapters 6 and 7 for further discussion of Bookchin's history of municipal movements.

2. To borrow a term from Brian Milani (2000).

3. I derive this typology from a summary of the themes which percolate through Bookchin's early work, notably Herber (1952), *OSE*, *CIOC* and 'Ecology and Revolutionary Thought' (1964).

4. With regard to the actual link between rising population and environmental despoliation, recent scholarship suggests that this relationship is much more complex than Ehrlich's IPAT formulae (Impact = Population × Affluence × Technology) maintains. That is, there is evidence of a range of possible dynamics playing themselves out here, varying from examples where rising populations have actually contributed to environmental enrichment and depopulation has been a key source of soil erosion, to the more traditional emphasis on rising population producing degradation. See García-Barrios and Garcias Barrios (1990) for an interesting example of how *depopulation* interacting with local social structures can produce soil erosion and food scarcity. For a more general critique of the undifferentiated nature of much neo-Malthusian thinking on this issue see Taylor and García-Barrios (1996). For more general critiques see Harvey, 1974; Benton, 1994; Sen, 1994. The important point to draw from this literature is that people do not impact on the environment in a homogeneous way – their impact is clearly mediated through existing social relations, cultural modalities and the forms of technology available. In short, on this issue Bookchin was right.

5. Of course, advocates of the 'Peak Oil' thesis will reject this line of thought. For an interesting critique of peak oil arguments from a leading British environmentalist, see Monbiot (2006).

6. Of course, this is not to suggest that the population/resources focus of neo-Malthusian forms of environmentalism has declined. It is still a very influential discourse which is present in a number of key institutions and articulates in complex ways with the broader discourse of 'environmental crisis' and with many aspects of US foreign policy. See Luke (1999) and

the work of Eric Ross (1998) for a valuable general critique of these currents.

7. For an interesting discussion of planned scarcity see Andrew Ross (1998). For a further excellent discussion of the role that green 'scarcity' discourses can play in embedding racialised and sexualised power dynamics, see Sandilands (1999).

## 4    CAPITALISM AND ECOLOGY

1. Notably, *Remaking Society*.
2. I have evaluated the contrarian critique of environmentalism elsewhere. See White (2004) for a critique of Lomborg, and White, Wilbert and Rudy (2007) for a general critique of contrarian and anti-environmental movements.
3. Indeed, in later works, the contours of 'ecological crisis' are increasingly distilled into something of a composite. For example Bookchin's assessment of ecological crisis in 1979 (in *TES*: 35) is exactly the same as his analysis offered some twelve years later (see *DtE*: 75)
4. Of course I am simplifying here. More recent developments have seen increased convergence between environmental justice and political ecology as academic fields, and the discursive use of the term 'environmental justice' has been increasingly deployed by movements in the South to frame their particular struggles.
5. For very fine summaries of the current state of political ecology as a discipline, see Forsyth (2003) and Robbins (2004). Robbins observes: 'political ecologists continue to hedge their bets before predicting anything so bold as a single set of structural forces under which land degradation must happen. The literature suggests complex networks that organise over time to produce new networks, each contextually quite different' (Robbins, 2004: 207).

## 5    ETHICS AND THE NORMATIVE GROUNDS OF CRITIQUE

1. Bookchin uses the term 'conventional reason' to include both analytic forms of reasoning and instrumental rationality (see *Pof SE*: 36).
2. Some prominent ecological philosophers had by the early eighties begun to moderate their understanding of ecology. Arne Naess, for example, noted in 1984: 'some of the key terms such as *harmony* and *equilibrium*, which were highly valued in the sixties, are I think less adequate today' (see Naess, 1984: 269).
3. See, for example, the conference papers collected in McDonnell and Pickett (1993) which provides an interesting overview of these issues.
4. Gould, 1989: 44, 45; see also Michael Zimmerman's excellent discussion of this issue in Chapter 5 of his *Contesting Earth's Future* (Zimmerman, 1997).
5. See Hughes, 1989. There are marked similarities between Bookchin's position and other advocates of 'cosmic purpose ethics', as Warwick Fox has pointed out in *Towards a Transpersonal Ecology* (1990: 179–84). In

Michael Zimmerman's discussion of cosmic purpose ethics, he make a good case for arguing for that there are notable points of overlap between Bookchin and Ken Wilbur's theologically tinged ecological ontology (see Zimmerman, 1997: Chapter 5).

6. It is worth stressing, though, that we can say this *retrospectively*. This is not to demonstrate though that this development was somehow implicit from the beginning or fulfilling a certain telos. The development of these capacities is, after all, simply what happened to a particular primate lineage, not what must have been. Such evolutionary capacities could well have gone in many other directions

7. For example, see Pickett et al. (1994: 5), who note the very different usage of the term 'community' within the sub-disciplines of ecology, varying from an understanding of ecological communities as 'a discrete unit' to 'an assemblage of interacting populations'. On similar lines, Alan Rudy and Andrew Light have noted that the terms 'symbiosis' and 'mutualism' in the science of ecology deal with quite diverse and differentiated relations and that the complexity of these terms is never addressed by Bookchin. See Rudy and Light, 1998.

8. This use of the term 'hierarchy', moreover, does return us to the previous point – that real difficulties emerge when extrapolating terms outside of their specific scientific context. For example (and contra Bookchin), the claim that ecosystems need to be understood in a 'hierarchical fashion' is now an assertion that can regularly be found in the literature of the science of ecology. See Marjorie Grene (1987). This notion of hierarchy has little in common with the social usage of the term, referring as it does to the need for a stratified and multilayered mode of conceptualisation rather than having anything to do with viewing relations of domination and subordination as ingrained in nature.

9. For a brilliant critique of this kind of reductionism see Stephen Jay Gould's 'Utopia Limited' (Gould, 1987). Gould's essay is a critique of the work of Frijof Capra – yet it is selectively relevant to Bookchin as well. Both Capra and Bookchin seek to suggest that developments in the various sciences are leading to a new metaphysics closer to holistic and organismic philosophy. Gould's critique does offer powerful reasons for feeling distinctly sceptical about these claims. Also see Stephen Rose (1997) for advocacy of the anti-reductionist model. Apparently, the advocate of holism, Arthur Koestler, was aware of this problem and consequently championed a stratified holism which saw the whole comprised of various levels or 'holons', each of which was seen as unique and non-reducible (see Zimmerman, 1997: 219).

10. Such an assertion may well seem controversial and at variance with James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis which posits the biosphere as a self-regulating organism tending to sustain life. There are good reasons, however, for believing that even if the Gaia hypothesis is correct, many green readings of its philosophical significance are simply incorrect. As Haila and Levins note here: 'Many readers have interpreted Lovelock's work in a mystical way and taken it to imply that the earth will take care of us. But variations in the climate over a much narrower range than would threaten life as a whole can have a major impact on our species' (Haila and Levins,

1992: 7). For example, they note that even naturally occurring climatic change could well be disastrous for us as a species.

11.   What can we make of Bookchin's more serious allegations, of a link between deep ecology and misanthropism? Ecocentric responses to Bookchin's position have tended to focus on the specific incident that prompted Bookchin's 1987 polemic. Hence, the interview that Dave Foreman gave to Bill Devall – where he stated 'the best thing [we could do in Ethiopia] would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve...' – is treated as an isolated outburst uncharacteristic of deep ecology as a whole. Thus, Warwick Fox has condemned Foreman's remarks as 'abhorrently simplistic' while nevertheless suggesting Bookchin's broader claims are 'totally misplaced with respect to the body of ideas known as deep ecology' (Fox, 1989: 21). Similarly Eckersley has remarked that 'fortunately, this stance has very few defenders' (Eckersley, 1989: 113). Considerable care does need to be taken in examining this complex issue. The very eclecticism that can be found in 'deep', transpersonal and ecocentric ecologies, and the manner in which such currents have been influenced by thinkers as different as Ghandi, Spinoza, Heidegger and even Marx, would mitigate against any undifferentiated critique of this increasingly diverse body of thought. It could also be noted that Bookchin's critique of a generic 'deep ecology' has often failed to make such distinctions and has thus at times suffered from a certain over-generalised quality. It would, though, be equally disingenuous not to recognise that currents of green thinking – since the early sixties – have espoused misanthropic, authoritarian and Malthusian positions; that these currents have been disproportionately influential in 'deep ecological' circles (see, Manes, 1990 for one of the worst examples).

## 6   URBANISATION, CITIES, UTOPIA

1.   *From Urbanization to Cities* was initially entitled *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship* in its first edition.

2.   *Crisis in Our Cities* is hereafter referred to in this chapter as *Crisis*.

3.   *The Limits of the City* is hereafter referred to in this chapter as *Limits*. The first two chapters of *Limits* draw together reflections on the rise of the city written by Bookchin during his late historical materialist phase in the late 1950s. They were initially published in *Contemporary Issues*. The third and fourth chapters, written in the early 1970s, provide a more characteristically libertarian engagement with city planning and the dilemmas of urban life as viewed at the time. The second edition of this text includes a long introduction from the vantage point of the mid 1980s, which clarifies and in part 'corrects' theoretical weaknesses of the earlier, more Marxian chapters. This edition also adds a new conclusion to the text which covers Bookchin's thinking on Libertarian Municipalism. While this provides a useful introduction to Bookchin's political philosophy, it does tend to sit awkwardly with the rest of the book.

4.   In a fascinating and sympathetic review of the organicist tradition in US urban planning, David. R. Hill has additionally observed that one part of

the difficulty with the deployment of the 'organic' philosophical axiom in urban planning is that it 'has been used to justify a remarkably disparate set of layouts for good urban and regional form. This spatial variety varies along a continuum all the way from Frank Lloyd Wright's "organic" extremely low density spread of city fragments across the continent to Paolo Soleri's advocacy of a notion of organic mile high structures' (Hill, 1992: 3).

5. This point is elegantly made by Colin Ward in his *Talking to Architects* (Ward, 1996).

6. In part, this is simply a failure of imagination; there is insufficient reflection in Bookchin's work that evoking the virtues of the 'small town agrarian heritage' perhaps does not speak to many African-Americans in the twentieth century who were grateful to escape their small-town heritages. In part, this is a product of Bookchin's overwhelming tendency to celebrate movements that move to the universal rather than the particular. But perhaps the principal weakness that emerges here – and as I have previously stressed in Chapter 2 – is the matter in which Bookchin's theoretical framework is excessively informed by a concern with the historical and the temporal and insufficiently informed by the spatial.

7. Of the kind that Bruegmann (2005), for example, is so critical of.

8. Gundersun has additionally observed in an insightful essay on Bookchin's ecotopia that there is something of a tension between Bookchin's vision of 'free nature' as a historical phenomenon and the eco-community which is rather fixed (Gunderson, 1998: 206).

9. 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' also suggests that future energy needs might be met by 'controlled thermonuclear reactions' (see *PSA*: 141).

10. Just how much nature should be preserved, 'blended' or transformed by human stewardship is one of the critical points at issue between Bookchin and Eckersley (see Eckersley, 1989: 112).

11. My thanks to John Clark for first pressing me to explore the diverse currents underpinning Bookchin's visions of community development in a response to an early paper I presented on Bookchin at Dunoon, Scotland in 1995. See Clark (1998) for a similar diversified reading of Bookchin's 1970s writings.

12. It is striking how Bookchin's diverse attitudes to the future relations between 'town' and 'country' reflect prevarications in Marx and Engels' own writings. As Andy Merrifield has observed, at moments Marx celebrates the city; yet, in *Capital*, Marx talks of 'the gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equitable distribution of the population over the countryside'. As Merrifield observes, this remark 'is ambiguous ... Apart from anything else it seems at odds with Marx's affirmation of capitalist urbanisation' (Merrifield, 2002: 24).

## 7   CITIZENS, POLITICS, DEMOCRACY

1. Bookchin has used the terms 'confederal' and 'libertarian municipalism' to describe his political strategy. In this chapter, I reference his political

strategy as libertarian municipalism since this is the term he uses most consistently.

2. Additionally we could refer to the work of critical theorists such as John Dryzek (2003), Iris Marion Young (1990)and Seyla Benhabib (1992; 2002) who have offered a range of proposals – from the extension of the use of citizens' juries to the demand for a 'democracy day' – that could contribute to the cultivation of a culture of civic virtue and deliberative engagement in the here and now; or to Hilary Wainwright's accounts of the successes and failures of participatory budgeting in Brazil (see Wainwright, 2003).

## CONCLUSION

1. See Bookchin, *OSE*: lxix–lxxi.
2. See Bookchin, *AMFL*.
3. It could be additionally observed here that Bookchin's brief engagements with Foucault, Deleuze, Latour and Derrida in *Re-enchanting Humanity* are equally limited. Shared concerns are ignored and potential points of engagement closed down. Bookchin's engagement with the field of science and technology studies critiques relativist and idealist excesses yet fails to engage with the range of scholarship that has moved past such positions to develop uniquely materialist-semiotic engagements with the natural sciences (see for example Haraway, 1991; Barad, 1996). And as such, what goes missing is any sense of the real gains that materialist readings of science studies, in conjunction with non-equilibrium ecology, environmental history and political ecology, have generated for re-framing much of the environmental debate (as we have seen in Chapters 3, 4 and 5).
4. See for example, the intensive and bitter dispute that unfolded between Bookchin and his former close colleague and ally, John Clark, in the mid to late 1990s (Clark, 1998; Bookchin, 1997; Clark, 2008). Additionally, see the dispute that unfolded between Bookchin, Clark, Biehl and Takis Fotopoulos in the journal *Democracy and Nature* (Vol. 3, No. 3, 1997; Vol. 5, No. 1, 1999; Vol. 5, No. 2, 1999).
5. For an account of what it was like to be an insider in Bookchin's ever-narrowing intellectual circle in the 1990s see Morse (2008). Morse provides an insightful account of the 'boundary maintenance' work that Bookchin embarked on in his final years. His thoughts on the inadequacies of Bookchin's analysis of race and 'white supremacism' though is more problematic. As a defender of the progressive legacy of the European enlightenment, a thinker steeped in forms of critical theory mostly developed prior to the post-colonial turn and as a thinker whose writings are primarily focused on the US, Bookchin's writings can be critiqued for his blind spots on matters of Euro-centrism as can virtually all the members of the Frankfurt school. As I noted in chapter 6, Bookchin's analyses of urban crisis are striking for their limited engagement with the question of urban racism. There is no comprehensive and systematic attempt to elaborate his 'grow or die' thesis outside the context of the

USA. The manner in which Bookchin's writings cling to an undifferentiated universalism in the 1990s in a response to the challenge of post-modernism ensures that he simply misses the insights and gains of post-colonialism in *Re-enchanting Humanity*. These writings cannot even entertain the notion that perhaps in post-colonial and global times we need to recognise the particularism that has always underlined Western universalism and that we need to transcend universalism and particularism – in favour of a contextual universalism – as has been elegantly argued by Beck (2006). However, such critiques of Bookchin have to proceed with care because Bookchin is often a more complex thinker than his critics allow. Whilst the issues of racism, colonialism and imperialism are not addressed in a systematic and singular fashion in Bookchin's work, they nevertheless do provide a central backdrop to his thoughts. For example, Bookchin's critique of Marxism in the 1970s is deeply sensitive to the issue of Euro-centricism and in many respects it anticipates post-colonial themes. As I have documented in this book, he was also one of the earliest and most insistent critics of racism and imperialism within the US environmental movement. From Bookchin's critiques of the implicit racial logics underlying neo-Malthusian thought in the 1970s to his critique of the subtle racism and class-ism of much deep ecological discourse in the 1980s, exposing the racism, and imperialism of much radical ecological discourse has been central to his work and he deserves credit for this. Indeed, even in his much criticised final writings, his critiques of the sweeping technophobia, romanticism and primitivism that gripped much of the US anarchist movement in the 1990s and beyond demonstrates a solid sense on Bookchin's part of the ongoing role that racism and often pure snobbery can play in the most radical of circles.

6. I would like to thank John Barry for this phrase.

# Bibliography

## BOOKCHIN'S CORE WORKS

Herber, L. (Pseud. M. Bookchin) 1962. *Our Synthetic Environment.* 1st Edition, New York: Alfred. A. Knopf. All quotes in this book are taken from the 1963 edition (London: Jonathan Cape) unless otherwise stated.

Herber, L. 1965. *Crisis in Our Cities.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Bookchin, M. 1971. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism.* 1st Edition, San Francisco: Rampart Books. All quotes in this book are taken from the 2nd Edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986) unless otherwise stated.

Bookchin, M. 1974. *The Limits of the City.* 1st Edition, New York: Harper and Row. All quotes in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986).

Bookchin, M. 1980. *Towards an Ecological Society.* Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Bookchin, M. 1982. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy.* 1st Edition, California: Cheshire Books. All quotes in this book are taken from the second edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1991), unless otherwise stated.

Bookchin, M. 1986. *The Modern Crisis.* Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Bookchin, M. 1988. 'Social Ecology versus Deep Ecology: A Challenge for the Ecology Movement' *Socialist Review* 18: 3.

Bookchin, M. 1987. *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship.* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. All quotes in this book are taken from the 1995 Revised Edition which is re-titled *From Urbanisation To Cities: Towards a New Politics of Citizenship* (London: Cassell).

Bookchin, M. 1990. 'Recovering Evolution: A Reply to Eckersley and Fox' *Environmental Ethics* 12: 3.

Bookchin, M. 1990. *Remaking Society: Paths to a Green Future.* Boston: South End Press.

Bookchin, M. 1990. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990. All quotes in this book are taken from the 2nd edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995) unless otherwise stated.

Bookchin, M. and Foreman, D. 1991. (ed. Steve Chase). *Defending the Earth: A Dialogue between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman.* Boston: South End Press.

Bookchin, M. 1994. *Which Way Forward for the Ecology Movement?* Edinburgh: AK Press.

Bookchin, M. 1995. *Re-enchanting Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism and Primitivism.* London: Cassell.

Bookchin, M. 1995. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* Edinburgh: AK Press.
Bookchin, M. 1996. *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era Vol. 1.* London: Cassell.
Bookchin, M. 1998. *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era Vol. 2*. London: Cassell.
Bookchin, M. 1999. *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998*. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press.
Bookchin, M. 2004. *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era Vol. 3*. London: Continuum.
Bookchin, M. 2005. *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era Vol. 4*. London: Continuum.

## SECONDARY WRITINGS BY BOOKCHIN

Shiloh, M.S. (Pseud. M. Bookchin) 1950. 'State Capitalism in Russia' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 2: 7.
Shiloh, M.S. 1952. 'A Social Study of Genocide' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 3: 10.
Herber, L. 1952. 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 3: 12.
Keller, R. (Pseud. M. Bookchin) 1952. 'Eastern Europe Under the Iron Heel' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 4: 13.
Ludd, H. (Pseud. M. Bookchin) 1953. 'The Fate of American Civil Liberties' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content*, 4: 16.
Anonymous. (M. Bookchin) 1953. 'America on the Road to Hitler and Stalin' *Contemporary Issues Leaflet* (January).
Keller, R. 1954. 'Year One of the Eisenhower Crusade' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 5: 18.
Herber, L. 1955. 'A Follow-Up on the Problem of Chemicals in Food' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 6: 21.
Keller, R. 1957. 'Arms for Hungary' *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* 8: 30.
Bookchin, M. 1974. 'Introduction to the Colophon Edition' *Our Synthetic Environment.* New York: Harper Colophon.
Bookchin, M. 1982. 'Finding the Subject: Notes on Whitebook and Habermas Ltd.' *Telos* 52.
Bookchin, M. 1986a. 'Municipalization: Community Ownership of the Economy' *Green Perspectives* 2.
Bookchin, M. 1986b. 'Who Are the German Greens?' *Gadfly* 2.
Bookchin, M. 1987. 'On the Last Intellectuals' *Telos* 73.
Bookchin, M. 1990. 'The Meaning of Confederalism' *Green Perspectives* 20.
Bookchin, M. 1991a. 'When Everything Was Possible' *Mesechabe: The Journal of Surregionalism* 9/10.
Bookchin, M. 1991b. 'Libertarian Muncipalism: An Overview' *Green Perspectives* 24.
Bookchin, M. 1993a. 'The Transition to the Ecological Society: An Interview by Takis Fotopoulos' *Society and Nature* 1: 3.

Bookchin, M. 1993b. 'Response to Andrew Light's "Rereading Bookchin and Marcuse as Environmental Materialists"' *Capitalism Nature Socialism: A Journal of Socialist Ecology* 4: 2.

Bookchin, M. 1997. 'Comments on the International Social Ecology Network Gathering and the "Deep Social Ecology" of John Clark' *Democracy and Nature* 3: 3.

Bookchin, M. 2000. 'An Interview with Murray Bookchin by David Vanek' *Harbinger* 2: 1.

Bookchin, M. 2002. 'The Communalist Project' *Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society* 2; available at :http://www.communalism. org/Archive/2/tcp.html

Bookchin, M. 2004. 'Introduction to the Third Edition' *Post-Scarcity Anarchism.* Edinburgh: AK Press.

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. 1979. *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* London: Verso.

Agyeman, J., Bullard, R., Evans, B. (eds.) 2003. *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Albrecht, G. 1998. 'Ethics and Directionality in Nature' in Light (ed. 1998).

Amin, S. and Thrift, N. 2002. *Cities: Re-Imagining the Urban.* Cambridge: Polity.

Anderson, E.N. 1969. 'The Life and Culture of Ecotopia' in Hymes, D. (ed.) *Reinventing Anthropology.* New York: Random House.

Appiah, A. 2006. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers.* London and New York: Norton.

Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Aristotle. 1986. *The Politics.* New York: Prometheus Books.

Aronowitz, S. 1982. 'Past Perfect' *The Village Voice*, 20 July.

Bahn, F.J. 1992. *Easter Island, Earth Island.* London: Thames and Hudson.

Bai, X. 2007. 'Industrial Ecology and the Global Impacts of Cities' *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 11: 2.

Barad, K. 1996. "Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism Without Contradiction" in Nelson, L.H. and Nelson J. (eds.) *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science.* Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Barber, B. 1974. *The Death of Communal Liberty.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Barber, B. 1984. *Strong Democracy.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barry, J. 1999. *Rethinking Green Politics.* London: Sage.

Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity.

Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity.* London: Sage.

Beck, U. 1995. *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk.* Cambridge: Polity.

Beck, U. 2006. *Cosmopolitan Vision.* Cambridge: Polity.

Benhabib, S. 1986. *Critique, Norm and Utopia.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Benhabib. S. 1992. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and the Postmodern.* London: Routledge.

Benhabib, S. 2002. *The Claims of Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Benton, T. 1989. 'Marxism and Natural Limits: An Ecological Critique and Reconstruction' *New Left Review* 178.

Benton, T. 1992. 'Ecology, Socialism and the Mastery of Nature' *New Left Review* 194.

Benton, T. 1993. *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice*. London: Verso.

Benton, T. 1994. 'Biology and Social Theory' in Redcliff, M., Benton, T. *Social theory and the Global Environment.* London: Routledge.

Benton, T. (ed.) 1996. *The Greening of Marxism.* New York: Guilford.

Best, S. 1998 'Murray Bookchin's Theory of Social Ecology: An Appraisal of the Ecology of Freedom' *Organization and Environment* 11: 3.

Biehl, J. 1991. *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Biehl, J. 1992. 'A Bibliography of Published Works by Murray Bookchin' available at: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html

Biehl, J. and Staudenmaier, P. 1996. *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience*. San Francisco: AK Press.

Biehl, J. 1997. 'Introduction' in Biehl, J. (ed.) *The Bookchin Reader*. London: Cassell.

Biehl, J. and Bookchin, M. 1997. 'Advisory Board Resignation Letter' *Democracy and Nature* 3: 3.

Biehl, J. 1998. *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Biehl, J. 2007. 'Bookchin Breaks with Anarchism' *Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society* 12; available at: http://www.communalism.net/Archive/12/bba.pdf

Biehl, J. 2008. 'Bookchin's Originality: A Reply to Marcel Van der Linden' *Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society* 14; available at: http://www.communalism.net/Archive/12/bba.pdf

Bilsky, L.J. (ed.) 1980. *Historical Ecology: Essays on Environment and Social Change*. Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, Kennikat Press.

Black. B. 1997. *Anarchy after Leftism*. Columbia: CAL Press.

Blackie, P. and Brookfield, H. 1987. *Land Degradation and Society*. London: Methuen.

Blanke, H.T. 1996. 'Domination and Utopia: Marcuse's Discourse on Nature, Psyche and Culture' in Macauley (ed. 1996).

Botkin, D. 1990. *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Oxford University Press.

Braun, B. 2006. 'Towards a New Earth and a New Humanity: Nature, Ontology, Politics' in Castree, N. and Gregory, D. (eds) *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Braun, B. and Castree, N. (eds.) 1998. *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium*. London: Routledge.

Bruegmann, R. 2005. *Sprawl: A Compact History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brundtland, G. (ed.) 1987. *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buber, M. 1958. *Paths in Utopia.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Bullard, R. 1990. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bullard, R. 1993. *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots.* Boston: South End Press.

Burtt. S. 1993. 'The Politics of Virtue Today: A Critique and a Proposal' *The American Political Science Review* 87: 2.

Buttel, F.H. 1998. 'Some Observations on States, World Orders, and the Politics of Sustainability' *Organization and Environment* 11: 3.

Castells, M. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots.* California: University of California Press.

Castells, M. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, M. 2005. 'Neo-Anarchism' *La Vanguardia*, 21 May 2005. Translated by Chuck W. Morse; available at: http://www.negations.net/?cat=5

Castree, N. 1995. 'The Nature of Produced nature: Materiality and Knowledge Construction in Marxism' *Antipode* 27: 1.

Castree, N. 2002. 'False Antitheses? Marxism, Nature and Actor Networks' *Antipode* 34: 1.

Castree, N. 2007a. 'Neoliberalising Nature: The Logics of Regulation and Deregulation' *Environment and Planning A.* Advanced Online Publication. DOI:10.1068/a3999.

Castree, N. 2007b. 'Neoliberalising Nature: Processes, Effects and Evaluations' *Environment and Planning A.* Advanced Online Publication. DOI:10.1068/a3999.

Castree, N. and Braun, B. 2001. (eds.) *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, Politics.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Clark, J. 1986. *The Anarchist Moment: Reflections on Culture, Nature and Power.* Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Clark. J. 1990. (ed.) *Renewing the Earth: A Celebration of the Work of Murray Bookchin.* London: Green Print.

Clark, J. 1997. 'A Social Ecology' *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 8: 3.

Clark, J. 1998. 'Municipal Dreams: A Social Ecological Critique of Bookchin's Politics' in Light (ed. 1998).

Clark, J. 2005. 'Introduction' in Zimmerman M. et al. *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology.* New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Clark, J. 2008. 'Domesticating the Dialectic: A Critique of Bookchin's Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics' *Capitalism Socialism Nature* 19: 1.

Clark, J. and Martin, C. (eds.) *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisée Reclus.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Cochrane, R. 1998. 'Social Ecology and Reproductive Rights: A Feminist Critique' in Light (ed. 1998).

Cole, H.S.D. et al. *Thinking About the Future: A Critique of the Limits to Growth.* Brighton: Sussex University Press.

Commoner, B. 1971. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Cronon, W. (ed.) 1995. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature.* New York: Norton.

Crumley, C. (ed.) 1993. *Historical Ecology: Cultural Knowledge and Changing Landscapes*. New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Darier, E. (ed.) 1999. *Discourses of the Environment.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Davis, M. 1998. *Ecology of Fear.* London: Verso.

Davis, M. 2004. 'Planet of Slums' *New Left Review* 26.

Demeritt, D. 1994. 'Ecology, Objectivity and Critique in Writings on Nature and Human Society' *The Journal of Historical Geography* 20.

Denevan, W.M. 1992. 'The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82: 3.

Dennett, D. 1995. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life.* London: Penguin.

Dobson, A. 1990. *Green Political Thought.* London: Unwin/Hyman.

Dryzek, J. 1996. *Democracy in Capitalist Times: Ideals, Limits and Struggles.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dryzek, J. 2000. *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dryzek, J., Downes, D., Hunold, C., Schlosberg, D. and Hernes, H.K. 2003. *Green States and Social Movem*ents. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duany, A., Plater-Zyberk, E., and Speck, J. 2000. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream.* New York: North Point.

Easterbrook, G. 1995. A *Moment on the Earth.* London: Penguin.

Eckersley, R. 1989. 'Divining Evolution: the Ecological Ethics of Murray Bookchin' *Environmental Ethics* 11: 2.

Eckersley, R. 1992. *Environmentalism and Political Theory*, London: UCL.

Eder, K. 1996. *The Social Construction of Nature.* London: Sage.

Ehrlich, H., Ehrlich, C., DeLeon, D. and Morris, G. (eds.) 1979. *Reinventing Anarchism: What are Anarchists Thinking These Days?* London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ehrlich, P. 1968. *The Population Bomb.* New York: Ballantine.

Ellen, R. 1986. 'What Black Elk Left Unsaid: On the Illusory Images of Green Primitivism' *Anthropology Today* 2: 5.

Ely. J. 1994. 'Libertarian Ecology and Civil Society' *Society and Nature* 2: 3.

Ely, J. 1996. 'Ernst Bloch, Natural Rights, and the Greens' in Macauley (ed. 1996).

Enzenberger, H.M. 1974. 'A Critique of Political Ecology' *New Left Review* 84.

Erickson, C.I. 2000. 'An Artificial Landscape-scale Fishery in the Bolivian Amazon' *Nature* 408.

Fairhead, J. and Leach M. 1998. *Reframing Deforestation: Global Analyses and Local Realities: Studies in West Africa.* London: Routledge.

Fekete, J. (1983). 'Ontology and Value: The Ecology of Freedom' *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 7: 3.

Ferkiss, V. 1974. *The Future of Technological Civilization.* New York: George Braziller Inc.

Fisher, D. and Freudenburg, W. 2004. 'Postindustrialization and Environmental Quality: An Empirical Analysis of the Environmental State' *Social Forces* 83.

Fitzsimmons, M. and Goodman, D. 1998. 'Incorporating Nature: Environmental Narratives and the Reproduction of Food' in Braun and Castree (eds. 1998).

Forsyth, T. 1998. 'Mountain Myths Revisited: Integrating Natural and Social Environmental Science' *Mountain Research and Development* 18: 2.

Forsyth, T. 2003. *Critical Political Ecology*. London: Routledge.

Foster, J.B. 1999. 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology' *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 2.

Foster, J.B. 2000. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Foster, J.B. and Burkett, P. 2000 'The Dialectic of Organic and Inorganic Relations: Marx and the Hegelian Philosophy of Nature' *Organization and Environment* 13: 4.

Fotopoulos, T. 1997. *Towards an Inclusive Democracy*. London and New York: Cassell.

Fox, W. 1989. 'The Deep Ecology – Eco-Feminism Debate and its Parallels' *Environmental Ethics* 11.

Fox, W. 1990. *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.

Frankel, B. 1987. *The Post Industrial Utopians*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Fraser, N. 1997. 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "post-socialist" age' in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Post-Socialist Condition.* London: Routledge.

Freeman, J. 1970. 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 17.

Frey, R.S. (ed.) 2000. *The Environment and Society Reader*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Furedi, F. 1997. *Culture of Fear: Risk Taking and the Morality of Low Expectations.* London: Continuum.

Gandy, M. 2002. *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Garb, Y. 1996. 'Change and Continuity in Environmental World-Views: The Politics of Nature in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring' in Macauley (ed. 1996).

García-Barrios, R. and Garcias Barrios, L. 1990. 'Environment and Technological Degradation in Peasant Agriculture: A Consequence of Development in Mexico' *World Development* 18.

George, Susan. 1990. *A Fate Worse Than Debt*. London: Grove Press.

Gibson-Graham. J.K. 1996. *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Giddens A. 1981. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Giddens, A. 1985. *The Nation State and Violence: A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, *Vol. 2.* Cambridge: Polity.

Giddens, A. 1994. *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gilroy, P. 2000. *Between Camps*. London: Allen Lane.

Goodman, P., and Goodman, P. 1960. *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*. New York: Vintage.

Goodwin, B. 1995. *How the Leopard Changed its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity.* London: Phoenix.

Gorz, A. 1975. *Ecology as Politics*. London: Pluto.

Gorz, A. 1994. *Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology*. London: Verso.

Gottlieb, R. 1993. *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Gould, S.J. 1987. 'Utopia Limited' in *An Urchin in The Storm*. London: Penguin.

Gould, S.J. 1989. *Wonderful Life*. New York: Norton.

Gould, S.J. 1991. 'Kropotkin was no Crackpot' in *Bully for Brontosaurus*. New York: Penguin.

Gray, J. 1997. *Endgame Questions in Late Modern Political Thought.* Cambridge: Polity.

Grene, M. 1987. 'Hierarchies in Biology' *Scientific American* 75.

Gundersen, A. 1998. 'Bookchin's Ecocommunity as Ecotopia: A Constructive Critique' in Light (ed. 1998).

Gutkind, E.A. 1953. *Community and Environment: A Discourse on Social Ecology.* New York: Philosophical Library.

Habermas, J. 1962/1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Haila, Y. and Levins, R., 1992. *Humanity and Nature: Ecology, Science and Society*. London: Pluto.

Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Routledge.

Haraway, D. 2000. *How Like a Leaf*. New York and London: Routledge.

Hardin, G. 1974. 'Living on a Lifeboat' *BioScience* 24: 10.

Harvey, D. 1974. 'Population, Resources and the Ideology of Science' *Economic Geography* 50.

Harvey, D. 1996. *Justice, Nature and the Politics of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Harvey, D. 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hawken, P., Lovins, A. and Lovins, H. 1999. *Natural Capitalism: The Next Industrial Revolution.* London: Earthscan.

Hawkins, H. 1993. 'Community Control, Workers' Control and the Cooperative Commonwealth' *Society and Nature* 1: 3.

Hayward, T. 1994. *Ecological Thought.* Cambridge: Polity.

Heider, U. 1994. *Anarchism: Left, Right and Green.* San Francisco: City Lights Books.

Held, D. 1980. *Introduction to Critical Theory.* Cambridge: Polity.

Heller, C. 1990. 'Toward a Radical Eco-Feminism' in Clark (ed. 1990).

Heller, C. 1993. 'For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic' in Gaard, G. (ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, and Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

Heller, C. 1999. *Ecology of Everyday Life: Rethinking the Desire for Nature*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Hess, K. 1979. *Community Technology*. New York: Harper and Row.

Heynen, N., Kaika, M. and Swyngedouw, E. (eds.) 2006. *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*. London: Routledge.

Hill, D.R. 1992. 'America's Disorganized Organicists' *Journal of Planning Literature* 7: 1.

Hirst, P. 1994. *Associative Democracy*. London: Polity.

Hoffman, R. 2001. 'A Longer View: Is Industrial Metabolism Really the Problem?' *Innovations* 14: 2.

Hughes, J.D. 2002. *An Environmental History of the World*. London: Routledge.

Hughes J.D. and Thirgood, J.V. 1983. 'Deforestation in Ancient Greece and Rome: A Cause of Collapse' *The Ecologist* 12: 5.

Hughes, J.J. 1989. 'Beyond Bookchinism' *Socialist Review* 89: 3.

Huston, S. 2002. 'Murray Bookchin on Mars! The Production of Nature in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy' in Kitchin, R. and Kneale, J. (eds.) *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*. London and New York: Continuum.

Ingelhart, R. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

IPCC (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). 2007. *The Fourth Assessment Report*; available at: http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/wg1_ar4.html

Jacobs, J. 1961. *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.

Jacoby, R. 1987. *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. New York: Basic Books.

Jacoby, R. 1999. *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in a Age of Apathy*. New York: Basic Books.

Jamison, A. 1996. 'The Shaping of the Global Agenda' in Lash, S., Szerszynski, B. and Wynne, B. *Risk, Environment and Modernity*. London: Sage.

Jay, M. 1988. *Fin De Siècle Socialism*. New York and London: Routledge.

Jonas, H. 1968. *The Phenomenon of Life*. New York: Delta.

Jorgenson, A.K. 2003. 'Consumption and Environmental Degradation: A Cross-National Analysis of the Ecological Footprint' *Social Problems* 50.

Jorgenson, A.K. 2004. 'Uneven Processes and Environmental Degradation in the World-Economy' *Human Ecology Review* 11.

Jorgenson, A.K. and Rice, J. 2005. 'Structural Dynamics of International Trade and Material Consumption: A Cross-National Study of the Ecological Footprints of Less-Developed Countries' *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11.

Jorgenson, A.K., Rice, J. and Crowe, J. 2005. 'Unpacking the Ecological Footprints of Nations' *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46.

Katz, C. 1998. 'Whose Nature, Whose Culture? Private Productions of Space and the Preservation of Space' in Braun and Castree (eds. 1998).

Kauffman, S. 1995. *At Home in the Universe*: *The Search for Laws of Complexity*. London: Penguin.

Kirkman, R. 1997. 'Why Ecology Cannot be All Things to All People: The "Adaptive Radiation" of Scientific Concepts' *Environmental Ethics* 18.

Knauft, B. 1987. 'Reconsidering Violence in Simple Human Societies' *Current Anthropology* 28.

Kovel, J. 1998. 'Nature's Prophet' in Light (ed. 1998).

Kropotkin, P. 1904/1987. *Mutual Aid*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Kunstler, J.H. 1993. *The Geography of Nowhere*. London and New York: Simon and Schuster.

Kuper, A. 1988. *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion.* London: Routledge.

Kuper, A. 1994. *The Chosen Primitive.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso.

Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Latour, B. 2004a. 'Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern' *Critical Inquiry* 30.

Latour, B. 2004b. *The Politics of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Leach, M. and Mearns, R. 1996. *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment.* Oxford: James Currey.

Lee, O. 1998. 'Culture and Democratic Theory' *Constellations* 5: 4.

Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. London: Blackwell.

Leiss, W. 1972. *The Domination of Nature*. Boston, MA: Braziller.

Lewis, M. 1992. *Green Delusions*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Light, A. 1993a. 'Re-reading Bookchin and Marcuse as Environmental Materialists' *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 4: 1.

Light, A. 1993b. 'Which Side Are You On? A Rejoinder to Murray Bookchin' *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 4: 2.

Light, A. (ed.) 1998. *Social Ecology after Bookchin*. New York: Guilford.

Light, A. and Rudy, A. 1996. 'Social Ecology and Social Labor: A Consideration and Critique of Murray Bookchin' in Macauley (ed. 1996).

Lindsay, B. 2007. *The Age of Abundance*. New York: Collins.

Lomborg, B. 2001. *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luke, T.W. 1997. *Ecocritique.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Luke, T.W. 1999. *Capitalism, Democracy and Ecology: Departing from Marx*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Lyotard, J.F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Macauley, D. (ed.) 1996. *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology*. New York: Guilford Press.

Macauley, D. 1998. 'Evolution and Revolution: The Ecological Anarchism of Kropotkin and Bookchin' in Light (ed. 1998).

McDonnell, M.J. and Pickett. S.T.A. (eds.) 1993. *Humans as Components of Ecosystems: Subtle Human Effects and the Ecology of Populated Areas*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

McKay, B. and Acherson, J. (eds.) 1987. *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

McKibbens, B. 1989. *The End of Nature*. New York: Random House.

McLennan, G. 1998. 'The Question of Eurocentricism: A Comment on Immanuel Wallerstein' *New Left Review* 231.

McNaughten, P. and Urry, J. 1998. *Contested Natures*. London: Sage.

McNeill, J. 2000. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*. London: Penguin.

Manes, C. 1990. *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmasking of Civilisation*. Boston: Little Brown.

Mann, C.C. 2005. *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*. Random House: New York.

Mann, M. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Margulis. L. 1981. *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman.

Marshall, P. 1992a. *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. London: Harper Collins.

Marshall, P. 1992b. *Nature's Web*. London: Simon and Schuster.

Marshall, T.E. 1958. *The Harmless People*. New York: Vintage Books.

Martin, D. 2006. 'Obituary of Murray Bookchin' *New York Times*, 7 August.

Martin, P.S. and Klein, R.G. (eds.) 1984. *Quarterary Extinctions*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press.

Marx, K. 1977. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Massey, D. et al. 1999. *Human Geography Today*. Cambridge: Polity.

Massey, D. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage.

Meadows, D.H., Meadows, D.L., Randers, J. and Behrens, W. 1972. *The Limits to Growth*. New York: Potomac Associates.

Mellor, M. 1992. *Breaking the Boundaries: For a Feminist Green Socialism*. London: Virago Press.

Merchant, C. 1980. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Harper and Row.

Merrifield, A. 2002. *MetroMarxism*. London. Routledge.

Milani, B. 2000. *Designing the Green Economy: The Post Industrial Alternative to Corporate Globalization*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Miller, D. 1985. *Anarchism*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd.

Mol, A.J.P. 1996. 'Ecological Modernisation and Institutional Reflexivity: Environmental Reform in the Late Modern Age' *Environmental Politics* 5: 2.

Mol, A.J.P. 2003. *Globalization and Environmental Reform*: Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Monbiot, G. 2006. *Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning*. London: Allen Lane.

Moore, J.W. 2000. 'Environmental Crises and the Metabolic Rift in World-Historical Perspective' *Organization and Environment* 13: 2.

Morse, C. 2008. 'Being a Bookchinite' *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*. March.

Mowatt, F. 1968. *The People of the Deer*. New York: Pyramid Publications.

Mumford, L. 1934. *Technics and Civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Mumford, L. 1938. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Mumford, L. 1961. *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Murphy, R. 1994. *Rationality and Nature: A Sociological Inquiry into a Changing Relationship*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Naess, A. 1984. 'Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes' in Tobias, M. (ed.) *Deep Ecology*. San Diego: Avant Books.

O'Connor J. 1994. 'A Debate by James O'Connor and Takis Fotopoulos' *Society and Nature* 2: 3.

O'Connor, J. 1998. *Natural Causes*. Guilford: New York.

Osmundsen, J. 1963. 'Man Against Nature: Our Synthetic Environment' *New York Times*, 19 May.

Padovan, D. 1999. 'Social Morals and Ethics of Nature: From Peter Kropotkin to Murray Bookchin' *Democracy and Nature* 5: 3.

Paehlke, R. 2003. *Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity and the Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Peet, R. and Watts, M. (eds.) 1996. *Liberation Ecology*. London: Routledge.

Perdue, P.C. 1987. *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500–1850*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Philips, M. and Mighall, T. 2000. *Society and Exploitation through Nature*. London: Prentice Hall.

Pickett, S.T.A. and White, P.S. (eds.) 1985. *The Ecology of Natural Disturbance and Patch Dynamics*. New York: Academic Press.

Pickett, S.T.A., Parker, V.T. and Fiedler, P.L. 1992. 'The New Paradigm in Ecology: Implications for Conservation Biology Above The Species Level' in Fiedler, P.L. and Jain S.K. (eds.) *Conservation Biology*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1992.

Pickett, S.T.A., Kolasa, J. and Jones, C.G. 1994. *Ecological Understanding*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Pierson, C. 1991. *Beyond the Welfare State?* Cambridge: Polity.

Piore, M.J. and Sabel, C.F. 1984. *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities of Prosperity*. New York: Basic Books.

Polanyi, K. 1980. *The Great Transformation*. London: Beacon Press.

Purchase, G. 1994. *Anarchism and Environmental Survival*. Tucson, AZ: Sharp.

Quill, L. 2006. *Liberty after Liberalism: Civic Republicanism in a Global Age*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rackham, O. 1987. *The History of the Countryside*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd.

Radin, P. 1960. *The World of Primitive Man*. New York: Grove Press.

Rambo, A.T. 1985. *Primitive Polluters*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Redclift, M. and Benton, T. 1994. *Social Theory and the Global Environment*. London: Routledge.

Robbins, P. 2004. *Political Ecology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Roberts, T., Grimes, P. and Manale, J. 2003. 'Social Roots of Global Environmental Change: A World-Systems Analysis of Carbon Dioxide Emissions' *Journal of World-Systems Research* 9.

Rose, S. 1997. *Lifelines: Biology, Freedom and Determinism*. London: Penguin.

Ross, A. 1998. *Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice*. London: Routledge.

Ross, E. 1998. *The Malthus Factor: Poverty, Politics and Population in Capitalist Development*. London: Zed Books.

Rudy, A.P. and Light, A. 1998. 'Ecology and Anthropology in the Work of Murray Bookchin: Problems of Theory and Evidence' in Light (ed. 1998).

Samways, D. 1996. *Ecological Wisdom and the Noble Savage: Assessing the Foundations of Eco-fundamentalism.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Government, University of Essex.

Sale, K. 1988. 'Deep Ecology and its Critics', *The Nation*, 14 May.

Salleh, A. 1996. 'Social Ecology and the Man Question' *Environmental Politics* 5: 2.

Salleh, A. 1997. *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern.* London: Zed Books.

Sandilands, C. 1995. 'From Natural Identity to Radical Democracy' *Environmental Ethics* 17.

Sandilands, C. 1999. 'Sex at the Limits' in Darier (ed. 1999).

Sandler, B. 1994. 'Grow or Die: Marxist theories of Capitalism and the Environment' *Rethinking Marxism* 7: 2.

Satterthwaite, D. 1997. 'Environmental Transformations in Cities as they get Larger, Wealthier and Better Managed' *Geography Journal* 163: 2.

Schnaiberg, A. 1980. *The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Schumacher, E.F. 1974. *Small is Beautiful.* London: Abacus.

Sen, A. 1981. *Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sen, A. 1994. 'Population: Delusion and Reality' *The New York Review of Books*, 22 September.

Sen, A. 2006. *Violence and Identity.* London and New York: Norton.

Sennett, R. 1977. *The Fall of Public Man New York.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sennett. R. 1991. *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities.* London: Faber and Faber.

Shellenberger, M. and Nordhaus, T. 2007. *Breakthrough: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Silliman, J. and King, Y. (eds.) 1999. *Dangerous Intersections: Feminism, Population and the Environment.* London: Zed Books.

Simmons, I. 1996. *Changing the Face of the Earth: Culture, Environment, History.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, J. 1992. 'Taking a Chance on Evolution' *The New York Review of Books* XXXIX, no.9, 14th May.

Smith, N. 1984. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, N. 1996. 'The Production of Nature' in Robertson, G. et al. *Future Natural: Nature, Science, Culture.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Smith, N. 1998. 'Nature at the Millennium: Production and Re-enchantment' in Braun and Castree (eds. 1998).

Smith, N. 2007. 'Nature as Accumulation Strategy' in Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (eds.) *Coming to Terms with Nature: The Socialist Register 2007.* London: Merlin.

Soja, E. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies.* London: Verso.

Soja. E. 1996. *Third Space.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Soper, K. 1995. *What is Nature?* Oxford: Blackwell.

Soper, K. 1996. 'Greening Prometheus: Marxism and Ecology', in Benton (ed. 1996).

Spaargaren, G., Mol, A. and Buttel, F. 2000. *Environment and Global Modernity*. London: Sage.

Stern, N. 2007. *The Economics of Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swyngedouw, E. 1996. 'The City as a Hybrid: On Nature, Society and Cyborg Urbanisation' *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 7: 1.

Swyngedouw, E. 1999. 'Modernity and Hybridity: Nature, *Regeneracionismo*, and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape, 1890–1930' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89: 3.

Swyngedouw, E. 2004. *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water: Flows of Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, P.J. and García-Barrios, R. 1996. 'The Dynamics of Socio-Environmental Change and the Limits of Neo-Malthusian Environmentalism' in Mount, T., Shue, H. and Dore, M. (eds.) *The Limits to Markets: Equity and the Global Environment.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Taylor, P., Halfron, S. and Edwards, P. 1997. *Changing Life: Genomes, Ecologies, Bodies.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Thomas, D.S.G. and Middleton, N. 1994. *Desertification: Exploding the Myth*. Chichester: Wiley.

Tokar, B. 2008. 'On Bookchin's Social Ecology and its Contribution to Social Movements' *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 19: 1.

Touraine, A. 1971. *The Post-Industrial Society*. New York: Random House

Trager, W. 1970. *Symbiosis*. New York: Van Nostrand, Reinhold Co.

Turnbull, C. 1961. *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo.* New York: Clarion/Simon and Schuster.

van der Linden, M. 2001. 'The Prehistory of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*: Josef Weber and the Movement for a Democracy of Content (1947–1964)' *Anarchist Studies* 9.

von Weizsäcker, E., Lovins, A. and Lovins, L. 1998. *Factor Four: Doubling Wealth, Halving Resource Use*. London: Earthscan.

Wainwright, H. 2003. *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy*. London: Verso.

Wallerstein, I. 1997. 'Eurocentricism and its Avatars: The Dilemmas of Social Science' *New Left Review* 226.

Walzer, M. 1984. *Spheres of Justice*. New York: Basic Books.

Ward, C. 1973. *Anarchy in Action*. London: Freedom Press.

Ward, C. 1996. *Taking to Architects*. London: Freedom Press.

Ward, C. 1997. 'The Bookchin Prescription' *Anarchist Studies* 52.

Watson, D. 1996. *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology*. Detroit: Black and Red.

White, D.F. 2002. 'A Green Industrial Revolution? Sustainable Technological Innovation in a Global Age' *Environmental Politics* 11: 2.

White, D.F. 2004. 'Environmental Sociology and its Future(s)' *Sociology* 38: 2.

White, D.F. and Wilbert, C. 2006. 'Technonatural Time/Spaces' *Science as Culture* 15: 2.

White, D.F., Wilbert, C. and Rudy, A. 2007. 'Contrarians, EcoSkeptics and Anti-Environmentalism' in Pretty, J. et al. *The Sage Handbook in Environment and Society*. London: Sage.

Whitebook, J. 1982. 'Saving the Subject' *Telos* 50.

Williams, R. 1980. 'Ideas of Nature' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso.

Wolfe, A. 1982. 'Listen, Bookchin' *The Nation*, 29 May.

Woodcock, G. 1986. *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*. 2nd Edition. London: Penguin.

World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Worster, D. 1985. *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Worster, D. 1988. *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Worster, D. 1990. 'The Ecology of Order and Chaos' *Environmental History Review* 14.

Worster, D. 1994. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, E.O. 2004. 'Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Some Questions I Still Want to Know and am Not Afraid to Ask'. *Organization and Environment* 17: 3.

Yeobright, C. 1982. 'Beginnings for a Critique of the Thought of Murray Bookchin' *Black Rose* 8.

York, R. and Rosa, E.A. 2003. 'Key Challenges to Ecological Modernization Theory: Institutional Efficacy, Case Study, Evidence, Units of Analysis, and Pace of Eco-Efficiency' *Organization and Environment* 16.

Young. I.M. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zimmerer, K. 1994. 'Human Geography and the New Ecology' *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 84: 1.

Zimmerman, M. 1997. *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

# Index