

# Nightmares of Reason

Bob Black

2010

# Contents

<b>A Word from the Author</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Getting Personal(istic)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 3. The Power of Positive Thinking, or, Positive Thinking of Power</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 4. This Side of Paradise</b>	<b>25</b>
Foraging as Anarchy . . . . .	29
Foraging as Zerowork . . . . .	29
Foraging as Egalitarian Communism . . . . .	35
Foraging as the Good Life. . . . .	38
<b>Chapter 5. Stone Age or Old Age: An Unbridgeable Chasm</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Book Filled with Lies</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Chapter 7. Primitivism and the Enlightenment</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter 8. The Spectre of Shamanism</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Chapter 9. The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Chapter 10. Before the Law</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Chapter 11. Humanists and Subhumans</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Chapter 12. Nightmares of Reason</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Chapter 13. The Communalist Hallucination</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Chapter 14. The Judgment of Athena</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Chapter 15. City-Statism and Anarchy</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Chapter 16. Fantasies of Federalism</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Chapter 17. Anarchist Communism versus Libertarian Municipalism</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Chapter 18. The Organization of Power</b>	<b>237</b>

Chapter 19. Murray Bookchin, One-Dimensional Man	245
Chapter 20. Conclusion: Whither Anarchism, Indeed?	251
Appendix: An American in Paris	256
1 . . . . .	256
2 . . . . .	260

“The general level of insight now is more educated, curiosity is wide awake, and judgments are made more quickly than formerly; so the feet of them which shall carry thee out are already at the door” – Hegel<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>*Hegel: Texts and Commentary*, tr. & ed. Walter Kaufman (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), 110. “The feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out” (Acts 5:9).

## A Word from the Author

In 1997, C.A.L. Press published my *Anarchy after Leftism*, which took the form of a point by point (or tit for tat) refutation of Murray Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (A.K. Press [who else?] 1996). In the course of the writing, which occupied two months in 1996, I had the occasion to consult some previous books by the Director Emeritus, as I was sure that he was contradicting most of his previous positions. He was. What only his inner circle then knew is that Bookchin had privately renounced anarchism in 1995 (*cf.* the "communalism" website maintained by his remaining acolytes, [www.communalism.org](http://www.communalism.org)). When, in the book, I demonstrated that Bookchin was not an anarchist, leftists castigated me for my "purism." They now observe a discreet silence.

My readings, however, revealed that *SALA* was not just a senile aberration. Across the board and from start to finish, Murray Bookchin Thought was authoritarian, obscurantist, conceited, self-contradictory, ahistorical, hypocritical, even racist. As to how he ever maintained a reputation as a great anarchist theorist, I offer some thoughts in the following pages. I undertook to read or reread nearly all of his books. It was an ordeal, but it was worth it, because it equipped me to write *Nightmares of Reason*. Here I show that Bookchin's errors (some qualify as lies) abound in every area he bumbled into, be it history, anthropology, philosophy, political theory, cosmology, or even lexicography. I adduce example after example of the falsity, bad faith and even brutality of his polemics. Leftists who suppose — mainly on his say-so — that Bookchin was a great scholar will learn here why no scholars think so.

More or less unexpectedly, this book gave me the opportunity to develop my own ideas, some of which find their first or fullest expression here, and influence my future direction. This is where I came to the conclusion that the rejection of democracy is the most important task for contemporary anarchists. Portions of this book have appeared as articles, usually in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, and in Bob Black, *Withered Anarchism* (London: Green Anarchist & Eugene, OR: Anarchist Action Collective, n.d. [1997]). C.A.L. Press would like to publish the text in hard copy, but lacks the financing. Perhaps some of my readers would like to help out.

Bob Black  
P.O. Box 3112  
Albany, NY 12203 U.S.A.  
[abobob51@verizon.net](mailto:abobob51@verizon.net)

# Chapter 1. Introduction

The tale is told of the American tourist abroad who, encountering some natives who didn't speak his language, assisted their understanding by repeating himself in a louder voice. That is Murray Bookchin's way with wayward anarchists. In *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (1995)<sup>1</sup> the Director Emeritus laid down for all time what anarchists are to believe and what they are not to believe; and yet many perversely persist in error. The book's very title announces its divisive intent. Three books<sup>2</sup> and a slew of reviews suggest an overwhelmingly adverse anarchist reaction to the ex-Director's encyclical, although it pleased Marxists.<sup>3</sup> For Bookchin, there is only one possible explanation for anarchist intransigence: they didn't hear him the first time. For who — having heard — could fail to believe?

And so it came to pass — like wind — that the Director Emeritus is repeating himself, louder than ever, in *Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left*, especially in the previously available essay “Whither Anarchism? A Reply to Recent Anarchist Critics.”<sup>4</sup> But it's not a reply, just a replay. In the words of Theodor Adorno, Bookchin's “verbal demeanour calls to mind the young man of low origins who, embarrassed in good society, starts shouting to make himself heard: power and insolence mixed.” If, as Mill maintained, “the weakest part of what everybody says in defense of his opinion is what he intends as a reply to antagonists,”<sup>5</sup> understandably an argument which commenced in exhaustion resumes in paralysis.

For those unfamiliar with the ex-Director's dialectical mode of reasoning — shame on you! — the distinction between appearance and essence must be made incorrigibly clear. Thus, when the Director Emeritus writes that “it is not my intention to repeat my exposition of the differences between social and lifestyle anarchism,” in *appearance*, he is saying that it is not his intention to repeat his exposition of the differences between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. But understood dialectically, in *essence*, he is saying that it is his intention to repeat his exposition of the differences between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. And that is exactly what, and all that, he proceeds to do, which validates the method.

There may be those who, having read (let us hope) *Anarchy after Leftism*, wonder if there is any point in my producing a second essay which necessarily covers some of the same ground

---

<sup>1</sup>Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1995) [hereafter Bookchin, *SALA*].

<sup>2</sup>Bob Black, *Anarchy after Leftism* (Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press, 1996) [hereafter: Black, *AAL*]; Andrew Light, ed., *Social Ecology after Bookchin* (New York: Guilford Publications, 1999); David Watson, *Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia and Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>“Max Anger” [Kevin Keating], “Lies, Damned Lies — and Trotskyoid Lies,” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* 16(1) (Spring-Summer 1998), 81 (“excellent and timely”); Frank Girard, review of *SALA*, *Discussion Bulletin* No.82 (1997), n.p.

<sup>4</sup>*Anarchism, Marxism, and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998* (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1999) [hereafter: Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*].

<sup>5</sup>Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, tr. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), 88 (quoted); John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnary Company, 1955), 64 (quoted). I am of the opposite opinion.

as the first. Bookchin already stands exposed, in Goethe's phrase, as "captious and frivolous in old age."<sup>6</sup> After all, neither Bookchin nor, to my knowledge, anyone else even purports to have controverted even one of my arguments. There is some risk that what's been said about another critique of Bookchin might be said about this one: "while there is much here to engage (and provoke) the readers specifically interested in Bookchin, it is not always clear who else will find the book a rewarding experience."<sup>7</sup> And besides, Murray Bookchin has now confirmed what I wrote there: he is not an anarchist.<sup>8</sup> Only AK Press and Black Rose Books remain in the dark.

For over ten years I have relentlessly pursued a single goal: "Through my satire I make unimportant people big so that later they are worthy targets of my satire, and no one can reproach me any longer" (Karl Kraus). For it ought not to be "rashly assumed that those attacked by a respectable philosopher must themselves be philosophically respectable."<sup>9</sup> I can at least say, as did one of my reviewers, that what was a joy to write is a joy to read.<sup>10</sup> This book should be interesting, if it is interesting at all (and it is), almost as much to those who are unfamiliar with Bookchin as to those who are. It should satisfy those readers who, pleased as they are with the rebuttal of *SALA*, wish I had elaborated the critique of libertarian municipalism and other Bookchin dogmas.<sup>11</sup> It is an expose, at once entertaining and informative, whose hapless subject is merely a pretext for me to show off. My method is no more original than my message. I cribbed it from Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain and Karl Kraus.

At this juncture, there cannot be too much deconstruction of sham scholarship in anarchist argumentation. While no one who has read *Anarchy after Leftism* will take Bookchin's latest parade of sources at face value, there must be some readers for whom his first reply-to-critics, "Whither Anarchism?" is something new and presents an impressive façade. Traditionally, as Lawrence Jarach has long maintained, many anarchists have a weakness for typescript. Nor are all of the other texts with which it was published devoid of interest, certainly not the fond reminiscences of Bookchin's Stalinist childhood and Trotskyist youth; or the tantalizingly brief accounts of how the Director Emeritus heavily influenced the peace movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the women's movement, the New Left, the counterculture, and the environmental movement. Here is information you cannot get anywhere else, as the participants and historians of those movements have neglected to mention his important role. They have neglected to mention him at all.

This book is written in the "ethnographic present," without trying to keep pace with Bookchin's continued free-fall into statism. He now admits that he failed to hijack the phrase "social anarchism" for his personalistic purposes. It only took him 45 years to realize that anarchism is "simply not a social theory," and to denounce the anarchist "myth" and "illusion" that "power can actually cease to exist."<sup>12</sup> His renegacy of course confirms my arguments, but they needed no confirmation.

---

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss & Ronald Speirs, tr. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56.

<sup>7</sup>Mark Lacy, review of *Social Ecology after Bookchin*, *Environmental Ethics* 23(1) (Spring 2001), 82.

<sup>8</sup>Black, *AAL*, ch. 5.

<sup>9</sup>*No Compromise: Selected Writings of Karl Kraus*, ed. Frederick Ungar (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), 222 (quoted); Thomas Mautner, "Introduction" to Francis Hutchinson, *On Human Nature*, ed. Thomas Mautner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 39 (quoted).

<sup>10</sup>Anonymous review of Black, *AAL*, *Here and Now*, No.18 (Winter 1997/98), 39.

<sup>11</sup>E.g., Laure Akai, "Terrible Tome," *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* No.45 (Spring/Summer 1998), 22

<sup>12</sup>Murray Bookchin, "The Communalist Project," *Communalism* No.2 (Nov. 2002), unpaginated, on-line, [www.communalism.org](http://www.communalism.org)

Bookchin is the kind of writer you can come back to again and again and always find another mistake. That experience, frequently repeated, accounts for the length of this essay. The smaller part of it corroborates *Anarchy after Leftism*. More of it enlarges the scope of the critique there. The entire Bookchin ideology is laid open, like a wound. I hope many readers come across something in my copious references which, like Bookchin, they might like to run down. The ever-growing legions of Bookchin-haters will welcome another demonstration that Bookchin's unbridgeable chasm is between his ears. Laughter means, according to Nietzsche, being *schadenfroh* — taking mischievous delight in another's discomfiture, "but with a good conscience."<sup>13</sup> Here is an example. Finally, there are these ponderable words by James Gallant: "Much ado about nothing beats nothing, hands down."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, "Seventy-five Aphorisms from Five Volumes," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), 172; see also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams & tr. Josephine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup>"Pope Had More Vigor," in *Thus Spake the Corpse: An Exquisite Corpse Reader, 1988–1998*, ed. Andrei Codrescu & Laura Rosenthal (2 vols.; Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1999–2000), 2: 71. I am deeply honored to be included here, *ibid.* at 2: 258–259.



## Chapter 2. Getting Personal(istic)

A decade ago, a Green observed that “Bookchin has a tendency to be vituperative in responses to criticism.”<sup>1</sup> By now Bookchin is completely out of control. My book *Anarchy after Leftism*, according to the Director Emeritus, teems with falsehoods so numerous “that to correct even a small number of them would be a waste of the reader’s time.” *AAL* is “transparently motivated by a white-hot animosity toward [Bookchin],” in stark contrast to *SALA*, which is transparently motivated by Bookchin’s own impersonal, disinterested quest for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him History. “So malicious are its invectives [sic]” that the Director Emeritus “will not dignify them with a reply.”<sup>2</sup>

Even a cursory reading of *SALA* — more than it merits — confirms that Bookchin himself is too high-minded to indulge in “invectives.” Never (except once) does he relegate David Watson and other anarcho-primitivists to “the lifestyle zoo,” an expression so demeaning and vicious that I wonder why I didn’t think of it first. Nor does he descend, as does my “gutter journalism [sic],” to the indiscriminate, malicious, and self-contradictory outpouring of such insults as “fascist,” “decadent,” “individualist,” “mystical,” “petit bourgeois,” “infantile,” “unsavory,” “personalistic,” “liberal,” “yuppie,” “lumpen,” “bourgeois,” “squirming,” “reactionary,” etc. Never does Bookchin, who is rationality incarnate, resort to these abusive epithets, except (a hundred times or so) as objective, scientifically validated characterizations of Lifestyle Anarchists.<sup>3</sup>

The Lifestyle category is boldly and baldly designed to define the irreconcilably different as essentially the same to accomplish their common degradation. “It is part of the genius of a great leader to make adversaries of different fields appear as always belonging to one category only, because to weak and unstable characters the knowledge that there are various enemies will lead only too easily to incipient doubts as to their own cause,” as Adolf Hitler explained.<sup>4</sup> In this, if in nothing else, Bookchin is the Great Leader he has always schemed to be. “One of the basic principles of conspiratology,” according to Martin Cannon, “holds that *everything you don’t like must be connected*.”<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, whom Bookchin purports to venerate, might have taught the ex-Director that “falsehoods are not all derived from a single identical set of principles: there are falsehoods which are the contraries of one another and cannot coexist.”<sup>6</sup> Bookchin is a hard act to follow, except with a pooper-scooper.

Since Bookchin’s dialectic takes a little getting used to, consider another example. When he says that he will not dignify with a reply a critique full of numerous falsehoods and “intense and

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew McLaughlin, *Regarding Nature: Industrialism and Deep Ecology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), 258 n. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 167.

<sup>3</sup> My use of this term does not reflect any change in my opinion, set forth in *Anarchy after Leftism*, that it is meaningless. My every use discredits it, but my text shall not be blemished by the ironic quotation marks which scar every page of Bookchin’s final books.

<sup>4</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), 152–153, quoted in Michael Velli [Fredy & Lorraine Perlman], *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders* (2d ed.; Detroit: Black & Red, 1974), 67.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Cannon, “Dan Brown versus History: Notes on the Da Vinci Code,” *Paranoia* No.35 (Spring 2004), 56.

<sup>6</sup> “Posterior Analytics,” in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 1947), 68.

personalistic vilification,” such as mine, the reader unlearned in dialectics might naively suppose that Bookchin means that he will not dignify with a reply a critique full of numerous falsehoods and intense, personalistic vilification. Thus the Director Emeritus would never dignify with a reply a “scandalous hatchet job” whose “almost every paragraph” contains “vituperative attacks, manic denunciations, ad hominem characterizations, and even gossipy rumors” (like the ones Bookchin relates about John P. Clark) — namely, David Watson’s *Beyond Bookchin*.<sup>7</sup> And yet he *does* dignify (if that’s the word for what he does) Watson’s book with 47 turgid pages of would-be rebuttal. Indeed, “almost every paragraph of *BB* is either an insult or a lie<sup>8</sup>”: even I could scarcely have surpassed it in depravity.

Once again I ask, what am I, chopped liver? (I wish Watson’s book was even a fraction as much fun as Bookchin makes it sound. Bookchin has given Watson a jacket blurb to die for.) But despair not, neophyte dialectician. Even a trained philosophy professor, avowed dialectician, and (for almost two decades) inner-circle Bookchin subaltern, John P. Clark, does not and — Bookchin belatedly relates — never did understand Dialectical Bookchinism. With the possible exception of his main squeeze Janet Biehl, only Bookchin is as yet a fully realized reasoning human who has mastered the dialectic and, deploying it masterfully, divines the “subjectivity” and “directionality” of the Universe itself.<sup>9</sup> The rest of us are best advised not to play with fire but rather to play it safe and simply believe whatever Bookchin tells us to this week.

If I had any reservations about the way I rudely and ruthlessly ridiculed the Director Emeritus in *Anarchy after Leftism* — actually, I didn’t — “Whither Anarchism?” would have laid them to rest. In *Beyond Bookchin*, David Watson responded a lot more respectfully to Bookchin than I did, and a lot more respectfully than Bookchin ever responds to anybody.<sup>10</sup> A fat lot of good it

---

“Vices may be inconsistent with each other, but virtues never can.” “Christian Magnanimity,” in *The Selected Writings of John Witherspoon*, ed. Thomas Miller (Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 117. Witherspoon, James Madison’s teacher, was the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence.

<sup>7</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 169 (quoted), 218–220 (Clark’s political background), 223–225 (circumstances of Clark’s break with Bookchin).

<sup>8</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 212.

<sup>9</sup>Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society: Paths to a Green Future* (Boston: South End Books & Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1991), 37 [hereafter Bookchin, *Remaking Society*]; Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire Books, 1982), 355–364.

<sup>10</sup>Bookchin’s pronounced incivility alienated the previous movement he sought to dominate, the Greens. Even a commentator who is very sympathetic to the ex-Director’s intellectual pretensions nonetheless admits, regarding him and his followers: “Their aggressive debating tactics have been criticized by other Greens and radical ecologists.” Michael E. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 151. With a ploy now familiar to anarchists, Bookchin publicized himself by lambasting the better known leaders of Deep Ecology who were not even Greens, but “by 1991, the debate between deep ecology and social ecology had ceased to be of interest in the Greens.” Greta Gaard, *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998), 312 n. 12. With the Greens as now with the anarchists, Bookchin was profuse with accusations of irrationalism and fascism, and he is open about his divisive, us-vs.-them intent. Even the wimpy Greens eventually took his word for it and gave Bookchin to believe that they considered him “them.” I found frequent references to the Director Emeritus in the radical ecology literature up to about 1996, but none since, with one arresting exception. In 1993, Bookchin was anthologized in a volume about environmental philosophy. In the second edition (1998), he was dumped and replaced by John P. Clark! *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, ed. Michael E. Zimmerman (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998). In the latest such compilation, with 40 contributors, Bookchin is mentioned once and social ecology, unlike deep ecology, is ignored. *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston III (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

did him. The ex-Director demonized Watson in the same hysterical terms he demonized me, but at much greater length. Bookchin isn't remotely interested in being civil, reasonable or fair. To me, and not only to me, that was already obvious from *SALA*. Watson let himself be played for a sucker. I can't say I'm especially sympathetic, since Watson affects a holier-than-thou attitude only a little less unctuous than Bookchin's. He and his fellow anarcho-liberal *Fifth Estate* yuppies gave me the silent treatment long before the ex-Director did. What Nietzsche wrote covers the whole lot: "It also seems to me that the rudest word, the rudest letter are still more benign, more decent than silence."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps no single word better sums up Bookchin the man than *indecent*.

To correct even a small number of my errors, according to Bookchin, would be a waste of the reader's time, unlike his correction of a large number of the errors of the miscreants Watson and Clark. The reader cannot be trusted to use his time wisely, since he uses it to read Bookchin. Therefore the Director Emeritus vets his own critics in his usual disinterested manner. The number "one" is, if I remember my arithmetic, as small as a whole number can get, yet it is big enough for Bookchin to draw "one sample" to "demonstrate the overall dishonesty of [my] tract." Bookchin, the sometime champion of science, does not even know the difference between an example and a sample. One observation is, to a statistician, not a sample from which anything can be reliably inferred about even a population of two, any more than a coin coming up "heads" has any tendency to indicate whether next time it comes up heads or tails. But I am being hopelessly positivistic: the Director Emeritus disdains "logicians, positivists, and heirs of Galilean scientism."<sup>12</sup>

That someone has made one error has no tendency to prove that he has made "numerous" errors. Even Bookchin — for the first time, so far as I know — now admits that he made what he considers errors, indeed serious errors, in his earlier, positive characterizations of "organic" (primitive) societies.<sup>13</sup> If one error is justification enough to dismiss an entire book from consideration, then by his own criterion almost every book by Bookchin must be dismissed from consideration, which is not such a bad idea. In fact, probably every book by anyone must be dismissed from consideration.

If my entire book-length critique is to be dismissed on the basis of one error, it should be a profoundly important error, one going to the fundamentals of Bookchin's dichotomy, his posited "unbridgeable chasm" between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism, or my more meaningful dichotomy between leftist and post-leftist anarchism. Instead, this denouncer of the "personalistic" preoccupations he attributes to the Lifestyle Anarchists is, as to me, exclusively indignant about my alleged errors in sketching his own personalistic political biography, as I do in chapter 1 of *Anarchy after Leftism*. And even then, his only substantive quibble is with my referring to him as "a 'dean' at Goddard College (*AAL*, p. 18), a position that, [Black] would have his readers believe, endows me with the very substantial income that I need in order to advance my nefarious ambitions," whereas the truth is that Bookchin "ended [his] professional connections with

---

<sup>11</sup>"Ecce Homo," in Kaufmann, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 685. Fritz the Niche continues with a diagnosis of Bookchin's ill health: "Sickness itself is a kind of *ressentiment*." *Ibid.*, 686. I would add, "and vice versa."

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 355. This is odd, because he denounces "the antirationalism of Paul Feyerabend's fashionable antiscientism [sic]." Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 226. The ex-Director is too illiterate to notice he is paying Feyerabend a compliment. Scientism is "Excessive belief in the power of scientific knowledge and techniques." It is "Freq. *depreciative*." *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary [hereafter OED]*, q/v "scientism." Thus Bookchin himself espouses antiscientism.

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 187–188; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 44–61 & *passim*.

Goddard College [as well as Ramapo College, which he also mentions] in 1981.” My citation to the 1995 Goddard College Off-Campus Catalog, “a rare document,” is an “outright fabrication,” as the Catalog does not identify Bookchin as a Dean.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed it does not. I never said it did. For Bookchin to claim otherwise is an outright fabrication. This is what I *did* cite the Catalog for: “The material base for these superstructural effusions [i.e., the many books Bookchin cranked out in the 1980s] was Bookchin’s providential appointment as a Dean at Goddard College near Burlington, Vermont, a cuddle-college for hippies and, more recently, punks, with wealthy parents (cf. Goddard College 1995 [the Off-Campus Catalog]). He also held an appointment at Ramapo College. Bookchin, who sneers at leftists who have embarked upon ‘alluring university careers’ [SALA, 67], is one of them.”<sup>15</sup> I cited the Catalog, not to verify Bookchin’s academic career — I never suspected he would ever deny it, since he has flaunted it for so long — but rather in support of my characterization of what kind of a college Goddard College is, an expensive private college catering to the children of rich liberals (for 2003, annual tuition was \$9,100<sup>16</sup>). Maybe not, originally, an important point, but better a little truth than a big lie. Bookchin pretends that I was saying, in 1996, that he was *then* a Dean at Goddard College. He supplies no reference, since there can be none, for this false attribution.

Still, if the credibility of my entire book turns on these three sentences, their truth assumes unwonted importance. Bookchin categorically asserts that he ended his professional connection with Ramapo College in 1981. But according to the jacket blurb for *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), he “is currently Professor of Social Ecology at Ramapo College in New Jersey.” By 1987, according to the jacket blurb for *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, he “is Professor Emeritus at the School of Environmental Studies, Ramapo College of New Jersey and Director Emeritus of the Institute for Social Ecology at Rochester, Vermont.” According to the 1994 Bookchin biography posted electronically “to Anarchy Archives on behalf of Murray Bookchin by Janet Biehl,” which remains unaltered in the years since I first read it, “in 1974, he [Bookchin] began teaching in Ramapo College in New Jersey, becoming full professor of social theory entering and retiring in 1983 in an emeritus status.” As all I said about that is that Bookchin *held* (notice the past tense) an appointment at Ramapo College, and all I implied was that this was in the 1980s, Bookchin’s authorized spokeswoman and doxy confirms that I was right. She also confirms, contrary to Bookchin, that he did *not* end his professional association with Ramapo College in 1981, but rather in 1983. Does it matter? According to Bookchin, everything about him matters, so who is anyone else to say it doesn’t?

---

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 158. This statement is typical of Bookchin’s declining capacity to express himself. He doesn’t mean what he says, that the citation is an outright fabrication: the document “Goddard College 1995” does exist, as he had just confirmed. He meant to say that my alleged inference (that it supports the attribution of Deanly status) is an outright fabrication. Similar errors abound in the book. So do cliches, gratuitous or unwitting neologisms, grammatical errors, and sentence fragments, such as the long, clumsy, incomprehensible sentence fragment at Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 181 (last full paragraph, first [attempted] sentence). For some of the many similar defects in SALA, see Black, AAL, 104. The 1995 catalog may be a “rare document” by now — it was available upon request when AAL came out — but the ex-Director has cited an older and even rarer document, “1992 Annual Meeting/Summer Program Evaluation,” Institute for Social Ecology, Oct. 3, 1992, p. 9; minutes taken by Paula Emery; Janet Biehl files. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 257 n. 55. It would be a wonder if 20 people have ever seen this document, of which Janet Biehl may well possess the only surviving copy.

<sup>15</sup>Black, AAL, 18.

<sup>16</sup>Institute for Social Ecology, *2003 Spring/Summer Catalog* (Plainfield, VT: Institute for Social Ecology, 2003), 8.

Then there is the affiliation with Goddard College. Now in referring to Bookchin as “the Dean,” I was merely following the custom of referring to a distinguished retiree by his highest achieved dignitary title, the way people refer to “President Clinton” or “Senator Dole.” Was my resort to this protocol, under the circumstances, ironic rather than honorific? Obviously. Bookchin is a self-important, pompous ass. He brings out the pie-throwing Groucho Marxist in me. Sure, I can also trounce him on his own sub-academic terms, and I did. So did Watson. But “beyond Bookchin” the pseudo-scholar is Bookchin the blowhard and Bookchin the bureaucrat. In a letter to me (April 28, 1996), C.A.L. Press publisher Jason McQuinn relates that “the first thing I did before I agreed to publish your book, was to call Goddard College to fact check the ‘Dean’ accusation. The first person to answer didn’t know who the hell he was, but someone else in the room confirmed that he had been such.” (I’d earlier made the same phone call and gotten the same answer.)

Bookchin’s stunning expose of my dishonesty rests, at best, on a pissant terminological quibble. As Janet Biehl says, “In 1974 he co-founded *and directed* the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainfield, Vermont, which went on to acquire an international reputation for its advanced courses in ecophilosophy, social theory, and alternative technology that reflect his ideas.” (I wonder what tripped-out moneybags got conned into funding that sweet set-up.) For whatever legal or administrative reasons, the ISE was set up as an entity formally distinct from Goddard College, but for all practical purposes — as Bookchin would say, “in effect” — it was the graduate school of Goddard College. Thus David Watson in *Beyond Bookchin* made what he undoubtedly considered a noncontroversial reference to “the Institute for Social Ecology at Goddard College.”<sup>17</sup> Bookchin, who objected to everything else Watson said about him, did not object to this. In almost the same words, Ulrike Heider writes: “In 1974 he founded the Institute for Social Ecology at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont.”<sup>18</sup> Bookchin, who has strongly taken issue with everything else Heider had to say about him, has said nothing about this. Writing in 1993, Victor Ferkiss states that Bookchin “runs the Institute of Social Ecology at Goddard College in Vermont.”<sup>19</sup> This is how the Director Emeritus signed the preface to *The Limits of the City* (1974): “Murray Bookchin, Social Ecology Studies Program, Goddard College.” And this is how he signed the introduction to *The Spanish Anarchists* (1977): “Murray Bookchin/November, 1976/Ramapo College of New Jersey/Mahwah, New Jersey/Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont.”<sup>20</sup>

The administrator who has the title “Director” at the ISE has the title “Dean” at most other post-secondary schools. That’s why Goddard College spokesmen vaguely remember Bookchin as a dean. So Bookchin was a dean whether or not he was a Dean. And his “professional connection” with Goddard/ISE persisted at least until 1994 when, as Biehl then reported, “he still gives two core courses at the Institute for Social Ecology each summer, where he has the status of director emeritus.”<sup>21</sup> As a matter of fact, it persisted at least to 2003. The Spring/Summer 2003 Catalog

<sup>17</sup>Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 38 n. 21.

<sup>18</sup>Ulrike Heider, *Anarchism: Left, Right, and Green* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1994), 60. The point of view of this noxious book is well expressed by the title of the German original: *Die Narren der Freiheit: Anarchisten in den USA Heute*, “The Fools of Freedom: Anarchists in the USA Today.” I’m surprised AK Press didn’t publish it.

<sup>19</sup>Victor Ferkiss, *Nature, Technology, and Society: Cultural Roots of the Environmental Crisis* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1993), 212.

<sup>20</sup>Murray Bookchin, *The Limits of the City* (New York: Harper & Row, Colophon Books, 1974), xi; Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868–1936* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1978), 11.

<sup>21</sup>The preface to a 1994 book is signed “Murray Bookchin, Institute for Social Ecology, Plainfield Vermont 05667, February 28, 1993.” Murray Bookchin, *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936* (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1994), 2.

listed the Director Emeritus as, well, the Director Emeritus in the faculty. listing He was scheduled to lecture on “Ecology and Society” in the summer. The catalog also confirms the former Goddard/ISE connection. The credentials listed for ISE faculty member Michael J. Cuba is “B.A., Goddard College/ISE”; for two ISE faculty members, Arthur Foelsche and Darini Nicholas, “M.A., Goddard College/ISE.”<sup>22</sup> Bookchin’s pretext for disregarding my critique is therefore a lie. Before I finish, I will have proven many more.

Out of consideration for Bookchin’s feelings, I herein refer to him, not as the Dean, but as the ex-Director or the Director Emeritus. He has no excuse for ignoring me *now*.

Let us recur to *why* I devoted all of several pages out of 140 to the ex-Director’s bureaucratic and academic career, which spanned a quarter of a century. One immediate purpose was simply to flag Bookchin’s gross hypocrisy in denouncing leftists who embarked upon “alluring academic careers”<sup>23</sup> when he had done the same thing himself for over two decades. A broader purpose, opening out from that, was to challenge what, if anything, Bookchin meant by his shotgun Marxist epithet “bourgeois.” If it is an objective category of class analysis, then Bookchin (I suggested) — as a salaried professional and order-giving bureaucrat — was a bourgeois himself,<sup>24</sup> unlike at least some of those he reviles as bourgeois, such as John Zerzan (a babysitter) and L. Susan Brown (an office worker), who are objectively proletarians. But if the ex-Director’s use of the word is not objective and scientific, if he is not flexing his mental muscles — the “muscularity of thought” he says he brought to the mushminded, ungrateful Greens<sup>25</sup> — then whatever does he mean by “bourgeois”? In what way is what he calls Lifestyle Anarchism bourgeois whereas what he calls Social Anarchism is not? He never says. For a devolved Marxist like Bookchin, “bourgeois” (and “fascist”) are, as H.L. Mencken remarked, just “general terms of abuse.”<sup>26</sup>

The Director Emeritus, with typical obtuseness, never notices the obvious irony in my incessantly referring to him as “the Dean,” “presumably on the assumption that mere repetition will make my title a reality.”<sup>27</sup> Actually, it was on the assumption that mere repetition would make his stomach sour. In *SALA*, Bookchin refers to Hakim Bey (the pseudonym of Peter Lamborn Wilson) at least 27 times as “the Bey,”<sup>28</sup> presumably on the assumption that mere repetition will make his title a reality. Hakim Bey is not a Bey. Nowadays nobody is. A Bey was the governor of a province or district in the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which ceased to exist long before Wilson

---

<sup>22</sup>Institute for Social Ecology, *2002 Catalog* (Plainfield, VT: Institute for Social Ecology, 2002), 6 (with photograph), 13, 14; ISE, *2003 Spring/Summer Catalog*, 17, 18. Apparently the Goddard connection ended. The only ISE degree program then mentioned was a B.A. program through Burlington College. Currently (2004), the ISE offers an M.A. program (MAP) through Prescott College: “The cost of this program includes the regular MAP tuition (currently \$5,490 per term), the ISE fee of \$800 per term, plus additional courses attended in residence at the ISE.” ISE, “Master of Arts Program in Social Ecology” (2003). In-resident fees are apparently \$310/credit. ISE, “2004 Winter Intensives at the Institute for Social Ecology” (2003). The minimum fees for the 2-year M.A. are thus \$25,160, plus additional thousands for in-resident coursework, as of six years ago.

<sup>23</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 67.

<sup>24</sup>Black, *AAL*, 28.

<sup>25</sup>Black, *AAL*, 18, citing Murray Bookchin, “Thinking Ecologically: A Dialectical Approach,” *Our Generation* 18(2) (March 1987), 3.

<sup>26</sup>H.L. Mencken, *The American Language: Supplement One* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 306. “The term ‘bourgeois,’ having become one of the least precise in political and historical writing, requires definition.” C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 162.

<sup>27</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 168: “presumably on the assumption” is redundant.

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 20–26.

was born. As Bookchin truly says, “one doesn’t have to be very bright or knowledgeable to make it as a professor these days.”<sup>29</sup>

I *might* have erred in *Anarchy after Leftism* in once referring to Bookchin as “high income,” but even that remains to be seen. Bookchin can always release his tax returns to settle the point. Undoubtedly his income fell when he retired, as does everyone’s, but from what to what? In addition to his salaries from two colleges, Bookchin collected royalties from the sales of over a dozen books (and, as he says, advances on others), and collected fees from lecturing at (his own words) every major university in the United States. I have no idea whether he managed all this money wisely, I only point out that he must have had a nice chunk of change to manage – at least enough that he should, in decency, forbear from class-baiting. I stand by my original assertion that Bookchin probably has a higher income, even now, than any individual he denounces, except maybe John P. Clark. It’s certainly higher than mine. Whatever his income, the fact remains that Bookchin is a bourgeois (in semi-retirement) whereas some anarchists he calls “bourgeois” are workers, which was already a high probability at the time Bookchin claimed otherwise. And he’s *still lying about this*.

In “Whither Anarchism?” the narrow, impoverished critique of *SALA* is further foreshortened. In *SALA*, the Director Emeritus startled anarchists, whom he had neglected for many years, by abruptly departing the Green fields of Social Ecology for the killing fields of Social Anarchism. He argued – or rather, he declaimed – that a tendency he calls Lifestyle Anarchism, the sinister shadow of Social Anarchism, has since the 60s increasingly supplanted the latter, a usurpation he attributes to a “climate of social reaction” which has prevailed since the 60s. Curiously, this was the period in which almost all the ex-Director’s own books were published, including all of them with even a little explicit anarchist content (several had none). Apparently the climate of social reaction proved as bracing for Bookchin as for the Lifestyle Anarchists, for whom he never had a discouraging word until 1996. But in his reply to anarchist critics (or rather, to the weakest ones), the Director Emeritus addresses, not criticism of his Social Anarchism, but criticism of his Social Ecology – which was not the subject of *SALA*. And even on that plane, his rebuttal dwindles to not much more than denouncing David Watson and John P. Clark as mystics, which, even if true, is only name-calling, unresponsive to their concrete criticisms of his Thought. And not even Bookchin is insolent enough to accuse *me* of mysticism. I’m too mean to be a mystic.

The Director Emeritus and diviner of world-historical directionality disdains to debate me directly, except as to details of his biography, already dealt with here to his disadvantage. Ignoring me didn’t work for him before and it won’t work now.<sup>30</sup> My summary dismissal is only an extreme expression of his essay’s monumental lack of proportion. In “Whither Anarchism?” he says nothing about work, wage-labor, organization, or even his pet preoccupation, municipal politics,

---

<sup>29</sup>Murray Bookchin, “Yes! – Whither Earth First?” *Left Green Perspectives* No.10 (Sept. 1988).

<sup>30</sup>Like Jason McQuinn, I opined that I should have been one of the ex-Director’s targets and was likely spared out of fear of a rejoinder. Black, *AAL*, 14; Jason McQuinn, “Preface,” *ibid.*, 8–9. I have just confirmed that I was, in fact, among the foremost Lifestyle Anarchist delinquents: “Even anarchism, once a formidable tradition, has been repackaged by Hakim Bey, Bob Black, David Watson and Jason McQuinn into a merchandisable boutique ideology that panders to petit-bourgeois tastes for naughtiness and eccentricity.” Murray Bookchin, “Theses on Social Ecology in an Age of Reaction,” *Left Green Perspectives* No.33 (Oct. 1995). That I alone of these merchants of naughtiness was unmentioned in the *SALA* diatribe which the ex-Director must have been writing at the same time confirms his cowardly fear of me.

but he devotes two pages (there was more in the online version) to debating with Watson the political meaning of a Goya engraving.<sup>31</sup>

The Director Emeritus declines to explain or justify his previous abuse of the epithet “bourgeois” — in fact, he makes even more use of it, as if other words are failing him — but spares ten pages to denounce Taoism.<sup>32</sup> All of his gossipy, personalistic, self-serving stories — especially concerning John P. Clark’s decades of discipleship — are, even if accurate, not a reply to critics. Judging Bookchin’s priorities from what he finds important to discuss, he is much less interested in the future of anarchism than in the future of his reputation. The irony is that *SALA* and the reaction to it and now to *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left* have surely done more damage, and much sooner, to Bookchin’s anarchist reputation than has its molecular erosion by Lifestyle Anarchist tendencies.

Some of the ex-Director’s ongoing obsessions are of only symptomatic interest to me. I don’t read Spanish and I don’t know anything about Goya. Having read very little of Lewis Mumford, I continue to stay out of the unseemly custody struggle for his corpse — I meant to say, his corpus — between Bookchin and Watson. (Although I was amused to discover, quite by accident, that Mumford espoused a version of the primitive-affluence thesis!<sup>33</sup>) I’m willing to grant that Bookchin understood Mumford well enough to steal Social Ecology from him, although he also stole the name *and* the concept from someone else.<sup>34</sup> I don’t think that trees talk to each other, something Watson reportedly does not rule out, but I do think that no tree could be much more wooden-headed than Murray Bookchin.

---

<sup>31</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 208–210.

<sup>32</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 220–222, 230–237.

<sup>33</sup>Lewis Mumford, “Utopia, The City and the Machine,” *Daedalus* 94 (Spring 1965), 272–273 — misdating primitive affluence, however, to the period of Neolithic agriculture.

<sup>34</sup>John Clark, “A Social Ecology,” in Zimmerman, ed., *Environmental Philosophy*, 418; John P. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 197–198; see Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934). In 1976, Bookchin acknowledged that social ecology was “a term the late E.A. Gutkind coined a quarter of a century ago in a masterful discussion on community,” viz., E.A. Gutkind, *Community and Environment: A Discourse on Social Ecology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954); Murray Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980), 108. Gutkind’s prescription became Bookchin’s: communities of “mutual aid, immediateness of personal relations, smallness of scale, and reciprocal adaptation of man and environment in a spirit of understanding and insight, not a fight of man against Nature” — in a stateless world. Gutkind, *Community and Environment*, 17.

Originally, Bookchin used the phrase without understanding it, as when, in 1965, he spoke of “a crisis in social ecology,” i.e., social ecology was an environmental condition, not a theory. Murray Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (San Francisco, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 62. Actually, Gutkind didn’t coin the phrase either. It’s been around since at least the 1930s, and a book by that title came out in 1940. Radhakamal Mukerjee, “The Concepts of Distribution and Succession in Social Ecology,” *Social Forces* 11(1) (Oct. 1932): 1–7; Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Social Ecology* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1940). Human ecology, a long established field, studies relationships between humans and their environment, including other people. It subdivides into cultural and social ecology; the latter refers to “the way the social structure of a human group is a product of the group’s total environment.” Bernard Campbell, *Human Ecology: The Story of Our Place in Nature from Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983), 6–7, 7 (quoted); e.g., *The Life Region: The Social and Cultural Ecology of Sustainable Development*, ed. Per Raberg (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), section “The Science of Social Ecology,” 430–436; F.E. Emery & E.L. Trist, *Towards a Social Ecology: Contextual Appreciation of the Future in the Present* (London & New York: Plenum Press, 1973). Amusingly, in 1978, Bookchin’s nemesis Marshall Sahlins was referred to in an anthology on urbanism as a social ecologist! Joyce Aschenbrenner & Lloyd R. Collins, “Introduction,” *The Process of Urbanism: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Joyce Aschenbrenner & Lloyd R. Collins (The Hague, Netherlands & Paris, France: Moutin Publishers, 1978), 5. The reason is that the editors used social ecology and cultural ecology interchangeably, and Sahlins was originally a cultural ecologist,



Only a little more interesting to me is John P. Clark's opinion that Taoism is, or could be, compatible with anarchism. Offhand it looks like it all depends on what you mean by Taoism and what you mean by anarchism. If this seems like a banal observation, well, that reflects my level of interest in the issue. I notice, though, that many eminent anarchists, including the orthodox anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker, have considered Taoism anarchist. So did Herbert Read.<sup>35</sup> The Taoist sage Chuang Tzu said that there must be no government: "If the nature of the world is not distracted, why should there be any governing of the world?"<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, even a cursory scan of the text reveals many instances of advice to rulers. In fact, most surviving Taoist texts, like many Confucianist texts, are advice on good government.<sup>37</sup> Still, no anarchists have expressed the ex-Director's opinion that the *Tao te Ching* is a tyrants' manual comparable to Plato's *Republic*.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, despite what he says now, in the 60s Bookchin saw something politically positive in Taoism: "Drawing from early rock-and-roll music, from the beat movement, the civil rights struggles, the peace movement, and even from the naturalism of neo-Taoist and neo-Buddhist cults (however unsavory this may be to the 'Left'), the Youth Culture has pieced together a life-style [!] that is aimed at the internal system of domination that hierarchical society so viciously uses to bring the individual into partnership with his/her own enslavement."<sup>39</sup> I am provisionally inclined to accept George Woodcock's judgment that calling Lao-Tse an anarchist is a mythmaking attempt to invest anarchism with the authority of an illustrious pedigree.<sup>40</sup> I suspect the claim to be ahistorical or at least anachronistic. But I am not about to place any credence in the ex-Professor's contrary professions, familiar as I am with the source. Bookchin has a way of discrediting even correct views by occasionally agreeing with them. But this does not happen very often.

The Director Emeritus claims that he could "never accept Clark's Taoism as part of social ecology" — but he kept his criticisms private so long as Clark acted in public as his loyal adjutant. According to Bookchin, "that my association with Clark lasted as long as it did is testimony to my silent endurance of his Taoist claptrap and my distinctly nondogmatic tolerance of views not in accordance with my own." Such stoic fortitude! Such latitudinarian generosity! "But in the late 1980s, as this type of mystical quietism gained more and more influence into [sic] the ecology

---

as is evident in his first book, *Social Stratification in Polynesia* (1958). By 1978, though, they should have known that Sahlins had become a culturalist, as evidenced by *Culture and Practical Reason* (1976). Social Ecology is thus a technical term with an established academic meaning which is quite other than Bookchin's ideology. The scientists have never heard of him. What Bookchin's peddling might be better called Socialist Ecology.

<sup>35</sup>Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 12; Herbert Read, *Anarchy & Order: Essays in Politics* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1970), 205.

<sup>36</sup>*The Complete Writings of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 114; quoted in Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 84.

<sup>37</sup>Burt Alpert, *Inversions* (San Francisco, CA: self-published, 1972), 262.

<sup>38</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 232.

<sup>39</sup>Murray Bookchin, "The Youth Culture: An Anarcho-Communist View," in *Hip Culture: Six Essays on Its Revolutionary Potential* (New York: Times Change Press, 1970), 59 [emphasis added, obviously]. This was where Bookchin assured his readers that "Marxian predictions that the Youth Culture would fade into a comfortable accommodation with the system have proven to be false." *Ibid.*, 60. Ten years later, Bookchin toiled to explain away his false prophecy: "this collection does not stand in any contradiction to my earlier sixties collection of essays, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*" — the counterculture is not dead, just "aborted." Murray Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980), 23. And today?

<sup>40</sup>George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1962), 39.

movement, I could no longer remain silent.”<sup>41</sup> So then (the reader has been primed to expect) — with regret the Director Emeritus went public with his critique of Clark, notwithstanding that Clark was “widely assumed” to be the ex-Director’s “spokesman,” perhaps because “from the mid-1970s until early 1993, the author was a close associate of [his]”?

Er — actually, not. As the ex-Director goes on to say, in the late 1980s he critiqued, not Clark, but deep ecologist Dave Foreman of *Earth First!* Whatever Foreman’s failings, and they are many, he was no Taoist. Bookchin never openly repudiated Clark’s dabbling in Taoism until Clark broke with Bookchin in 1993. The Director’s “silent endurance” — silence, like “quietism,” is a quality Bookchin does not conspicuously display — looks more like opportunism than tolerance. Either way, Bookchin must never have thought that Taoism was any kind of serious threat to, or important influence on, contemporary anarchism — and it isn’t.

It does the Director Emeritus no good to disinvite me to his (vanguard) party. Erisian that I am, I’m crashing it. First I dispose of his misappropriated, misunderstood distinction between negative and positive freedom, which he fumbles as he always does when he affects intellectual sophistication. Next, as in *Anarchy after Leftism*, I set forth what has become a comprehensive refutation of Bookchin’s prejudices against primitive society. These are a slurry of Christian moralism, vulgarized 18<sup>th</sup> century irreligion, Marxisant 19<sup>th</sup> century social evolutionism, Judaic blood tabus, and pure racism, and embellished with a personalistic preoccupation with old age. Not every point of rebuttal is highly important, but I am not doing all this just to show how many facts the Director Emeritus got wrong or faked. Believe me, I only scratch the surface. I am also debunking, root and branch, a rhetorical style — call it Lie Style Anarchism — a malignant Marxist import, alien to anarchist discourse but tempting to the neo-platformist and workerist anarchists closest to the authoritarian left. They must be taught not to count on their irrelevance to secure them against comprehensive critique. Finally, although it’s hard to believe, there’s a Bookchin personality cult kept up by, at this point, mainly his publishers, who have so heavily invested in this fading star that all they can do is talk him up as if they weren’t dreading the arrival of his next manuscript. They are fettered to a corpse, but here I provide the key.

---

<sup>41</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 222–223.

## Chapter 3. The Power of Positive Thinking, or, Positive Thinking of Power

Anarchism is a philosophy of freedom. Other philosophies which are older, like liberalism, or better funded, like libertarianism, make the same claim, but they shrink from the logical, unqualified assertion of liberty against its antithesis: the state. To that extent, anarchists easily have a better understanding of freedom than its other, deeply conflicted proponents. But better is not necessarily good enough. The meaning of freedom is something anarchists more often take for granted than articulate, much less analyse. We should think more about this.

Bookchin often tries to impress his readers with forays into other fields, including philosophy. And indeed his philosophic dabbling is revealing. Since writing on this topic, the Director Emeritus has finally agreed with my conclusion that he is not an anarchist.<sup>1</sup> For once we can take him at his word, and he is a man of many, many words, many, many of which he does not understand. One of these words is *freedom*.

Some of the ex-Director's readers must be puzzled by his terms negative and positive freedom, especially if they know what they mean. Negative freedom is said to be "freedom *from*," whereas positive freedom is "a fleshed-out concept of *freedom for*." Bookchin does not define these opaque expressions, he simply assigns them as gang colors. Lifestyle Anarchists "celebrate" negative freedom — also known, in his argot, as autonomy — in keeping with their bourgeois individualist liberal heritage. (What he calls) Social Anarchism, in contrast, "espouses a substantive 'freedom *to*.'" It "seeks to create a free society, in which humanity as a whole — and hence the individual as well — enjoys the advantages of free political and economic institutions."<sup>2</sup> He blithely ignores the fact that liberal philosophers espousing negative freedom — such as the utilitarians, the ultimate social engineers — have always assigned the highest importance to designing what they considered free political and economic institutions.<sup>3</sup>

The Director Emeritus says the Greek word *autonomia* means independence (of other people) — but this is one of his many etymological bumbles. The word means self-government, "having its own laws, f. AUTO + nomos law." Another dictionary renders the word as "political freedom," with a different Greek word, *eleutheria*, for "freedom." It is something collective. Yet for the ex-Director, despite its etymology *and* dictionary meaning, *autonomy* is the object only of negative freedom. However, autonomy is a better word for positive than for negative freedom. My read-

---

<sup>1</sup>Murray Bookchin, "The Communalist Project," *Communalism* No.2 (Nov. 2002), [www.communalism.org](http://www.communalism.org) (unpaginated); cf. Black, *AAL*, ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 4. In Bookchin's world, nobody he disagrees with just *believes* something, he always "celebrates" it, with the connotation of dizzy euphoria.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (rev. ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1999); Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), ch. 10; F.A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (3 vols.; Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1973–1979), 3: 105–127 (of course, none of these gentlemen is a utilitarian).

ing is also supported by the fact that the ancient Greeks, who coined the word, highly valued collective self-government but lacked the very concept of individual rights.<sup>4</sup>

The Director Emeritus has made a category mistake, representing facts as belonging to one type when they belong to another.<sup>5</sup> What a concept of freedom means and what kind of society would realize it are questions of a different order. And Bookchin's particular formulations are also empirically false in obvious ways. The celebration of individual freedom is not the definition of Lifestyle Anarchism, for liberals and laissez-faire libertarians also celebrate individual freedom, but they are not anarchists.<sup>6</sup> The quest for a free society cannot define Social Anarchism, for, as Bookchin says, "many lifestyle anarchists eagerly plunge into direct actions that are ostensibly [sic] intended to achieve socialistic goals."<sup>7</sup> Social Anarchists may be right and Lifestyle Anarchists may be wrong, but not by definition, especially in the absence of definitions.

Although he never explains what these phrases mean, the Director Emeritus finally says where he got them: Sir Isaiah Berlin's well-known essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." Although the distinction was at one time much discussed by philosophers, "it has been much criticized," and the two concepts are really "not clearly differentiated." Bernard Williams calls the distinction misleading in several respects, "especially if it is identified, as it is sometimes by Berlin [and always by Bookchin], with a distinction between 'freedom from' and 'freedom to.'"<sup>8</sup> Generally, negative freedom means freedom from prevention of action, from interference, or as John P. Clark says, "freedom from coercion."<sup>9</sup>

Positive freedom is the freedom — I think "capability" or "power" is the better word — to accomplish one's purposes. The reader who finds this confusing or hair-splitting has my sympathy. How real is freedom of choice with nothing worth choosing? How is the power to act possible without some protection from interference? Negative freedom, freedom from interference,

---

<sup>4</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v "autonomy" (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 144–145 & *passim*; S.C. Woodhouse, *English-Greek Dictionary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), q/v "freedom"; Martin Ostwald, "Shares and Rights: 'Citizenship' Greek Style and American Style," in *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, ed. Josiah Ober & Charles Hedrick (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 54–57; Robert W. Wallace, "Law, Freedom, and the and the Concept of Citizens' Rights in Democratic Athens," in *ibid.*, 106–107.

<sup>5</sup>Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), 16.

<sup>6</sup>As Bookchin confirms, with respect to the libertarians, in *SALA*, 5, and in *Anarchism, Marxism*, 160, with respect to the liberals.

<sup>7</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 162. The ex-Director just had to throw in "ostensibly." He's constitutionally incapable of acknowledging that anyone he disagrees with might be acting in good faith. Yet by his own admission he's a poor judge of character, having misjudged the blackguard Clark for so many years. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 217–225.

<sup>8</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 4 (no attribution); Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958); Peter Jones, "Freedom," in *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke & Joe Foweraker (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 293, 296; Bernard Williams, "From Freedom to Liberty: The Construction of a Political Virtue," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30(1) (Winter 2001), 8 (quoted). The distinction was originated by Benjamin Constant, a liberal, in 1819. Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared With That of the Moderns," *Selected Writings*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 309–328.

<sup>9</sup>John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), 59. Note that this book was published when Clark (alias "Max Cafard") was a Bookchinist. I suspect this was where, and why, Bookchin came across the distinction. *Ibid.*, ch. 7. The conclusion of Clark, who clearly does not know what to make of Stirner, seems to be that Stirner espouses both negative and positive freedom and criticizes both negative and positive freedom. *Ibid.*, 68–89. Contrary to Bookchin, Stirner's philosophy isn't anti-society. Even Daniel Guerin, an even more Marxist anarchist than Bookchin, knows that. Daniel Guerin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 29–30. It is unlikely that Bookchin ever read Stirner.

is more important than positive freedom if only because it is the latter's precondition.<sup>10</sup> I find useful Gerald C. MacCallum's popular proposal "to regard freedom as always one and the same triadic relation, but recognize that various contending parties disagree with each other in what they understand to be the ranges of the term variables." Freedom is a triadic relationship among an agent, "'preventing conditions' [such] as constraints, restrictions, interferences, and barriers," and "actions or conditions of character or circumstance."<sup>11</sup>

What Sir Isaiah did make quite clear was his judgment as to the political implications of the two concepts. Writing during the Cold War, he was strongly committed to the West.<sup>12</sup> Negative freedom, he contended, implies limits on state action, but positive freedom is totalitarian in tendency.<sup>13</sup> At least since Rousseau, many theorists of positive freedom have, like Bookchin, equated freedom with identification with the general will. Real freedom consists, not in unconstrained individual indulgence, but in fulfilling one's — that is, everyone's — true nature. In the case of humans, rising above their animal origins, self-realization occurs in and through the social whole. As Bookchin has approvingly (but falsely) written, "Bakunin emphatically prioritized the social over the individual."<sup>14</sup> It can happen that the individual, as Rousseau put it, can and should be forced to be free. I do not care for the prospect of society prioritizing me.

Anarchism is nothing if it does not transcend this dichotomy. Bookchin himself once said that his imaginal urban revolution expressed a demand for both, and he authorized John P. Clark, then his subaltern, to represent him that way.<sup>15</sup> Negative freedom is not necessarily anarchist — Berlin is no anarchist — but positive freedom, Berlin thinks, is necessarily authoritarian. This of course is diametrically opposed to Bookchin's use of the distinction, which explains why the Director Emeritus keeps the specifics of Berlin's argument out of his own. Bookchin himself admits that his is not the mainstream anarchist position: "Essentially, however, anarchism as a whole advanced what Isaiah Berlin has called 'negative freedom,' that is to say, a formal 'freedom from,' rather than a substantive freedom to."<sup>16</sup> But Berlin does not equate negative freedom with formal freedom and positive freedom with substantive freedom. That's transparently sleight of hand. Everybody wants substantive freedom. The question is how to get it.

Berlin's own census of major philosophers of freedom shows that his distinction is no predictor of their politics. Adherents of negative freedom include Occam, Erasmus, Hobbes, Locke,

---

<sup>10</sup>Giovanni Baldelli, *Social Anarchism* (Chicago, IL & New York: Aldine-Atherton, 1971), 72; Jones, "Freedom," 294 (pointing out that freedom to vote is a negative freedom essential to democracy).

<sup>11</sup>Gerald C. MacCallum, Jr., "Negative and Positive Freedom," *Philosophical Review* 76 (July 1967), 312, 314. His "claim is only about what makes talk concerning the freedom of agents intelligible," *ibid.*, 314, and I acknowledge that there are intelligible ways of speaking of freedom which fall outside the formulation, such as freedom in the sense of political participation. John Gray, "On Negative and Positive Liberty," in *Conceptions of Liberty in Political Philosophy*, ed. Zbigniew Pelczynski and John Gray (London: The Athlone Press, 1984), 326. I prefer to refer to democracy as democracy, not freedom or political freedom, so as not to beg the question of democracy's relation to freedom in the personal sense. The concept of freedom should not be identified with what Bookchin calls the forms of freedom by definitional fiat. The ex-Director's beloved Athenian citizens, for instance, enjoyed political freedom but were almost entirely without personal freedom. Black, *AAL*, 66; Alfred Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth: Politics and Economics in Fifth-Century Athens* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York: The Modern Library, 1931), 169–170 & n.1; Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, ed. J.W. Burrow (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1993), 47.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 199, 231. In 1951, Berlin assisted British Intelligence in its search for academic accomplices of the Communist defector Guy Burgess.

<sup>13</sup>Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 6.

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 5.

<sup>15</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 335; Clark, *Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 313.

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 4.

Bentham, Constant, J.S. Mill, de Tocqueville, Jefferson, Burke, and Paine. Hobbes *and* Locke? Burke *and* Paine? What use is a classification that puts Paine on the same side as Burke but the opposite side from Rousseau? Had Rousseau lived to see the French Revolution, he, not Paine, would have been its greatest defender against Burke, its greatest critic. There is hardly an adherent on the list who does not sometimes sound like he espouses positive freedom, including the archetypal philosopher of negative freedom, Locke: “So that, however it may be mistaken, *the end of Law* is not to abolish or restrain, but *to preserve and enlarge Freedom*.”<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt thought the purpose of human life is self-development, and that “social union” is a means by which individuals realize themselves and one another. This sounds like the language of positive freedom with a German accent. But von Humboldt, like his admirer J.S. Mill, held that provision of security, the one condition of self-development which an individual cannot obtain by his own unaided efforts, is the only proper state function. And Charles Taylor, a philosopher of positive freedom, thinks that Mill may belong in that camp.<sup>18</sup> I think maybe de Tocqueville does too.

Adherents of positive freedom include Plato, Epictetus, St. Ambrose, Montesquieu, Spinoza, Kant, Herder, Rousseau, Hegel, Fichte, Marx, Bukharin, Comte, Carlyle, T.H. Green, F.H. Bradley, and Bosanquet. Plato, for example, is representative of the ancient Greek “‘positive’ conception of freedom as obedience to right authority.”<sup>19</sup> Here again, the attribution falters whenever looked into closely. As Locke is the ultimate negative freedomseeker, Kant is the ultimate positive freedomseeker, and Kant makes the negative/positive distinction explicitly. But John Rawls, who also recognises the distinction and identifies his philosophy as in the Kantian tradition, subordinates positive freedom to negative freedom. Implicitly, so does the Kantian anarchist Robert Paul Wolff.<sup>20</sup>

Almost any anarchist can be quoted as straddling this unbridgeable chasm. The anarchist philosophy, in fact, shows up the inadequacy of the distinction. Bookchin has accused Lifestyle Anarchists of perpetuating the pernicious German philosophical tradition which led from Fichte and Kant through Stirner to Heidegger and Hitler.<sup>21</sup> (Stirner is maliciously misplaced in this Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists, since he was influenced by Hegel, not Kant, and influenced neither Heidegger nor Hitler.) For blatantly self-serving reasons the Director Emeritus omits Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lassalle, Kautsky, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and Mao. Nor does Bookchin remind the reader of his own earlier admiration for “Fichte’s stirring prose,”<sup>22</sup> much less his current claim

<sup>17</sup>John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (rev. ed.; New York: Mentor Books, 1968), 348, quoted in MacCallum, “Negative and Positive Freedom,” 322 n. 9. “Locke is much closer here than was once recognized to Rousseau’s position that men can be compelled to be free, compelled by the law of the legislative which they have consented to set up.” Peter Laslett, “Introduction” to *Two Treatises*, 126.

<sup>18</sup>Von Humboldt, *Limits of State Action*, chs. 2 & 4; Charles Taylor, “What’s Wrong With Negative Liberty?” in *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. Robert E. Goodin & Philip Pettit (Oxford & Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 418.

<sup>19</sup>MacCallum, “Negative and Positive Freedom,” 321 n. 7; Mulgan, “Liberty in Ancient Greece,” 19 (quoted).

<sup>20</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Library of Liberal Arts, 1959), 64–65; John Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory,” *Journal of Philosophy* 77(9) (Sept. 1980), 519–520; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 201–202; Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 11, 29–30, 50, 61.

<sup>22</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 110. After moving from New York City to Burlington in 1970, Bookchin “studied Aristotle, Hegel, Fichte, the Frankfurt School, and other international classics of philosophy...” Heider, *Anarchism*, 60. One wonders when he finally got around to studying the anarchists.

that Fichte “essentially wrote that human beings are nature rendered self-conscious,” as Bookchin also contends.<sup>23</sup> All these gentlemen adhered to the positive concept of freedom. Although, as is obvious from the lists, adherents of each view are all over the political map, there is some perceptible tendency for adherents of positive freedom not to be adherents of freedom at all.<sup>24</sup> Thus the Director Emeritus has found his place.

For Bookchin, of all the malignant influences on Lifestyle Anarchism, Max Stirner seems to be the worst. Sputtering with horror, he cannot more vehemently express the degeneracy of Hakim “The Bey” than by ejaculating that “Hakim Bey *even invokes Max Stirner*, who believed that the concerns of the ego — the ‘I’ — should be the guide of all human action.” (Although the ex-Director formerly wrote that, “in principle [sic], Stirner created a *utopistic [sic] vision of individuality* that marked a new point of departure for the affirmation of personality in an increasingly impersonal world.)”<sup>25</sup> Stirner with his individualist, surrational, amoral egoism epitomizes more of what Bookchin loathes than any other classical anarchist thinker. In 1976, the Director’s disciple John P. Clark devoted an entire book, perhaps on his orders, to refuting Stirner’s heresies, which had not received so much hostile attention since Marx and Engels wrote *The German Ideology* 130 years before. Stirner, then, should be an exponent, maybe the ultimate exponent, of negative freedom.

Instead, he is the ultimate exponent of positive freedom: “Who is it that is to become free? You, I, we. I, therefore, am the kernel that is to be delivered from all wrappings and — freed from all cramping shells. What is left when I have been freed from everything that is not I? Only I; nothing but I. But freedom has nothing further to offer to this I himself. As to what is now to happen further after I have become free, freedom is silent — as our governments, when the prisoner’s time is up, merely let him go, thrusting him out into abandonment.”<sup>26</sup> For Stirner as for Bookchin, negative freedom is insufficient at best, a formalistic mockery at worst.<sup>27</sup> What Bookchin calls positive freedom, Stirner calls “ownness” (*die Eigenheit*): “I have no objection to [negative] freedom, but I wish more than freedom for you: you should not merely *be rid* of what you do not want; you should not only be a ‘freeman,’ you should be an ‘owner [*Eigner*],’ too.”<sup>28</sup>

Even if it has some utility in other contexts, the distinction between positive and negative freedom does nothing to differentiate Social Anarchism from Lifestyle Anarchism, or even to

---

<sup>23</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 283. The Director Emeritus is forever torn between his desire to legitimate his doctrine by providing it with classical credentials and his own egotistic claims to originality.

<sup>24</sup>E.g., Catherine MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 169–170 (criticizing the “negative state”). Correcting a scholar who thought she saw something liberal in her, MacKinnon makes clear that for her, “choice and consent” are nothing but objects of critique. Catherine MacKinnon, “The ‘Case’ Responds,” *American Political Science Review* 95(3) (Sept. 2000), 709. Although she is a law professor, MacKinnon is a relentless foe of free speech, and drafted the unconstitutional Indianapolis anti-pornography ordinance. Donald Alexander Downs, *The New Politics of Pornography* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1989). When this proven legal quack was hired to teach the First Amendment at the University of Michigan, my alma mater, I said: “Hiring MacKinnon to teach the First Amendment is like hiring Lysenko to teach Biology.”

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 125 (emphasis added); Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 159 (emphasis in original).

<sup>26</sup>Max Stirner, “Art and Religion,” in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Lawrence Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 344.

<sup>27</sup>Clark, *Max Stirner’s Egoism*, 61.

<sup>28</sup>Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142. Stirner goes on to characterize (negative) freedom as “the doctrine of Christianity”! Ibid. The quotation also gives the lie to the accusation by Marx, Kropotkin and Bookchin that Stirner’s egoism is for the individual egoist alone (in which case the charge of elitism would have some merit). Stirner exhorts “you” — the reader — to assert *your* ownness. The effectiveness of his own egoism is multiplied by the ownness of others. Cf. For Ourselves, *The Right to Be*

characterize anarchism as such. On the contrary, as Clark says, “anarchism is the one major political theory which has attempted to synthesise the values of negative and positive freedom into a single, more comprehensive view of human liberty.”<sup>29</sup> Bakunin did *not* prioritize society over the individual: “Man is not only the most individual being on earth,” he wrote, “but also the most *social*.” In fact, Bakunin nearly anticipated Berlin’s two concepts of liberty and even his terminology. “We see that liberty as conceived by the materialists [as he then defined himself] is very positive, complex and, above all, an eminently social matter, which can only be realized by means of society and through the strictest equality and solidarity of each and everybody... The second aspect of liberty is negative. It consists in the *rebellion* of the human individual against all authority, whether divine or human, collective or individual.”<sup>30</sup> Bookchin has never demonstrated that any Lifestyle Anarchist espouses negative freedom to the exclusion of positive freedom. In fact, he has never demonstrated that any Lifestyle Anarchist espouses negative freedom. He misappropriates the distinction to try to infuse some content into his own incoherent dichotomy between Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism, but the infusion does not relieve the confusion. The semi-literate Director Emeritus is, as so often, showing off by pretending to be smarter than he really is.

---

*Greedy: Theses on the Practical Necessity of Demanding Everything* (Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited, n.d.), and my Preface thereto, reprinted in Bob Black, *The Abolition of Work and Other Essays* (Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited, n.d. [1986]), 129–131.

<sup>29</sup>Clark, *Max Stirner’s Egoism*, 61.

<sup>30</sup>“State and Society,” in *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, ed. Arthur Lehning (New York: Grove Press, 1973), 136,148–149



## Chapter 4. This Side of Paradise

Bookchin might have begun his discussion of primitive society as did Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “Let us begin by laying the facts aside, as they do not affect the question.”<sup>1</sup> For all his huffing and puffing, the Director Emeritus adds nothing to the inadequate and dishonest “evidentiality” (one of his gratuitous neologisms) which Watson and I have already shown to be wanting in *SALA*. He continues to ignore the anthropological studies summarized in John Zerzan’s *Future Primitive*, Watson’s *Beyond Bookchin*, and my *Friendly Fire*<sup>2</sup> and *Anarchy after Leftism*. He continues to pretend that the thesis that stateless hunter-gatherers enjoyed a sort of primitive affluence was a short-lived 60s fad, like smoking banana peels — little more than the rebellious, euphoric romanticizing of non-Western peoples by tripped-out hippies, like the ones who fell for Carlos Casteneda’s “Don Juan” hoax. This anthropological aberration, he again assures us, has been corrected by the sober scholarship of the period of social reaction.

The Director Emeritus persists in his dogged and dogmatic reiteration of the bourgeois Hobbesian myth of the lives of pre-urban anarchist foragers as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short, in dramatic contrast to the life of Murray Bookchin: nasty, brutish, and long. Hobbes himself did not believe that the war of each against all described the original condition of all societies.<sup>3</sup> When your Hobbesian argument is refuted by Hobbes, you are off to a bad start.

Again, what are the implications for Bookchin’s own theory of a protracted period of “social reaction” as the explanation why decadent Lifestyle Anarchism has supplanted heroic Social Anarchism over the last 30 years? Apparently periods of — what? social progress? political turbulence? — foster theoretical progress, such as that singlehandedly accomplished by the Director Emeritus. By implication the 60s were not a period of social reaction. It was then that the ex-Director came into his own as an anarchist theorist — proof enough of the fructifying influence of those heady times.<sup>4</sup> Yet this was also when the hippie anthropologists concocted their ludicrous “primitive affluence” thesis based on little more than intensive ethnographic fieldwork and careful historical research. Incredibly, this absurd, empirically-grounded conception prevailed as

---

<sup>1</sup>Jean Jacques Rousseau, “A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality,” in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, tr. G.D.H. Cole (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company & London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1950), 198.

<sup>2</sup>Bob Black, “Primitive Affluence,” in *Friendly Fire* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1992), 19–41.

<sup>3</sup>Hobbes himself believed that this condition “was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places where they live so now,” as in many parts of America. His theory is an “Inference, made from the passions” — deductive, not inductive. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 187, 186. Hobbes was wrong about primitive warfare. It is thoroughly regulated in a way Kropotkin thought analogous to international law. P.A. Kropotkin, “The State: Its Historic Role,” in *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*, ed. Martin A. Miller (Cambridge & London: M.I.T. Press, 1970), 216–217. Hegel considered the noble savage and the state of nature theoretical fictions not descriptive of actual “primitive conditions”: “it would indeed be difficult, were the attempt seriously made, to detect any such condition anywhere, either in the present or the past.” G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1953), 54.

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin has never explained his conversion to anarchism circa 1960. In his own autobiographical account there is a chasm (unbridgeable?) between *Our Synthetic Environment*, written in 1958 and devoid of anarchist content, and

anthropological orthodoxy, as the Director Emeritus complains, well into the 80s. Undoubtedly it owed much of its undue influence to its qualified endorsement by the Director Emeritus himself in *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), an epochal work which — as I demonstrated in *AAL* by surveying all its academic reviews (both of them)<sup>5</sup> — took the world of social science by storm. If, and insofar as, there has been a professional reaction against the primitive-affluence thesis, it is entirely, like Social Ecology and Social Anarchism, a product of the period of social reaction. How odd (and yet, how dialectical) that from decadence, from decay, the life-force, conscious “second nature” — renewed by rot and reaction — is resurgent in the person and the praxis of the ex-Director of directionality and such lackeys as he finds useful from time to time.

To support his claim that Hobbesianism has been restored to anthropological orthodoxy, the Director Emeritus cited in *SALA* one highly controversial book (discussed in Chapter 6), one review of that book, and a pop science story,<sup>6</sup> none of which was of very recent vintage when he wrote. In his latest outing, in the face of the challenge of the massed evidence assembled by Watson and myself, Bookchin does not cite a single new source. It is characteristic of Bookchin’s

---

“Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” written in 1964. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 53–58. According to Ulrike Heider, who interviewed the Director Emeritus, “Kropotkin had not been translated into English, he told me, his first acquaintance with classical anarchist theory was through secondary sources, but he worked out these ideas more and more by himself.” Heider, *Anarchism*, 59. In fact, Kropotkin’s most influential books and articles had been written in English, among them *Mutual Aid*, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* and *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*. Many titles must have been available at the magnificent New York public library. Later Bookchin told a somewhat different story. He *thinks* that Kropotkin’s writings were out of print in the 1950s and 1960s, so Bookchin had to deduce anarcho-communism independently from his “decades-long studies of the Athenian polis.” He generously allows as how Kropotkin “anticipated” his brilliant work. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 57–58 (quoted); Heider, *Anarchism*, 59.

With his usual modesty, the Director Emeritus is claiming to have independently invented classical anarchism. In point of fact, one of Kropotkin’s books was reprinted in 1955, and there were at least ten reprintings of at least seven titles in the 60s: *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Boston, MA: Extending Horizons Books, 1955); *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), reprinted (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1967) and (New York: Horizon Press, 1968); *Russian Literature* (New York: B. Blom, 1967); *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: B. Blom, 1968); *Ethics: Origin and Development* (New York: B. Blom, 1968); *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* (rev., enl. ed.; New York: B. Blom, 1968) and (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: B. Blom, 1968); *The State: Its Historic Role* (London: Freedom Press, 1969). Curiouser still, in 1990 Bookchin referred to himself in the passive voice and the third person plural: “an attempt was made in 1964 by anarchist writers to rework libertarian ideas along broadly ecological lines,” a new approach “rooted in the writings of Kropotkin.” Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 154.

It seems odd that in the late 60s, by which time he was calling himself an anarchist, Bookchin had yet to read the major anarchist theorists, yet from 1967 to 1969 he found the very considerable time to research *The Spanish Anarchists*, 3. In this book he discusses, if only in a cursory fashion, some of the ideas of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. *Ibid.*, 20–31, 115–116. Kropotkin does not appear in the footnotes or the bibliographical essay, so maybe it’s true that Bookchin hadn’t read him yet. But then why not? This looks to be the only book by the Director Emeritus which may have a readership in a generation, although the first scholarly history will supersede it. Even *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* looks worse every time I open it, if only because I know how some of its ambiguities will be resolved.

<sup>5</sup>Black, *AAL*, 93–96.

<sup>6</sup>Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (Chicago, IL & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) (discussed in Chapter 6); Thomas N. Headland, “Paradise Revised [a review of Wilmsen],” *The Sciences* 242 (Sept.-Oct. 1990): 45–50 (inadvertently omitted from the *AAL* bibliography); Roger Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” *Science* 240 (May 27, 1988), 1146–1147 (“Past Perspectives,” cited by Bookchin as if it were an independent article, is just a four-paragraph sidebar to the Lewin article). As he did in *SALA*, Bookchin erroneously references the Headland review to *Science*, not to *The Sciences*, a different periodical. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 251 n. 23.

scrupulously scientific method that he affirms as the new consensus — because it suits his political purposes — the most extreme statement of one polar position (Edwin Wilmsen's) in an ongoing controversy. Make that “controversies”: anthropologists are debating a number of issues involving foragers, issues partly or wholly independent of one another. What most exercises the specialists turns out to be what's least relevant to anarchists. To say, for example, that “the !Kung [San] model of the foraging lifeway — small, nomadic bands — is no longer taken as typical of preagricultural human societies”<sup>7</sup> invites the question, “In what respects?” As of 1992 there were already at least 582 items published relating to the Kalahari foragers alone<sup>8</sup> — ample evidence of controversy. Eighteen years later, there are many more.

There's one thing that bothers me. If prehistoric humans weren't foragers, like all other primates,<sup>9</sup> what were they? Factory workers?

Insofar as any generalization is possible, even a leading revisionist, Thomas N. Headland, approvingly quoted by the ex-Director on the same subject,<sup>10</sup> wrote in 1997 that “while we now doubt that prehistoric hunter-gatherers were as affluent as Sahlins, Lee and others first suggested, we do not want to return to the pre-1966 Hobbesian idea that their lives were nasty, brutish and short ...” Sahlins himself had already written that the Hobbes cliché “becomes now a subject for textbook burlesque,” but the Director Emeritus doesn't get the joke.<sup>11</sup> He never does. Similar conclusions are common in the literature.<sup>12</sup> The most recent statement I located is by a critic of the Sahlins thesis who nonetheless concedes that Sahlins “appears to have carried the day and has come to represent the new enlightened view of hunting-gathering societies.”<sup>13</sup> In *Anarchy after Leftism* I already quoted M.A.P. Renouf, writing in 1991, to the effect that “although the more idealized aspects of the Lee and DeVore model are commonly acknowledged, I think it is fair to say that no fundamental revision of it has been made.”<sup>14</sup> Reviewing the scholarship of the nine years subsequent to *AAL*, I found nothing to refute or dilute this judgment. By the late 1980s, forager (and specifically San) controversies were turning to such questions as whether archeology and the historical record provide evidence of an Iron Age San culture and to what extent the San are, or were, subordinated by sedentary Bantus. New field studies also make clear the diversity of San adaptations.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the general validity of at least a moderate version of what

---

<sup>7</sup>Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1146–1147.

<sup>8</sup>Alan Barnard, *The Kalahari Debate: A Bibliographical Essay* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup>P.A. Garber, “Foraging Strategies Among Living Primates,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987): 339–364.

<sup>10</sup>Headland, “Paradise Revised.” Note that the title is “Paradise Revised,” not “Paradise Refuted.”

<sup>11</sup>Thomas N. Headland, “Revisionism in Ecological Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1997), 609; Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 7 (quoted).

<sup>12</sup>E.g., Alan Barnard & James Woodburn, “Property, Power and Ideology in Hunting-Gathering Societies: An Introduction,” in *Hunters and Gatherers 2: Property, Power and Ideology*, ed. Tim Ingold, David Riches, & James Woodburn (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1988), 11; Elizabeth Cashdan, “Hunters and Gatherers: Economic Behavior in Bands,” in *Economic Anthropology*, ed. Stewart Plattner (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 22–30; David Byrd-Merut, “Beyond the ‘Original Affluent Society,’ A Culturalist Interpretation,” *Current Anthropology* 31(1) (Feb. 1990), 27.

<sup>13</sup>David Kaplan, “The Darker Side of the ‘Original Affluent Society,’” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 56(2) (Summer 2000), 303.

<sup>14</sup>M.A.P. Renouf, “Sedentary Hunter-Gatherers: A Case for Northwest Coasts,” in *Between Bands and States*, ed. Susan Gregg (Carbondale, IL: Southern University of Illinois at Carbondale, 1991), 90; see also Margaret W. Conkey, “To Find Ourselves: Art and Social Geography of Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers,” in *Past and Present in Hunter Gatherer Societies*, ed. Carmel Schrire (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1984), 257.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Bird-David, “Beyond the ‘Original Affluent Society’: A Culturalist Interpretation,” 25–48; Susan Kent, “The Current Forager Controversy: Real versus Ideal Views of Hunter-Gatherers,” *Man* 27(1) (March 1987): 45–70; Jacques-

the Director Emeritus calls “the preposterous theory of an ‘original affluent society’”<sup>16</sup> is still the current orthodoxy. It appears in current college textbooks, such as *Anthropology* by Ember, Ember and Peregrine (2002), which cites Richard B. Lee’s calculation of !Kung hours of work and remarks that that the !Kung San have more leisure than many agriculturalists.<sup>17</sup>

For present purposes, as in *AAL*, I am *only* addressing aspects of forager society of direct relevance to anarchism. Revisionist corrections, valid or not, mostly relate to other issues. It doesn’t matter to anarchists, for instance, if contemporary foragers are “living fossils” who have always lived as they do now, in “pristine” societies. The media, not the anthropologists, are mainly responsible for that public misperception.<sup>18</sup> It doesn’t matter that foragers have histories (who ever doubted it?), including histories of trade and other interactions with agriculturalists and herders. It doesn’t matter if foragers aren’t always and everywhere the benign caretakers of the environment. It doesn’t matter if prehistoric humans were scavengers (not a revisionist thesis, by the way, but rather a quirky Bookchinist thesis<sup>19</sup>). So what *does* matter to anarchists about these people? In two of my books I specified two crucial points:

“They operate the only known viable stateless societies.”  
“And they don’t, except in occasional emergencies, *work* ...”<sup>20</sup>

To these I would now add (or rather, make explicit) two more. The first – courtesy of the ex-Director – is the egalitarian communism of hunter-gatherers:

“There is very much we can learn from preliterate cultures ... their practices of usufruct and the inequality of equals [?] are of great relevance to an ecological society.”<sup>21</sup>

And finally, a somewhat general, summary contention:

---

line Solway & Richard B. Lee, “Hunter-Gatherers, Real or Spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in History,” *Current Anthropology* 31(2) (April 1990): 109–146; Robert K. Hitchcock, “Comment,” *ibid.*, 129; Thomas C. Patterson, “Comment,” *ibid.*, 132; John Gowdy, “Hunter-Gatherers and the Mythology of the Market,” *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 392–393.

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 187.

<sup>17</sup>Carol R. Ember, Melvin Ember & Peter N. Peregrine, *Anthropology* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.; Uper Saddle River, NJ: PrenticeHall, 2002), 273.

<sup>18</sup>M.G. Bicchieri, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 30(1) (Feb. 1989), 51; Stefen Zeitz, “Comment,” in *ibid.*, 59. Anthropologists have been debunking the myth of the isolated forager at least since a classic ethnography of the Seligmanns in 1907. G.G. & B.Z. Seligmann, *The Veddas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 410–411. Prominent anthropologists who have done the same include A.L. Kroeber, Claude Levi-Strauss and Elman R. Service. Peter M. Gardner, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 30(1) (Feb. 1989), 55–56.

<sup>19</sup>Because hunting provides a much larger and much more reliable supply of meat than scavenging, any advocate of preponderant scavenging without hunting (I know of no such advocate) has a “burdensome hypothesis” to sustain. John Tooty, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 28(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1987), 400. No mammal derives the majority of its food from scavenging. D.C. Houston, “The Adaptation of Scavengers,” in *Serengeti: Dynamics of an Ecosystem*, ed. A.R.E. Sinolain & M. Norton-Griffiths (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 263–286. This scavenging whimsy looks like yet another of the ex-Director’s half-remembered scraps of pop science. Anyway it’s irrelevant.

<sup>20</sup>Black, *AAL*, 106, quoting Black, *Friendly Fire*, 54.

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 41; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 189. Inequality of equals seems to mean distribution according to need. Murray Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 143–144. If so, it should be the other way around, “equality of

Foragers enjoy a relatively high quality of life, when the blessings of anarchy, leisure, equality and community are considered along with relative good health and longevity.

It is only certain aspects of this last contention (of those of any interest to anarchists) which some revisionist anthropologists would seriously dispute, but even if we had to bid farewell to it, the first three points would still stand.

## Foraging as Anarchy

So far as I can determine, none of the research or argument of the revisionists even purports to deny the long-established and unanimous anthropological consensus that nonsedentary hunter-gatherers, at least — and at least most of the sedentary ones — have always been stateless.<sup>22</sup> This was common ground between them and the Lee/DeVore school and all their predecessors, just as it was common ground between Marx and Kropotkin. Not even Bookchin seems to dispute the primitive-anarchy thesis, the thesis most important to anarchists.

## Foraging as Zerowork

In “The Original Affluent Society” — which Bookchin has apparently not read,<sup>23</sup> although he formerly praised it as “one of the more readable and well-argued accounts of the hunting-gathering case”<sup>24</sup> — Marshall Sahlins wrote: “A good case can be made that hunters and gatherers work less than we do; and, rather than a continuous travail, the food quest is intermittent, leisure abundant, and there is a greater amount of sleep in the daytime per capita per year than in any other condition of society.”<sup>25</sup> Citing the then-unpublished results of Richard B. Lee’s fieldwork among the !Kung San (“Bushmen”), Sahlins estimated that the San worked a four-hour day. In their refined, published version, Lee’s figures were even lower, 2.2 to 2.4 hours a day.<sup>26</sup> Such evidence renders ridiculous what Bookchin is still spouting today, the Marxist dogma about “toil and material uncertainties (as well as natural ones)”<sup>27</sup> that have in the past shackled the human

---

unequals.” The reader will encounter many more mutilations of English by the Director Emeritus, who should concern himself less with lifestyle and more with writing style.

<sup>22</sup>Harold Barclay, *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchism* (London: Kahn & Averill with Cienfuegos Press, 1982), ch. 3.

<sup>23</sup>I infer this for two reasons. One is that Bookchin never cites it, rather citing a brief pre-publication excerpt from it, “Notes on the Original Affluent Society,” in *Man the Hunter*, ed. Richard B. Lee & Erven DeVore (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton, 1968). The other is that when Bookchin refers to Sahlins, he always assumes that Sahlins’ only data were those on the San supplied by Lee. In fact, Sahlins provided a second extended example — the Australian aborigines — based on both historical and ethnographic evidence, as I mentioned in *Friendly Fire*, 19. But this is not apparent from the “Notes” excerpt.

<sup>24</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom* (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 24.

<sup>25</sup>Marshall Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society,” in *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 14.

<sup>26</sup>Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 256.

<sup>27</sup>Another manifestation of Bookchin’s faltering command of the English language: what’s the difference between “material” and “natural” subsistence uncertainties for hunter-gatherers whose way of life he repudiates precisely because it is merely natural?

spirit to a nearly exclusive concern for subsistence.” The foraging San were not preoccupied with subsistence. They had no reason to be.

The quantitative data, as startling as they are, only begin to disclose the qualitative difference between primitive and modern work, in respects I summarized in *Friendly Fire*:

In addition to shorter hours, “flextime” and the more reliable “safety net” afforded by general food sharing, foragers’ work is more satisfying than most modern work. We awaken to the alarm clock; they sleep a lot, night and day. We are sedentary in our buildings in our polluted cities; they move about breathing the fresh air of the open country. We have bosses; they have companions. Our work typically implicates one, or at most a few hyper-specialized skills, if any; theirs combines handwork and brainwork in a versatile variety of activities, exactly as the great utopians called for. Our “commute” is dead time, and unpaid to boot; foragers cannot even leave the campsite without “reading” the landscape in a potentially productive way.<sup>28</sup>

To which I might add that hunting, in Europe as elsewhere, has always been the “sport of kings” — play, not work — characterized by what Kierkegaard called “the lovable seriousness which belongs essentially to play.”<sup>29</sup> The synthesis of work (production for its own sake) and play (activity for its own sake) is what I have long called, and long called for, the abolition of work. Someone else might phrase the goal differently, as, for instance, “a joyous artfulness in life and work” — as Murray Bookchin once did.<sup>30</sup>

According to an author highly regarded by Bookchin, “the labor of pastoral peoples is so light and simple that it hardly requires the labor of slaves. Consequently we see that for nomadic and pastoral peoples the number of slaves is very limited, if not zero. Things are otherwise with agricultural and settled peoples. Agriculture requires assiduous, painful, heavy labor. The free man of the forests and plains, the hunter as well as the herdsman, takes to agriculture only with great repugnance.” The Director Emeritus formerly endorsed this point of view.<sup>31</sup> The anarcho-primitivist crazy who wrote these words was Mikhail Bakunin.

It is not just that foragers work much less than the members of agricultural and industrial societies, if by work is meant production. It is not just that they work differently, in more varied and mostly more challenging and satisfying ways.<sup>32</sup> It is not just that they work in cooperation, not in competition. It is not just that they are almost always free of time-discipline, *i.e.*, at any

---

<sup>28</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 33. Marjorie Shostack refers to San “women who were as familiar with the environment as they were with their children.” *Return to Nisa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 212.

<sup>29</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/The Sickness Unto Death* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, n.d.), 131.

<sup>30</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 45.

<sup>31</sup>“Physiological or Natural Patriotism,” in *From Out of the Dustbin: Bakunin’s Basic Writings, 1869–1871*, ed. Robert M. Cutler (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1985), 190–191; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 76–77.

<sup>32</sup>“Men know no occupations other than hunting and warring, which our own civilization still considers the most noble callings; ...” *Ibid.*, 191. I hasten to confess, preempting the expose, that I have truncated the statement to remove a reference to the women doing all the real work. I did so because it isn’t true. Bakunin repeats the standard misperception of Europeans who only observed Indians in their villages, not on “the hunt — where the writing kind of European does not seem to have followed.” Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 92. Richard B. Lee found that San women did less work than San men. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 277–278.

particular time they literally don't *have* to do anything.<sup>33</sup> It is not just that they sleep in as late as they like and loaf a lot. In every one of these particulars, forager working life is superior to ours, but more important is what their coincidence implies about the foraging mode of production. At some point, less work plus better work ends up as activity it no longer makes sense to call work at all, although it furnishes the means of life. Foragers are at that point. *They don't work*, not if work means forced labor, compulsory production, or the subordination of pleasure to production when these objectives diverge.

Now it is possible to define work in other ways than I do. No one owns the word. I don't hijack words the way Murray Bookchin does. But an important revolutionary current, by now rooted mainly in anarchism, is explicitly anti-work in approximately the sense I've defined work in several essays, one of them well-known,<sup>34</sup> going back twenty five years.<sup>35</sup> By now, many anarchists appreciate that the abolition of the state without the abolition of work is as fatally incomplete — and as fated for failure — as the abolition of the state without the abolition of capitalism. In his early anarchist essays, Bookchin seemed (to many of us) to say so too when he condemned needless and stultifying "toil."<sup>36</sup> "The distinction of pleasurable work and onerous toil should always be kept in mind,"<sup>37</sup> he said, and he made it hard to forget by repeating it often, though not recently. I of course prefer my own definitions — to which I have devoted some years of careful thought — and which I like to think identify the essentials of work while still corresponding to common usage. But if somebody else prefers a different terminology, that's fine, as long as he makes its meaning explicit and refrains from spouting eccentric verbiage to muddle the matter. Whatever you call it, foragers usually had it. They were zeroworkers.

With respect to the San, Bookchin fudges the figures for working time in a crude way which is extraordinarily, and blatantly, dishonest even by the relaxed standards of his dotage. He claims that "[Richard B.] Lee has greatly revised the length of the workweek he formerly attributed to

---

<sup>33</sup>Polly Wiessner, "Risk, Reciprocity and Social Influences on !Kung San," in *Politics and History in Band Societies*, ed. Eleanor Leacock & Richard Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press & Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, 1982), 79. "When we consider people living under some of the harshest, most commanding conditions on earth, who can nevertheless do what they like when the notion occurs to them, we should be able to witness the contemporary doubt about civilization's superiority without growing indignant." Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 240. Wishful thinking: there is very little that Murray Bookchin witnesses, except Vermont town meetings and seminars stocked with his acolytes, without growing indignant. After quoting scraps of Watson's sentence, the Director delivers a damning riposte: "One can only gasp: Really!" Yes — really! Watson only echoes the ecologists and anthropologists. E.g., Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 113; Marjorie Shostack, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 17; Mathias Guenther, "Comment," *Current Anthropologist* 31(2) (April 1990), 127.

<sup>34</sup>"The Abolition of Work," in Black, *Abolition of Work*, 17–33, and in many other places. In the utterly unlikely event the Director Emeritus never saw it sooner, he certainly saw it in *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, ed. Howard J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1996), 236–253, cheek by jowl (my cheek, his jowl) with Murray Bookchin, "Anarchism: Past and Present," 19–30. "Abolition" has been published in translation in Russian, French, German, Swedish, Italian, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Portuguese (Peninsular and Luso-Brazilian), Dutch, Slovene and other languages. And I did discuss forager zerowork. Black, "Abolition of Work," 24–25.

<sup>35</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 11–62; Black, *AAL*, ch. 9 & *passim*; Bob Black, "What's Wrong With This Picture?" *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, No.43 (Spring/Summer 1997): 11–14 (reviewing Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work*).

<sup>36</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 15, 34, 70, 92, 94, 102, 105, 112, 134 & *passim*. Bookchin still talked that way in the 70s, though not nearly so often. Bookchin, "Self-Management and the New Technology," in *Toward an Ecological Society*, 118, 123, 127, 129.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

the Zhu [sic<sup>38</sup>]; the average workweek for both sexes, he wrote in 1979, is not eighteen but 42.3 hours.”<sup>39</sup> Now I cannot do better than I did in *Friendly Fire* to refute, *in advance*, this clumsy lie. Originally, “Lee studied the San equivalent of what is conventionally accounted work in industrial society — hunting and gathering in their case, wage-labor in ours.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, as I discuss in *Friendly Fire*, housework — a form of “shadow work”<sup>41</sup> — was originally excluded from the comparisons Sahlins made, not only because Lee had yet to measure housework, but also because housework had always been excluded by our economists from what they measure as work because it is unpaid, and anything not measured in money is invisible to economists. This does not, as I wrote in *Friendly Fire*, invalidate the comparison, although it invites the more expansive comparison which Lee returned to the field to record, and which I summarized as follows:

Upon returning to the field, Lee broadened his definition of work to encompass all “those activities that contribute to the direct appropriation of food, water or materials from the environment” — adding to subsistence activity tool-making and — fixing and housework (mainly food preparation). These activities didn’t increase the San workload as much as their equivalents in our sort of society increase ours — relatively we fall even further behind. *Per diem* the manufacture and maintenance of tools takes 64 minutes for men, 45 minutes for women.”<sup>42</sup> San women devote 22.4 hours a week to housework, 40.1 hours to all work.<sup>43</sup> American women with full-time jobs devote 40-plus hours a week to them in addition to doing 25–35 hours of housework.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, Bookchin is comparing San direct subsistence work *plus* shadow work with American direct subsistence work *without* shadow work.

After the deceptive citation to Lee, the ex-Director adds, as if to clinch the point: “Irven DeVore, the Harvard anthropologist who shared Lee’s conclusions on the Bushmen in the 1960s and 1970s, has observed: ‘We were being a bit romantic... Our assumptions and interpretations were much too simple.’”<sup>45</sup> There is no indication of what exactly DeVore and his colleagues thought they had been romantic or simplistic about. This was just a journalistic sound-bite. Nothing in the article by Roger Lewin (quoting DeVore) suggests that DeVore is referring to the data on working time. The article’s only reference to forager working time is to summarize the original Lee/DeVore finding “that the !Kung were able to satisfy their material needs with just a few hours work each day, their effort being divided between male hunting and female gathering of plant foods.”<sup>46</sup> Lewin reports challenges to several aspects of the Lee/DeVore model, and it must have been to these that DeVore referred, but none to the findings on working time.

<sup>38</sup>“Zhu” is not a synonym for “San,” rather, it is one of the three regional divisions of the !Kung-speaking northern San peoples. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 37–38. There is no consensus on a general term for these people: Zhu, San, Bushmen, and Basarwa are all in circulation. Wilmsen, like Bookchin, is notorious for personalistic indulgence in an unnecessary private nomenclature.

<sup>39</sup>Citing Lee, *The !Kung San*, 278.

<sup>40</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20.

<sup>41</sup>Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work* (Boston, MA & London: Marion Boyars, 1981), esp. ch. 5.

<sup>42</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20.

<sup>43</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 20–21, citing Lee, *The !Kung San*, 277–278.

<sup>44</sup>Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 83.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1146.

<sup>46</sup>Lewin, “New Views Emerge on Hunters and Gatherers,” 1147.



Lee studied the foraging !Kung San of the Dobe area of the Kalahari. Susan Kent studied the Kutse group of recently sedentarized San in southeast Botswana. Although some of them kept a few goats and chickens, 90–95% of their meat was obtained by hunting. *Per diem* the economically active men on average devoted barely two hours to hunting, 22 minutes to tending goats, and less than ten minutes to making traps, for a total of 3.09 hours work.<sup>47</sup> Jiri Tanaka, who was also not in the Lee-DeVore group, studied another group of San in the #Kade area of the Kalahari in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His figures on working time, though slightly higher than Lee's, in general provide independent support for the primitive-zero work thesis. The daily average of time away from camp, hunting and gathering, is 4 hours and 39 minutes; this includes long breaks, as "the sun's rays beat down mercilessly on the Kalahari most of the year, [so] the San often stop to rest in the shade during their day's work ..." In-camp chores add about two hours a day.<sup>48</sup> That makes for a workweek of 46 hours and 33 minutes, a bit higher than Lee's estimate (44.5 hours for men, 40.1 hours for women), but then Tanaka acquired his data at a time of severe drought.<sup>49</sup> Tanaka is Japanese, from a nation of workaholics. It is unlikely he was subject to the counter-cultural influences which Bookchin improbably blames for the primitive-affluence theory. Tanaka did not come to the Kalahari as a believer in that theory: the figure he arrived at "is less than [he] expected."<sup>50</sup> Finally, Lorna J. Marshall, who studied the !Kung San in the 50s, a decade before Richard B. Lee and others from the Harvard Kalahari project arrived, reports that the San hunters work less than two hours a day. During the dry season, which is six months of the year, three women she knew spent 43% of their time in camp. And when the !Kung are in camp, "more time is spent in leisure than in tasks."<sup>51</sup>

So far as I can tell, none of the ex-Director's cited sources overturns or even qualifies the primitive-zero work thesis. The Lewin article I have already dealt with. Wilmsen's polemic *Land Filled with Flies* is a fierce critique of most aspects of the Lee/DeVore model, but it does not address forager working time. Bookchin relies heavily on Headland's review of Wilmsen, "Paradise Revised," as "summarizing current research," something Headland did not purport to do, and fourteen years later, when I first wrote this passage, such a summary would be obsolete anyway.<sup>52</sup> Rather, he spoke of an awakening in anthropology "that is still taking place."<sup>53</sup> As so often happens, soon the cutting edge grew dull. By 1997 Headland, as quoted above,<sup>54</sup> stated that the prevailing view is a moderate version of the primitive-affluence thesis.

It is not hard to see why Headland would back off from his 1990 position in just seven years. After mentioning Lee's contention that "the Dobe !Kung were able to supply their needs easily by working only two or three hours a day," he went on to make the point that Lee's original "calculations of the amount of work the !Kung devoted to subsistence ignored the time spent

<sup>47</sup>Susan Kent, "Hunting Variability at a Recently Sedentarized Kalahari Village," in *Cultural Diversity among Twentieth-Century Foragers: An African Perspective*, ed. Susan Kent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 132 (calculated from Table 6.1).

<sup>48</sup>Jiri Tanaka, *The San: Hunter-Gatherers of the Kalahari: A Study in Ecological Anthropology* (Tokyo, Japan: University of Tokyo, 1980), 77.

<sup>49</sup>Kent, "Hunting Variability," 126.

<sup>50</sup>Tanaka, *The San*, 78.

<sup>51</sup>Lorna J. Marshall, *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Peabody Museum of Archeology & Ethnology, 1976), 105, 313 (quoted).

<sup>52</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 191 & n. 23.

<sup>53</sup>Headland, "Paradise Revised," 46.

<sup>54</sup>Headland, "Revisionism in Ecological Anthropology," 609.

in preparing food, which turned out to be substantial.”<sup>55</sup> He does not explain why he did not use Lee’s later calculations, which did include food preparation, and which had been published eleven years previously. The augmented data only widen the gap between the San and ourselves to our disadvantage. Headland does not say how much time devoted to food preparation he considers substantial, but the time that San foragers devote to food preparation (about two hours a day) is not much different from the time we devote to it, especially if we factor in shopping. Whereas the time they devote to direct food acquisition is, as we have seen, far less. Headland’s initial revisionism is explained, if not excused, by the condition of the foragers he studied, the Agta of the Philippines, who suffer from high mortality, poor nutrition, and low foraging return, “but since this appears to be due primarily to encroachment by agriculturalists the relevance to Sahlins’s thesis is limited.”<sup>56</sup>

The San are not the only example of primitive leisure, just the best quantified. Using historical sources and the reports of fieldwork, Marshall Sahlins held up the Australian aborigines, along with the San, as exemplars of primitive affluence.<sup>57</sup> The Hadza in East Africa, who are surrounded by agriculturalists and pastoralists, nonetheless persist in foraging — mainly because, as they explain, they do not like hard work. The men spending more time gambling than working. Sahlins quips that they “seem much more concerned with games of chance than with chances of game.” The hunters spend less than two hours a day obtaining food.<sup>58</sup> Another case: the Guayaki Indians of Paraguay, men and women, work less than two hours a day.<sup>59</sup> In pre-contact conditions the Tiwi of north Australia enjoyed “an abundance of native food available the whole year round” — so much that male initiates aged 14 to 25 desisted from food production for long periods of the year, something “only a very well-off tribe could afford to allow.”<sup>60</sup> But primitive affluence is not confined to foragers. It is generally (not universally) true that underproduction is typical of primitives, notably shifting cultivators. They could produce more, as shown by the fact that, pressed by population increase or conquistador coercion, they did produce more.<sup>61</sup> Without at least potential primitive affluence, civilization could not have arisen.

Without rhyme or reason, the Director Emeritus abruptly fast-forwards (or -backwards) to medieval Europe: “Given the demands of highly labor-intensive farming, what kind of free time, in the twelfth century, did small-scale farmers have? If history is any guide, it was a luxury they rarely enjoyed, even during the agriculturally dormant winters. During the months when farmers were not tilling the land and harvesting its produce, they struggled endlessly to make repairs, tend animals, perform domestic labor, and the like.”<sup>62</sup> This is entirely beside the point — any point — at issue. The appeal to history is unaccompanied by any reference to what historians actually say about work in medieval Europe. These peasants were working to support the cities Bookchin celebrates, as well as a parasitic nobility and church. Even so, how many weeks of work

---

<sup>55</sup>Headland, “Paradise Revised,” 46, 48.

<sup>56</sup>Eric Alden Smith, “The Current State of Hunter-Gatherer Studies,” *American Anthropologist* 32(1) (Feb. 1991), 74.

<sup>57</sup>Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 14–20, 23–26.

<sup>58</sup>Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 26–27, 27 (quoted); James Woodburn, “An Introduction to Hadza Ecology,” in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter*, 54.

<sup>59</sup>Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: The Leader as Servant and the Humane Uses of Power Among the Indians of the Americas*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Urizen Books, Mole Editions, 1974), 164.

<sup>60</sup>C.W.M. Hart & Arnold R. Pilling, *The Tiwi of North Australia* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), 34 (quoted), 95 (quoted). Note that this monograph antedates the primitive-affluence thesis.

<sup>61</sup>Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, ch. 2.

<sup>62</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 182.

a year did Englishmen devote to subsistence in 1495? *Ten!*<sup>63</sup> Marxist that he is, Bookchin should remember that Paul Lafargue in *The Right to Be Lazy* wrote that 25% of the pre-industrial French peasant's calendar consisted of work-free Sundays and holidays.<sup>64</sup> Family celebrations such as betrothals, weddings and funerals subtracted another day from work in a typical month.<sup>65</sup> But, for peasants as for foragers — although to a lesser degree — simply counting days of work and days of leisure understates the superior quality of low-energy modes of production for the direct producers. “The recreational activities of the Middle Ages,” writes historian Keith Thomas, “recall the old primitive confusion as to where work ended and leisure began.”<sup>66</sup>

## Foraging as Egalitarian Communism

This is the one aspect of forager society which Bookchin even now accepts and approves of. The revisionists have not gone very far in dispelling this conception, to which both Marx and Kropotkin subscribed: they have just identified a few more exceptions to the general rule of equality and food-sharing. The mode of production in bands, tribes, and some chiefdoms is precisely the “primitive communism” of which Marx and Kropotkin wrote.<sup>67</sup> Usually, as I pointed out in *Anarchy after Leftism*, it is the sedentary hunter-gatherers who may (but often do not) develop

---

<sup>63</sup>Black, *Friendly Fire*, 27, citing Joseph Eyer and Peter Sterling, “Stress-Related Mortality and Social Organization,” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9(1) (Spring 1977), 15. Bookchin's word “farmers” is inaccurate and anachronistic. A farmer is a capitalist, an agricultural entrepreneur producing for the market. There were no farmers in Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. 12<sup>th</sup>-century cultivators were peasants. Peasants till the soil to sustain their households and to pay rent, tithes and taxes to their exploiters. Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 2. This blunder is typical of the ex-Director's disquisitions on the Middle Ages: he hates it, as an age of faith, too much to understand it. He also believes that there existed state bureaucracies in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 156 (“kings and their bureaucratic minions”). That is not only absurd but, in Bookchin's terminology, tautological: for him the state is bureaucratic by definition. Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanism and the Decline of Citizenship* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, (1987), 33. If, as Bookchin insists, the anarchist revolution must be worldwide and all-encompassing if it is to succeed, his fixation on urbanism impedes that revolution, for it reduces the peasantry, in traditional Marxist fashion, to semi-conscious cannon fodder of the revolutionary proletariat. Now this is rather odd, because Bookchin's beloved civilization has usually been associated with urbanism and always associated with statism. Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanism*, 10–11. Peasant anarchists who were actually engaged in revolution didn't noticed the inherent anarchist potential of the city, possibly because it hasn't any. The Makhnovists, Ukrainian peasants, according to Makhno himself were mostly not consciously anarchists, but “in their communal life they felt an anarchist solidarity such as manifests itself only in the practical life of ordinary toilers who have not yet tasted the political poison of the cities, with their atmosphere of deception and betrayal that smothers even many who call themselves anarchists.” Nestor Makhno, “Agricultural Communes,” in *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Paul Avrich (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 1973), 131–132.

<sup>64</sup>Cited in Black, *Abolition of Work*, 23.

<sup>65</sup>Robert Delort, *Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1983), 165.

<sup>66</sup>Keith Thomas, “Work and Leisure in Pre-Industrial Society,” *Past & Present* No.29 (Dec. 1964), 53. “The pastoral relationships of country life in the high Middle Ages tempered the purely economic necessities of feudalism with a sort of freedom; play often took the upper hand in the corvee, in the dispensing of justice, in the settlement of debts.” Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; London: Rebel Press & Seattle, WA: Left Bank Books, 1994), 256.

<sup>67</sup>Richard B. Lee, “Reflections on Primitive Communism,” in *Hunters and Gatherers 1: History, Evolution and Social Change*, ed. Tim Ingold, David Riches & James Woodburn (Oxford, England: Berg, 1988), 252–268; Richard B. Lee, “Primitive Communism and the Origin of Social Inequality,” in *The Evolution of Political Systems: Sociopolitics in Small-Scale Sedentary Societies*, ed. Steadman Upham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225–246; Frederick Engels, “Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,” in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 528; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 261, 263.

some social stratification, as did the Northwest Coast Indians with permanent villages adjoining salmon runs in which property rights were recognized. Their anarchy is a borderline case.<sup>68</sup>

It's not impossible, however — just extremely rare — for even nomadic hunter-gatherers to distribute wealth unequally or assert ownership rights to the means of production. A 19<sup>th</sup> century example is the Tutchone, a nomadic Athapaskan Indian people in the Yukon. Despite their general poverty, they allocated food resources unequally and even maintained a form of domestic slavery, allegedly without borrowing these practices from other stratified societies. In *SALA*, Bookchin cited another aberrant, pathological example, the Yuqui — all 43 of them.<sup>69</sup> But that's just "the 'not-so-in-Bongobongoland' style of argument." Probably all South American foragers, including the miserable Yuqui, are devolved from more complex societies destroyed by European contact.<sup>70</sup> That was not an issue in prehistoric times. If forager egalitarianism is not universal, it almost is, and every other form of society departs from equality to the extent of its greater complexity.

To seriously challenge the thesis of forager egalitarianism, the revisionists would have to find inequality among the many foraging peoples where ethnographers have hitherto found equality. So far as I know, the only revisionist to make such a claim is Edwin Wilmsen in *Land Filled with Flies*. His provocative example is, improbably, the San. Wilmsen asserts that "meat sharing — the putative sine qua non of San egalitarianism — is thoroughly controlled to meet the political ends of the distributors."<sup>71</sup> There are several difficulties here. The distributor of meat (the owner of the arrow which killed the animal) has no political ends, for the San are anarchists. What he does have is expectations to satisfy which are determined mainly by kinship. To infer inequality from this is a non sequitur, for few if any San are entirely without family and friends at a campsite: "virtually all members in a band are directly or indirectly related to a core member and thus have free access to the area's resources."<sup>72</sup> San principles of food-sharing priorities do not mathematically guarantee absolute distributive equality, but in practice they approximate it. The same has been said of another foraging people, the Paliyans: they do not achieve perfect equality, "but they come closer to doing so than most social philosophers dare dream of."<sup>73</sup> Generally, hunter-gatherer societies represent "the closest approximation to equality known in any human societies."<sup>74</sup>

However, even arguments at this modest level of sophistication are unnecessary to dispose of Wilmsen's example — for that's all it is: a single "anecdote" (his word) about a San who complained of receiving no meat from a band in which she had no relatives. Even that sounds fishy, or at least nontraditional, because the practice is that everyone in camp gets some meat, and some of it (not the choicest cuts) is shared with non-relatives.<sup>75</sup> Probably she just got less than

---

<sup>68</sup>Thomas K. King, "Don't That Beat the Band? Nonegalitarian Political Organization in Prehistoric Central California," in *Social Archaeology: Beyond Subsistence and Dating*, ed. Charles L. Redman *et al.* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 244–246; Black, *AAL*, 118; Barclay, *People Without Government*, 48–49.

<sup>69</sup>Dominique Legros, "Comment," *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1997), 617; Bookchin, *SALA*, 45.

<sup>70</sup>David Pollock, review of *Yanomami Warfare*, by R. Bryan Ferguson, *Ethnohistory* 44(1) (Winter 1997), 191; M. Kay Martin, "South American Foragers: A Case Study in Cultural Devolution," *American Anthropologist* 71(2) (April 1969), 257.

<sup>71</sup>Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 229.

<sup>72</sup>Shostack, *Nisa*, 10 (quoted); Marshall, *!Kung of Nyae Nyae*, 98, 184.

<sup>73</sup>Peter M. Gardner, "Reply," *Current Anthropology* 32(5) (December 1991), 568.

<sup>74</sup>James Woodburn, "Egalitarian Societies," *Man*, N.S. 17(3) (Sept. 1982), 431

<sup>75</sup>Hans-Joachim Heinz & Marshall Lee, *Namkwa: Life Among the Bushmen* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), 126; Woodburn, "Egalitarian Societies," 441.

she wanted. These San are, in fact, nontraditional. They are *not foragers*, they are pastoralists who hunt, part-time, from horseback, and partly with rifles.<sup>76</sup>

Wilmsen's claim for class distinctions among foraging San is his "most contentious," overstated, and least accepted proposition.<sup>77</sup> Several anthropologists, even Wilmsen's main target Richard B. Lee, credit Wilmsen with placing emphasis on the historical dimension of San studies, but they contest the findings of his fieldwork, which commenced only in 1973, as "so at odds with previous works that it is impossible to reconcile one's prior knowledge of the Kalahari with what Wilmsen presents."<sup>78</sup> Even a fellow revisionist like Thomas Headland, in a review which Bookchin cites approvingly, concludes that "one can be generally convinced by Wilmsen's account of outside influence in the Kalahari desert while being troubled by his complete rejection of earlier portraits of the !Kung."<sup>79</sup>

Wilmsen's embrace of history (and archeology, his specialty<sup>80</sup>) at the expense of ethnography looks like sour grapes. He arrived in the field in 1973,<sup>81</sup> too late to study viable San foragers, as Marshall, Lee, Howell, Tanaka, Shostack and others had done. Instead, he rummaged the archives to prove that there'd never been any such foragers, only the same impoverished underclass he found in the 1970s. But Marjorie Shostack observed rapid change from 1969 onwards.<sup>82</sup> Susan Kent, another anthropologist who has studied the San, surely had Wilmsen in mind when she wrote: "For people not experiencing such rapid change, it sometimes is difficult to conceive that it can occur so quickly. Some researchers are consequently skeptical about descriptions of a people they know today that were written only a decade ago."<sup>83</sup>

Still another of Wilmsen's reviewers notes that "page after page denounces Richard Lee and a host of other ethnographers with unnecessary stings, while some other pages rely on the findings of these very scholars."<sup>84</sup> Murray Bookchin is right to recognize in Wilmsen a kindred spirit, another lawyer trapped in the body of a scholar, except that Bookchin isn't even a scholar. "Scholarship," noticed one of Bookchin's rare scholarly reviewers, "is not his point, or his achievement," and his "method is to ransack world history — more or less at random" for examples that seem to support his position.<sup>85</sup> Bookchin relies on Wilmsen in exactly the opportunistic way Wilm-

---

<sup>76</sup>Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 229, 227.

<sup>77</sup>Jacqueline S. Solway, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *American Ethnologist* 18(4) (Nov. 1991), 817.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 816.

<sup>79</sup>Headland, "Paradise Revised," 50.

<sup>80</sup>Little archeological research has been conducted in the Kalahari, but Wilmsen has made expansive claims that it proves 2,000 years of extensive socio-economic interactions between San and Iron Age Bantu. A recent review of the literature finds the evidence insufficient. Karim Sadr, "Kalahari Archeology and the Bushmen Debate," *Current Anthropology* 38(1) (Feb. 1997): 104–112.

<sup>81</sup>Edwin N. Wilmsen, *Journeys with Flies* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xii. This book is a post-modernist *melange* of diary, diatribe, quotations and reminiscences which a reviewer describes as "exhaustive, unconvincing, and difficult to read." Miegán Bisele, "Distance From the Manuscript: Anthropological Publishers' Responsibilities," *American Anthropologist* 103(4) (Dec. 2001), 1104. Bisele all but says that it was irresponsible to publish the book. The ex-Director does not explain why he relies, as his only source for debunking all other accounts of the San, on a post-modernist, a real one, although Bookchin elsewhere claims that everybody he denounces has at least an affinity with post-modernism, even people like John Zerzan who also denounce post-modernism.

<sup>82</sup>Shostack, *Return to Nisa*, 4.

<sup>83</sup>Susan Kent, "Cultural Diversity among African Foragers," in Kent, ed., *Cultural Diversity among African Foragers*, 16–17.

<sup>84</sup>Parker Shipton, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *American Anthropologist* 93(3) (Sept. 1991), 756.

<sup>85</sup>Anonymous review of Murray Bookchin, *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, *Orbis: A Journal of*

sen relies on Lee “and a host of other ethnographers,” grabbing whatever sounds like support for an advocacy position, and never mind what it really means or the context or the rest of the story. When lawyers pillage history this way, historians refer to the result contemptuously as “law-office history.”<sup>86</sup> Bookchin writes law-office history, law-office anthropology, and law-office philosophy, which is to say, pseudo-history, pseudo-anthropology, and pseudo-philosophy.

## Foraging as the Good Life.

By the catchall phrase “the good life” I refer to various further features of foraging society which are significant for what I can only refer to, vaguely at the outset, as the quality of life. Necessarily, interpretation and value judgments enter into the assessment of this dimension even more openly than in the assessment of the first three, but just as necessarily there is no avoiding them in a full appraisal. Viable anarcho-communist societies naturally interest anarchists, but if hunter-gatherers enjoy little more than the freedom to suffer, and equality in poverty, their example is not very inspiring. If that is all that anarchy offers, anarchism has no appeal except to the fanatic few. Abundance and good health, for instance, may not be supreme values, but values they are. If they are too lacking for too long, the widest liberty, equality and fraternity lose their savor. But for foragers, the price of liberty, equality and fraternity is not nearly so high.

When Marshall Sahlins characterized hunter-gatherers as the original affluent society, he meant to make several points. One I have already dealt with: relatively short working time. The other, which has always attracted more attention, is the contention that foragers typically enjoy a food supply not only abundant but reliable. They do not work very much because they have no need to work any longer or any harder in order to have all that they want to consume. They do not store much food or for long, partly for lack of the requisite technology, but fundamentally because of their confidence that they can always go out and get some more. Instead of the desperate preoccupation with survival which Bookchin attributes to them, the foragers’ attitude toward the quest for subsistence, is, as Sahlins says, one of “nonchalance.”<sup>87</sup>

As everyone acknowledges — Watson and I included<sup>88</sup> — although abundance is the norm among contemporary hunter-gatherers, they may go hungry occasionally. There’s a two-month period of the year, for instance, in which San food intake declines. That does not validate the Hobbesian view, which is exactly the opposite: that for foragers, hunger is the norm. Lee and demographer Nancy Howell measured a 1% to 2% loss in San body weight during the low point, “far short of [the] 4 to 6.5 percent average loss observed among agriculturalists.”<sup>89</sup> And although saying so incenses the easily irked Director Emeritus, it is obviously relevant to the primitive-affluence thesis that in prehistoric times, foragers had all the world’s habitats to enjoy, not just the marginal wastes to which contemporary foragers are relegated by civilized techno-violence. It is reasonable to infer that when foragers had the whole world to themselves, they enjoyed even greater ease and affluence, the material base of their successful anarchy.<sup>90</sup> I daresay that more Americans than foragers will go to bed hungry tonight.

---

*World Affairs* 32 (Fall 1988): 628, quoted in Black, *AAL*, 96.

<sup>86</sup> Alfred Kelly, “Clio and the Court: An Illicit Love Affair,” *1969 Supreme Court Review*, 119–158.

<sup>87</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 18.

<sup>88</sup> Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 110.

<sup>89</sup> Lee, *The !Kung San*, 301.

<sup>90</sup> “Life for our prehistoric ancestors was not characterized by constant deprivation, but rather by usually adequate

The world of the foragers is not, any more than ours is, absolutely secure. Such words as “paradise” and “edenic” are never used by anthropologists and not often used, and then usually metaphorically, by anarcho-primitivists. It is their critics, above all Bookchin, who put these words in their mouths, compounding the deception by putting these nonexistent quotations in quotation marks — a Bookchin abuse I targeted in *Anarchy after Leftism* but which the Director Emeritus now indulges in more recklessly than ever.<sup>91</sup> Like Bookchin, but unlike a fine wine, it has not improved with age. Inverted commas are a “stylistic tic” with which, as Bookchin does, “‘trendy lefties’ make quotation mark signs in the air at every third word.” As Karl Kraus wrote: “It is a pitiful form of mockery that expends itself in punctuation — employing exclamation marks, question marks, and dashes as if they were whips, snares, and goads.”<sup>92</sup> As John Zerzan says, “you see pretty much everything in quotes when you look at postmodern writing. So it’s a lot of irony, of course.”<sup>93</sup>

For Bookchin, the world of ideas is a fragile and fearful place. If an idea is wrong, it is counter-revolutionary, and vice versa. That is why it never occurs to him that any of the ideas he assails, even if his criticisms are cogent, are just trivial. To be wrong about Goya or Taoism is as calamitous as being wrong about liberatory industrial technology or the polis as human destiny. Every error, no matter how seemingly remote from political practice, is even more catastrophic than every other error, and they all form one vast, malignant pattern. To believe (as all reflective scientists do) that there are no definitive explanations — no one could “have formulated a more disastrous notion”! As usual, the Director Emeritus blames Nietzsche and the Post-Modernists for a point of view with multiple origins, among them Pragmatism, which has prevailed among scientists for a century. At one time he admitted himself that there are no “brute facts” independent of interpretation.<sup>94</sup> What practical difference does it make if one upholds an absolutist or, as scientists do, a probabilistic conception of knowledge? Practicality be damned when the soul is in peril.

And that is also why he calls everything he opposes “bourgeois,” as the term seems to explain and justify a range of rejections which would otherwise look arbitrary and idiosyncratic. In his Stalinist youth, the Director Emeritus learned how to say that whatever the Communist Party opposed that week was “objectively counterrevolutionary.” As that expression has acquired notoriety, Bookchin turns to “bourgeois” as a substitute. He never explains *what* is bourgeois about this or that hobby-horse because there is never any social basis to refer to. When he says that “primitivism is precisely the privilege of affluent urbanites,” he lies, because he knows that John Zerzan, for instance, is not affluent, and neither are many other primitivists.<sup>95</sup> He never explains

---

food and nutrition, modest work effort, fair amounts of leisure, and sharing of resources, with both women and men contributing to the family, the economy, and the social world. Today, gatherers and hunters, the !Kung included, live in the more marginal areas, whereas prehistoric gatherers and hunters occupied areas abundant with water, plant food, and game. If there is any bias in the data from modern-day gatherer-hunters, therefore, it probably leads to an underestimate of the quality of life of their — and our — predecessors.” Shostack, *Nisa*, 17. Shostack was one of the last-arriving anthropologists of the Lee-DeVore study.

<sup>91</sup>Black, *AAL*, 38–39, 42, quoting Theodor W. Adorno, “Punctuation Marks,” *The Antioch Review*, Summer 1990, 303

<sup>92</sup>*No Compromise: Selected Writings of Karl Kraus*, ed. Frederick Ungar (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), 229

<sup>93</sup>Kenneth MacKinnon, *Uneasy Pleasures: The Male as Erotic Object* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1997), 9 (quoted); John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2002), 52 (quoted). MacKinnon’s statement is self-referential.

<sup>94</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 200; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 114 (quoted).

<sup>95</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 49.

how astrology, deep ecology, Temporary Autonomous Zones, situationist theory, Taoism, and the primitive-affluence thesis serve the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

When the ex-Director ventures an explanation, as with Taoism and the situationists, it is that the offending idea promotes passivity and indifference to the “political sphere,” in other words, it deprives him of cadre. But that would not make situationists and Taoists bourgeois, nor alter the reality that the political sphere is overwhelmingly bourgeois. The passivity thesis founders on familiar facts. Over 90% of Americans believe in God<sup>96</sup> — and this is not something new in the period of social reaction — yet the Religious Right surpasses all other interest groups in political activism. Taoism is supposed to induce political quietism, yet John P. Clark is rather too active politically to suit the Director Emeritus.<sup>97</sup> To speak of the situationists as politically quiescent is belied by their activity in Paris in May-June 1968, when Bookchin was in New York waiting out the general strike (see Appendix).<sup>98</sup>

As often as not, it is Bookchin’s ideology which is the more plausible candidate for reinforcing the status quo. “The town meeting ideal,” states a political scientist who does not mean to be critical, “plainly touches something very close to the heart of the dominant ideology.”<sup>99</sup> To be pro-technology is to remove a basis for opposing those who own the technology and what they do with it. Technology may be liberatory *potentially*, but that does not trouble the capitalists so long as it is profitable *actually*. “Potentially” may never come and, after all, it never has. To be pro-electoral reproduces the representative system at all levels, not just the one not abstained from, and diverts oppositional forces from direct action. To criticize all other anarchists who differ even somewhat from oneself in goals and methods as delusional or vicious is to split the movement, which is exactly what the Director Emeritus is trying to do, since he cannot hope to place himself at its head. The Greens would not rally behind his leadership and, with uncharacteristic realism, Bookchin has finally figured out that neither would the anarchists. In appearance, the Director Emeritus is an anarchist; in essence, he is a Trotskyist.

It makes no sense to suggest that the myth of the Noble Savage benefits the bourgeoisie. Today, as in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the principal political use of the myth is to criticize civilized society (a function to which it was put by Diderot, Rousseau and others who made explicit that they did not call for a return to primitive ways). Primitive society is actually primitive *communism*, and, “obviously, the concept is out of step with bourgeois ideology. Bourgeois ideology would have us believe that primitive communism does not exist. In popular consciousness it is lumped with romanticism, exoticism: the noble savage... There is a considerable industry in anthropology, and especially pop anthropology, to show the primitive as a Hobbesian being — with a life that is ‘nasty, brutish and short.’ In the current climate of opinion in the West, no one is going to go broke by appealing to the cynicism and sophistication of the intellectual in late capitalism” (Richard B. Lee).<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 123.

<sup>97</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 222, 233.

<sup>98</sup>Len Bracken, *Guy Debord — Revolutionary: A Critical Biography* (Venice, CA: Feral House, 1997), 160–174; Rene Vienet, *Enrages and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May’68* (New York: Autonomedia & London: Rebel Press, 1992); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238.

<sup>99</sup>Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 95–96.

<sup>100</sup>Lee, “Reflections on Primitive Communism,” 253.



## Chapter 5. Stone Age or Old Age: An Unbridgeable Chasm

For many years now the Director Emeritus has exhibited, as I have mentioned, a personalistic preoccupation with old age. Often his opinions are scarcely sublimated emotions — for example, his transparently autobiographical anxiety that “the lives of the old are always clouded by a sense of insecurity.” And only an insecure (and paranoid) old man could suppose that one of the groups against which mass discontent is channeled by reactionaries is — besides the usual suspects (racial minorities, the poor, etc.) — “the elderly.”<sup>1</sup> As so often, Bookchin echoes his beloved Athenians, this time the Aristophanes character who says: “Isn’t old age the worst of evils? Of course it is.”<sup>2</sup> His insecurities are not, however, “always” felt by the elderly — not in primitive societies: “The idea that one might fear or resent growing up or growing old does not evidently occur in traditional preliterate, preindustrial societies.”<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after he turned 60, Bookchin’s *Ecology of Freedom* (1982) advanced, among other eccentricities, the thesis that the origin of hierarchy in human society was gerontocracy, domination by the elderly. After all, “People who have lived longer can often be expected to know more than those who are very young.” Or to think they do. According to the Director Emeritus, “gerontocracy, whose priority I emphasize as probably the earliest form of hierarchy, is one of the most widespread hierarchical developments described in the anthropological literature,”<sup>4</sup> but he neglects to cite a single example of these widespread developments in *The Ecology of Freedom*, *Remaking Society* or, so far as I know, anywhere else. The only anthropologist to review *The Ecology of Freedom* (and surprisingly sympathetically) wrote that the ex-Director’s “emphasis on age stratification as the key to domination is unconvincing and suffers from such a paucity of empirical evidence that it reads at times like a ‘Just-So’ story.”<sup>5</sup> You’d think an anthropologist would be aware that gerontocracy is one of the most widespread hierarchical developments described in the anthropological literature, but, what does she know anyway?

Bookchin’s Just-So story is unrecorded in any ethnographic, historical or archaeological source. It does not even appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century conjectural histories alongside the primal horde, the matriarchy, animism, and the “psychic unity” of mankind. Exactly how he knows the thoughts of prehistoric men is unclear, since he was probably too young to remember anything. It looks like an example of the ex-Director’s trademark introspective/projective method. Occasionally, the emergence of age hierarchy — or rather, the emergence of age groups which might be ranked

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 82; Bookchin, *SALA*, 1.

<sup>2</sup>“Wasps,” in *Aristophanes: Plays: I*, tr. Patric Dickinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 184.

<sup>3</sup>Meyer Fortes, “Age, Generation, and Social Structure,” in *Age and Anthropological Theory*, ed. David I. Kertzer & Jennie Keith (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 119–120.

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 43\*.

<sup>5</sup>“Interview with Bookchin,” *Anarchism, Marxism*, 164 (quoted); Karen L. Field, review of *The Ecology of Freedom*, *American Anthropologist* 86(1) (March 1984), 161 (quoted), quoted in Black, *AAL*, 94 (but inadvertently omitted from the bibliography).

hierarchically — is known to have taken place in historic time. The one example I came across, though, does not seem to corroborate Bookchin's theory. It is the Plains Indians after they become heavily involved in the fur trade: "Age grades were borrowed from neighboring groups as a mechanism for expressing and channeling the vertical mobility which accompanied increasing wealth."<sup>6</sup> In this case the origin of age grades was economic — namely, incorporation into the capitalist world-system — an aspect of social change the Director Emeritus usually ignores.

In East Africa, the stronghold of age groups, the origin was military. The age class consisting of all initiated males below the current set of elders, where there is only one such set, is the warrior age grade: "A political system of this kind is clearly focused on military organisation." The first Zulu king, Dingeswayo, "organized regiments of warriors on the basis of their social age-grades, and thereby increased organizational efficiency and morale." Colonial governments demilitarized the warrior age grades throughout Africa, artificially tilting the balance of power in favor of the easily controlled elders. Thus among the Samburu, the ex-warriors have lost their power while the elder grade has retained theirs, and so the younger men have "turned from warriors into angry young men."<sup>7</sup> You can call it gerontocracy if you want to, but by any name, it is a policy or by-product of colonialism which has nothing to do with the emergence of hierarchy.

In *Anarchy after Leftism* I suggested that Bookchin's belief in gerontocracy as "one of the oldest forms of hierarchy" or "the original form of hierarchy" (which is it?) was wishful thinking.<sup>8</sup> The San, for instance, have no gerontocracy. A cross-cultural study of the role of the aged found a strong negative correlation (-.44) between hunting and aged men in councils.<sup>9</sup> The Director Emeritus may have erred by generalizing from his own, no doubt satisfying career experience. Something approximating gerontocracy does prevail on college campuses (there it's known as "tenure"), but in few other areas of any society. No contemporary anthropologists believe that true gerontocracy ever existed anywhere. Their infrequent use of the word is metaphorical. The word does not even appear in anthropological encyclopedias and dictionaries.<sup>10</sup> The ex-Director's personalistic obsession with age increases as his own does.

By definition, *gerontocracy*, as an *-ocracy*, does not appear among stateless (acratic) primitive societies. What have appeared to be age-based hierarchies often result merely from the fact that it may take a lifetime to accumulate the material and social resources to assume an influential role: authority is achieved, not ascribed.<sup>11</sup> The U.S. Senate is an example. A false impression of

---

<sup>6</sup>Robert McC. Adams, "Anthropological Perspectives on Ancient Trade," *Current Anthropology*, 15(3) (Sept. 1974), 244.

<sup>7</sup>Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1970), 84 (quoted); Elman R. Service, *The Origins of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 108 (quoted); Paul Spencer, *The Samburu: A Study of Gerontocracy in a Nomadic Tribe* (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press), 149 (quoted).

<sup>8</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 272; Field, review, 161, quoted in *AAL*, 94.

<sup>9</sup>Harriet G. Rosenberg, "Complaint Discourse, Aging, and Caregiving Among the !Kung San of Botswana," in *The Cultural Context of Aging: Worldwide Perspectives*, ed. Jay Sokovsky (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1990), 22; Shostack, *Nisa*, 17 & n. 54; Leo W. Simmons, *The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1945), 255. Elderly San are hale and hearty and well-integrated into their societies, nonetheless, they complain of imaginary neglect. Rosenberg, "Complaint Discourse, Aging, and Caregiving," 23. Old folks are the same everywhere.

<sup>10</sup>*Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, ed. David Levinson & Melvin Ember (4 vols.; New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996); *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Alan Bernard & Jonathan Spencer (London & New York: Routledge, 1996); Robert H. Winthrop, *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

<sup>11</sup>Jennie Keith & David I. Kertzer, "Introduction," in Kertzer & Keith, eds., *Age and Anthropological Theory*, 23; Bernardo

gerontocracy may also result from the common situation where roles of authority, such as chief or (sometimes) elder, are held for life, so the average age of the official is likely to be much higher than the average age of accession to office, the latter being the true indicator of gerontocracy. The U.S. Supreme Court is an example. But only “in relatively rare cases has age alone qualified one for positions of civil responsibility.”<sup>12</sup>

Both factors are at work in the so-called “gerontocracy” of the Jokwele Kpelle in Liberia. The ethnographer applies the term to the *loi namu*, high ritual officeholders who, it is averred, have power over public officials although they cannot hold public office themselves. Her single anecdote hardly persuades that the power exists, but even if it does, it rests on other sources than age: birthplace, ancestry, long-term residence, skills as public speakers and advisors, completion of a progress through the stages of initiation of the ritual hierarchy of a secret society, and finally, retirement from the civil office of chief. “Clearly, the *loi namu* do not attain their positions simply by becoming old.” In fact, only 2.3% of the population over 50 become *loi namu* (or “town elders,” a lesser honor), and there were eight *loi namu* in their late 60s or 70s in a town of 757. The author makes clear that their glory does not reflect on the ordinary oldsters, who have no distinctive prerogatives and may not be treated respectfully.<sup>13</sup> Here is hierarchy all right, but not gerontocracy.

The existence of age-sets or age-grades in a minority of societies likewise does not entail gerontocracy. The leading scholar of age class systems, Bernardo Bernardi, rejects the application of the word “gerontocracy” to such systems. Age groups may be mere categories “which never act corporately,” as among the Nuer in the Sudan or, in Australia, the Walbiri.<sup>14</sup> Even where political authority, such as it is, is assigned to a certain age group, it is may not be assigned to the oldest age group. Among the Nyakusa of East Africa — who carry age distinctions to the unique extreme of residential segregation in “age-villages” — the middle of three age groups, known as “the ruling generation,” is responsible for administration and defense; the elder group is respected but restricted to ritual functions. Similarly, among the Walbiri of Australia, the 40–55 age group, are the men who have seen all the ceremonial and ritual objects, and have the highest social status. But by age 60 one is considered an “old man,” enjoying only ritual recognition.<sup>15</sup>

Among the Arusha of Tanzania, no age-group dominates the parish assembly, and of the four adult age-groups, the third highest, the junior elders (25–37) most heavily participates in political, legal and ritual affairs; the senior elders (37–49) participate to a lesser extent, but are considered indispensable in diplomacy and dispute resolution; and the retired elders (over 49) “give up participation in public affairs unless personally involved; indeed they are specifically excluded and their experience ignored.” In fact, societies where politics is the primary or exclusive prerogative

---

Bernardi, *Age Class Systems*, tr. David I. Kertzer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 110; e.g., Berndt, “Law and Order in Australia,” 295.

<sup>12</sup>Simmons, *Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, 105, 130 (quoted).

<sup>13</sup>Michele Teitelbaum, “Old Age, Midwifery and Good Talk: Paths to Power in a West African Gerontocracy,” in *Aging & Cultural Diversity: New Directions and Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Heather Strange & Michele Teitelbaum (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), 39–60, 51 (quoted).

<sup>14</sup>Bernardi, *Age Class Systems*, 30; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (New York & Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1940), 259; M.J. Meggitt, *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 233, 239.

<sup>15</sup>Monica Wilson, “Nyakusa Age-Villages,” in *Cultures and Societies of Africa*, ed. Phoebe & Simon Ottenburgh (New York: Random House, 1960), 231; Meggitt, *Desert People*, 235.

of a middle-aged group, not the elders, seem to be common in Africa. It seems ludicrous to apply the term gerontocracy to a society like that of the Samburu where the “elders” are those 35 and older!<sup>16</sup> And it is difficult to see how gerontocracy could emerge where the ruling class is subject to *term limits*.

Such is the pattern almost everywhere in Oceania (including Australia), a vast area, although its societies do divide the life cycle into sequential stages defined by physical and/or behavioral criteria. Old men per se were relied upon and respected for their expertise in matters of sacred ritual and belief – but only within that domain. As for the public sphere, in nearly every society, most privileged or influential roles “were held by males who were past ‘youth’ and not yet ‘old.’”<sup>17</sup> According to Bookchin, as discussed below, it is with gerontocracy that hierarchy emerges, “slowly, cautiously, and often unnoticeably” – first “big men/small men [sic],” then warriors/followers, then chiefs/community, then nobles/peasants, and finally the “incipient, quasi, or partial states.”<sup>18</sup> It would seem, then, that societies without gerontocracies are in no immediate danger of becoming states, or even chiefdoms. Yet several Oceanian societies – notably Hawaii and Tahiti – developed what were at least socially stratified complex chiefdoms. The anthropological debate is whether they were states or only on the threshold of statehood.<sup>19</sup> Either way, the grand theory of the Director Emeritus is refuted.

Bookchin’s conjectural reconstruction of gerontocracy is inconsistent and unconvincing. To an old man such as himself, rule by old men is simply “logical”:

The logical beginnings of hierarchy, as well as a good deal of anthropological data at our disposal, suggest that hierarchy stems from the ascendancy of the elders, who seem to have initiated the earliest systems of command and obedience. This system of rule by the elders, benign as it may have been initially [how would he know?], has been designated as a “gerontocracy” and it often included old women as well as old men [not true]. We detect evidence of its basic, probably primary role in virtually all existing societies up to recent times – be it as councils of elders that were adapted to clan, tribal, urban and state forms, or, for that matter, in such striking cultural features as ancestor-worship and an etiquette of deference to older people in many different kinds of societies.<sup>20</sup>

Thus hierarchy begins, in part, with – (the logic of) hierarchy. If this is not a tautology it is gibberish. Either way, it is no support for the thesis. The claim that many ethnographic data

---

<sup>16</sup>P.H. Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society: A Study of the Arusha; Agricultural Masai of Northern Tanganyika* (Boston, MA: Boston University Press, 1963), 28, 36–39, 59, 38 (quoted); A.H.J. Prins, *East African Age-Class Systems: An Inquiry into the Social Order of Galla, Kipsigis and Kikuyu* (Groningen, West Germany: J.B. Wolters, 1953); Bernardi, *Age Class Systems*, 29 (Masai), 103–104, 106 (Lagoon Peoples of the Ivory Coast); Monica Wilson, *Good Company: A Study of Nyakusa Age-Villages* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963), 31; Spencer, *The Samburu*, 86. Although the “elders” do manipulate when an age set reaches the elder grade, meanwhile marrying young women, still, men marry in their late 20s and early 30s. Spencer, *The Samburu*, 137.

<sup>17</sup>Douglas L. Oliver, *Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands* (2 vols.; Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 1: 662, 745 (quoted), 745–748.

<sup>18</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 57, 67.

<sup>19</sup>Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization*, ch. 9; Marshall D. Sahlins, *Social Stratification in Polynesia* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1958), 13–22, 37–47; Allen W. Johnson & Timothy Earle, *The Evolution of Human Societies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 284–294.

<sup>20</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 54.

support the idea that gerontocracy is the first form of hierarchy is false, not only because there is no such thing as a true gerontocracy, but because origins are not necessarily deducible from later developments. No ethnographer of patriarchy, shamanism, councils of elders, age-class systems or anything else has ever drawn the conclusions from his data that Bookchin has. The Director Emeritus presents gerontocracy as a turning point in the evolution toward the state. Scholarship on the origins of the state does not so much as mention age groups, much less gerontocracies. Indeed, anthropologists rarely speak of gerontocracy, not even with reference to Australia.<sup>21</sup> And an archaeologist has made the obvious point (see below) that if, as Bookchin claims, old people in our sense of the term were absent in prehistoric times, “then in prehistoric societies there was no gerontocracy.”<sup>22</sup>

Revealing here is the empirical part of the ex-Director’s methodology here (if a ten dollar word can be said to apply to a ten cent scribbler). The existence of an institution in the past is inferred from its “survivals” in the present, the only difficulty being that there is no independent evidence that the survival was ever part of the institution. E.B. Tylor, the first to use the term, defined it: “These are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved.” Interpreting survivals was crucial to the reconstructions of the past in the theories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century social evolutionists, but came under withering attack in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from empirically oriented anthropologists. Today, they deny that survivals explain anything: “On the contrary, the concept of survival is almost a confession of defeat before the challenge to find a contemporary sense in anything.”<sup>23</sup> Even an anthropologist who does not “totally discount” survivals acknowledges that “to identify something as a genuine survival in the present always requires some independent corroboration.” Without it, “to speak of survivals merely begs the whole question.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus we have this method to thank for the theory of “mother right” lately revived by feminists: the existence of matrilineal descent in (a minority of) contemporary or historical primitive societies is taken to prove matriarchy, rule by women, in the prehistoric past. The problem is that there is no independent evidence that matrilineality and matriarchy are related, or for that matter that matriarchy has ever existed. In fact, all known societies, including all known matrilineal societies, are patriarchal. Still less does the existence of a trait in some societies in the present prove that it existed in all societies in the past. The simplest societies, bands of hunter-gatherers,

---

<sup>21</sup>E.g., Elman R. Service, *Primitive Social Organization: An Evolutionary Perspective* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Random House, 1971); Jonathan Haas, *The Evolution of the Prehistoric State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); and, concerning gerontocracy in current ethnography, Ronald M. Berndt, “Law and Order in Aboriginal Australia,” in *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A.P. Elkin*, ed. Ronald M. Berndt & Catherine M. Berndt (Sydney, Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1965), 168.

<sup>22</sup>Henri de Vallois, “The Social Life of Early Man: The Skeletal Evidence,” in *Social Life of Early Man*, ed. Sherwood L. Washburn (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1961), 223.

<sup>23</sup>Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), 164–171, quoting (at 164) E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 1: 16; Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Preface,” *The Fate of Shechem or The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), vii–viii (quoted).

<sup>24</sup>Thomas M. Kiefer, “An Anthropological Perspective on the Nineteenth Century Sulu Sultanate,” in *Perspectives on Philippine Historiography: A Symposium*, ed. John A. Larkin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1979), 58.

are patrilineal or composite, never matrilineal.<sup>25</sup> Matriarchy does not exist in the present, there is no direct evidence of its existence in the past, and all of its supposed survivals may coexist with authority systems which are not matriarchal. Ethnohistory reports no patrilineal society which turned matrilineal, but reports at least one — the Tiwi of Australia — which went from patrilineal to matrilineal before the eyes of Western observers. And the clincher: the Director Emeritus does not believe in primitive matriarchy.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, gerontocracy does not exist in the present, there is no direct evidence of its existence in the past, and all of its supposed survivals may coexist with authority systems which are not gerontocratic.

Bookchin's first contention which smacks of being an argument is the proposition that councils of elders are tantamount to gerontocracy because they have played a basic role in all societies until recently. He is wrong, first, because ubiquity does not prove antiquity. The state, for example, is ubiquitous, but nobody thinks it is older than anarchy. Many states are of recent vintage. Capitalism is also ubiquitous, but it is relatively recent, whereas the domestic mode of production is ancient but increasingly marginalized.

Second, antiquity does not prove priority. No matter how old gerontocracy is, patriarchy, for instance, might be older.

Third, councils of elders and the like play no part in the lively current debate among archaeologists and ethnohistorians on the origins of the state, whose antecedent is usually considered to be the complex chiefdom in ranked society.<sup>27</sup>

Fourth, councils of elders are not ubiquitous. This requires no documentation. They do not exist now in Western societies or most others. They did not exist in the European monarchies of the *ancien regime*; or in any of the Hellenic and Italian Renaissance city-states which Bookchin celebrates; or at any time in American history. They are also absent from many small-scale traditional societies, including the Nuer, the Yanamamo, the Tikopia, the San, the Montenegrins, the Kalinga of northern Luzon, the Basseri tribesmen of Iran, Sicilian peasants, the Kachins, the Tsembaga Maring, etc., to mention only some that I happen to know of. In Australia, the supposed stronghold of gerontocracy, "there are almost no judiciary bodies which we can reasonably call 'councils.'"<sup>28</sup>

Bookchin's reliance on ancestor-worship is, for several reasons, no evidence of gerontocracy past or present. I grant that the association seems plausible. Ancestral ghosts may be conjectured to concern themselves with the superior rights of the elders who will be joining them soon. But ancestor worship is not universal. Ghosts cannot promote elder power where the living do not attach much importance to the ghosts, as among the Nuer, who have no "elders' concerned with the administration of the country."<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, an age class system is a *sine qua non* of gerontocracy, yet some ancestor-worshipping societies lack them. Such systems are far from ubiquitous. They have always been

---

<sup>25</sup>Service, *Primitive Social Organization*, 38, 48–49.

<sup>26</sup>Hart & Pilling, *Tiwi of North Australia*, 111–112; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 79.

<sup>27</sup>E.g., *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology*, ed. Timothy Earle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); *The Transition to Statehood in the New World*, ed. Grant D. Jones & Robert R. Kautz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. Robert L. Carneiro, "The Chiefdom as Precursor of the State," 37–79.

<sup>28</sup>Berndt, "Law and Order in Aboriginal Australia," 204 (quoted).

<sup>29</sup>Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the Lodagaa of West Africa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 18; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan," in *African Political Systems*, ed. M. Fortes & E.E. Evans-Pritchard (London & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), 289 (quoted).

as rare in Eurasia as they have been common in Africa. Outside Africa, age sets and age grades find only limited application. Even in Africa they are not “overwhelmingly important in most societies.” In South America they are found only in Brazil.<sup>30</sup> As noted in Roy Rappaport’s classic monograph *Pigs for the Ancestors*, the ritual/ecological cycle among the Tsembaga of New Guinea revolves around ancestor worship, but there is virtually no social differentiation by age.<sup>31</sup> The Chinese are well-known for ancestor worship, but in traditional China there were no age-grades and “age is not, of itself, a qualification for leadership.”<sup>32</sup>

Note too that ancestor worship is not the cult of the dead in general. People may worship only their own ancestors,<sup>33</sup> which is the spiritual counterpart of household patriarchy, not gerontocracy. Even where the aged form an age group (*i.e.*, a corporate group) and ancestor-worship prevails, the elder class may be assigned ritual rather than political functions, as we have seen, or just put out to pasture.<sup>34</sup> Ancestor worship is even compatible with the custom of killing useless old men like Bookchin. In a cross-cultural study of the role of the aged in 71 societies, there was a *positive* correlation (+.29) between ancestor worship and the practice of killing old men.<sup>35</sup> In the social sciences that is a respectable though not a strong positive correlation, but on Bookchin’s argument, the correlation should be strongly negative.

The purported fact that the aged possess essential technical or ritual knowledge which they turn to political advantage is not universally true. In many societies all adults, subject to gender differentiations, possess all necessary know-how: “Unlike the manufactured capital of industrial society, hunter-gatherer capital stock is knowledge that is freely given and impossible to control for individual advantage.”<sup>36</sup> The aged possess no such special knowledge among the San, where nobody rules. Boys play at hunting from as early as age 3, and receive formal instruction from “older men” (not “old men”) from age 12. The main tracking skills, though, are acquired in the field. Hunters say that it takes a lifetime to learn the country. Thus the aged have no more to teach than other men, and cannot impart the vital skills training gained away from camp.<sup>37</sup> Among the Netsilik Eskimo, “Despite the complexity of articles such as the kayak and the composite

---

<sup>30</sup>Pierre L. van den Bergh, “Age Differentiation in Human Societies,” in *The Sociology of Aging: Selected Readings*, Robert C. Atchley & Mildred Seltzer (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983), 77 (quoted); Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), 227; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1956), 161–162; Bernardi, *Age Class Systems*, 52–53, 62.

<sup>31</sup>Roy A. Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People* (new, enl. ed.; New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1984), 203–304. Rappaport, now deceased, taught the first anthropology course I ever took (1970). He impressed me very much, as did guest lecturer Napoleon Chagnon.

<sup>32</sup>Morton H. Fried, *The Fabric of Chinese Society: A Study of a Chinese County Seat* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), chs. 4–7 (discussion of non-kin rural and urban relationships — no mention of age); Martin C. Yang, *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shantung Province* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947), 184 (quoted).

<sup>33</sup>Wilson, *Good Company*, 122.

<sup>34</sup>Meyer Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on Tallensi Religion*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 22, 76; Raymond Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 27, 90, 227, 279–280 & *passim*; Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society*, 77–78, 98–99 (Arusha); Bernardi, *Age Class Systems*, 52–53 (Masai); Wilson, *Good Company*, 31 (Nyakusa).

<sup>35</sup>Simmons, *Role of the Old in Primitive Societies*, 284. It is interesting that the correlation between hunting and the killing of the old is much weaker, only +.09 — perhaps indirect confirmation of the primitive affluence thesis?

<sup>36</sup>Goody, “Hunter-Gatherers and the Mythology of the Market,” 393.

<sup>37</sup>Lee, “What Hunters Do for a Living,” 36; Lee, *The !Kung San*, 236–237; Lorna Marshall, “The !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert,” in James Lowell Gibbs, Jr., *Peoples of Africa, Abridged* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), 146.

bow, every man had the skills and the tools to be technologically self-sufficient.” Even if the old make themselves useful with their craft skills, as among the Eskimos, once an elderly Eskimo’s children leave the household, the elder will be resented as a burden and encouraged to kill himself, which he is usually willing to do.<sup>38</sup> The only knowledge the aged might monopolize is religious knowledge, as in Australia.<sup>39</sup>

One would think that if this theory were valid, gerontocracy would have “emerged” in all the earliest human societies, which would contradict the ex-Director’s continued belief in primitive egalitarianism. To patch his theory, the Director Emeritus explains that it was “growing knowledge” which the elderly used to take power.<sup>40</sup> But if the growing knowledge was technical, it would have to be shared to be used, and if it was ritual or esoteric knowledge, since the elders have all of it anyway, what difference does it make if it grows or not? Especially since Bookchin would be the first to assert that superstition in any quantity is not knowledge at all.

The hypothesis makes no sense. Even if the elders possessed essential technical knowledge, they would have to transfer that knowledge in order for it to be used for everybody’s benefit, since the elderly are usually, or even by definition, no longer capable of supporting themselves. In other words – Bookchin’s words – “I’ve cited the infirmities and insecurities aging produces in the elderly and their capacity to bring their greater experience and knowledge to the service of their increasing status.” In their decrepitude they need the young at least as much as the young need them; the young are able-bodied and more numerous than the old; and the old men will probably need a feed before the young men need a ritual.<sup>41</sup> Here is a blunt description of the situation in aboriginal Australia, which is gerontocratic if any place is: “Physical weakness with advancing age meant loss of status for practical purposes, whatever religious knowledge a man possessed.” Superannuated men were known by the uncomplimentary term “close-up dead.” Among the Arusha of East Africa, retired elders are “rather pitied by younger men, and even despised as ‘too old for anything.’”<sup>42</sup> Thus the pension scheme the Director Emeritus attributes to elderly primitives fails when it is most needed; they live on charity; nothing remains of their former power.

Respect for the aged has been claimed to be “practically universal,” and a recent cross-cultural study based on the Human Relations Area Files reported respect for the aged in 88% of the sample. But the same study shows that respect does not confer power, as we saw in the Nyakusa case. 42% of the 60 societies were actively supportive of their helpless elderly, but in 26% the aged were forsaken or abandoned and allowed to die, and in another 19% they were killed. Often, then, respect does not even prevent the useless elderly from being killed or left to die.<sup>43</sup> In this respect civilization is no different. Whether the oldster is set adrift on an ice floe, forced into a Victorian

---

<sup>38</sup>Asen Balikci, *The Netsilik Eskimo* (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1970), 4.

<sup>39</sup>Berndt, “Law and Order in Aboriginal Australia,” 174, 181.

<sup>40</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 62.

<sup>41</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 81–82; Simmons, *Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, 105.

<sup>42</sup>Ronald M. Berndt & Cathleen M. Berndt, *Land, Man & Myth in North Australia* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1970), 185–186 (quoted); A.P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Sydney, Australia & London: Angus and Robertson, 1948), 75 (quoted); Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society*, 38 (quoted).

<sup>43</sup>Simmons, *Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, 79 (quoted); Anthony P. Glascock & Susan L. Feinman, “Social Asset or Social Burden: Treatment of the Aged in Non-Industrial Societies,” in Christine L. Fry *et al.*, *Dimensions: Aging, Culture, and Health* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 28, 26.



workhouse on a sub-subsistence diet, or denied costly medical care in a modern nursing home, it amounts to killing him.<sup>44</sup>

The way the elders impose their ideology (we are told) is through control over socialization of the young:

Initially, the medium by which the old create a modicum of power for themselves is through their control of the socialization process. Fathers teach their sons the arts of getting food; mothers, their daughters. The adults, in turn, consult their parents on virtually every detail of life, from the workaday pragmatic to the ritual. In a preliterate community, the most comprehensive compendium of knowledge is inscribed on the brains of the elders. However much this knowledge is proffered with concern and love, it is not always completely disinterested; it is often permeated, even if unconsciously, by a certain amount of cunning and self-interest. Not only is the young mind shaped by the adults, as must necessarily be the case in all societies, but it is shaped to respect the curriculum of the adults, if not their authority.<sup>45</sup>

Every aboriginal parent is a mama's boy or daddy's little girl. No one has ever reported a society in which adults consult their old parents on virtually every detail of life. Although most of the details of everyday life are routine and repetitious everywhere, Bookchin's portrayal is of parents, self-supporting adults, with the know-how and the dependency needs of small children. How many times does anyone need to be told how to plant a yam seed? The images are arresting: the old Eskimo mom buttoning up her son's parka before he goes whaling; the venerable San father reminding his son, as he does every day, to point the spear *toward* the warthog; the Navajo mother, always there for her daughter, telling her to prepare tortillas for dinner, just like last night. It takes at least as much practical information, probably more, to navigate the day in our own society, but only Norman Bates consults his mother on every detail. For the elders to use their "monopoly of knowledge"<sup>46</sup> would be to use it up.

Since their adult offspring are such helpless nitwits, for the aged to control the socialization process they would have to undertake most of the skills training and child rearing, but there are few if any societies in which they have done so. Children are socialized by their parents, often augmented by older children, siblings, aunts and uncles (both real and classificatory), and sometimes even grandparents. In a few societies, grandparents play a significant role in childrearing, but not in the vast majority. At minimum they would have to live in the child's household to do so, as part of an extended family, but many societies — more than half of those in George Peter Murdock's Cross-Cultural Survey — have the nuclear family instead. In the nuclear family, their role in childrearing usually ranges from modest to nil. Thus an early anthropological classic on socialization, *Becoming a Kwoma*, does not even mention grandparents.<sup>47</sup> Bookchin, who believes that ordinary people can manage our complex society without dependency on technocrats, in-

---

<sup>44</sup>Mike Brogden & Jessica Kingsley, *Geronticide: Killing the Elderly* (London & Philadelphia, PA: Kingsley Publisher, 2001), 11.

<sup>45</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 82.

<sup>46</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 79.

<sup>47</sup>George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier Macmillan Limited, 1949), 2; John W.M. Whiting, *Becoming a Kwoma* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press for the Institute of Social Relations, 1941).

consistently believes that ordinary people cannot manage a simple society without dependency on elders.

I have oversimplified Bookchin's complex, inflected account of the emergence of hierarchy. If it were just a matter of waiting on old people hand and foot, the benign if self-serving hierarchy of the old would only be annoying. There had to be other, more culpable makers of the fully realized hierarchy of social class and the state. The elders' form of hierarchy and theirs alone at least began as "benign." For what happened next, the Director Emeritus exonerates the elderly of full responsibility: "Certain strata, such as the elders and shamans and ultimately the males in general, began to claim privileges for themselves," from which the state and the class system duly followed. To this enlarged docket of defendants he adds the final authority figures, the "big men": "When the number of horticultural communities began to multiply to a point where cultivable land became relatively scarce and warfare increasingly common, the younger warriors began to enjoy a sociopolitical eminence that made them the 'big men' of the community, sharing power with the elders and shamans."<sup>48</sup>

Younger men, older men, shamans — that's universal manhood suffrage in the Stone Age! That leaves nobody to dominate but women and children — in which case, the origin of hierarchy is patriarchy — yet the Director Emeritus gasses us: "the sterner features of patriarchy were often absent during this transitional period."<sup>49</sup> All the usual whipping-boys are on the list except the important one: the chief. And by prestidigitation, Bookchin has derived the state, *i.e.*, civil authority, from civil authority, *i.e.*, the state, just as he derived hierarchy from hierarchy.

"Big man" is a term of art and, as such, beyond the ken of a literalist like the Director Emeritus. He makes it sound like big men comprise warrior bands. But big men are individuals, not groups of men, and they need not be warriors. Marshall Sahlins (that name again!) produced the most influential characterization of the big man of Melanesia. His position is not an office — he is a self-made (big) man — and his power is purely personal. He "must be prepared to demonstrate that he possesses the kinds of skills that command respect — magical powers, gardening prowess, mastery of oratorical style, *perhaps* bravery in war and feud [emphasis added]." Above all, he strives to assemble a faction by amassing goods (usually pigs, shell money and vegetable foods) and redistributing them in "public giveaways" which attest to his wealth and generosity. The core of his faction is his household, enlarged by plural marriages and by taking in the socially disconnected, by "finessing" via reciprocity relations with kinsmen, and by placing men under obligations to him near and far. His faction is not a group capable of corporate action: he is center-man to each of his clients individually. It dissolves upon his death, and often collapses sooner, because the big man is competing for power with other big men who are doing the same things. Eventually he fails to reconcile his simultaneous needs to reward his clients and to exploit them.<sup>50</sup> All this is played out in autonomous village communities of several hundred people.

What is the big man's real role in the emergence of advanced hierarchy? He doesn't play one! The chief, the man in the empty chair, is the incipient ruler. The big man's quest for power is structurally self-defeating, which is not the path to the state: "Developing internal constraints

---

<sup>48</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 6 (quoted), 7. Although there is no evidence that chiefs ever supplanted shamans, there is contemporary evidence that shamans may supplant chiefs, as they are doing in South America, where shamans have assumed leadership of indigenous rights movements. Beth A. Conklin, "Shamans versus Pirates in the Amazonian Treasure Chest," *American Anthropologist* 104(4) (Dec. 2002): 1051–1061.

<sup>49</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 7.

<sup>50</sup>Marshall D. Sahlins, "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia," in *Cultures*

the Melanesian big-man political order brakes evolutionary advance at a certain level. It sets ceilings on the intensification of political authority, on the intensification of household production by political means, and on the diversion of household outputs in support of wider political organization.” Other men work for the chief; the big man works for other men (Sahlins calls this “autoexploitation”), which is not the path to class stratification. The system is unstable because it depends upon the big-man’s personalistic success.<sup>51</sup> Big-men do not form a group because they compete with each other. And any “warrior” aspect to the role is incidental and not intrinsically more important than the gardening role or the magical role. It has even been suggested that big men are just fallout from collapsed chiefdoms.<sup>52</sup> In that case, big men could not have been a stage in the emergence of hierarchy because they result from devolution, not development, from evolving hierarchy. There is no known example of a big-man system growing into a chiefdom, and “the prospect of a chiefdom to grow into a state seems much better than that of a ‘Big-Man’ system to grow into a chiefdom.”<sup>53</sup> It is like saying that the “Big Man on Campus” is the origin of the Deanship.

The fun is just beginning: “The bas reliefs of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and later the writings of Plato and Aristotle, leave no doubt [for Bookchin there is always ‘no doubt’] that the precondition for the emergence of tribal ‘big men’ involved not only material sufficiency but cultural inferiority.”<sup>54</sup> This does not even describe the condition of big men, much less their precondition. There is no “cultural inferiority” in a homogeneous tribal culture; for the third time, the Director Emeritus slips the effect in ahead of the cause. This style of reasoning is Hermetic — it is, in Bookchinspeak, mystical: “a consequence is assumed and interpreted as its own cause” (Umberto Eco).<sup>55</sup> And those bas reliefs must be an eyeful. Too bad he doesn’t say where they are. Herodotus might have written something remotely relevant to big men (although he didn’t), but hardly Aristotle, and certainly not Plato. Contempt for “barbarians” does not comport well with ethnological curiosity.

The Director Emeritus, however, is not quite finished:

The most challenging form of social status, however, is probably the power that “big men” gained and concentrated, initially in their own persons, later in increasingly institutionalized “companies” [why the quotation marks?]. Here, we encounter a very subtle and complex dialectic. “Big men” were notable, as we have seen, for their generosity, not only for their prowess. Their ceremonial redistribution of gifts to people — a system for the redistribution of wealth that acquired highly neurotic [sic] traits in the Potlatch ceremonies of the Northwest Indians, where bitter contests

---

*of the Pacific: Selected Readings*, ed. Thomas G. Harding & Ben J. Wallace (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier Macmillan, 1970), 205–210; Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 22–23.

<sup>51</sup>Sahlins, “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief,” 209 (quoted); Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 135–138; Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization*, 293–294.

<sup>52</sup>J. Friedman & M.J. Rowlands, “Notes Towards an Epigenetic Model of the Evolution of ‘Civilisation,’” in *The Evolution of Social Systems*, ed. J. Friedman & M.J. Rowlands (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1977), 213.

<sup>53</sup>Alex T. Strating & T. Christian Uhlenbeck, “An Explanatory Model for Structural Change of a Political System,” in *Private Politics: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to “Big Man” Systems*, ed. Martin A. van Bakel, Renee R. Hagesteijn & Pieter van de Velde (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1986), 143; Edward Ch. L. Van der Vliet, “Big Man, Tyrant, Chief: The Anomalous Starting Point of the State in Classical Greece,” *ibid.*, 118 (quoted).

<sup>54</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 72.

<sup>55</sup>Umberto Eco, “Interpretation and Overinterpretation,” in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 51.

between “big men” led to an orgiastic “disaccumulation” of everything they owned in order to “accumulate” prestige within the community — may have had very benign origins.

Watch out for those benign origins! Whenever the Director Emeritus says “dialectic,” he’s about to tell a whopper. So here’s the sequence: “Everywhere along the way, in effect [sic], conflicting alternatives confronted each community as potential hierarchies began to appear: first, as gerontocracies, later, as individual ‘big men’ and warrior groups.”<sup>56</sup> How does he know the big men didn’t come first? Or, as just suggested, last?

The Northwest Coast potlaches involved *chiefs*, not big men — this was the very distinction explicated in Sahlins’ article, between big men (Melanesia) and chiefs (Polynesia, Northwest Coast). And Bookchin has said so! Elsewhere Sahlins explains that if the external feasting of Northwest Coast chiefs and Melanesian big men are similar as prestige quests, nonetheless “the chief has an entirely different relation to the internal economy.” The chief as lineage head uses lineage resources; the big man has to establish a personal claim by autoexploitation.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, for a big man, his military prowess, if any, is secondary to his generosity, not, as Bookchin would have it, the other way around. Now we are told that the potential hierarchies emerged sequentially: gerontocracy, big man, warrior group. We know where Bookchin thinks gerontocracy came from (and we know better). Where do big men and warrior groups come from? If big men are warriors, they cannot very well emerge from gerontocracies of the enfeebled. Warrior groups presumably come from big men. Where do big men come from?

“From out of the skin of the most able hunter emerged a new kind of creature: the ‘big man,’ who was also a ‘great warrior.’” It follows that warrior groups emerge from, well, warrior groups. By definition, there has always been an ablest hunter in every hunting band such as flourished for 99% of human existence — why after two million years did he finally start to get out of line? The Director Emeritus proceeds to replace one imaginary oath, the “blood oath,” with another one, “oaths of fealty” sworn by “soldierly ‘companions’” (why the quotation marks?) recruited from outside the clan. (I suspect that Bookchin swears a lot.) Whereupon “‘lesser men’ [why the quotation marks?] appeared [out of whose skin this time?] who were obliged to craft his weapons, provide for his sustenance, build and adorn his dwellings, and finally, erect his fortifications and monumentalize his achievements with impressive palaces and burial sites.”<sup>58</sup> The Director Emeritus gave us an explanation, albeit a preposterous one, for the gerontocrat emerging out of the wrinkled skin of the old man. He gives no explanation how or why the big man emerges out of the skin of the hunter. If he was “the most able hunter,” he must have been doing all right already, why rock the boat? What’s his motivation? Personalistic self-advancement at the expense of the community? Bookchin has told us that people don’t think that way in organic societies.<sup>59</sup> If he can’t tell us why they changed their minds, he can’t tell us how hierarchy emerged.

Why does it have to be the *most* able hunter? The *least* able hunter would be the one most motivated to try something he might be better at, like ordering people around. Why a hunter? Why not a gardener? The assumption is gratuitous unless they’re all hunters. But if they’re all

---

<sup>56</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 63.

<sup>57</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 125; Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 137 (quoted); Elman R. Service, *The Hunters* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 3.

<sup>58</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 57.

<sup>59</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 14, 51, 73.

hunters, Bookchin is positing the emergence of ranked society — chiefdom — directly out of band society, which is impossible if only because chiefdoms are “an order of magnitude larger than simpler polities.”<sup>60</sup> Almost (if not quite) all anthropologists and archaeologists believe that chiefdoms emerge only from tribes. The Director Emeritus might be affiliating with the minority view, but it’s more likely he’s oblivious to the issue, or he might have mentioned it.

The big man’s retinue is “drawn from clans other than his own, indeed, from solitary strangers.”<sup>61</sup> How can Bookchin possibly know this? DNA testing? And why not draw men from the big man’s own clan, since they’d be the most likely to sign on with him? Two pages later he tells us that they do!<sup>62</sup> Are there no editors at South End Press? In real life, a big man’s original power base is his household and relations. Once again, the Director Emeritus assumes the consequent. Who but a big man could recruit a military retinue in the first place? As depicted, the big man’s domination commences with sheer brute force. But “difficulties arise from the fact that force is a crude and expensive technique for the implementation of decisions. More importantly, force itself has to depend on interpersonal relationships that are based on something *other* than force.” Bookchin himself admits that even the state can’t rule by brute force alone.<sup>63</sup> Still less can a chief, who does not, in fact, possess any coercive power.<sup>64</sup>

Why should anybody repudiate his sacred blood oath (Chapter 9) for such a dubious venture? And who are these “solitary strangers,” why are they solitary, and if they are solitary (rather than merely shy), how is it possible they’re still alive? Lord Bolingbroke ridiculed Locke for positing pre-political “solitary vagabonds” and “strolling savages.” The mockery, unfairly applied to Locke, fairly applies to Bookchin. Why didn’t the big man’s clan stop his putsch before it started? Two or three weak men can always kill one strong man, as Hobbes remarked: “For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by cofederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himselfe.”<sup>65</sup> These “companions” also allow for bounding over developmental stages, although Bookchin formerly told us that “a leap from tribalism to despotism is an obvious myth.” Without social loyalties or traditions, the companions “can easily be set against the community or reared above it into a coercive monarchy and aristocracy.”<sup>66</sup> That is, these deracinated mercenaries skip over chieftainship and create the state out of communities of several hundred people. No known states are so small. Even in chiefdoms the population is at least one thousand, and usually tens of thousands.<sup>67</sup>

The best way to mock Murray Bookchin is to take him seriously. In a still stateless society of indeterminate socioeconomic form, “lesser men” are crafting the big man’s weapons. While

---

<sup>60</sup>Service, *Primitive Social Organization*, 100, 133; Johnson & Earle, *Evolution of Human Societies*, 265 (quoted).

<sup>61</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 57.

<sup>62</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 59.

<sup>63</sup>Marc J. Swartz, Victor W. Turner, & Arthur Tuden, “Introduction,” in *Political Anthropology*, ed. Marc J. Swartz, Victor W. Turner & Arthur Tuden (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966), 9–10 (quoted); Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 94–95.

<sup>64</sup>Colin Renfrew, *Approaches to Social Archaeology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 204–205; Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 174; Service, *Primitive Social Organization*, 150–151; Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, tr. John & Doreen Weightman (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), 350.

<sup>65</sup>Quoted in Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 96; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 183 (quoted).

<sup>66</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 130 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 60 (quoted).

<sup>67</sup>Timothy K. Earle, “Chiefdoms in Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Perspective,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987), 288.

they're at it, why don't they craft some for themselves? Suddenly — for this is an abrupt break with previous life-ways — yesterday's hunters are today's engineers, architects, masons, carpenters, overseers, etc. The great leap forward is even greater than it seemed at first. The archaeological record has so far identified monumental building only in states.<sup>68</sup> "Hierarchy," according to the Director Emeritus, "did not suddenly explode into prehistory. It expanded its place gradually, cautiously, and often unnoticeably, by an almost metabolic [sic] form of growth when 'big men' began to dominate 'small men' [why the quotation marks?], when warriors and their 'companions' begin gradually to dominate their followers" — their followers or their subjects? — "when chiefs began to dominate the community, and finally, when nobles began to dominate peasants and serfs."<sup>69</sup>

The difference between stone age and iron age economics is that band and tribal peoples produce no surplus, although they could.<sup>70</sup> I cannot imagine how an egalitarian hunter (or gardener, for that matter) could "gradually" out of a face-to-face kinship society recruit an armed force small enough for him to support but large enough for a takeover. If these misfits and strangers can be spared from subsistence activities, the primitive affluence thesis must be true. If not, after their recruitment but before the coup, what does the big man do, tell his men to keep their day jobs? Private plotting could never escape notice in primitive societies where social life is almost entirely public.

Finally, in the last act, the Prince of Denmark appears in the play. "Still another refinement of hierarchy was the transition from the big man," this time defined semi-accurately, "into a quasi-monarchical figure who evokes fear" with his goon squad and pretensions to supernatural power.<sup>71</sup> Thus the chief emerges out of the skin of the big man, but, as with the big man's emergence out of the skin of the hunter, cause and motive are not mentioned. The big man is not explained, nor does he explain anything. All we have is a row of increasingly hierarchal statuses — an array of "alternatives" for the anarchist society shopping, for reasons unstated, for hierarchy. It's hard to imagine that this was a matter of choice, although we do have the Biblical story of the Israelites importuning Samuel to make them a king, "but the thing displeased Samuel," understandably (I Sam. 8: 6). Add the king and the series is complete, but we will never understand why, as His Majesty Alley Oop comes as the culmination of three unexplained transmutations.

Despite the subtitle of *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin has failed to explain the emergence of hierarchy, and he never even tries to explain any prospects of its dissolution. When David Watson confesses his inability to explain the emergence of hierarchy, the Director Emeritus is scathing: "I hate to think how dessicated [sic] social theory would become if all its thinkers exhibited the same paucity of curiosity and speculative verve that this off-handed remark reveals." A prudent agnosticism compares favorably with delusional certitude. Rather would I say, with Malatesta, that "the fact of not knowing how to solve a problem does not oblige one to accept unconvincing solutions."<sup>72</sup>

It's remarkable for an incipient, quasi or partial Marxist to proffer a theory of hierarchy — or anything else, for that matter — which completely ignores economics, technology and demogra-

---

<sup>68</sup>Haas, *Evolution of the Prehistoric State*, 216; Kent V. Flannery, "The Ground Plans of Ancient States," in *Archaic States*, ed. Gary M. Feinman & Joyce Marcus (Santa Fe, NM: American Research Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>69</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 57.

<sup>70</sup>Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, chs. 2–3.

<sup>71</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 59.

<sup>72</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 196 (quoted); *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, ed. Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press,

phy. Bookchin does find it “difficult to not believe that class rule, private property and the State could have emerged, fully accoutred and omnipresent, largely because surpluses made their existence possible.”<sup>73</sup> Although that’s more plausible than saying that class rule, private property and the state emerged because old men felt insecure. What’s even more difficult is to believe that it’s possible to analyse the emergence of chiefdoms and states while ignoring such variables as population size, population density, sedentarism, agriculture, environmental and social circumscription, long distance trade, ecological variation, esoteric wealth, fission, redistribution, external ideologies, food storage, potential for intensification, craft specialization, primogeniture, and irrigation.<sup>74</sup> These are among the concepts, some self-explanatory, some not, which figure in serious contemporary research and argument about the origins of hierarchy.

An anarchist theory of the origins of hierarchy, no matter how many prior stages it conjectures, has to assign unique importance to the onset of *coercive* hierarchy, and recognize the fundamental discontinuity – the unbridgeable chasm – between stateless and state societies. The primitive affluence thesis is true. For farmers, social complexity leads to the loss of personal independence and a lower standard of living: “The essential question is, why do so many people accept from a few a social contract that is clearly disadvantageous? The only conceivable answer is that it is not a matter of choice, but the process that leads to stratification is coercive, mechanistic, and highly predictive.”<sup>75</sup> That answer cannot be found by spinning prehistoric fairy tales which make the creation myths of primitives look plausible by comparison.

To sum up: Murray Bookchin has no theory of the emergence of hierarchy.

Claims of primitive gerontocracy are found in travelogues and older accounts, especially narratives by missionaries or colonial officials, or in early ethnographies based on the memories of nostalgic old men. The Victorians were highly susceptible to interpreting aboriginal phenomena in terms of their own ideologies, such as nationalism (“Take me to your leader!”) and Christianity. The first instinct of colonizers is to “find the chief” – or invent him.<sup>76</sup> In some cases, something like gerontocracy was not observed, it was constructed. British colonial rulers perpetuated Nyakusa chiefs in office much longer than they would have served in precolonial days, and they expanded the power of the Igbo elders in Nigeria.<sup>77</sup> Stories of the Old Testament patriarchs were vividly familiar to Victorians of the respectable classes. Thus Jehovah, after devoting four chapters of the Book of Exodus to dictating rules to the Israelites, continued: “Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.” There are many other references.<sup>78</sup> Bookchin’s faith reflects “the strong gerontocratic prejudice we have inherited from the Judaic tradition.”<sup>79</sup>

---

1977), 43 (quoted).

<sup>73</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 74.

<sup>74</sup>Timothy Earle, “The Evolution of Chiefdoms,” in Earle, ed., *Chiefdoms*, 1–15; Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization*, 71–80.

<sup>75</sup>Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 169; William T. Sanders, “Pre-Industrial Demography and Social Evolution,” in *On the Evolution of Complex Societies*, ed. Timothy Earle (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1984), 15 (quoted).

<sup>76</sup>Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 38.

<sup>77</sup>Nancy Foner, “Age and Social Change,” in Kertzer & Keith, eds., *Age and Anthropological Theory*, 202; Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 38.

<sup>78</sup>Exod. 24:1 (quoted); I Kings 1:1, 1:20, 12; I Chron. 23:1; Numb. 27; Josh. 23, 24; II Sam. 5:4; Simmons, *Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, 109, 116.

<sup>79</sup>Thomas E. Spenser, “A Proposal for Voting Reform,” *Ethics* 78(4) (July 1968), 294 – a well-reasoned proposal for disenfranchising those over 60.

Bookchin does not seem to have noticed that his notion of a short primitive lifespan, discussed below, contradicts his notion of gerontocracy. If, for example, the average lifespan of foragers (the San, let's say) is 30 years, as he says at one point, they don't *have* enough elders for gerontocracy. Adult foragers could not consult their parents about almost every detail of everyday life because nearly all their parents would be dead. To make matters worse, San bands or camps are rather small, 10–30 people, with shifting compositions, including temporary residents. In 1964, the average population of the eight permanent water holes in the Dobe area was 58. In the older age grades, women outnumber men, as they do in all societies,<sup>80</sup> 7 females for 1 male, and it is always male elders who monopolize essential esoteric knowledge if anyone does. The percentage of elderly males (60+) ranged, at three points of time, from 7.8% to 9.1%, with the ratio of children to elders 3:2. On the ex-Director's assumptions, the average water hole would not have even one resident male elder.

Obviously his assumptions are false. Average age of death is always irrelevant, and San elders do not monopolize sacred knowledge. Using real figures — which were available to Bookchin — and using a conservative estimate of 8% male elders, there would only be at most one elder in every other camp. But actual camps vary widely in size, so actually the odds were over two to one against there being a male elder in even the camp with the most people (35). Some camps, of course did include elders.<sup>81</sup> But the point is that Bookchin's vision of male elders indoctrinating boys with gerontocratic values is demographically impossible.

At the tribal level, the residential unit will be larger, in the low hundreds,<sup>82</sup> but mortality might be higher and the children may be required to commence subsistence activity sooner. I can just barely imagine a village of 200 horticulturists with 16 elders indoctrinating 24 or more children, but only apart from the household in something like a school, and *that* I can't imagine at all. Apparently, neither can Bookchin, since he nowhere hints that the old wise men operated schools.

Prehistoric man, according to Bookchin, never lived past age 50. Actually, the remains of a Neanderthal man in his fifties show that his people not only provided his food but specially prepared it for him, much as Janet Biehl must do for the ex-Director. That opinion was based on earlier measures of skeletal aging which were systematically biased.<sup>83</sup> At the Shanidar site in Iraq were found two Neanderthal infants, three young adults, and four older adults, a fossil sample “clearly dominated, in numbers and degree of preservation, by elderly males.” The author cites three other sites containing elderly males.<sup>84</sup> A summary of the data from all the many Neanderthal remains found up to 1961 reveals that 35.8% of them were from 31 to 60 years of age at death.<sup>85</sup> Besides, it is not obvious — if this even matters — that Neanderthals were the ancestors of those now denominated “anatomically modern humans,” namely, ourselves. The experts have debated that question for decades and they still do. For present purposes, it's irrelevant.

---

<sup>80</sup>Hart & Pilling, *Tiwi of North Australia*, 15.

<sup>81</sup>Lee, *The !Kung San*, 42–47, 52–58.

<sup>82</sup>Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 21.

<sup>83</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 121; Douglas E. Crews, “Anthropological Issues in Biological Gerontology,” in *Anthropology and Aging: Comparative Reviews*, ed. R.L. Rubinstein (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 13–14; Clifford J. Jolly & Fred Plog, *Physical Anthropology and Archaeology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 260. In a rapidly moving field like paleobiology it will not do to depend in 1995, as does the Director Emeritus, on a secondary source published in 1979. Bookchin, *SALA*, 46\*.

<sup>84</sup>Erik Trinkaus, *The Shanidar Neanderthals* (NY: Academic Press, 1983), 53.

<sup>85</sup>Vallois, “The Social Life of Early Man: The Evidence of Skeletons,” 223 (Table 2).



In *SALA*, and now again in its sequel, Bookchin indicts the San (standing in for hunter-gatherers) for their brief life-spans. Unlike in *SALA*, Bookchin this time provides a source for his claim that the average San lifespan is 30 years — it is Headland’s old review of Wilmsen.<sup>86</sup> Headland has done no research on the San and provided no reference to anyone who has. In *SALA*, Bookchin left the impression that “Wilmsen and his associates” came up with this figure,<sup>87</sup> but Wilmsen does not even refer to San lifespan, much less purport to estimate it based on his own research. It begins to look as if Bookchin has never read Wilmsen.

Arriving at ages for the San is actually a research problem. The San don’t know how old they are (the usual situation among primitives), and in their own language they can only count to three.<sup>88</sup> The most thorough investigation of San demography was done by Nancy Howell, a member of the Lee/DeVore team, among the Dobe San. Her estimate of life expectancy at birth was 30–35 years.<sup>89</sup> Another study, which I cited in *Anarchy after Leftism*, produced an estimate of 32 years.<sup>90</sup> For the ≠Kade San, Tanaka’s estimate was 40 years.<sup>91</sup> But a San who survives to the age of 15 can expect to live to be 55.<sup>92</sup> Laura Marshall counted 15% of a !Kung population who were over 50.<sup>93</sup> By comparison, the life expectancy for ancient Romans was 20 to 30 years;<sup>94</sup> thus the highest estimate for the civilized Romans is the lowest estimate for the savage San. Just a century ago, American life expectancy was only 40 years. And as the ex-Director remarks, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, “to be in one’s mid-sixties was to be quite elderly.”<sup>95</sup>

Are these statistics appalling? No doubt they are to a sick, scared old man like Bookchin who knows his time is short. Had *he* died at 40, none of his books would ever have been written. It is embarrassingly obvious that his recent tirades are the outbursts of someone in a desperate hurry to perpetuate an ideological legacy he rightly perceives to be in eclipse. He fears the loss of the only kind of immortality he believes in. But his private terror at the prospect of death and disregard is a personalistic demon. There is more to the quality of life than the quantity of life. How much more is strictly a value judgment. Bookchin’s philhellenism fails him here; he should heed Epicurus: “As [the wise man] does not choose the food that is most in quantity but that which is most pleasant, so he does not seek the enjoyment of the longest life but of the happiest.”<sup>96</sup>

According to one of the Grimm’s fairy tales, “God originally set the life span for all creatures at 30 years; finding so long a life wearisome, the ass, the dog, and the monkey had theirs reduced by 18, 12, and 10 years respectively. Only man wished a longer life, and added to his previous span what the others had relinquished. He paid dearly for longevity; at 48 his condition became that of the ass, carrying countless burdens; at 60 like the dog’s, growling toothlessly and dragging

---

<sup>86</sup>Headland, “Paradise Revised,” 46.

<sup>87</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 45–46.

<sup>88</sup>Tanaka, *The San*, 81; Marshall, *!Kung of Nyae Nyae*, 162; Heinz & Lee, *Namkwa*, 244; Fortes, “Age, Generation, and Social Structure,” in Kertzer & Keith, eds., *Age and Anthropological Theory*, 99, 110, 113.

<sup>89</sup>Nancy Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 82.

<sup>90</sup>Black, *AAL*, 111, quoting Melvin Konner and Marjorie Shostack, “Timing and Management of Birth Among the !Kung: Biocultural Interaction in Reproductive Adaptation,” *Cultural Anthropology* 32(1) (Feb. 1987), 12.

<sup>91</sup>Tanaka, *The San*, 86.

<sup>92</sup>Shostack, *Nisa*, 15.

<sup>93</sup>Marshall, *Kung! of Nyae Nyae*, 162 (calculated from Table 4).

<sup>94</sup>Keith Hopkins, “On the Probable Age Structure of the Roman Population,” *Population Studies* 20(2) (Nov. 1966), 263.

<sup>95</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 266.

<sup>96</sup>Epicurus, “Letter to Menoeceus,” in *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*, tr. Russel M. Geer (Indianapolis, IN & New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1964), 55.

himself from corner to corner; and at 70 like the monkey's, a derisory, witless creature."<sup>97</sup> I leave to the reader the amusement of tracking this sequence onto Bookchin's career. Achilles chose a short life as a hero over a long life as a nobody. Pirates preferred a short and merry life to a longer life of drudgery. Some people, as Zapata put it, would rather die on their feet than live on their knees. And some people can pack a lot of life into a short span. If foragers generally live lives of liberty, conviviality, abundance and ease, it is by no means obvious that their shorter, high-quality lives are inferior to our longer, low-quality lives.

Murray Bookchin tells us that it is modern medical technology which is keeping him alive.<sup>98</sup> This is not the best argument for modern medical technology. Most of the maladies which afflict our elders — including hypertension, for which Bookchin receives treatment — are nonexistent among the San.<sup>99</sup> These absent conditions include obesity, coronary and hypertensive heart disease, high cholesterol, and suicide (and homicide is very rare). Viral diseases are unknown among hunter-gatherers.<sup>100</sup> Tuberculosis, unknown in prehistory, "is associated with keeping livestock and living in sedentary or urban centers."<sup>101</sup> Among tribal and band peoples, for example, one would never find a "portly" fellow, short of breath, "a man of sixty or so, bald on top, flatfooted on bottom, wide-assed narrow-minded and slope-shouldered, he resembled in shape a child's toy known as Mr. Potato-Head."<sup>102</sup> That is, one would never find — as here described by Edward Abbey — Murray Bookchin. Judging from *SALA* and "Whither Anarchism?" the Director Emeritus is not enjoying his golden years. Nobody else is enjoying his golden years either.

Lest anyone else panic over the statistics, let's consider what they really mean. In *Anarchy after Leftism* I already pointed out that life expectancy at birth is no measure of how long those who survive infancy, or who reach any particular age, can expect to live.<sup>103</sup> That's why there are jobs for actuaries. Bookchin first fell for this fallacy in *SALA*, and I corrected him in *AAL*; he repeated it in the on-line version of "Whither Anarchism?" and I corrected him again in the shorter pamphlet version of the present essay.<sup>104</sup> Its recommitment to text for a *third* appearance cannot be a mistake. It is a conscious lie, a *recrudescence* of Bookchin's irrepressible Stalinism.

In all human populations, including ours, infant mortality is high relative to the mortality of all other age groups except the very old. In this respect, as Nancy Howell concluded, "the !Kung have an age pattern of mortality more or less like everyone else."<sup>105</sup> Richard B. Lee observed that "the Dobe population pyramid looks like that of a developed country, for example, like that

---

<sup>97</sup>David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 129.

<sup>98</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 249 n. 9.

<sup>99</sup>Shostack, *Nisa*, 15.

<sup>100</sup>C.G.N. Mascie-Taylor, "The Biological Anthropology of Disease," in *The Anthropology of Disease*, ed. C.G.N. Mascie-Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6–7.

<sup>101</sup>Kathleen D. Gordon, "What Bones Teach Us," in *Anthropology Explored: The Best of Smithsonian AnthroNotes*, ed. Ruth Osterweis Selig & Marilyn R. London (Washington, DC & London: Smithsonian University Press, 1998), 89. It is the same for tooth decay. *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup>Edward Abbey, *Heyduke Lives!* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1990), 201. This is "Bernie Mushkin," a barely fictionalized Murray Bookchin, as he appeared at an Earth First! gathering.

<sup>103</sup>Black, *AAL*, 109–111; Hopkins, "On the Probable Age Structure of the Roman Population," 247; Robert Boyd, "Urbanization, Morbidity and Mortality," in *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, ed. Peter J. Ucko, Ruth Tringham, & D.W. Dimbleby (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1972), 345.

<sup>104</sup>Black, *AAL*, 109–111; Bob Black, *Withered Anarchism* (London: Green Anarchist & Eugene, OR: Anarchist Action Collective, n.d.), 17–18.

<sup>105</sup>Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*, 82.

of the United States around 1900.”<sup>106</sup> The high rate of infant mortality depresses the average lifespan, but real people live, not the average lifespan, but their own lifespans. According to the ex-Director, back in the Old Stone Age, “few lived beyond their fiftieth year.” (more recently he says that *no* “human beings survived beyond the age of fifty”).<sup>107</sup> As Nancy Howell discovered, that was not true of the San. Over 17% were over 50; 29% were over 40; 43% were over 30. One San man was approximately 82.<sup>108</sup> In 1988, another anthropologist interviewed at least one San who was in his 90s.<sup>109</sup> According to Tanaka, too, many San live far beyond the age of 40.<sup>110</sup> According to Shostack, a San who lives to be 15 can expect to live to 55, and 10% of the population was aged over 60.<sup>111</sup>

To these figures we may compare those compiled from the tombstones of ancient Romans (n = 4,575) and non-Roman Italians (n = 3,269). Only 10% of the Romans were over 50, compared to 17% of the San; for the Italians it was 18.4%. 16% of the Romans and 22.5% of the Italians were over 40, compared with 29% of the San. 26.7% of the Romans and 18.4% of the Italians were over 30, compared with 43% of the San. For both ancient populations, the life expectancy of persons aged 5–44 was much less than 20 years in every age cohort.<sup>112</sup> The life expectancy for a San at age 15, according to Konner and Shostack, is 40 years. The Roman and Italian statistics, by the way, based on the evidence from tombstones, greatly underestimate mortality, because very few babies under one year old were buried with tombstones. According to United Nations Model Life Tables, which average the life expectancy rates of underdeveloped nations, the first year of life has the highest mortality rate (33.2%) except for the 60–64 cohort (35%).<sup>113</sup> Another historian, whose own tombstone survey produced an estimated lifespan of 30, observed that the population structure of the later Roman Empire resembled that of India in about 1900.<sup>114</sup>

Mortality rates for Bookchin’s revered classical Athens are like the Roman rather than the San figures. A study of 2,022 classical Greek sepulchral inscriptions, where again infants and small children are underrepresented, as children of the very poor may also be, yielded an average life expectancy of 29.43 years — a little lower than the lowest figure, Bookchin’s false figure, for San life expectancy. 42.63% of the sample died before they were 21, and an astonishingly high 64.73% before they were 30. Only 16.43% were over 50 — again lower than the San figure.<sup>115</sup> Death was ever-present: “In the Greek world death was prevalent among persons of all age groups, whether as a result of warfare, accident, or illness or, in the case of women, as a consequence of giving birth.”<sup>116</sup> In fourth-century Athens, only 2% of people *over 18* were over 40,<sup>117</sup> reflecting a much

<sup>106</sup>Lee, *The !Kung San*, 47.

<sup>107</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 46; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 121. Whenever the Director Emeritus amends a former proposition it is always to make it simpler and more extreme, and always without acknowledgment

<sup>108</sup>Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung*, 30, 35; cf. Lee, *The !Kung San*, 44–48.

<sup>109</sup>Patricia Draper & Henry Harpending, “Comment,” *Current Anthropology* 30(1) (Feb. 1990), 128.

<sup>110</sup>Tanaka, *The San*, 86.

<sup>111</sup>Konner & Shostack, “Timing and Management of Birth Among the !Kung,” 12; Shostack, *Nisa*, 15.

<sup>112</sup>Hopkins, “On the Probable Age Structure of the Roman Population,” 252 (calculated from Table 4).

<sup>113</sup>Ibid. (Table 4).

<sup>114</sup>A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* (2 vols.; Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 2: 1041.

<sup>115</sup>Bessie Ellen Richardson, *Old Age Among the Ancient Greeks: The Greek Portrayal of Old Age in Literature, Art, and Inscriptions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 231–234.

<sup>116</sup>Robert Garland, *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 114.

<sup>117</sup>Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology* (Oxford & Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 249.

higher mortality rate than among the San. The high respect the Greeks accorded their elderly reflects the fact that there were not enough of them to be burdensome.

In his celebrated Funeral Oration, Pericles consoled the parents of sons fallen in the war by assuring them that their troubles are almost over: “As for those of you who are now too old to have children, I would ask you to count as gain the greater part of your life, and remember that what remains is not long.”<sup>118</sup> Parents with adult children, in other words, will soon be dead. It occurs to me that many aspects of Greek life — such as war and philosophy — might be illuminated by the fact and the awareness of early death. Ancient philosophers who disagreed about everything else agreed that “fear of death is the supreme enemy of life.”<sup>119</sup> These “appalling” mortality rates have never troubled the Director Emeritus, perhaps because he admires almost everything about classical civilization but despises everything about the San, from their size to their shamanism, but above all, for their anarchism.

---

<sup>118</sup>J. Lawrence Angel, “The Length of Life in Ancient Greece,” *Journal of Gerontology* 2(1) (Jan. 1947), 23; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, tr. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Books, 1954), 150 (quoted).

<sup>119</sup>Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: A Modern Interpretation* (2 vols.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976–1978), 2: 84–87, 85 (quoted).

## Chapter 6. Book Filled with Lies

The latest of the ex-Director's ironic indiscretions is his heavy reliance on Edwin Wilmsen's *Land Filled with Flies* to bash the anarcho-primitivists. In *SALA*, Bookchin asserted an affinity between anarcho-primitivism and post-modernism, with sublime indifference to the fact that post-modernism has no harsher critic than John Zerzan.<sup>1</sup> To any reader of Wilmsen not in thrall to an ulterior motive, Wilmsen is blatantly a post-modernist.<sup>2</sup> One of his reviewers, Henry Harpending, is a biological anthropologist who is charmingly innocent of exposure to PoMo. He had "a lot of trouble" with the beginning of the book, which contains "an alarming discussion of people and things being interpellated in the introduction and in the first chapter, but my best efforts with a dictionary left me utterly ignorant about what it all meant."<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly: the jargon ("interpellation of the subject") is that of Louis Althusser, the structuralist Marxist who went mad and murdered his wife.<sup>4</sup> According to Thomas Headland, Wilmsen-style "revisionism is not just testing and rejecting hypotheses. Partially fueled by postmodernism, it seems to be ideologically driven."<sup>5</sup>

When it was published in 1989, *Land Filled with Flies* created a sensation, as it was meant to. Not only did it debunk the conventional wisdom, it did so as insultingly as possible. Not only did it furnish startling new data drawn from language, archeology and history in addition to fieldwork, it placed them in a pretentious theoretical apparatus. And it seethed with self-righteousness. By not recognizing the San for what they are — an underclass, the poorest of the poor under comprador capitalism — all other anthropologists were ideologically complicit in their subjugation. Since all anthropologists who have lived with the San are strongly committed to some notion of their rights and autonomy, naturally they were infuriated to be castigated as the dupes or tools of neo-colonialism. Rebuttals were soon forthcoming, and the controversy, much abated, continues. But Wilmsen enjoyed a strategic advantage: his quadruple-barreled shotgun attack. His linguistic, archeological, historical and ethnographic researches all converged on the same or on congruent conclusions. In methodology as in morals, Wilmsen is the Stewart Home of anthropology.

Academics are the timid type in the best of circumstances. By temperament they prefer to be the big fish in a pond however small. The phrase "a school of fish" says as much about school

---

<sup>1</sup>John Zerzan, "The Catastrophe of Postmodernism," in *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia & Columbia, MO: Anarchy/C.A.L. Press, 1994), 101–134; John Zerzan, *Running on Empty: The Pathology of Civilization* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2002), 136–139, 165–167.

<sup>2</sup>Headland, "Paradise Revised," 50; Mathias Guenther, "Comment," *Current Anthropology* 31(5) (Dec. 1990), 509; Bicchieri, "Comment," 507; Richard B. Lee, "Comment," in *ibid.*, 511 ("post-modern rhetoric"); Michael S. Alford, "Comment," *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (Aug.-Oct. 1997), 610; Allyn Maclean Stearman, "Comment," in *ibid.*, 623.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Harpending, review of *Land Filled with Flies*, *Anthropos* 86 (1991), 314. He continues: "When I deduced that 'interposing instruments of production between themselves and subjects of labor' (48) meant spearing animals I gave up on the rich language of the theoretical arguments and decided to concentrate on the substance of the book." *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Geraldine Finn, *Why Althusser Killed His Wife: Essays on Discourse and Violence* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 3–9.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas N. Headland, "Reply," *Current Anthropology* 38(4) (August-October 1997), 624.

as it does about fish. Specialization is the source and the limit of the academic's authority. The expert in one subfield, such as ethnography, cannot help but lose self-confidence — something he probably never had very much of — when his certitudes are impeached by researches in three other subfields. He begins to wonder if he can be sure of even the evidence of his own senses (or what he remembers to be such). Wilmsen, by purporting to possess expertise in so many areas, intimidates the experts in all of them — at first, anyway. But scholars have started checking up on Wilmsen, just as anarchists have started checking up on Bookchin, and with similar consequences.

Most of Edwin Wilmsen's observations of 70s San are strikingly unlike the observations of all his dozen-odd predecessors in the field. Previous anthropologists had already reported how abruptly the San foraging life-way was succumbing to pressures ranging from protracted drought to entanglement in counterinsurgency in Southwest Africa to the sedentarizing, nationalizing policies of newly independent Botswana. Nobody denies that most of the San have been forced into the capitalist world-system at its very bottom level — and while it was happening, nobody did deny it<sup>6</sup> — but only Bookchin is obscene enough to enthuse over this particular extension of the development of the productive forces. He doesn't care what happens to people so long as he can turn it to polemical advantage.

Most of Wilmsen's fieldwork was done at a waterhole he calls CaeCae, whose inhabitants he labels, according to how he classifies their "principal production activities," as variously "pastoralist, independent, forager, reliant, and client" — a rather elaborate typology for just 16 households, only 9 of which were San.<sup>7</sup> There's almost a category for every San household, which rather defeats the purpose of categorization. In 1975–1976, only two households (both San) consisted of foragers, people deriving over 95% of their food from hunting and gathering; by 1979–1980, both subsisted on a combination of relief and casual wage-labor. As for the "independents," who owned some livestock but derived over half their subsistence from foraging, there were three households in the earlier period, two in the later.<sup>8</sup> Those in the other households did some hunting, but subsisted mainly by other means. Now even if Wilmsen's findings are accurate, they derive from a ridiculously small sample, 2–5 households at the most, of people who were obviously caught up in a process of proletarianization so accelerated that it would have made Karl Marx's head spin.

I read a bunch of reviews of Wilmsen's book, pro and con, before I read the book itself. Nothing prepared me for the sheer, shocking near-nothingness of its ethnographic database: it was like reading *The Ecology of Freedom*. And nothing Wilmsen says he found in the field, even if true, refutes or even calls into question what previous researchers discovered about far larger groups of San at earlier times and in other places. Wilmsen berates his predecessors for ignoring history (they didn't<sup>9</sup>). But he's the one who has trouble accepting the possibility that, just as the people he studied were living differently in 1980 than they were in 1975, the people that Lee, DeVore,

---

<sup>6</sup>E.g., Lee, *The !Kung San*, ch. 14 ("Economic and Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s"); Richard B. Lee, "What Hunters Do for a Living, or How to Make Out on Scarce Resources," in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter*, 30–48; Mathias G. Guenther, "From Hunters to Squatters: Social and Cultural Change Among the Farm San of Ghanzi, Botswana," in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers*, 120–134. In 1965, the year in which, according to Bookchin, the primitive-affluence thesis was promulgated, Richard B. Lee's dissertation discussed social change among the San. "Subsistence Ecology of !Kung Bushmen," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1965.

<sup>7</sup>Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 225 (quoted), 225–226, 198.

<sup>8</sup>Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 225–226.

<sup>9</sup>E.g., Lee, *The !Kung San*, ch. 3 ("The Dobe Area: Its Peoples and Their History").

Howell, Tanaka and others studied before 1975 might have in a rather short time come to live differently. Marjorie Shostack, whose first visit to the field took place near the end of the Lee/ DeVore project, reported exactly such a transformation:

Although pressures for change were being universally felt in 1969, the time of my first field trip, !Kung traditions still dominated. By the spring of 1975, however, when I made my second field trip, the pace of change had increased and changes could be seen everywhere. Gathered and hunted foods were still in ample evidence, but gardens were being planted, herds of goats were being tended, donkeys were being used to transport food from the bush, and cattle were being bought with money saved from selling crafts. Most of all, the attitude of the people had changed. They were now looking to the agricultural and herding people near them as a model for their future.<sup>10</sup>

Wilmsen is the victim of a tragic fate. He missed the last chance to study a pure hunter-gatherer society. As of 1968, there were only 27 such societies known to be in existence.<sup>11</sup> Today probably all of them are gone.<sup>12</sup> Wilmsen's first monograph was an archaeological reconstruction of a Paleo-Indian site. The occupants were hunter-gatherers, and in explaining their way of life, Wilmsen explicitly invoked *Man the Hunter*.<sup>13</sup> These were the kind of people he wanted to know in the flesh. But when he went to the Kalahari, they were already gone. To persuade himself that he had lost nothing, especially nothing irrecoverable, he persuaded himself and now tries to persuade others that there was nothing there to lose, even if that means dismissing all his luckier predecessors as liars and conspirators. Wilmsen missed the boat. The historian himself needs historicizing.

Among Wilmsen's most controversial claims is for longstanding social stratification among the San and between the San and Bantu-speaking peoples. Since his ethnographic evidence is paltry, he relies mainly on evidence of inequality embedded in the languages of the San and their Bantu neighbors, such as the Herero. Unfortunately for Wilmsen, one of his reviewers, Henry Harpending, actually knows these languages. Wilmsen claims that a word the Herero apply to the San they also apply to their cattle, implying that the San are their chattels. However, the Herero apply the same word to the Afrikaners, and nobody would say that the Afrikaners are the Herero's property. The Herero word implies antagonism, not ownership, just as I do when I say that Freddie Baer is a cow. According to Harpending, Wilmsen derives sociological conclusions from bad puns: "This all, and much more, is fanciful drivel. It is like saying that the people of Deutschland are called 'Germans,' meaning 'infected people,' from the word 'germ' meaning a microorganism that causes illness. Almost every foray into linguistics appears to be entirely contrived, created from nothing, even when there is no reason to contrive anything."

---

<sup>10</sup>Shostack, *Nisa*, 346 (quoted); Kent, "Cultural Diversity among African Foragers," 16–17.

<sup>11</sup>George Peter Murdock, "The Current Status of the World's Hunting and Gathering Peoples," in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter*, 14–20. 10,000 years ago there were only hunter-gatherers; by the birth of Christ, they occupied half or less of the face of the earth; by 1492, 15%. *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup>I may have spoken too soon. There are still hunter-gatherer peoples in New Guinea (four are mentioned) who derive over 85% of their subsistence from foraging. And they are less acculturated than were other hunter-gatherer societies when they were first studied. Paul Roscoe, "The Hunters and Gatherers of New Guinea," *Current Ethnology* 43(1) (Feb. 2002), 158.

<sup>13</sup>Edwin Wilmsen, *Lindenmeier: A Pleistocene Hunting Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), ch. 7.

Yet another “bizarre analysis,” this one drawn from San kinship terminology, Harpending characterizes thusly: “It is as if I were to claim that the English word grandmother refers to a custom whereby old people stay at home and grind wheat for the family bread and that grandmother is really a corruption of grindmother. Of course, if I were to write such nonsense it would never be published. Editors and referees would laugh me out the door because they would be familiar with English. But hardly anyone in Europe and North America is familiar with !Kung and Otjiherero.”<sup>14</sup>

Wilmsen claims that archeology demonstrates — well, let’s let Bookchin say it in his own inimitable way — “The San people of the Kalahari are now known to have been gardeners before they were driven into the desert. Several hundred years ago, according to Edwin Wilmsen, San-speaking peoples were herding and farming [Wilmsen never says they were farmers], not to speak of trading with neighboring agricultural chiefdoms in a network that extended to the Indian Ocean. By the year 1000, excavations have shown, their area, Dobe<sup>15</sup>, was populated by people who made ceramics, worked with iron, and herded cattle ...”<sup>16</sup> These conclusions the Director Emeritus serves up as indisputable facts. That they are not.

Karim Sadr has taken up Richard B. Lee’s exasperated proposal for independent review of all of Wilmsen’s controversial claims.<sup>17</sup> Sadr addresses only the archeological claims, and concludes that they are unsupported by what little evidence is available so far. Wilmsen’s ally Denbow, as Sadr has related, “says that his model is based on over 400 surveyed sites and excavations at 22 localities. The 400 or more surveyed sites, however, provide no relevant evidence. The model is really based on a dozen of the excavated sites, and of these only three have been adequately published.”<sup>18</sup>

One does not have to be an expert to notice how forced and foolish some of the Wilmsenist arguments are. Rock paintings of uncertain age depicting stick figures, supposedly San, alongside cattle are claimed to be evidence that the San at some indefinite past time herded cattle. From this premise — even if true — is drawn the illogical conclusion that the San were working for Bantu bosses who owned the cattle. Why the San were incapable of owning and herding their own cattle is not disclosed. As Sadr says, “the stick figures may be herding or stealing the cattle, or the Bushmen may have received the cattle in fair trade. To stretch the point, maybe the paintings represent wishful thinking. One alternative is as speculative as another.”<sup>19</sup> Besides, as another anthropologist asks: “Has the identity of the rock paintings been unequivocally established?”<sup>20</sup>

Actually, to say that one alternative is as speculative as another may be an unwarranted concession to Wilmsen. Some rock paintings *do* depict San rustling cattle from Bantus. San were stealing Bantu cattle as recently as the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>21</sup> and that was likely

---

<sup>14</sup>Harpending, review, 314.

<sup>15</sup>Sorry to interrupt so compelling a narrative, but Dobe is only a small part of the Kalahari now inhabited by the San. The Dobe area was where Lee, DeVore, Howell and associates focused their research in the 60s and 70s. Obviously Bookchin has not even bothered to read Wilmsen’s book, but at best skimmed it — or had Janet Biehl skim it — to cull quotations as ammunition.

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 44.

<sup>17</sup>Richard B. Lee and Mathias Guenther, “Errors Corrected or Compounded? A Reply to Wilmsen,” *Current Anthropology* 32 (1991): 298–305.

<sup>18</sup>Sadr, “Kalahari Archaeology and the Bushmen Debate,” 105.

<sup>19</sup>Sadr, “Kalahari Archaeology and the Bushmen Debate,” 105.

<sup>20</sup>Bicchieri, “Comment,” 507.

<sup>21</sup>G. Baldwin Brown, *The Art of the Cave Dweller: A Study of the Earliest Artistic Activities of Man* (London: John



not a recent innovation. There are also depictions of San in proximity to cattle which rule out the serfdom theory, for example, showing Bantus offering cattle to a San rain-maker (a much sought after specialist).<sup>22</sup> San could and did herd their own cattle, as some do today. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans saw San with their own cattle.<sup>23</sup> San rock painting goes back at least 10,500 years, and possibly 19,000 to 27,000 years,<sup>24</sup> and forward to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are 2,000 sites, and almost 15,000 paintings.<sup>25</sup> Yet Wilmsen is unable to point to a single painting which unambiguously indicates San subordination to the Bantus.

The main evidence cited to show San “encapsulation” by Iron Age Bantu speakers from the sixth to eleventh centuries is cattle and sheep remains found at San sites in the Kalahari. The proportions, however, are extremely small, like those found in the Cape area where there were no Iron Age chiefdoms to encapsulate foragers. The evidence of all kinds is scanty and inconclusive. San might have been encapsulated at certain times and places, dominant at others. Nothing rules out the possibility “that they may very well have retained their autonomous hunting and gathering way of life until historic times.”<sup>26</sup>

Wilmsen claims that when Europeans perceived hunter-gatherers, they were constructing them as such in accordance with ideological preconceptions. It was the other way around: 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans originated the stereotypes, such as the miserable poverty of the San, which Wilmsen is trying to revive today.<sup>27</sup> But when Herero pastoralists, refugees from a vicious German military campaign in Southwest Africa, passed through the Kalahari in 1904 and 1905, they, too, saw only San who lived entirely by foraging.<sup>28</sup> It is unlikely that these Bantus were readers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Lewis Henry Morgan or Friedrich Engels. It is almost as if the San would have been foragers even if there had been no Europeans to construct them. The San have been reporting to Western ethnographers since 1951, and the memories of some of these informants went back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. None of them remembers or has heard of a time when the San were herders or cultivators.<sup>29</sup> In 1988, Patricia Draper interviewed 13 San whose ages ranged from the 60s to the 90s. Except for one woman who lived in a border area, all these San spent their early childhoods in the bush, with no contact whatsoever with Bantus.<sup>30</sup>

Which brings us to the strictly historical content of Wilmsen’s case. He made more, and more systematic use, of archival evidence than any previous ethnographer of the Kalahari. Identifying these sources and emphasizing their importance may well be his only lasting accomplishment.<sup>31</sup> What he made of them is something else again. Travelers reported seeing “Bushmen with cattle somewhere in the Kalahari in the nineteenth century,” but since nobody ever doubted that

---

Murray, 1928), 220 (Fig. 144); J. David Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (London: Academic Press, 1981), 9 (Fig. 1) (late 19<sup>th</sup> century); Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 136–137.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 105.

<sup>23</sup>Andy Smith, Candy Malherbe, Mat Guenther, & Penny Berens, *The Bushmen of South Africa: A Foraging People in Transition* (Cape Town, South Africa: David Philing Publishers & Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 30.

<sup>24</sup>David Coulson & Alec Campbell, *African Rock Art: Paintings and Engravings on Stone* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 6.

<sup>25</sup>Burchard Brentjes, *African Rock Art* (London: Dent, 1969), 6.

<sup>26</sup>Bicchieri, 111.

<sup>27</sup>Smith, Malherbe, Guenter & Berens, *Bushmen of South Africa*, 28–29.

<sup>28</sup>Harpending, review, 315.

<sup>29</sup>Shostack, *Nisa*, 35.

<sup>30</sup>Harpending & Draper, “Comment,” 128.

<sup>31</sup>Harpending, review, 315.

Bushmen have long been in contact with cattle-raising Bantu,<sup>32</sup> as were foraging Bushmen in the 1960s, this does not prove anything about the Bushman way of life.<sup>33</sup>

The very fact that until the 1970s, some San were still pure foragers *despite* centuries of contact with herders is an objection to Wilmsen's theory, which assumes that contact means subordination. Wilmsen denounces the classical social evolutionists and also those he derides, with questionable cause, as their latter-day inheritors. But he shares with them the assumption that upon contact with the higher, more complex systems of society, the lower, simpler systems are subsumed or else wilt and wither away. To Wilmsen, as to Bookchin, it is unthinkable that foragers might hold their own against herders or farmers. They are, by definition, inferior! Exposure to a higher level of social organization is like exposure to pathogens to which the savages have no immunity. But "contact does not automatically entail the domination and exploitation of peoples that practice hunting-gathering modes of existence." Nor does trade necessarily entail loss of economic autonomy or the abandonment of foraging.<sup>34</sup>

Wilmsen's position begs every question. For all anybody knows, foragers might have dealt with their neighbors from a position of strength. As late as 1850, even 1877 — as Wilmsen informs us — the northern San recognized no outside authority over them, and their Herero neighbors respected their military prowess.<sup>35</sup> If you look at the situation from a purely military perspective, for instance, the foragers had definite advantages over the sedentary Bantu herders. The Bantus permanently occupied villages whose locations were easy for an enemy to ascertain. The San often moved their campsites, taking their scanty personal property with them. The Bantus mainly lived off their cattle, whose whereabouts were easily known, and which could be stolen or killed. The San lived off of wild game and gathered plant food which no enemy could destroy or despoil them of. The Bantus could probably mobilize more manpower for war than the San, but to do what? In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their neighbors did not regard the San as "the harmless people."<sup>36</sup> There's no reason to think that Bushmen and Bantus have, or ever had, some cause of chronic conflict. Wilmsen's own argument holds otherwise. These peoples had some incentive to interact, perhaps some incentive to avoid each other otherwise, but no known incentive to wage permanent war on each other.

It is above all with history that Wilmsen seeks to overawe the anthropologists. His book is very much part of the historical turn the discipline has taken in the last twenty years. "People without history"<sup>37</sup> nowhere exist, of course. Berating other anthropologists as ahistorical possesses a strategic advantage for someone like Wilmsen in addition to its trendiness. When he contradicts the ethnography of a dozen predecessors, they are inclined to retort that either con-

---

<sup>32</sup>Alan Bernard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 40–41.

<sup>33</sup>Harpending, review, 314; Alan Barnard, "Comment," *Current Anthropology* 31(2) (April 1990), 122; Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, "On Subsistence and Social Relations in the Kalahari," *Current Anthropology* 32(2) (April 1991), 55.

<sup>34</sup>Patterson, "Comment," 133 (quoted); Susan Kent, "Comment," *Current Anthropology* 31(2) (April 1990), 132; Solway & Lee, "Foragers, Genuine or Spurious?"; Adams, "Anthropological Perspectives on Ancient Trade," 240.

<sup>35</sup>Wilmsen, *Land Filled with Flies*, 103.

<sup>36</sup>Alluding to a widely read popular account of the life of the San, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959). It was assigned reading in the first anthropology course I took, in 1970. For the San, war is now a thing of the past, but intra-group violence is significant and "homicide is not rare." Lee, *The !Kung San*, 370 (quoted) & ch. 7.

<sup>37</sup>Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

ditions changed or Wilmsen is wrong. It wouldn't be the first time an anthropologist with an ideological agenda went into the field and saw what he wanted to see.<sup>38</sup> But if Wilmsen was a latecomer, indeed a too-latecomer to the field, he was almost a pioneer in the archives where time is on *his* side. If the others point to the 1960s, he can point to the 1860s. Take that! But there is a crucial disadvantage too. There is no returning to the ethnographic 1960s, but the archival 1860s are available for others to visit. Wilmsen's critics did research his sources, as I researched Bookchin's, and with the same devastating results.

Richard B. Lee and Mathias Guenther sought out the traders' and travelers' diaries (in English, German and Afrikaans), the maps, the letters and the other sources on which Wilmsen relied to prove that the remote arid region of the Kalahari where the Lee/DeVore anthropologists found foraging San a century later was a major trade crossroads in the mid-nineteenth century. The Dobe area, according to Wilmsen, "pulsed" with commercial activity in which Europeans, Bantus and San were all heavily involved. On this account the San, however, were herders, not hunters — they were the serfs of the Bantus whose cattle they tended — and when disease decimated the cattle in the late nineteenth century, the San lost their livelihoods and were forced into the desert to forage ("literally devolved, probably very much against their will," in the ex-Director's learned words). Even *a priori* there was reason to doubt this remarkable discovery. As Harpending writes: "There is more trade through Xai Xai than anywhere in South Africa! Yet Xai Xai is perhaps the most remote isolated place I have ever visited. I am ready to believe that the occasional trader showed up at Xai Xai, but I am not ready to believe that it was ever a hub of major trade routes."<sup>39</sup>

According to Wilmsen, the records left by European traders confirm their commercial activity in the Dobe area. But not according to Lee and Guenther.<sup>40</sup> Repeatedly, the diaries and maps cited by Wilmsen to place these Europeans in or near the Dobe area actually place them hundreds of kilometers away. In fact, the Europeans say that they went well out of their way to avoid the area. It was unmapped — all the maps Wilmsen refers to display the Dobe area as a big blank spot — its commercial potential was limited, and its inhabitants, who were mostly the then-numerous San, were known to be warlike and hostile to intruders.

The chicanery doesn't end there. Wilmsen's linguistic flimflammy, previously noted, isn't confined to obscure African languages where he might hope to get away with it. He mistranslates German too. One of his most highly-hyped findings is in a German-language source which, he claims, identifies "oxen" at an archeological San site. The German word quoted actually means onions, not oxen. Lee and Guenther also adduce other mistranslations. In self-serving ways Wilmsen inserts words which clearly have no counterparts in the German originals, usually for the purpose of faking evidence of ethnic stratification.

The Post-Modernist fad in anthropology, and possibly elsewhere, is now blowing over.<sup>41</sup> Revisionism in the extreme form espoused by Wilmsen is untenable, but nothing less extreme debunks the primitive-affluence thesis as Bookchin has caricatured it. The reader will by now be weary of

---

<sup>38</sup>Such as, notoriously, Margaret Mitchell. Derek Freeman, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: A Historical Analysis of Her Samoan Research* (Oxford, England & Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Derek Freeman, "Was Margaret Mead Mised or Did She Mised on Samoa?" *Current Anthropology* 41(4) (Aug.-Oct. 2000): 609-616; Martin Orans, *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman, and the Samoans* (Novato, CA: Chandler & Sharp Publishers, 1996).

<sup>39</sup>Harpending, review, 314-315.

<sup>40</sup>Richard B. Lee and Mathias Guenther, "Problems in Kalahari Historical Demography and the Tolerance of Error," *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 185-235.

<sup>41</sup>E.N. Anderson, "New Textbooks Show Ecological Anthropology Is Flourishing," *Reviews in Anthropology* 31(3) (July-Sept. 2002), 240; John Zerzan, "Why Primitivism?" (unpublished MS., 2002), 3, 7 n. 17. As early as 1997, in the opin-

!Kung calorie-counting and kindred esoterica: and Bookchin is counting on it. He deploys an argument almost as persuasive as the argument from force, namely, the argument from boredom. Anything you say, Murray, just don't say it to me! Anyone ever involved with a leftist group knows the school where Bookchin learned "process." Bookchin's perverse paradise is precisely this pathology generalized.<sup>42</sup> The winner of every argument is the guy who won't shut up, the Last Man Grandstanding.

---

ion of Richard Rorty, the "term post-modernism, has been ruined by over-use," and he advised its abandonment. Richard Rorty, *Truth, Politics and "Post-Modernism"* (n.p. [Amsterdam, Netherlands]: Van Gorcum, 1997), 13.

<sup>42</sup>Black, *AAL*, 66–70.

## Chapter 7. Primitivism and the Enlightenment

In his prime, Bookchin could be a harsh critic of the Enlightenment, or, as he invariably referred to it, “the bourgeois Enlightenment.”<sup>1</sup> Now his only criticism is that with respect to primitive society, it wasn’t bourgeois enough. As he now sees it, the Enlightenment, which fought for reason and progress in its own society, inconsistently tolerated and even celebrated stagnant, backward, ignorant and superstitious primitive peoples. In this as in so many other ways, it is Bookchin’s project to perfect and complete the essentially rational and progressive project of the bourgeois Enlightenment. He always understands what people are doing better than they do.

“There is nothing new,” the Director Emeritus intones, “about the romanticization of tribal peoples. Two centuries ago, denizens of Paris, from Enlighteners such as Denis Diderot to reactionaries like Marie Antoinette, created a cult of ‘primitivism’ that saw tribal people as morally superior to members of European society, who presumably were corrupted by the vices of civilization.” Actually, two centuries before they were both dead. Bookchin makes it sound like they were collaborators. If there was a Parisian cult of the primitive, the airhead Marie Antoinette (d. 1793) had no part in creating it. Her cult of choice was Catholicism. Denis and Marie never met. And, as so often with Bookchin, the quotation marks around “primitivism” do not identify a quotation, they imply disapproval — an abuse, especially rife among Marxists, which I have already protested.<sup>2</sup> Quotation marks could not properly be used here because the English word “primitivism” and its French cognate did not enter those languages until the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Am I quibbling about dates and details? Doesn’t the Director Emeritus? This guy claims to discern the directionality, not only of human history, but of natural history. How can he tell where history is going if he doesn’t know where it’s been, or even when?

Bookchin misdates the romanticizing of the primitive not by years but by centuries and, in the Garden of Eden version, by millennia. The noble savage wasn’t dreamed up at a Parisian salon. Although it is not quite primitivism, the pastoral ideal goes back to Bookchin’s dream-world, the urban-dominated world of classical antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Hesiod and Ovid wrote of an original Golden Age.<sup>5</sup> Primitivist ideas were expressed in the Middle Ages. The German barbarians of Tacitus are likewise noble and free. European notions of a specifically primitive freedom, virtue and comfort are at least as old as extensive European contacts with primitive peoples, especially

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 195, 197.

<sup>2</sup>Black, *AAL*, 38, quoting Theodor W. Adorno, “Punctuation Marks,” *The Antioch Review* (Summer 1990), 303.

<sup>3</sup>*The Oxford English Dictionary* (2d ed.; 20 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 12: 486, q/v “primitivism”; *Grand Larousse de la langue française* (7 vols.; Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1976), 5: 4629, q/v “primitivisme.”

<sup>4</sup>Gay, *Enlightenment*, 2: 92–94; Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 17–18; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 19–24. “In Elizabethan writing the distinction between primitive and pastoral styles of life is often blurred, and devices first used by Theocritus and Virgil appear in many descriptions of the new continent.” Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 39.

<sup>5</sup>*Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), q/v “Primitivism.”

in the Americas. They were Columbus' first impressions of the Indians, and the first impressions of Captain John Smith in Virginia. Neither of these conquistadors was by any stretch of the imagination an Enlightenment humanist. In 1584, a sea captain working for Sir Walter Raleigh scouted the coast of Virginia. He saw it as a garden of "incredible abundance" whose inhabitants were "most gentle, loving and faithfull, voide of all guile and treason, and such as live after the manner of the golden age."<sup>6</sup> Peter Martyr (1459–1526) relied on the accounts of his voyages by Columbus in composing an influential account of Amerindian primordial innocence. The Indians remained the *locus classicus* of the noble savage until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

Montaigne's celebrated essay on cannibals (1580) is "one of the fountainheads of modern primitivism." It influenced Shakespeare, among many others, who even lifted some of its actual words.<sup>8</sup> In *The Tempest* (1611), the "honest old Councillor" Gonzalo envisages Prospero's enchanted island – under his own self-abolishing rule – as an anarchist, communist, amoral, libertine, pacific, primitivist, zerowork commonwealth, a place not to repeat the mistakes of civilization.<sup>9</sup> I am not claiming Shakespeare was a primitivist; he is sceptical, perhaps mocking here. But he is also a sensitive witness that one pole of the European perception of primitives was already primitivist in 1611. Serious utopias too, like Francis Bacon's, "now could be plausibly located in America. In their good order, just government, supportive society, peaceful abundance, and absence of greed, vice, and private property, these happy social constructions, situated by their authors in the New World, served as the antithesis of the Old."<sup>10</sup> Accurate or not, these impressions indicate an attraction for the primitive which long antedates the eighteenth century.

And is it so unthinkable that some of these early-contact impressions, formed before European aggression and spoliation embittered relations with the Indians, might be true? Several historians – historians, mind you, not anthropologists – believe that they are.<sup>11</sup> That there is nothing new about an idea does not mean that there is nothing true about it. What the Director Emeritus does not appreciate is that the primitivists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, notably Rousseau, believed that mankind could *not* return to the primitive condition. As Rousseau wrote: "For it is by no means a light undertaking to distinguish properly between what is original and what is artificial in the actual nature of man, or to form a true idea of a state which no longer exists, perhaps never did exist, and probably never will exist; and of which it is, necessary to have true ideas, in order to form a proper judgment of our present state."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University, 1948); "Primitivism," 36–37; Krech, *The Ecological Indian*, 18.

<sup>7</sup>George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1987), 18.

<sup>8</sup>*The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, tr. George B. Ives (3 vols.; New York: The Heritage Press, 1946), 1: 271–288; Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 49. Montaigne was reacting to accounts of Brazilian Indians; he even interviewed one through a translator. The first English translation of the *Essays* (1603) happens to be the only book which Shakespeare is known to have owned. *Essays*, 3: 1654–1655.

<sup>9</sup>William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, II. 1. 143–160; Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 48–49.

<sup>10</sup>Jack P. Greene, "America and the Creation of the Revolutionary Intellectual World of the Enlightenment," in *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Charlottesville, VA & London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 353.

<sup>11</sup>Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 61–71; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 48–57; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), ch. 1. Anthropologists have drawn similar conclusions from historical sources, among them Clastres, *Society Against the State*.

<sup>12</sup>Gay, *Enlightenment*, 2: 95, 538; Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: Renaissance to Roman-*

Of all the things Bookchin does badly, intellectual history may be the worst. He is so balled up with anti-religious rage that he is hardly capable of an accurate statement about the history of religion. At one point — actually, at too many points — he castigates David Watson for thinking that civilization as such represents regression for humanity. The ex-Director makes the obvious comparison to the Garden of Eden story, with which I find no fault except for its banality. He should have left it at that. Everything he goes on to say reveals him as an ignorant bigot.

“This sort of rubbish,” the Director Emeritus continues in his usual dispassionate voice, “may have been good coin in medieval universities.”<sup>13</sup> Medieval universities were urban institutions. Evidently Bookchin is unfamiliar with their curricula. Aristotle is the ex-Director’s favorite philosopher, and “the authority of Aristotle was supreme throughout this [the 12<sup>th</sup> century] as well as the later medieval period.”<sup>14</sup> The universities soon taught the Thomist interpretation of Aristotelian teleology, to which Bookchin’s dialectical naturalism is much closer than it is to the mechanistic philosophy of his revered Enlightenment. Official Christianity was never anti-urban or anti-civilization. Christianity originated in the urban-dominated Roman Empire, and its original appeal was in the cities, not the countryside — the word “pagan” derives from the same root as the word “peasant.” Saint Augustine would not have written of the City of God if he thought God had something against cities. Where previous religions had been particularistic, “the Heavenly City — for Augustine, its early voice in the universal Church — melds all diversity among peoples, ‘all citizens from all nations and tongues [into] a single pilgrim band.’” Sez who? Murray Bookchin. After the fall of Rome, “the Christian church preserved the language of the polis ... Even heaven was conceived to be a city-state.”<sup>15</sup>

Christian orthodoxy has never interpreted human history or destiny as the recovery of the primal innocence preceding the Fall. That was the teaching of anarchic heretics like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Adamites, the Diggers and the Ranters. Rather, orthodox Christianity, like Marxism and Bookchinism, is forward-looking, eschatological. The Kingdom of Heaven is not the Garden of Eden restored, it’s the City of God, the ultimate polis, except that a loving Lord as a special dispensation for the saved excuses them from attending town meetings. In the Commune of Hell, attendance is obligatory for all eternity. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant tendency in religious thought was to regard the Fall as an “episode in prehistory” marking the origin of human society, and not such a bad thing after all.<sup>16</sup>

So here’s the ex-Director’s *next* sentence: “But in the late Middle Ages, few ideas in Christian theology did more to hold back advances in science and experimental research than the notion that with the Fall, humanity lost its innocence.”<sup>17</sup> Try as I have, I am unable to understand why the notion that humanity lost its innocence should retard scientific progress. So far as I know, no historian has ever said so. And I’m unaware that anyone in the later Middle Ages was even trying to conduct experimental research, aside from the alchemists. That is why it was possible

---

*ticism* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 145; Jean Jacques Rousseau, “A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,” in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, tr. G.D.H. Cole (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company & London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1950), 190–191 (quoted).

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 171.

<sup>14</sup>Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F.M. Powicke & A.B. Emden (3 vols.; Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1987), 1: 38.

<sup>15</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 159–160, 160 (quoted); Richard Mackenney, *The City-State, 1500–1700: Republican Liberty in an Age of Princely Power* (London: Macmillan Education, 1989), 2 (quoted).

<sup>16</sup>Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 102.

<sup>17</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 171.

to publish, in eight volumes, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*.<sup>18</sup> The distinction is relatively recent.

Presumably, if the fall-from-innocence idea retarded scientific and technological progress in the late Middle Ages, it must have done so throughout the Middle Ages. That nearly reverses the reality. Scientific progress, it is true, was slowed by the prevailing ideology — not by Christianity, but by ideas inherited from pagan classical antiquity, from urbanites like Aristotle, Galen and Ptolemy.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, there was rapid technological progress, unlike the stagnation of Greek and Roman times. From the standpoint of invention, “the period of more than a thousand years that spans the gap between early Greek and late Roman civilization was, to say the least, not very productive.”<sup>20</sup> The Latin Christian world fostered one innovation after another throughout the Middle Ages. The mold-board plough opened up vast new territories for farming. Three-field rotation greatly increased agricultural productivity. Other innovations included the windmill, the clock, the nailed horseshoe, and advances in shipbuilding and navigation destined to transform the world. Military technology, especially, progressed by invention and adoption: heavy armored cavalry, the stirrup, the longbow, the crossbow, artillery, firearms, stone castles, etc. Kropotkin paid tribute to the inventiveness of the period.<sup>21</sup> Eyeglasses, which the ex-Director wears, were invented by an Italian cleric in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Architecture surpassed its classical limitations — Bookchin’s beloved Athenian polis could never have built Notre Dame. And it was during the Middle Ages that the foundations of the Scientific Revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were laid.<sup>23</sup> Yet Bookchin can speak of “a nearly Neolithic technology in the late Middle Ages”! That would put Classical Greece in the Old Stone Age — which is going only a little too far: basic Greek technology was fixed early in the archaic, pre-polis period.<sup>24</sup>

Nor is it the case that technical advances were achieved despite superstition and ecclesiastical resistance. On the contrary, the cultural presuppositions of Western Christianity were a cause, arguably the most important cause, of technological innovation:

The Latin Middle Ages ... developed an almost entirely affirmative view of technological improvement. This new attitude is clearly detectable in the early ninth century, and by 1450 engineering advance had become explicitly connected with the virtues: it was integral to the ethos of the West... Medieval Europe came to believe that technological progress was part of God’s will for man. The result was an increasing thrust of invention that has been extrapolated, without interruption or down-curve, into our present society.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (8 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1929–1958).

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300–1800* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: The Free Press, 1957), ch. 4.

<sup>20</sup>K.D. White, *Greek and Roman Technology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 172 (quoted); Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 107, 121..

<sup>21</sup>Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1962); Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 23–24.

<sup>22</sup>Lynn Townsend White, *Medieval Religion and Technology: Collected Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 3.

<sup>23</sup>Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science, 1300–1800* (rev. ed.; New York: The Free Press, 1957), 7–8.

<sup>24</sup>Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 107.

<sup>25</sup>White, *Medieval Religion and Technology*, 235–253, 261–262 (quoted).



As Lewis Mumford says, in technological innovation, “the contribution of the monastery was a vital one. Just because the monks sought to do away with unnecessary labor, in order to have more time for study, meditation, and prayer, they took the lead in introducing mechanical sources of power and in inventing labor-saving devices.”<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 246. To rub it in: “The monastery was a new kind of polis.” Ibid.

## Chapter 8. The Spectre of Shamanism

The Sage of Burlington continues: “One of the Enlightenment’s great achievements was to provide a critical perspective on the past, denouncing the taboos and shamanistic trickery that made tribal peoples the victims of unthinking custom as well as the irrationalities that kept them in bondage to hierarchy and class rule, despite [?] its denunciations of Western cant and artificialities.”<sup>1</sup> Mopping up this mess will take me awhile. But briefly: primitive peoples don’t *have* class rule — according to Bookchin the Younger.<sup>2</sup>

Having credited, or rather discredited, the Enlightenment with inventing primitivism, the Director now credits it with refuting primitivism by denouncing the tabus and tricky shamans holding tribal peoples in bondage. But how would “a critical perspective on the past” bring about these insights? 18<sup>th</sup> century Europeans had little interest in and less knowledge of the histories of any tribal peoples except those mentioned in the Bible and the classics.<sup>3</sup> They wouldn’t have been able to learn much even if they wanted to. They were barely beginning to learn how to understand their own histories. Anything resembling what we now call ethnohistory was impossible then. Bookchin implies that the Age of Reason was the first historicist period. In fact it was the last period which was not.

The Enlightened ones posited a universal, invariant human nature. People are always and everywhere the same: only their circumstances are different.<sup>4</sup> The philosophes proceeded much as Bookchin does: “The records of all peoples in all situations had to be ransacked empirically to verify those constant and universal principles of human nature that natural reason declared were self-evident.”<sup>5</sup> The same circumstances always determine the same behavior, according to Hume: “It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions.” A politician in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain or America, for instance, will act the same way as an Athenian or Roman or Florentine politician acted, as reported by Thucydides, Livy or Machiavelli (who, by the way, made this same observation<sup>6</sup>), in the same situation. One constantly comes upon statements like this one by Montesquieu: “Modern history furnishes us with an example of what happened at that time in

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Marxism, Anarchism*, 171.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 7, 89.

<sup>3</sup>This continued to be true of the evolutionary social theorists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Henry Maine and Emile Durkheim. Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, 268.

<sup>4</sup>Hampson, *Enlightenment*, 109; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1945), 83–84.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York & London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), 8.

<sup>6</sup>Niccolo Machiavelli, “The Discourses,” in *The Prince & The Discourses* (New York: The Modern Library, 1940), 216, 530. This is not a coincidence. In recent years, scholars have demonstrated that Machiavelli stands in the fore of a republican tradition of political thought which heavily influenced 18<sup>th</sup> century Americans. J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

Rome, and this is well worth noting. For the occasions which produce great changes are different, but since men have had the same passions at all times, the causes are always the same.”<sup>7</sup> So really there was nothing to learn from the primitives. They were merely contemporary confirmatory examples of a stage of society already familiar from Homer and Hesiod and Tacitus and the Old Testament. The Director Emeritus inexplicably denounces this view as “sociobiological [sic] nonsense.”<sup>8</sup>

Bookchin overdoes everything, but his philippic against shamanism attains a new plateau of epileptoid frenzy worthy of a Victorian missionary. Were it not for his demonstrable ignorance of all the literature on shamanism, I might suspect him of having heard of anthropologist George Foster’s characterization of magical healing systems as “personalistic.”<sup>9</sup> Clearly he has no idea that shamans are known in most cultures, or that shamanism obsessed his revered Enlightenment: Diderot, Herder, Mozart and Goethe “each, in his own way, absorbed material from the shamanic discussion that was raging and used what he took to give shape to his own special field of endeavor.”<sup>10</sup>

“Shamanistic trickery” is the crudest kind of soapbox freethought cliché. Some primitive peoples have no shamans to dupe them. Many are not in thrall to supernatural fears; some have an opportunistic, even casual attitude toward the spirit world. Shamans — healers through access to the supernatural — aren’t usually frauds (though there are quacks in any profession): they believe in what they do.<sup>11</sup> And what they do does help. Medical science is taking great interest in their medications.<sup>12</sup> Beyond that, shamans alleviate the suffering of victims of illness by providing an explanation for it. American physicians serve the same shamanistic function, as they are well aware. Indeed, until recently, that was almost all they did which benefited the patient, as pointed out by thinkers as disparate as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Ivan Illich. Psychoanalysis,

---

<sup>7</sup>Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, tr. David Lowenthal (NY: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1965), 26.

<sup>8</sup>“Interview with Murray Bookchin,” 172. David Hume a sociobiologist! The Founding Fathers sociobiologists!

<sup>9</sup>George Foster, “Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems,” *American Anthropologist* 78(4) (Dec. 1976), 778–779.

<sup>10</sup>Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3, 16 (quoted). The shaman “is a ubiquitous figure in the religious life of the world.” Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966), 125–126.

<sup>11</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company and London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Company, 1926), 284; Elkin, *Australian Aborigines*, 204–205; R.H. Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folk-Lore* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 192–193. Eskimo shamans, who are really over the top, believe in their magic. D. Janness, *The Life of the Copper Eskimos* (New York & London: John Reprint Corporation, 1970), chs. 1–16; Knud Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglylik Eskimos* ([Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921–1924]), 7:1; Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1929), ch. 5.

For five years of his life, over a 30-year period, and on over 20 occasions, anthropologist Napoleon A. Chagnon has lived among the Yanomamo, warlike horticultural Indians who live in Venezuela and Brazil. Their shamans, who undergo a rigorous year of preparation (including celibacy and near-starvation), enjoy no special privileges and clearly believe in their own healing powers derived from (drug-assisted) access to the spirit world. Napoleon A. Chagnon, *Yanomamo* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1992), 116–119.

<sup>12</sup>Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 51–52. “[T]he current *U.S. Pharmacopia*, used by druggists to compound medicines, contains 170 ingredients whose medicinal properties were discovered and used by native Americans.” James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial America* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 158.

after all, is secular shamanism.<sup>13</sup> By now, “many anthropological studies have documented the effectiveness of a range of medical systems of tribal, peasant, and other peoples.”<sup>14</sup>

To claim, as some shamans do, that they have flown through the air, experienced incarnation as an animal and so forth, they’d have to be crazy, right? Well, some of them *are* crazy — by our standards. In some of the many societies more humanistic than ours, psychotics aren’t mocked or feared or warehoused, they are cherished for their gift of altered states of consciousness — and recognized as shamans. Their mystical experiences, although they may be indistinguishable from schizophrenia, are socially valued.<sup>15</sup> The delusional are sincere. To believe the missionary caricature of shamanism — which is little more than disparaging the competition — requires imputing such a level of credulity to primitives that it is amazing they kept the human race going all by themselves for so long. As Robert H. Lowie explains, shamans have often used their magic for personal gain, but “the shaman’s security is often quite illusory,” because of the threat of vindictive relatives, “and in not a few regions the fees paid to a shaman are far from generous.” Bookchin himself has noted how hazardous the role can be,<sup>16</sup> but not how that undercuts his argument.

The Director Emeritus is so apoplectic about shamans that he even accuses David Watson of being one!<sup>17</sup> He may suspect that Watson is to blame for his poor health. Or perhaps he is displacing his dissatisfaction with his own Western medical care onto shamans. So ranting, repetitious and rancorous is the ex-Dean’s diatribe, which is over the top even for him, that one suspects a personalistic motive. My research has disclosed a possibility. In 1983, a great Alaskan Eskimo shaman named Tikigaq claimed to have killed Joseph Stalin in March 1953 by malefic magic.<sup>18</sup> (Perhaps this was revenge for the savage persecution of Eskimo shamans in the Soviet Union<sup>19</sup> — anti-shamanism is another prejudice the Director Emeritus still shares with his

---

<sup>13</sup>Megan Biesele & Robbie Davis-Floyd, “Dying as Medical Performance: The Oncologist as Charon,” in *The Performance of Healing*, ed. Carol Laderman & Marine Roseman (New York & London: Routledge, 1996), 314; Rousseau, “A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,” 204–205; Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (New York: Random House, 1976), 15–22; Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, tr. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (2 vols.; New York: Basic Books, 1979), 1: 204; Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, 158. Biesele did her field-work among the San.

<sup>14</sup>Daniel E. Moerman, “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing,” *Current Anthropology* 20(1) (March 1979), 59.

<sup>15</sup>Julian Silverman, “Shamans and Acute Schizophrenia,” *American Anthropologist* 69(1) (Feb. 1967): 21–31. “Everyone knows that primitive peoples honored or still honor the expression of mental abnormalities and that the highly civilized peoples of antiquity [!] were not different from them in that respect; nor are the Arabs today.” André Breton, “The Art of the Insane, the Door to Freedom,” *Free Rein*, tr. Michel Parmentier & Jacqueline d’Ambrose (Lincoln, NE & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 219. “Recent studies suggest a physiological basis for shamanic ecstasy.” Lola Romanucci-Ross, “The Impassioned Knowledge of the Shaman,” in *The Anthropology of Medicine: From Culture to Method*, ed. Lola Romanucci-Ross, Daniel E. Moerman, & Lawrence W. Tancredi (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Westport, CT & London: Bergin Garvey, 1997).

<sup>16</sup>Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Religion* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1948), 335 (quoted); Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, 284; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 59. Among the Jívaro, an unusually violent and vindictive people, shamans were more frequently exposed to revenge attacks than anyone else; in large tribes, they are almost continually threatened or assassinated. Rafael Karsten, *Blood Revenge, War, and Victory Feasts Among the Jibaro Indians of Eastern Ecuador* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1923), 9.

<sup>17</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 211, 254.

<sup>18</sup>Tom Lowenstein, “Introduction” to Asatchaq, “*Things that Were Said of Them*”: *Shaman Stories and Oral History of the Tikigaq People* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), xviii.

<sup>19</sup>Caroline Humphrey with Urgonge Onon, “Introduction” to *Shamans and Elders: Experience, Knowledge, and Power Among the Daur Eskimos* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1. Shamans and elders: an unbridgeable chasm?

Stalinist mentors.) At one time I might have attributed Bookchin's attitude to envy. Now I think he's worried he might be next.

Bookchin appears to derive his notions of primitive religion from the Tarzan movies. The benighted primitives, he believes, are the manipulated dupes of their shamans ("witch-doctors" would better convey Bookchin's meaning). There is no indication that Bookchin even knows what a shaman is. A shaman heals by drawing on supernatural power. It is not obvious how such a skill is translatable into political power, in societies without power politics. In any event, some primitive societies have no full-time religious specialists. They are seldom found among foragers. Instead, there are part-time practitioners who derive their subsistence from the same activities as other adults. Many receive little remuneration and are hard put economically.<sup>20</sup>

Access to shamanic power may be widespread, even granting that where there are shamans the old are almost always among them. Among Australian Aborigines, "any adult member of the tribe (including women) can practise some forms of black magic, and this is true whether they are supposed to be sorcerers [= shamans] or not." Thus among the Walbiri, almost any man over 30 might be a medicine man.<sup>21</sup> Among one group of !Kung San, half the older adult men and one-third of the women "learn to !kia," and the San themselves view this as a manifestation of their cherished egalitarianism.<sup>22</sup> Among other San studied in the 1950s, out of 45 men, 32 were practicing healers, 9 were old men retired from healing, and only 4 were without the gift: "It is rare to find a man among the !Kung who is not a medicine man."<sup>23</sup> The healing power is traditionally shared, not sold, since its activation in one person stimulates its activation in others.<sup>24</sup> Among the Tikopia, in principle anyone can practice magic, and there are no specialists, although certain forms of magic are appropriate to certain social ranks. Among the Yanomamo, a tribal people practicing shifting cultivation, shamanism "is a status or role to which any man can aspire, and in some villages a large fraction of the men are shamans."<sup>25</sup> In the Zambales province of the Philippines, most shamans are elderly women.<sup>26</sup> Among the Jívaro, most old men are "more or less initiated into the art." About one in four of the Jívaro men (and a few of the women) are shamans.<sup>27</sup>

To speak of "shamanistic trickery" in such cases is absurd — who are the shamans fooling, each other? Yet the Director Emeritus maintains that, more often than not, shamans were frauds.<sup>28</sup> Nor

---

<sup>20</sup>Edward Norbeck, *Religion in Primitive Society* (New York & Evanston, IL: Harper & Row, 1961), 101–115; e.g., the Australians: Elkin, *Australian Aborigines*, 205; the San: Lorna J. Marshall, *Nyae Nyae !Kung Beliefs and Rites* (Cambridge: Harvard University Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, 1999) 49; the Eskimos: Kai Birket-Smith, *Eskimos* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 187; Janness, *Life of the Copper Eskimos*, 194–195; the Yanamamos: Chagnon, *Yanomamo*, 258.

<sup>21</sup>Simmons, *Role of the Aged in Primitive Society*, 173–174; Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, 285 (quoted); Meggitt, *Desert People*, 249.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Katz, "Education for Transcendence: !Kia Healing with the Kalahari !Kung," in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers*, 285, 288.

<sup>23</sup>Marshall, *Nyae Nyae*, 48; Marshall, "'!Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert," 153 (quoted).

<sup>24</sup>Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy: Community Healing among the Kalahari San* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 196–201.

<sup>25</sup>Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, 197–198; Chagnon, *Yanomamo*, 116 (quoted).

<sup>26</sup>Paul Rodell, *Culture and Customs of the Philippines* (Westport, CT & London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 31.

<sup>27</sup>Rafael Karsten, *The Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas: The Life and Culture of the Jibaro Indians of Eastern Ecuador and Peru* (Helsingfors, Finland: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1935), 270 (quoted); Michael J. Harner, *The Jívaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973), 122, 154.

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 58.

is shamanism an easy alternative to working. Often would-be shamans, like would-be doctors in our society, undergo an arduous and protracted initiation.<sup>29</sup> And, as noted, often a shaman has to hold down a day job too. A classical anarchist of impeccable credentials, Elie Reclus, wrote in 1891 that the *angorak*, the Eskimo shaman, absents himself occasionally but usually “takes part in the hunting and fishing expeditions, [and] exercises some craft ...”<sup>30</sup> The shaman is not a priest. Shamanism is a function but not an occupation.

In our society, the fusion of religion with morality, institutionalized by a church, forms an oppressive ideology. Among primitives such as the San, as among the Homeric and even the Classical Greeks, their deities are not clearly associated with moral values of good and evil. As E.B. Tylor put it, they had “theology without morals.”<sup>31</sup> If Bookchin assumes that a major religious activity of primitives is the propitiation of spirits whom they regard with awe and dread, he has again mistaken the Tarzan movies for documentaries. Among the “simplest societies,” prayer — which expresses dependence — “is seldom prominent.”<sup>32</sup> Thus the San do not so much pray to their gods as berate them for any difficulties in their circumstances: “The !Kung say that they scold their gods.”<sup>33</sup> Much more important than prayer is magic, defined as people using words, objects and rituals to obtain supernatural power to further their own ends.<sup>34</sup> The magician does not ask for supernatural power: he takes it. As Paul Radin said with respect to the Winnebagos, although what they do could be called prayer, “there seems to be a purely mechanical relation of cause and effects between the offerings of men and their acceptance by the spirits. The latter are not free to reject them except in theory.”<sup>35</sup>

Bookchin so rarely cites relevant and respectable scholarship that when it looks like he does, strict scrutiny is in order. He cites Paul Radin’s *The World of Primitive Man*<sup>36</sup> (1953) in support of his notion of shamans as predatory terrorists. The Director Emeritus does not explain why he does not accept the same source, quoted below (Chapter 9),<sup>37</sup> when it rebuts his conception of unthinking, coercive custom. Radin only discusses shamanism in one society, the Yakuts of central California. He discusses the religion of one other people, the Eskimos, in that chapter, but without even mentioning their shamanism, which is curious, since Eskimo shamanism is possibly the most famous of all. Then again, Eskimo shamanism does not support the thesis that shamans intimidate and exploit their fellows. They exercise no authority by virtue of their shamanic roles.<sup>38</sup> Neither do Winnebago shamans, on which Radin was the expert.<sup>39</sup>

The small portion of Radin’s text relied on by Bookchin bases its generalizations on a single society, the Yokuts Indians of central California. This is what Bookchin got out of Radin:

---

<sup>29</sup>Chagnon, *Yanamomo*, 116–117; Norbeck, *Religion in Primitive Society*, 110.

<sup>30</sup>Elie Reclus, *Primitive Folk* (NY: Scribner & Welford, 1891), 74.

<sup>31</sup>Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, tr. John Raffan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 246–250; Mathias Guenther, *Tricksters & Trancers: Bushmen Religion and Society* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 62; Tylor, *Anthropology*, 368.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 64–65. “In many primitive societies confession and prayers beseeching forgiveness for sins or aid in maintaining moral standards are both unknown and unthinkable.” Norbeck, *Religion in Primitive Society*, 65.

<sup>33</sup>Marshall, *Nyae Nyae*, 32 (quoted), 32–35.

<sup>34</sup>John J. Collins, *Primitive Religion* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1978), 18.

<sup>35</sup>Paul Radin, *The Winnebago Tribe* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 231.

<sup>36</sup>Paul Radin, *The World of Primitive Man* (New York: H. Schuman, 1953); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 254 n. 38.

<sup>37</sup>See n. 237 & accompanying text *supra*.

<sup>38</sup>Birket-Smith, *Esquimos*, 188; Knud Rasmussen, *The People of the Polar North: A Record*, ed. G. Herring (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Co. & London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1908), 146.

<sup>39</sup>Paul Radin, *Winnebago Tribe*, ch. 10.

Let me emphasise that Paul Radin (who[m] I used as a source in *The Ecology of Freedom*) held a very sceptical attitude toward shamans, regarding them as the earliest politicians of aboriginal societies, shysters who manipulated clients for self-serving purposes (which is not to say that a number of them may not have had good intentions [?]). He showed that the shamanic life, far from being a calling, was often well-organized and based on trickery handed down from father to son over generations. Shamans in consolidated tribes commonly formed a social elite, based on fear and reinforced by alliances with other elites, such as chiefs.<sup>40</sup>

Bookchin quotes Radin as saying that alliances between shamans and chiefs are “clearly a form of gangsterism.” And a final quotation: “The dread of the practical consequences of the shaman’s activities hangs over the ordinary individual.”<sup>41</sup> These are the only quotations, and there are no other source references. Except for the quotations, which are merely misleading, *every attribution to Radin is false*.

First: Radin does not say that shamans are politicians, much less the earliest politicians. Instead he discusses the alliance, in one tribe, between shamans and chiefs. He does not depict these particular shamans as exercising political power: it was for the lack of such power that they allied with chiefs. The fear inspired by the shamans “is not due to any unusual powers that these men possess by virtue of being shamans for, at bottom, they have little, but to the alliance between them and the chief of the tribe.”<sup>42</sup>

Second: Radin does not say that shamans were shysters manipulating their clients. By definition, *all* shamans cannot be shysters because a shyster is someone who acts unprofessionally. Shamanism is the world’s oldest profession.<sup>43</sup> The standard of practice of a profession is relative to the level of prevailing practice. Nor do shamans manipulate their clients (how? to what end?); at worst they overcharge them. Testimonials to the sincerity of most shamans abound.

Third: Radin does not say that shamanism is not a calling. Obviously it is, in both the religious and everyday senses of the word.<sup>44</sup> Individuals are “called” to shamanism by their dreams.

Fourth: Radin does not say that shamans are well-organized. On the contrary, he says that “all the organizational gifts they possessed went into the elaboration of the relations between them and the chief of the tribe.”<sup>45</sup> Shamanism is not necessarily well-organized: it’s usually not organized at all. Yakuts shamans were sole practitioners who were so far from being organized that they practiced their black magic on each other. In central California where the Yakuts live, according to A.L. Kroeber, “the body of initiated shamans do not form a definite society or association.”<sup>46</sup>

Fifth: Radin does not say that in consolidated tribes, shamans formed a social elite. Their mutual jealousies ruled that out. Radin always speaks of shamans as unconnected individuals. According

---

<sup>40</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 204–205.

<sup>41</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 205, quoting Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 140.

<sup>42</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 139 (quoted), 139–141.

<sup>43</sup>Moerman, “Anthropology of Symbolic Healing,” 59.

<sup>44</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “calling.” Also notice the ex-Director’s non sequitur: shamanism is not a calling *because* it is well-organized and based on trickery. Why can’t a calling — lawyers, for instance — be well-organized and based on trickery?

<sup>45</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 137–138. Kropotkin is therefore in error to speak of “the secret societies of witches, shamans and priests, which we find among all savages.” *Mutual Aid*, 111.

<sup>46</sup>A.L. Kroeber, “The Religion of the Indians of California,” *University of California Publications in American Archaeol-*

to another source, “there was no formal organization of shamans.”<sup>47</sup> They linked up, not with each other, but with chiefs on a one-to-one basis. Also, Radin does not refer to “consolidated tribes” because the expression is unknown to anthropology. Only the ex-Director knows what it means.

Sixth: Radin does not even say that shamanic life was based on trickery! He must have thought so, but he did not say so. For purposes of *his* argument, not Bookchin’s, concerning the alliance of shamans and chiefs, the efficacy of shamanic magic is irrelevant. Had the spells actually worked, the chief/shaman alliance would have been even more fearsome.

Seventh: Radin does not say that shamanic status was hereditary in the agnatic line. He does not address the topic. It so happens that among the Yakuts, it was common for sons to follow their fathers into shamanism, but the call may come to any seeker or even come unsought: “Theoretically, any individual can obtain his gift.”<sup>48</sup> In other societies, such as the San, the Yanamamo and the Jívaro, the gift is widely distributed without regard to kinship.

What a tremendous amount of misinformation Bookchin packs into just three sentences! From his former hero Joseph Stalin, Bookchin learned, as part of what Hannah Arendt called “the totalitarian art of lying,” that a big lie is more likely to go over than a small one.<sup>49</sup> The larger the lie, the harder it is to believe that anybody could say such a thing *unless* it were true. And it is much more trouble to refute a big lie because there’s so much to it. In saying that he does not lie because of his “moral standards,”<sup>50</sup> Bookchin tops all his other deceits. His standards are set so low you could step on them. Or as Oscar Wilde put it, when a democrat wants to sling mud he doesn’t have to stoop.<sup>51</sup>

Even after correction of the ex-Director’s fabrications, there are a couple of things Radin really did say which call for correction themselves. He did say that “dread” of shamanism “hangs over the ordinary individual.” This should be understood in light of the topic of the chapter it appears in, “The Economic Utilizations of Magic and Religion.” Bookchin, as we saw, stressed the role played by “fear and terror” in aboriginal religion.<sup>52</sup> That is the portrait of “primitive tribes completely dominated, in fact, almost paralyzed by fear and terror,” that Radin’s examples are supposed to *refute*: “Every ethnologist with any field-experience knows, of course, that no such communities exist.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the Yakuts are not such a community, contrary to the ex-Director’s presentation of them. Considering the point he was trying to make, Radin made a poor choice of an example. But the sources on which Radin relies do not sustain so dark a picture even of the Yakuts. More important, in more respects than Radin mentioned, Yakuts society is exceptional.

Radin chose the Yakuts as a typical hunter-gatherer society with only one peculiarity: “a fixed unit of exchange,” *i.e.*, shell money.<sup>54</sup> A tribal society with a money economy is *very* peculiar. An even clearer indication that this was not a typical foraging society was the institution of chief-

---

*ogy and Ethnology* 4(6) (Sept. 1907), 330.

<sup>47</sup>Herbert F.G. Spier, “Foothill Yokuts,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1978), 8: 482.

<sup>48</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 141.

<sup>49</sup>Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (new ed.; San Diego CA: Harcourt Brace & Company, n.d.), 413.

<sup>50</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238.

<sup>51</sup>“The Soul of Man Under Socialism,” *The First Collected Edition of the Works of Oscar Wilde, 1908–1922*, ed. Robert M. Ross (London: Paul Mall, 1969), 8: 322–323; for an example of the ex-Director’s morality, see the Appendix.

<sup>52</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 140, 137.

<sup>53</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 138.

<sup>54</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 139.



tainship. Or rather, it is typical of one type: the sedentary type. The Yakuts lived in permanent villages, although they spent the summer in camps elsewhere. They stored food, which was abundant, for the winter. In some (not all) foraging societies, sedentariness is associated with incipient political authority and stratification.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever merit Radin's argument might have for such societies, it has none as applied to the nonsedentary foragers like the San. The presence of a chief marks a decisive break from that way of life. It is such "varyingly developed *chiefdoms*, intermediate forms that seem clearly to have gradually grown out of egalitarian societies and to have preceded the founding of all of the best-known primitive states."<sup>56</sup> Bookchin, oblivious to the consequences for his argument, agrees: "The chiefdom of a simple tribal society, for example, was a potential hierarchy, usually an emerging one."<sup>57</sup>

But if the Yakuts are not typical foragers, they are typical California Indian foragers. Anthropologists have referred to "the exceptional nature of California hunters and gatherers," and they are well aware of the contrast: "The data presented in such books as *Man the Hunter* [!] have served to underline the fact that most California societies bear a more striking resemblance to Melanesian chiefdoms than they do to Australian or African bands."<sup>58</sup> And whether or not primitives are normally affluent, the California Indians were. According to a trapper who encountered them in 1827, they lived in "a country where the creator has scattered a more than ordinary Share of his bounties."<sup>59</sup>

To be sure, Yakuts chieftainship is about as modest as chieftainship can be. One might say it was incipient. The position was hereditary, but if the community is dissatisfied with a chief, they depose him and choose another chief from his family.<sup>60</sup> "The respected elders of a village exercise a practical control over the chief's decisions"<sup>61</sup>; he risks his position if he goes against their counsel. The chief's powers, though real, are few. He decides when various ceremonies will be held (for which he is paid).<sup>62</sup> He is the first to leave for summer camp, although the others do not necessarily follow him right away.<sup>63</sup> He adjudicates disputes which are brought to him. Disputes do not have to be brought to him, but there is an advantage if they are: the loser is forbidden to take private vengeance, as he might otherwise do. The chief is the richest man in

---

<sup>55</sup>Wayne Suttles, "Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the Northwest Coast," in Lee & DeVore, eds., *Man the Hunter*, 56.

<sup>56</sup>Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization*, 15–16.

<sup>57</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 271–272. He could hardly say otherwise without finishing the job of repudiating his masterpiece, *The Ecology of Freedom*.

<sup>58</sup>Lowell J. Dean & Thomas C. Blackburn, "Introduction" to *Native Californians: A Theoretical Retrospective*, ed. Lowell J. Dean & Thomas C. Blackburn (Ramona, CA: Ballena Press, 1976), 7.

<sup>59</sup>*The Travels of Jedediah Smith: A Documentary Outline Including the Journal of the Great American Pathfinder*, ed. Maurice S. Sullivan (Santa Ana, CA: Fine Arts Press, 1934), 72–73.

<sup>60</sup>A.H. Gayton, "Yakuts and Western Mono Ethnography. I. Tulare Lake, Southern Valley, and Central Foothill Yakuts," *Anthropological Records* 10(1) (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1948), 94 [hereafter Gayton I]; Anne H. Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," in Dean & Blackburn, eds., *Native Californians*, 219.

<sup>61</sup>Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 227.

<sup>62</sup>A.H. Gayton, "Yakuts and Western Mono Ethnography. II. Northern Foothill Yakuts and Western Mono," *Anthropological Records* 10(2) (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1948), 163 [hereafter: Gayton II].

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

the village and he does not hunt.<sup>64</sup> Some of his income he redistributes to the very poor,<sup>65</sup> but on nothing like the scale that prevails in Polynesia.

The basis of the chief's alliance with the shaman is his judicial power. People know that if a shaman who is under his protection kills someone, the chief will immunize him against retaliation or prosecution. In return, the shaman uses his magic to further the chief's interests.<sup>66</sup> To take an extreme case, if a rich man refused to join in a fandango, thereby denying the chief his fee, the shaman might make the man sick. He would then drag out the cure in order to collect repeated fees for his housecalls. And then he would split the fee with the chief<sup>67</sup> — who would have thought that fee-splitting is not confined to civilized professionals! It was only this specific example — not shamanism in general, or even Yakuts shamanism in general — which Radin called gangsterism.<sup>68</sup> But to dwell on the worst possibilities distorts the picture of Yakuts shamanism, still more so of shamanism generally.

There were several factors which held all but the boldest and greediest Yakuts shamans in check.

An important one was other shamans. It was not unusual for shamans to kill each other.<sup>69</sup> Also, the alliance between chiefs and shamans, as between gangsters, was never easy. In some cases the chief would authorize or even order the execution of a shaman: "Such killings, however, were not infrequent; and the shaman who lives above suspicion was fortunate."<sup>70</sup> The friends and family of a real or supposed victim were not necessarily paralyzed by fear and trembling and, as one informant related, they "didn't always tell the chief" before killing the shaman.<sup>71</sup> According to A.L. Kroeber, for Yakuts shamans, murder was their normal end.<sup>72</sup> Yet even in this unusually, perhaps uniquely corrupt aboriginal situation, people believed that most shamans were not malicious. Witchcraft was an ever-present threat, "but this does not mean that an individual lived in a perpetual state of anxiety and dread."<sup>73</sup> Radin himself concluded that it was not shamanism per se, but politically connected shamanism which was the source of anxiety: "The belief in spirits or, for that matter, in magical rites and formulae becomes of secondary consequence ..."<sup>74</sup> Thus Radin, Bookchin's sole reliance, refutes him.

We may therefore dismiss as malicious nonsense the ex-Director's characterization of the shaman as "the incipient State personified."<sup>75</sup> Bookchin's position is entirely lacking in logical or empirical support. It is lacking in logic because the supposed ability to kill from afar cannot be a source of political power unless there exists a political authority to protect the shaman against retaliation — and if there is such an authority, *he*, not the shaman, is the incipient state personified. Nor is there any empirical support for this nightmare of reason. Bookchin's grandiose

---

<sup>64</sup>Gayton I, 95; Gayton II, 163.

<sup>65</sup>Gayton I, 95.

<sup>66</sup>Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 211–214.

<sup>67</sup>Gayton, "Yakut-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 211–212.

<sup>68</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 140.

<sup>69</sup>Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 199, 208.

<sup>70</sup>Gayton I, 112 (quoted), 244; Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 380 (originally published 1877).

<sup>71</sup>Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 187–188

<sup>72</sup>Kroeber, "Religion of the Indians of California," 332.

<sup>73</sup>Gayton, "Yakuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 217 (quoted), 217–218.

<sup>74</sup>Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 140–141.

<sup>75</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 84.

speculations about the origins of hierarchy are in contradiction regarding the shaman's role. In one scenario it is the chiefs and shamans who succeed the elders and precede the young warriors and "big men" on the long march toward statehood. In another the sequence is: big men, warriors, chiefs, nobles, then "incipient, quasi, or partial states" — but no shamans!<sup>76</sup> It's all delirious, pretentious fantasy, nothing more.

If even the Yakuts data utterly fail to depict shamans on the verge of founding a state, it's highly unlikely there's a better example lurking somewhere in the literature. There is no historical or ethnographic evidence of any transition to statehood in which shamans played any part. *Priests* have played such parts, but priests, as Bookchin confirms, are not shamans.<sup>77</sup> In the western United States, societies based on foraging, or mixed foraging and extractive pursuits had shamans; agricultural societies had priests.<sup>78</sup> As usual, increasing social complexity is associated (if not perfectly correlated) with increasing authoritarianism, in religion as in politics. The shamanism shuffle is just another example of Bookchin in all his vulgar viciousness defaming inoffensive people in a callous but clumsy attempt to score points in a petty political squabble, the kind he wasted his life on.

---

<sup>76</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 6–7; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 57, 67.

<sup>77</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 91.

<sup>78</sup>Joseph G. Jorgensen, *Western Indians: Comparative Environments, Languages and Cultures of 172 Western American Indian Tribes* (San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman & Co., 1980), 282.

## Chapter 9. The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom

Sir Alfred Zimmern, Murray Bookchin's favorite historian, intended some derision when he wrote that "the modern anarchists have reinvented 'unwritten laws,'" but Sir Alfred, unlike the Director Emeritus, was right in spite of himself.<sup>1</sup> Malatesta expressed the anarchist view of custom: "Custom always follows the needs and feelings of the majority; and the less they are subject to the sanctions of law the more are they respected, for everyone can see and understand their use."<sup>2</sup> So did George Woodcock: "Customs and not regulations are the natural manifestations of man's ideas of justice, and in a free society customs would adapt themselves to to the constant growth and tension in that society."<sup>3</sup> Custom (it is better to avoid the confusionist expression "unwritten laws") is a basic ordering institution in primitive society which anarchists appreciate as a way to replace the law of the state with acephalous order. Where custom prevails, it expresses common values "although no common political organization corresponds to them."<sup>4</sup>

That's exactly why the Director Emeritus condemns "unthinking custom" as irrational, "as a dim form of inherited tradition,"<sup>5</sup> although that's not why he *says* he condemns it. His Commune may grudgingly tolerate the out-of-doors "personalistic" expression of values by dissident, discreditable "individualists" because their values cannot find social expression — in other words, they cannot influence life — until the assembly municipalizes them. The directionality of life is a municipal monopoly. But custom is implicit, insidious, extra-institutional and, scandalously, *democratic*. It is the only decision rule which really rests on *universal* suffrage. It is how affairs arrange themselves when everybody minds his own business. It is democracy when there is no hurry. If there is any social process in which democracy and anarchy coincide, it is consensus, not assembly majoritarianism, and custom is tacit consensus.

Bookchin defines custom as "behavior that is *unreflective*, that is practiced unthinkingly as though it were an instinctive rather than a learned heritage." By now we are alert to the fact that the Director Emeritus never proffers a definition of his own unless it departs substantially from what the word really means. The dictionary definition is: "A habitual or usual practice; a common way of behaving; usage, fashion, habit."<sup>6</sup> Reflection is irrelevant. Custom is not by definition unreflective. The ex-Director's definition is both overinclusive and underinclusive. Overinclusive, because much, perhaps most unreflective behavior is not custom. It is when we act in an *unusual* way, and regret it, that we are wont to say, "I wasn't thinking."

---

<sup>1</sup>Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth*, 127 n.1.

<sup>2</sup>Errico Malatesta, *Anarchy* (London: Freedom Press, 1974), 42.

<sup>3</sup>George Woodcock, "The Rejection of the State," *The Rejection of the State and Other Essays* (Toronto, Canada: New Books, 1972), 25.

<sup>4</sup>J.G. Peristiany, *The Institutions of Primitive Society* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1956), 45.

<sup>5</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 71 (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 135; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 99 (quoted).

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 288; *New Shorter OED*, q/v "custom."

Most unthinking behavior is not customary behavior, although some of it is habitual behavior. Compliance with law is an important example. Most motorists obey the traffic laws, if they obey them at all, unthinkingly. If they paused to reason out their every decision, they would never get out of the driveway. Activities like riding a bicycle, tying your shoes, swimming, and even breathing may actually be impeded if you think about doing them: “Your breathing goes wrong the moment your conscious self meddles with it” (George Bernard Shaw).<sup>7</sup> Customs are obeyed – or rather, observed – far more willingly, or rather, more spontaneously, than laws.<sup>8</sup> The traffic example further shows that the definition is defective because it fails to distinguish custom from law, as anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski may have been the first to notice.<sup>9</sup>

The definition is also defective because it is underinclusive. To follow a custom is not necessarily unthinking. Most of the customs which anthropologists identify for a particular people are expressed in “emic” or native categories of thought, which must be reflected upon in order to be articulated to the ethnographer.<sup>10</sup> It is unlikely that the first time aborigines think about their customs is when they are debriefed by an anthropologist. It can even happen in our own always aberrant society that people have to look up and learn customs not previously familiar to them, as parents may do, for example, when they set out to provide a traditional wedding for their child. By Bookchin’s defective definition, such matters are customs if you don’t have to look them up, but they’re not customs if you do.

The justification of many a custom is that it was thought through once, it worked, and nobody has to think about it anymore.<sup>11</sup> So it is not necessarily an objection that “custom prescribes how one does certain things in a certain way but offers no rationale for doing it that way except that that is how things have ‘always been done.’” Despite Plato, Rousseau and Bookchin,<sup>12</sup> rarely does any *law* come provided with a justification either. And when it does, the preamble (the explanation) is not to be trusted: it does not control the interpretation of a statute.<sup>13</sup>

Custom is recurrent social behavior. Custom is collective habit. Custom is not something apart from social organization. Custom is implicit in social organization, any social organization. And “even in supposedly advanced societies, behavior is governed more by custom than by law in the usual sense of that word.”<sup>14</sup> Custom is not something we could choose to do without, not without reversion to that state of nature in which the ex-Director disbelieves. Like some of the

---

<sup>7</sup>George Bernard Shaw, “Maxims for Revolutionists,” *Bernard Shaw: The Collected Plays with Their Prefaces* (London: The Bodley Head, 1971), 2: 791.

<sup>8</sup>Robert H. Lowie, *Primitive Society* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1920), 398.

<sup>9</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (London: Kegan Paul, 1926), 50.

<sup>10</sup>Harris, *Rise of Anthropological Theory*, 571, 576–577.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Boyd & Peter J. Richerson, *Culture and the Evolutionary Process* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 288. As Sir John Davies, Attorney General for Ireland, wrote in 1612: “For a Custome taketh beginning and growth to perfection in this manner: When a reasonable act once done is found to be good and beneficiall to the people, and agreeable to their nature and disposition, then do they use it and practice it again and again, and so by often iteration and multiplication of the act it becometh a *Custome*; ...” Quoted in J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 33.

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 288; Jean Jacques Rousseau, “A Discourse on Political Economy,” in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 295.

<sup>13</sup>Alexander Addison, “Analysis of the Report of the Committee of the Virginia Assembly,” in *American Political Writing During the Founding Era, 1760–1805*, ed. Charles S. Hyneman & Donald S. Lutz (2 vols.; Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1983), 2: 1091.

<sup>14</sup>George C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1951), 28–29; Burton M. Leiser, *Custom, Law, and Morality: Conflict and Continuity in Social Behavior* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), 112 (quoted).

ex-Director's other anthropological insights, the notion of custom as quasi-instinctual seems to have been gleaned from the Tarzan movies where, usually egged on by witch-doctors, the natives act out insane rituals like zombies. The Director Emeritus is the only person who believes it is literally true that "Custom is King." But that is precisely what it is not.

The difference between custom and law, as everybody else knows, is coercion.<sup>15</sup> Bookchin conceives custom to be as coercive as command, if not more so. But whatever the force of custom is in modern states, that is not how it is in primitive societies, according to the Bookchin-vetted anthropologist, Paul Radin: "But customs are an integral part of the life of primitive peoples. There is no compulsive submission to them. They are not followed because the weight of tradition overwhelms a man. That takes place in our culture, not in that of aboriginal man. A custom is obeyed there because it is intertwined with a vast living network of interrelations, arranged in a meticulous and ordered manner." There is no society in which rules are automatically followed. Thus anthropologist Edmund R. Leach scoffs at "the classic anthropological fiction that 'the native is a slave to custom.'"<sup>16</sup>

It does not occur to the Director Emeritus that in denouncing custom he is "unthinkingly" obeying the most fundamental of all customs: language: "All speech is a form of customary behavior." Thus Bishop Berkeley wrote of "common custom, which you know is the rule of language."<sup>17</sup> Every society, ours included, is riddled with customs (concerning child-rearing, for example), more than could ever be reduced to law. As the anarchist Herbert Read said, customs cannot be eliminated, only replaced. We already have laws which once were customs, such as driving on the right side of the road.<sup>18</sup> A rule can be arbitrary (driving on the left side works just as well in other countries) without being irrational.<sup>19</sup> What would be irrational in a case like that is *not* being arbitrary. Custom as such can even be incorporated into law: for instance, a legal rule may prescribe that a contract may be interpreted in light of the "usage of trade" in the industry.<sup>20</sup>

There is nothing inherently irrational about custom. A regular theme in anthropology is the discovery that superficially irrational customs serve positive functions. That may even be the case with such food tabus as the sacred cow or the Jewish and Muslim abstention from pork. Most Americans have their own tabus about what animals, and what parts of animals to eat.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Law of Primitive Man: A Study in Comparative Legal Dynamics* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 26–27.

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 204; Radin, *World of Primitive Man*, 223 (quoted); Mair, *Primitive Government*, 18; *The Essential Edmund Leach*, ed. Stephen Hugh-Jones & James Laidlow (2 vols.; New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 2000), 1: 76 (quoted).

<sup>17</sup>Hugh-Jones & Laidlow, eds., *Essential Edmund Leach*, 1: 168 (quoted); George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, ed. Jonathan Dancy (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 131. Are my sources amazing or what?

<sup>18</sup>Herbert Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 16–17; John Chipman Gray, *The Nature and Sources of the Law* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963), 289.

<sup>19</sup>A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 194.

<sup>20</sup>Uniform Commercial Code § 1–205(2)–(4); Richard Danzig, "A Comment on the Jurisprudence of the Uniform Commercial Code," *Stanford Law Review* 27(2) (Feb. 1975): 621–635; Benjamin Cardozo, *The Nature of the Judicial Process* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921), 58–65. British colonialism, for instance, legalized Nuer custom and enforced it in new tribunals. P.P. Howell, *A Manual of Nuer Law* (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1954), 1–2.

<sup>21</sup>Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, 300; Marvin Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches: The Riddles of Culture* (NY: Random House, 1974), 11–57; Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 169–176.

The Director Emeritus, too, is a “victim of unthinking custom.” Murray Bookchin does not eat the insects in his garden.

Presumably falling under the rubric of custom is the most mysterious phrase in Bookchin’s dyslexicon, “the blood oath.” He deploys it freely, almost always without defining it, as if all the world already spoke his private language. The term is unknown to anthropology and to the dictionary. I finally located an explanation of sorts: “The loyalty of kin to each other in the form of the blood oath — an oath that combined an expression of duty to one’s relatives with vengeance for [sic] their offenders — became the organic source of communal continuity.” Thus he refers to “the archaic group cemented by the blood oath.”<sup>22</sup> That’s funny, because it’s generally supposed that kin ties themselves — what the Director Emeritus would call “mere kin ties” — provide the organic source of communal continuity. As we shall see later (Chapter 10), Bookchin considers family relations biological, hence organic. Tribal peoples, he believes, have not emerged from animality. But the blood oath is not biological or organic, it is juridical. It has nothing in common with animal behavior, but very much in common with the oath of a witness or juror in court; and, like them, it’s a component of legal systems. It represents a step in the direction of culture from biology, from kinship toward polity, and from status toward contract. (Indeed, according to the Athenian democratic politician Lycurgus, “what holds democracy together is the oath.”<sup>23</sup>)

That is, the blood oath might represent all these things *if* it existed. It doesn’t. It is a dark fantasy concocted out of Bookchin’s own family life — with the father breaching the blood oath of his marriage vows by desertion<sup>24</sup> — compounded with misremembered scraps of 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropology and maybe more Edgar Rice Burroughs. On the ex-Director’s account, the blood oath should be a general if not universal feature of tribal life, in which case many fieldworkers would discuss it. I can find no text or monograph which even mentions it. This is no surprise, since the notion is sociologically (if not quite logically) self-contradictory. It supposes that in a society defined by kinship, family feeling is insufficient to provide assistance or revenge, but that a voluntaristic tie, not in principle kin-based, more successfully motivates relatives to furnish help which they were already obligated to give anyway. The blood oath may be possible, but only as an anomaly, irrelevant to the rise of civilization where kin ties are supposed to weaken in cities and perhaps need ritual fortification there.

Ah, but the wily Director Emeritus has an explanation for the universal absence of something which should be universally present. “The blood-tie and the rights and duties that surround it are embodied in an *unspoken oath* that comprised the only visible unifying principle of early community life.”<sup>25</sup> How can an unspoken oath be visible? It isn’t even audible! Unfortunately for the Sage, an oath “is oral by its very nature”; in the ethnographic record, only in rare instances are there silent oaths.<sup>26</sup> How can anybody rely on a silent oath?

As a matter of fact, the only example of a blood oath known to me or cited by Bookchin is the one taken by the aristocratic extended families of medieval Italian city-states around 1200 A.D.:

---

<sup>22</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 51 (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 135.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 250. This Lycurgus is a 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Athenian politician, not the Spartan lawgiver.

<sup>24</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 23.

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 53 (emphasis added).

<sup>26</sup>Ivan Illich, *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses, 1978–1990* (New York & London: Marion Boyars, 1992), 172 (quoted); John M. Roberts, “Oaths, Automatic Ordeals, and Power,” *American Anthropologist* 67(6) (pt. 2) (Dec. 1965), 186.

Drawing upon a strong sense of clan and consanguinity, noblemen clustered into tight-knit associations and built fortified towers so as to defend themselves or to expand their rights and privileges. Each such *consortaria* was a sworn corporate grouping, consisting of males descended from a common male ancestor. It was therefore a male lineage, although, when extinction threatened, the line might be transferred via a woman. In time the *consortaria* entered into sworn association with other like neighborhood groups.<sup>27</sup>

Here is libertarian municipalism literally with a vengeance: confederations of sovereign neighborhoods in arms. And here is kinship with the oath superadded. These communes are so many counter-examples to the theory that city loyalty necessarily supplants kin loyalty (see Chapter 9). Otherwise, the use of blood to solemnize an oath with blood through the “oath sacrifice” is best known among — Bookchin’s classical Greeks. From Homeric through classical times, oaths were accompanied by animal sacrifice and blood libations, involving immersion of the hands in the blood, and dismemberment of the animal followed by squeezing or trampling upon its testicles. This gory procedure was used to confirm contracts and treaties as well as in court.<sup>28</sup> So much for urban Greek rationality.

Oddly, Bookchin never says *why* the blood oath is so bloodcurdling. He relies instead on provoking the unreasoning qualms of the squeamish such as myself. The blood oath has, after all, nothing to do with blood; it is a political metaphor, something the Director Emeritus denounces almost as often as he uses one.<sup>29</sup> Once again I am constrained to invent an argument for Bookchin’s bald conclusion. By the time I finish this book, I may have invented more arguments for Bookchin than he has.

The assumption that “blood vengeance” is “unreasoning retribution” is gratuitous and parochial, as well as forgetful of the prominent role capital punishment played in ancient Athens and in the history of Europe. What the ex-Director has in mind is some celluloid image of prehistoric McCoys and Hatfields trapped in an endless cycle of retribution.<sup>30</sup> That’s not how it worked. A feud — three or more alternating homicidal attacks — is not necessarily endless, although it may occasionally last a rather long time: on the South Pacific island of Bellona, one counterattack came after 225 years!<sup>31</sup> As Lewis Henry Morgan explained (with particular reference to the

---

<sup>27</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 101; Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 35–36. “An intricate relationship between blood ties and territorial ties stands out as an intrinsic and defining feature of the medieval city.” Diane Owen Hughes, “Kinsmen and Neighbors in Medieval Genoa,” in *The Medieval City*, ed. Harry A. Miskimin, David Herlihy, & A.L. Udovitch (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 95.

<sup>28</sup>Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 250–254; Louis Gernet, *The Anthropology of Ancient Greece*, tr. John Hamilton (Baltimore, MD & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 167–170.

<sup>29</sup>In *Anarchism, Marxism*, 199–200 in six paragraphs, the Director Emeritus uses political metaphors 20 times in denouncing political metaphors. “From the very beginning political science has abounded in analogues and metaphors.” Erik Rasmussen, *Complementarity and Political Science: An Essay on Political Science Theory and Research Strategy* (n.p.: Odense University Press, 1987), 48. Another Jewish mystic, Spinoza, likewise believed that “the less occasion we humans use metaphors, the greater our chance of blessedness.” Rorty, *Truth, Politics and “Post-Modernism”*, 19.

<sup>30</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 96 (quoted), 97.

<sup>31</sup>Rolf Kuschel, *Vengeance is Their Reply: Blood Feuds and Homicide on Bellona Island. Part I: Conditions Underlying Generations of Bloodshed* (Kobenhavn, Denmark: Dansk psykologisk Forlag, 1988), 18–19. Feuds take place within, and wars take place between, political communities. *Ibid.*, 19–20; Keith F. Otterbein, *The Evolution of War: A Cross-*



Iroquois), clans did avenge the murder of their members, but it was their duty first to try for an adjustment of the crime through apology and compensation.<sup>32</sup> Among the Nuer of the Sudan, where killings are common and the blood feud is obligatory for a lineage, compensation is usually arranged through the mediation of a leopard-skin chief. Even the headhunting Jívaro, the most warlike group in South America, accept compensation when a killing is unintentional.<sup>33</sup> Among the German barbarians, according to Tacitus, the blood feud was an obligation, “but the feuds do not continue without possibility of settlement,” since even murder was atoned for by payment of a specific number of cattle and sheep. In the *Iliad*, Ajax reminds Achilles that even the slaying of a brother or child may be compensated by a blood price.<sup>34</sup> Thus, even in the exceptional situation, like this one, where the Director Emeritus is not making up *all* of his ethnological insight, he follows sources long obsolete.<sup>35</sup>

Bookchin’s argument requires that the blood feud be a universal feature of kin-based primitive society. Most such societies, however, do not engage in blood feuds. In a cross-cultural study of the institution, feuding was frequent in 8 societies, infrequent in 14, and absent from 28. It was argued that certain social structural features favored feuding, specifically, patrilocal societies with “fraternal interest groups,” groups of related men who live near one another. They proved to be positively correlated, although even in 10 out of 25 patrilocal societies, feuding was absent.<sup>36</sup> Thus urbanization is not necessary to avert the blood feud in most primitive societies, because it is not a feature of most primitive societies.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionists propounded the thesis that primitive justice was a punitive and automatic duty in order for there to be something for our enlightened justice — compensatory and forgiving (as we all know) — to evolve out of.<sup>37</sup> Actually, the Jívaro distinction between unintentional homicide (tort, compensation) and intentional homicide (crime, punishment) is not that far removed from where American law is today, and closer still to what it used to be. Nuer custom also distinguishes unintentional from intentional homicide, both of which are compensable, but intentional homicide requires higher damages. Indeed, we (in the United States) have in

---

*Cultural Survey* (n.p. [New Haven, CT?]; HRAF Press, 1970), 3.

<sup>32</sup>Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1877), 77–78. Kropotkin is thus in error to say “there is no exception to the rule” that bloodshed must be avenged by bloodshed. Indeed he goes on immediately to say that intra-tribal killings are settled differently, and that inter-tribal killings may be settled if the injured tribe accepts compensation. He concludes that with most primitive folk, “feuds are infinitely rarer than might be expected.” *Mutual Aid*, 106–108.

<sup>33</sup>Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 152–155; N.W. Stirling, *Historical and Ethnographical Material on the Jívaro Indians* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938), 41, 116–117; Karsten, *Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas*, 270–271 (Stirling is plagiarizing Karsten here).

<sup>34</sup>“Germany,” in *Tacitus’ Agricola, Germany, and Dialogue with Orators*, tr. Herbert W. Benario (rev. ed.; Norman, OK & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 7 (quoted); *The Iliad of Homer*, tr. Richard Lattimore (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 215.

<sup>35</sup>I can only find a single citation to one of these sources: Robert Briffault, *The Mothers* (3 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1927), cited in Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 75\*, the definitive exposition of the discredited hypothesis of primitive matriarchy. The future Director Emeritus “had been influenced in this regard by the work of Robert Briffault, a Marxist anthropological writer, as far back as the 30s.” Bookchin, *Marxism, Anarchism*, 117.

<sup>36</sup>Keith F. Otterbein & Charlotte Swanson Otterbein, “An Eye for an Eye, A Tooth for a Tooth: A Cross-Cultural Study of Feuding,” *American Anthropologist* 67(6) (pt. 1) (Dec. 1965), 1472, 1473 (Tables 2 & 3).

<sup>37</sup>E.g., Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics* (2 vols.; Indianapolis, MN: Liberty Press, 1978), 1: 393–400; Edward B. Tylor, *Anthropology: The Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), 414–415; Edward Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas* (2 vols.; London: Macmillan and Co. & New York: Macmillan and Company, 1906), 1: 176–177.

many areas gone back to the strict liability rules of primitive jurisprudence (e.g., strict liability for defective products, workers' compensation, and no-fault automobile insurance). The correspondence between primitive/punitive and complex/compensatory breaks down at the outset. The most primitive peoples, according to the Director Emeritus and the old evolutionists, are hunter-gatherers. Among them the blood feud, if it exists, tends to be *less* punitive and automatic, and *more* compensatory and discretionary than among tribal peoples (herders and agriculturalists): "Indeed, legal ethnologists demonstrate little sympathy for an evolutionary scheme in which principles of collective responsibility and strict liability are considered hallmarks of primitive legal systems while doctrines of justice are thought embodied in civilized legal institutions."<sup>38</sup>

The passage from Lewis Henry Morgan also, it turns out, looks like the remote source of Bookchin's misconception, because it was closely paraphrased by Engels, but not closely enough. Engels wrote: "From this — the blood ties of the gens [clan] — arose the obligation [*Verpflichtung*] of blood revenge, which was unconditionally recognised by the Iroquois. If a non-member of a gens slew a member of a gens the whole gens to which the slain person person belonged was pledged [*schuldeten*] to blood revenge."<sup>39</sup> The first sentence, which is correct — at least for one tribe, the Iroquois — speaks of an obligation arising out of the family relation itself. Read correctly, so does the second. "Pledged" is a mistranslation of the past tense of *schulden*, a word properly rendered as "owe; be indebted to." The German words (transitive verbs) for "pledge" are not *schulden* but *verphaenden* or *verpflichten*.<sup>40</sup> No word like "pledged" appears in Morgan, and there is no doubt that all Engels does here is repeat Morgan, or try to.

No primary sources, including a classic monograph by Morgan, and no secondary sources say that the Iroquois swore blood oaths. In fact, Iroquois practice rebuts the supposition of a reflexive, automatic resort to vengeance. Crime was almost unknown. Iroquois ideology idealized the "stern and ruthless warrior in avenging any injury done to those under his care," but the kinfolk of a murder or witchcraft victim were usually expected to accept compensation from the killer. Or they might kill the offender — with impunity, *if* the offender's family admitted his guilt. Thus there was scope for discretion on both sides.<sup>41</sup> Even Engels must have known as much, since he wrote that "blood revenge threatens only as an extreme or rarely applied measure." Morgan wrote that "a reconciliation was usually effected, except, perhaps, in aggravated cases of premeditated murder."<sup>42</sup> In any case, nothing can be generalized about prehistoric behavior from the custom of a single modern-day tribe. The evidentiary void is typical of Bookchin's inept, pretentious generalizing.

The ex-Director has perhaps confused his imagined blood oath with the institution of blood *brotherhood*, also known as blood pacts or blood covenants, whereby *unrelated* individuals swear mutual loyalty after an exchange of blood. If so, he has again been confounded by irony. Bookchin

---

<sup>38</sup>R. Thurnwald, "Blood Vengeance Feud," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin R.A. Seligman (13 vols.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1937), 2: 589; Howell, *Manual of Nuer Law*, 223; Norman Yoffee, "Context and Authority in Early Mesopotamian Law," in *State Formation and Political Legitimacy*, ed. Ronald Cohen & Judith D. Toland (New Brunswick, NJ & Oxford, England: Transaction Books, 1988), 96 (quoted).

<sup>39</sup>Engels, "Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State," 520.

<sup>40</sup>Friedrich Engels, "Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats," in Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, Germany: Dietz Verlag, 1960), 21: 87; *The New Cassell's German Dictionary* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1971), q/v "Schuld, -en," "pledge."

<sup>41</sup>Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 30 (quoted), 25–26.

<sup>42</sup>Engels, "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," 528 (quoted); Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1969), 330–333, 333 (quoted).

is forever carrying on about “the stranger,” how he is feared by primitives but welcomed in the city. Blood pacts are often entered into precisely to *protect* the stranger — specifically, the trader, when he ventures to distant lands where he has no kin.<sup>43</sup> A well-known essay on the subject is “Zande Blood-Brotherhood” by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who himself entered into the relationship. Among the Azande of central Africa, the principal purpose of the relationship is often business, not justice: to secure for traders a safe-conduct through, and to, hostile territory. Kinsmen *never* formed a blood pact: “A man cannot exchange blood with his own kin,” for the obvious reason that “they were already bound to one another by the social ties of kinship.” Among the Tikopia, too, where the covenant does not involve exchange of bodily fluids, the primary function of bond friendship is to give a man a trustworthy confidante outside the circle of kin. Indeed, strangers are frequently taken as bond-friends. Among the Kwoma (New Guinea), a “pseudo-kin relationship is established with the young men whose blood is mixed with his at the time of adulthood.” The two are always unrelated by kin ties.<sup>44</sup>

“The Stranger” is Stranger than most of Bookchin’s tropes. He has already appeared, a solitary figure wandering in from the woods, among the big man’s “companions” (Chapter 5). Like the tall taciturn Stranger riding into a wary town in the Westerns, the ex-Director’s Stranger evokes “the primitive community’s dread of the stranger.” The primitive community hates and fears the Stranger, who is viewed as an enemy and may be slain summarily.<sup>45</sup> The problem, see, is that “tribal and village societies are notoriously parochial. A shared descent, be it fictional or real, leads to an exclusion of the stranger — except, perhaps [!], when canons of hospitality are invoked.”<sup>46</sup> Among tribesmen, the Stranger is in danger because he has no kin to protect him. Happily, history came to the rescue in the form of the city, “the shelter of the stranger from rural parochialism.” The emergence of cities began to overcome the self-enclosed tribal mentality. “As ‘strangers’ [why the quotation marks?] began to form the majority of urban dwellers in late classical and medieval times,” kin-based life became limited to urban elites. In the city, “the suspect stranger became transformed into the citizen.”<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult even to imagine the tableau. Who the hell *is* the Stranger and what is he doing in an alien community? Is he a tourist, a hitchhiker, a backpacker? Seemingly not. If he has no apparent business there, it might not be unreasonable to suspect he is a thief or a spy. But while he might inspire distrust, it is hard to imagine why the villagers should feel fear or dread. After all, they heavily outnumber him, and so, as Bookchin says, he might be killed with impunity, or simply sent on his way. Logically, then, the Stranger should be the fearful one. Needless to say, the Director Emeritus adduces no evidence bearing on this eminently empirical question, and hedges by saying that “perhaps” customs of hospitality might protect the Stranger.

Why “perhaps”? They *do* protect the Stranger in many societies, for example, among Bedouins or the Kabyles: as Kropotkin wrote, “every stranger who enters a Kabyle village has right to housing in the winter, and his horses can always graze on the communal land for twenty-four hours.

---

<sup>43</sup>“Blood Pacts or Blood Covenants,” *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, ed. Thomas Barfield (Oxford, England & Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 42–43.

<sup>44</sup>E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology and Other Essays* (New York: the Free Press, 1962), 257–287, 261 (quoted), 280 (quoted); Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, 110–111, 114; Whiting, *Becoming a Kwoma*, 154 (quoted).

<sup>45</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 147 (quoted) 138; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 50.

<sup>46</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 78.

<sup>47</sup>Bookchin, *Limits of the City*, 76 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 81, 50; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 28–29 (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 174 (quoted).

But in case of need he can reckon upon an almost unlimited support.” Among pastoral Arabs in northwestern Sudan, when a traveller arrives they throw a party for him. Among peninsular Arabs, according to T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), the law of the desert was to offer three days’ hospitality. Among the Tikopia the taking of bond-friends, just mentioned, “is done partly from the tradition of caring for the welfare of visitors.” Eskimos welcome the unfamiliar Stranger with a feast, as in many parts of the world. Among Montenegrin tribesmen (white men *can jump*), “generous hospitality and honesty were prime moral values for men.”<sup>48</sup> And there is no better example, according to Morgan, than the Iroquois:

One of the most attractive features of Indian society was the spirit of hospitality by which it was pervaded. Perhaps no people ever carried this principle to the same degree of universality, as did the Iroquois. Their houses were not only open to each other, at all hours of the day, and of the night, but also to the wayfarer, and the stranger. Such entertainment as their means afforded was freely spread before him, with words of kindness and of welcome... If a neighbor or a stranger entered [an Indian woman’s] dwelling, a dish of hommony, or whatever else she had prepared, was immediately placed before him, with an invitation to partake. It made no difference at what hour of the day, or how numerous the calls, this courtesy was extended to every comer, and was the first act of attention bestowed. This custom was universal, in fact one of the laws of their social system; and a neglect on the part of the wife to observe it, was regarded both as a breach of hospitality and as a personal affront.<sup>49</sup>

Among the ancient Greeks, guest-friendship was an effective substitute for kinship; but any visitor, guest-friend, ambassador or Stranger, was fed before he was asked his business. For Homer, “all wanderers/and beggars come from Zeus,” and “rudeness to strangers is not decency”; for Aeschylus, “Zeus protects the suppliant,” “Zeus the God of Strangers.”<sup>50</sup> Although inhospitable tribes (such as the Dobuans) do exist, ordinarily, “savages pride themselves in being hospitable to strangers.”<sup>51</sup>

Although Bookchin’s attitudes announce their own emotional, personalistic essence, a basic intellectual error enters into several of his fallacies, namely, a childish literalism. He takes everything at face value. If the rules say an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, to him that must mean real eyes and real teeth in pairs. People of the same blood are not merely related through descent, the *same* blood, the same fluid, flows in their veins, and somehow they know this. If the rule of “blood revenge” requires the retaliatory killing of a man in another clan which “owes

---

<sup>48</sup>Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 134–135; Ian Cunason, “Camp and Surra,” in *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, ed. Louise E. Sweet (2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, 1970), 1: 332; T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), 267; Firth, *Tikopia Ritual and Belief*, 114 (quoted); Franz Boas, *The Central Eskimo*, Report of the Bureau of Ethnology (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1888), 609; Pitt-Rivers, *Fate of Shechem*, 179 n. 2; Christopher Boehm, *Montenegrin Social Organization and Values: Political Ethnography of a Refuge Area Adaptation* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), 86 (quoted).

<sup>49</sup>Morgan, *League of the Iroquois*, 327–328.

<sup>50</sup>M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (rev. ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1965), 106, 134–135; Homer, *The Odyssey*, tr. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), 249 (quoted); Aeschylus, “The Suppliants,” in *Prometheus Bound, The Suppliants, Seven Against Thebes, The Persians*, tr. Philip Vellacott (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1961), 68 (quoted), 74 (quoted).

<sup>51</sup>Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 216–217, quoting *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800–1816*, ed. W.K. Lamb (Toronto, Canada: Macmillan, 1957), 43.

blood,” such a killing by the same rule requires another, and so forth. Feuds must be endless. But in tribal Montenegro (whose terms I am using), that is *not* what usually happened. By a variety of mechanisms, homicides were composed, if not immediately, then sooner or later, despite the ideology.<sup>52</sup> There is always a difference, in Roscoe Pound’s phrase, between the law on the books and the law in action.

The first generation of anthropologists to go into the field often returned reporting conceptually elegant clockwork kinship systems. Departures from the system on the ground were minimized, explained away, or adjudged deviant, even if they went unsanctioned. Eventually, anthropologists began to see the rules as somewhat flexible, and above all open to interpretation. They might be invoked selectively and tactically, perhaps as bargaining counters, just as in our criminal justice system the legal definition of a crime enters into plea negotiations, but as only one factor. In application to particular situations, custom may be negotiable. Raymond Firth, who was in that first generation, was also one of the first to appreciate that the idealized native rules usually provide for options for action.<sup>53</sup> Thus the blood feud is not perpetual, the Stranger is often not the enemy, custom is not programming, shamans are not theocratic terrorists, and rules are made to be broken.

The reality of large-scale, long distance intertribal trade among contemporary, historic *and* prehistoric primitives reveals the ex-Director’s fears for the Stranger as neurotic projections. “Interlocked regional exchange systems have been in existence since the Neolithic,” indicating extensive permanent dealings between strangers, so that Danish amber ended up in Mycenaean tombs, and faience from Egypt is found in Poland and Britain. Amber circulated in the Baltic zone from the early Neolithic (3500–2500 B.C.); by the late Neolithic (2500–1900 B.C.) it reached Germany and northern France; and by the early Bronze Age (1900–1600 B.C.) it reached Britain, southern France, Hungary, Romania and Mycenaean Greece. Circulation of goods was a basic precondition of Neolithic societies. Large volumes of luxury goods moved more than several hundred kilometers. Flint mines were up to 15 meters deep. Peasant communities were not self-sufficient.<sup>54</sup> It was the same all over the world. Prehistoric primitives regularly interacted with middlemen, *i.e.*, Strangers. So do contemporary primitives, the most famous example being the Trobrianders, but also, as previously mentioned, even the lowly San.

In real life, the Stranger “as such” is usually not hated, feared or murdered, because he has business, literally, in the village after all. “Usually” is not “always”: in Fiji, for example, the Stranger is someone you can eat.<sup>55</sup> Bookchin has unwittingly conjured up the protagonist of a famous essay in sociology, “The Stranger” by Georg Simmel. Unlike, say, our relation to the inhabitants of Sirius — the comparison is Simmel’s — our relation to the Stranger is part of the interaction system of a community which he is simultaneously inside and outside of. The Stranger is “an

---

<sup>52</sup>Christopher Boehm, *Blood Revenge: The Anthropology of Feuding in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1984).

<sup>53</sup>Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963), 65, 236; Raymond Firth, “Foreword” to E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1954), vi-vii; Boehm, *Blood Revenge*, 93. Firth’s own *We, the Tikopia* and Evans-Pritchards’ *The Nuer* are among those clockwork classics.

<sup>54</sup>Kristian Kristiansen, “Chiefdoms, States, and Systems of Social Evolution,” in Earle, ed., *Chiefdoms*, 25; Andrew Sheratt, “Resources, Technology and Trade: An Essay in Early European Metallurgy,” in *Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology*, ed. G. de G. Sieveking, I.H. Longworth & K.E. Wilson (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1976), 559–566; Norman Yoffee, *Explaining Trade in Ancient Western Asia* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1981), 3.

<sup>55</sup>Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 10.

element of the group itself,” so related to it that “distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near.”<sup>56</sup> If that was a bit abstract, this is not: “Throughout the history of economics the stranger everywhere appears as the trader, or the trader as stranger.” His position is actually accentuated if he settles in the place of his activity. He comes in contact, sooner or later, with everyone, but he “is not organically connected, through established ties of kinship, locality, and occupation, with any single one.” And in a way, the Stranger really does anticipate urban social relations. One relates to the Stranger, unlike persons to whom one is organically connected in particularistic relationships, on the basis of more abstract, more general qualities or interests in common. In this respect too he is both near and far.<sup>57</sup> The relationship with the Stranger is the first alienated, the first *estranged* relationship (Simmel uses the word, the same word Marx used).

The story about the elites retiring to brood about their bloodlines while Strangers crowd into town and take over is funny but false. That never happened anywhere, including Athens, the one city you might think the Director Emeritus knows a little about (but you would be wrong). Intermarried aristocratic or patrician oligarchy is the norm in the pre-industrial city, be it Babylon or Barcelona, Alexandria or Amsterdam, Tours or Tenochtitlan (Chapter 9). As discussed in Chapter 14, as Athenian democracy reached its apex under Pericles (an aristocrat, by the way), access to citizenship became more *restricted* as an influx of Strangers vastly increased the population. In fact, on the proposal of Pericles, the assembly made citizenship hereditary, *i.e.*, a privilege of blood. Citizenship remained the zealously guarded prerogative of an endogamous caste until Macedonian and then Roman hegemony made it meaningless.

It is, in fact, the city — until relatively recent times usually huddled behind its walls — which is historically the epitome of the exclusivist community. And that is as true, probably *more* true of the supposed urban democracies which Bookchin claims as harbingers of his Communes in Switzerland, Italy and New England. In the New England towns, for example, “strangers were discouraged or denied permission to settle.” In fact, they were “warned out”: “towns could legally eject ‘strangers’ and have constables convey them from town to town until they were returned to the town where they legally belonged. Society had to be an organic whole.” These covenanted communities — “tight little islands” — took urban exclusivism to an extreme. Between 1737 and 1788, Worcester County in Massachusetts warned out 6,764 persons: “Thus the system discriminated against unfortunate strangers.” As late as 1791, the selectmen warned over 100 persons out of Lancaster, Massachusetts. Primarily directed against the poor, warning out also served “the purpose of keeping out persons whose political or religious opinions were unsatisfactory to the towns.”<sup>58</sup>

It requires no great psychological insight to realize that the Stranger is Bookchin himself. The fear he projects onto the communities of alien Others expresses his estrangement from them, just as his utopian Commune reflects a yearning for the lost community he imagines from his

<sup>56</sup>Simmel, “The Stranger,” *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier Macmillan, 1950), 402 (quoted), 402–403.

<sup>57</sup>Simmel, “The Stranger,” 403 (quoted), 403–408.

<sup>58</sup>George Lee Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts: A Study in Tradition and Design* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1960), 78 (quoted); Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 90–91 — a source quoted by Bookchin, 237–238; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 20 (quoted); Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 89–90 (quoted); Josiah Henry Benson, *Warning Out in New England, 1656–1817* (Boston, MA: W.B. Clarke Company, 1911), 18, 56, 10 (quoted).

childhood. He is, like the exiled Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, nowhere at home — in internal exile, in his case. The explanation is straightforward sociologically and begins, again, with Simmel: trade is “the sphere indicated for the stranger, who intrudes as a supernumerary, so to speak, into a group in which the economic occupations are already occupied — the classical example is the history of European Jews.” The Stranger is the Jewish peddler anxiously approaching a Gentile village; “in the Pale of Settlement of Czarist Russia peddling was an important means of livelihood up to 1917.” Only the economic division of labor brings Jew and Gentile together. “Each distrusts and fears the other”: “Beyond this surface dealing, however, [is] an underlying sense of difference and danger.”<sup>59</sup>

The Director Emeritus was born, as he relates, in the then-Jewish ghetto of the Lower East Side soon after his leftist parents arrived from the chaos of revolutionary Russia. His first language was Russian, and the new ghetto his family inhabited was Communist as well as Russian-Jewish: “In a sense, they remained a part of the Russian workers’ movement even after they came to the United States.”<sup>60</sup> The relevant influence is not Judaism — his parents were secular leftists — but rather the insular community of the *shtetl*, the “townlet” in which Jews abided, or sojourned might be a better word, since “a long history of exile and eviction strengthens the tendency to regard the dwelling place as a husk.” The Jews and the goyim are near, yet far: “In a small *stetl* the Jews and the peasants may be close neighbors. In a large one, most of the Jews live in the center and the peasants on the outskirts, near their fields... The non-Jew, the goy, is a farmer. The Jew, officially proscribed from owning land, is urban.”<sup>61</sup> Here is the origin of Bookchin’s urban antagonism to the country. The *stetl*, however humble, is a seat of Talmudic learning, set apart from and better than the surrounding illiterate, animalistic peasantry. The Commune is not only a glorified polis, it’s a glorified *stetl*, inhabited by culturally superior Strangers of well-defined exclusivist status.

That these themes really do illuminate Bookchin’s *mentalite* is suggested by an unexpected source: *The World of Sholem Aleichem*, by Maurice Samuel. In one of Aleichem’s stories, a Jew named Tevyeh drives his wagon through the vast Russian forest on his way back to the *shtetl*: “The man on the driver’s seat, a little, bearded Jew in a ragged capote, keeps his eyes half closed, for he has no inclination to look on the beauties of nature.” Like the Director Emeritus, the urbane Tevyeh is indifferent to First Nature, or even afraid of it. As it grows dark, “he thinks of the demons who haunt the forest.” Described as a “wage-slave,” Tevyeh has been, in fact, engaged in the ecologically destructive activity of logging. Like Bookchin, he is impatient with animality: he kvetches to himself about the slowness of his horse, a “wretched beast.” Like Bookchin, he tries to conquer his fear of the natural world with words: “Tevyeh tries to spin the thread of rational discourse.” Finally, Tevyeh — Second Nature — tries to impart directionality to First Nature by talking to his horse: “Here I am at least talking, while you are dumb and cannot ease your pain with words. My case is better than yours. For I am human, and a Jew, and I know what you do not know.” According to Bookchin, “emancipated humanity will become the voice, indeed the

<sup>59</sup>Simmel, “The Stranger,” 403 (quoted); H. Wasserman, “Peddling,” in *Economic History of the Jews*, ed. Nachum Gross (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 263 (quoted); Mark Zborowski & Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 66–67 (quoted).

<sup>60</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 15–18, 16 (quoted). He also states: “I had a better knowledge of revolutions in Russia than of events in the history of the United States.” Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 18. This hasn’t changed (see Chapters 13 & 16).

<sup>61</sup>Zborowski & Herzog, *Life Is With People*, 62, 66.

expression, of a natural evolution rendered self-conscious, *caring, and sympathetic to the pain, suffering, and incoherent aspects* of an evolution left to its own, wayward unfolding.”<sup>62</sup> Here too he echoes a Hellenic theme: “In ancient Greek culture, the image of horse and rider represented the victory of reason in the eternal battle of civilization with anarchy. Horsemanship had a spiritual meaning as the discipline of our animal impulses” (Camille Paglia). The *shtetl* is tiny but crowded amidst the vast Russian expanse: its ethnohistorians ask: “What are they shrinking from? Perhaps the loneliness and formlessness of space, perhaps the world of the uncircumcized, perhaps the brutalizing influence of untamed nature. They fear the bucolic.”<sup>63</sup>

So, the next time you think of Tevyeh, the Fiddler on the Roof, think of Murry Bookchin, the Fiddler With the Truth.

---

<sup>62</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 202–203 (emphasis added), quoted in Black, *AAL*, 98.

<sup>63</sup>Camille Paglia, *Vamps & Tramps: New Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 192 (quoted); Maurice Samuel, *The World of Sholem Aleichem* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 8–26 (quoted).



## Chapter 10. Before the Law

The Director Emeritus is full of — surprises. He takes David Watson to task for “denigrat[ing] the development of writing” — actually, all Watson did was deny the “dogma of the inherent superiority of the written tradition” to the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> The irony (as always, unnoticed) is that speaking and listening are inherently sociable, whereas “reading — silent reading — is manifestly antisocial activity.”<sup>2</sup> Astonishingly, Bookchin’s defense of literacy takes the form of an affirmation of *law*:

Before the written word, it should be noted, chiefs, shamans [!], priests, aristocrats, and monarchs possessed a free-wheeling liberty to improvise ways to require the oppressed to serve them. It was the written word, eventually, that subjected them to the restrictions of clearly worded and publicly accessible laws to which their rule, in some sense, was accountable. Writing rendered it possible for humanity to record its culture, and inscribing laws or *nomoi* where all could see them remains one of the great advances of civilization. That the call for written laws<sup>3</sup> as against arbitrary actions by rulers was an age-old demand of the oppressed is easily forgotten today, when they are so readily taken for granted. When Watson argues that the earliest uses of writing were for authoritarian or instrumental purposes, he confuses the *ability to write* with what was *actually written* — and betrays an appalling lack of historical knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

(Presumably, then, these phenomena are entirely unrelated?) “I believe in law,” the Sage remarked recently. More than merely “one of the great advances of civilization,” the rise of law “marks one of humanity’s greatest ascents out of animality.”<sup>5</sup> Having just denounced custom for preventing people from doing anything differently, Bookchin blithely denounces custom for allowing kings and priests to innovate! Let’s just see who betrays an appalling lack of historical knowledge.

If there remained any doubt that Bookchin is not an anarchist, this passage dispels it. To affirm law — and written law — while disparaging custom is unequivocally statist. Custom, he contends, is inherently enslaving, whereas law is at least potentially liberatory. Here’s an eerie parallel with

---

<sup>1</sup>Watson, *Beyond Bookchin*, 24.

<sup>2</sup>I.A. Richards, *Complementarities*, ed. John Paul Russo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 206. “When Augustine first saw a man reading to himself silently (it was Saint Ambrose) he was deeply shocked. He knew Ambrose was a good man, what he did couldn’t be wicked ... but still!” Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>*Nomoi* also means “custom.” M.I. Finlay, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 134; Douglas M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 44. Notice Bookchin’s absurd implication that laws cannot be arbitrary.

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 171.

<sup>5</sup>Dave Vanek, “Interview with Murray Bookchin,” *Harbinger* 2(1) (2002) (online, unpaginated); Biehl, “Interview with Murray Bookchin,” 171.

the ex-Director's dismissal of the actual anarchism of primitive societies and his affirmation of the, at best, potential anarchism of cities. Whether a rule or norm is enslaving or liberatory depends — not solely on whether it is custom or law, and not solely on whether it is oral or written — it also depends on its content and its source. If we consider the general tendencies and affinities of custom and law, the order of custom is characteristic of primitive societies, usually anarchist, and the rule of law is characteristic of civilized societies, always statist.<sup>6</sup> Everyone knows this who knows anything about the differences between primitive society and civilization. It's a difference which ought to be of special interest to an anarchist such as Bookchin formerly mistook himself for. Bookchin's law-and-order anarchism is nothing short of bizarre.

Unfortunately for the assertion, in almost all pre-modern legal codes including the Athenian, crimes are usually undefined. That is left to custom. If written law is sought to reduce the manipulation of custom, it must be because custom has grown too large or complex to be entrusted to memory. But most early codes are neither long nor complex. The most complete Mesopotamian code to survive (but not, as Bookchin claims, the first) is the Code of Hammurabi from about 1750 B.C. It consists of "close to three hundred laws sandwiched in between a boastful prologue and a curse-laden epilogue."<sup>7</sup> That amount of material is easily within an oral culture's capacity for memory. The conqueror claims to be executing the will of the gods, not the will of the people:

Then did Anu and Enlil call me to afford well-being to the people,  
me, Hammurabi, the obedient, godfearing prince, to cause righteousness to appear  
in the land  
to destroy the evil and the wicked, that the strong harm not the weak  
and that I rise like the sun over the black-headed people, lighting up the land.<sup>8</sup>

(With small changes this might be the brag of a more recent conqueror of Mesopotamia, George W. Bush.) Only trained scribes could read the code; Hammurabi himself couldn't read it. There is no evidence it was ever applied in judicial proceedings, or intended to be. In fact, that was impossible, as the judges were also illiterate. Rather it was propaganda for the inhabitants of recently conquered cities.<sup>9</sup> The first stages of literacy occurred within the state. It was a technology of domination:

Writing was an important part of the growth of the first imperial states, that is of the Akkadian and subsequent empires of the third and second millennia BC. Literacy was restricted to the bureaucracy, stabilized its systems of justice and communications,

---

<sup>6</sup>Stanley Diamond, "The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom," in *The Rule of Law*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (New York: Simon and Schuster, Touchstone Books, 1971), 116–118.

<sup>7</sup>David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 208; Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 51 (quoted).

<sup>8</sup>Henri Frankfort *et al.*, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 193.

<sup>9</sup>Benno Landsberger, "Scribal Concepts of Education," in *City Invincible*, ed. Carl H. Kraeling & Robert M. Adams (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 98; Yoffee, "Context and Authority in Early Mesopotamian Law," 102–103, 106–108.

and so provided infrastructural support to a state despotism, though apparently in some kind of an alliance with a property-owning economic class.<sup>10</sup>

In early Egypt, also, literacy was extremely restricted, limited to the pharaoh, his entourage and a not very large number of scribes. The ruling group of higher officials in Old Kingdom Egypt was about 500 people.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the codes of early English kings and kinglets are brief: the laws of Hlothhere and Eadric, kings of Kent (2 pages); the laws of Wihtrid, another king of Kent (barely 2 pages); the laws of Ine (8½ pages); the laws of Alfred (7½ pages); the laws of Athelstan (4 ½ pages); and King Ethelred's code of 1108 A.D (3½ pages).<sup>12</sup> The earliest English (and Germanic) code, the laws of Ethelbert, is 6½ pages.<sup>13</sup> The Frankish *Lex Salica*, which at 63 pages is copious by comparison,<sup>14</sup> was promulgated by the king and for the king: "*Lex Salica* is new law; and it is royal law ... The mere fact of legislation makes him more of a king." The codification of custom by this and other barbarian codes was highly selective. The Germanic codes "record just that fraction of custom that seemed enough to satisfy royal pride in legislation. The fact of their existence as books was what mattered most ... The Kentish laws ... reveal a little of contemporary practice ... By causing them to be written down, the king makes them his own." Most law remained customary and unwritten.<sup>15</sup> Written law could not have been for the benefit of the illiterate masses.

A 12<sup>th</sup> century source provides another example of a self-serving codification: "When the famous William, 'the Conqueror,' had brought under his sway the farthest limits of the island, and had tamed the minds of rebels by awful examples to prevent error from having free course in the future, he decided to bring the conquered peoples under the rule of written law."<sup>16</sup> Actually, many Anglo-Saxon laws had already been written down, as we have seen, but William after crushing all resistance started afresh. The conquered would live under *his* laws. The Anglo-Saxons were down, and the laws would help see to it that they stayed down.

Kropotkin also assumed that law originated as codified custom, but he was more realistic than Bookchin about its genesis and function:

---

<sup>10</sup>John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* (2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press & Eugene, OR: A.A.A., 1999), 41; Mogens Trolle Larsen, "Introduction: Literacy and Social Complexity," in *State and Society: The Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralization*, ed. John Gledhill, Barbara Bender & Mogens Trolle Larsen (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 188; Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 117–118, 118 (quoted).

<sup>11</sup>John Baines, "Literacy, Social Organization, and the Archaeological Record: The Case of Early Egypt," in Gledhill, ed., *State and Society*, 196; John Baines & Norman Yoffee, "Order, Legitimacy and Wealth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia," in Feinman & Marcus, eds., *Archaic States*, 232.

<sup>12</sup>*English Historical Documents*, general ed., David C. Douglas (11 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1955–1959), 1: 360–409.

<sup>13</sup>F.L. Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 4–17.

<sup>14</sup>"*Pactus Legis Salicae*," in *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, tr. Katherine Fischer Drew (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 59–167.

<sup>15</sup>J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962), 179 (quoted), 179–181; A.W.B. Simpson, "The Laws of Ethelbert," in *Legal Theory and Legal History: Essays on the Common Law* (London & Ronceverte, WV: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 5–6; Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London & New York: Longman), 109–110.

<sup>16</sup>Richard fitz Nigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario. The Course of the Exchequer and Constitutio Domus Regis*, ed. Charles Johnson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 64.

If law, however, presented nothing but a collection of prescriptions serviceable to rulers, it would find some difficulty in insuring acceptance and obedience. Well, the legislators confounded in one code the two currents of custom of which we have just been speaking, the maxims which represent principles of morality and social union wrought out as a result of life in common, and the mandates which are meant to ensure external existence to inequality. Customs, absolutely essential to the very being of society, are, in the code, cleverly commingled with usages imposed by the ruling caste, and both claim equal respect from the crowd. “Do not kill,” says the code, and hastens to add, “And pay tithes to the priest.” “Do not steal,” says the code, and immediately after, “He who refuses to pay taxes, shall have his hand struck off.”

Such was law; and it has maintained its two-fold character to this day. Its origin is the desire of the ruling class to give permanence to customs imposed by themselves for their own advantage. Its character is the skilful commingling of customs useful to society, customs which have no need of law to insure respect, with other customs useful only to rulers, injurious to the mass of the people, and maintained only by the fear of punishment.<sup>17</sup>

We do not have to take this conspiracy theory literally to take Kropotkin’s point about the twofold nature of law, any more than we have to believe Bookchin’s tale of the common people clamoring for laws. But we may well agree with self-styled anarchist Howard Zinn that law’s twofold nature is still manifest today.<sup>18</sup> It is common knowledge. Empirical research confirms it.<sup>19</sup> The Director Emeritus alludes to the legend that in 621 B.C., Draco wrote down the laws of Athens by popular demand. Actually, nobody knows if the codification was to placate popular unrest or to anticipate and preempt it.<sup>20</sup> And who wrought the miracle? According to Bookchin: “The agents for the new juridical disposition [sic] in [sic] the rights of city dwellers were the strangers!” And nobody knows if the hoi polloi lived to regret it. Historian John Thorkey concludes that “whatever the full details of Draco’s code of laws, it seems it was a clear expression of the power of the aristocracy over everybody else.”<sup>21</sup> If the Draco tale is true, it may stand almost alone as an example of popular philonomic folly. The only verified example I know of is the demands of the freemen of Massachusetts Bay for written law.<sup>22</sup> But they were already accustomed to living under written law; their colonial charter already had the force of law; and enough of them were literate that the content of written law could not be successfully misrepresented. Normally, as Kropotkin implies, the initiative to codify the law is taken by the state.

---

<sup>17</sup>“Law and Authority,” in *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 205–206.

<sup>18</sup>Howard Zinn, “The Conspiracy of Law,” in *Rule of Law*, 26–27.

<sup>19</sup>Murdock, *Social Structure*, 84; Morton H. Fried, “On the Evolution of Social Stratification and the State,” in *Culture in Society: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 729; Irving L. Horowitz, “A Postscript to the Anarchists,” in *The Anarchists*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), 584–585.

<sup>20</sup>J.B. Bury, *A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great* (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), 172.

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 150 (quoted); John Thorkey, *Athenian Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

<sup>22</sup>Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 120, 123–129; Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), 41.

What little is known about the codification of the law in ancient Greece refutes any supposition that it was liberatory. “Crete,” for instance, “was far advanced in its publication of laws on stone”: the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Code of Gortyn was the culmination of a long legal tradition. Yet Aristotle singled out Cretan officials for their arbitrary judgments. Evidence for Cretan literacy is minimal; written law, exhibited monumentally, was intended to impress the illiterate citizenry. The chief function of writing was to legitimate the new form of political organization, the polis.<sup>23</sup> The Athenian lawgivers likewise gave written law to the illiterate. Thirty years after Draco, Solon promulgated his new laws in *poems* for recitation by heralds at public meetings. That assumes a nonliterate public. In truth, “Athens remained a largely oral culture, where only very few people could read and write.”<sup>24</sup>

Nor does the weirdness end there. According to the Director Emeritus, the magic of “the written word” “eventually” rendered the rulers accountable “to some extent” — by implication, for the first time. He provides no places, dates or details because there are none to provide. According to Bookchin, not popular resistance, but rather the law itself, self-propelled to realize its potential, places limits on power independent of human agency. The Director Emeritus does not explain why custom could not have constrained power, as it does in primitive societies.<sup>25</sup> In fact it played such a role in medieval Europe. The Magna Carta, for instance, was mostly about subordinating the king to the customs of the realm.<sup>26</sup>

Nor does the ex-Director notice that he has made yet another category mistake, confusing the custom/law distinction with the oral/written distinction. All four pairings have actually existed. There is nothing about a custom that precludes its being written down, if there’s anybody around who is able to write. Thus Blackstone spoke of “the first ground and chief corner stone of the laws of England, which is, general immemorial custom, or common law, from time to time declared in the decisions of the courts of justice; which decisions are preserved among our public records, explained in our reports, and digested for general use in the authoritative writings of the venerable sages of the law.” Before Blackstone, Sir Matthew Hale identified the common law as “Usage or Custom.” In 1790, future U.S. Supreme Court justice James Wilson wrote: “The common law is founded on long and general custom. On what can long and general custom be founded. Unquestionably, on nothing else but free and voluntary *consent*.”<sup>27</sup> If I should write down that “people are expected to throw rice at the newlyweds at weddings,” my writing that down doesn’t destroy the practice as a custom any more than it turns it into a law. And law is not necessarily written. The most minimal common sense suggests that there had to be an unwritten law before there could have been a demand to write it down.

It is almost obvious why literacy is so useful to power. Everyone has a memory, but for thousands of years, few could read. Literacy does not just supplement orality, it tends to supplant it. As Plato wrote: “Those who acquire [literacy] will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead

---

<sup>23</sup>Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992), 67 (quoted), 72, 145, 167.

<sup>24</sup>Eric A. Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 190; S. Cuomo, *Ancient Mathematics* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 15 (quoted).

<sup>25</sup>Clastres, *Society Against the State*.

<sup>26</sup>J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. ch. 4 (“Custom and Law”).

<sup>27</sup>*The Works of James Wilson*, ed. James DeWitt Andrews (2 vols.; Chicago, IL: Callaghan & Co., 1896), 185.

of on their own internal resources.”<sup>28</sup> Even the literate lose something by their literacy, though not as much as the new underclass, the illiterate. The state, above all the modern centralized state, strives to confront the citizen as an isolated individual. Hence its long campaign to eliminate mediating groups between state and citizen.<sup>29</sup> This is the same trend which Bookchin so witlessly hails as liberation from kin ties when he is not inconsistently denouncing everything modern as privatistic and individualistic. The state levels the playing field — levels it down — but towers over that level itself. Regardless what people are reading, be it Director Emeritus Bookchin or Father Cardenal, their reading is a private experience: “Literacy brings about a break in togetherness, permits and promotes individual and isolated initiative in identifying and solving problems.” Oral culture is purely social culture, but writing encourages private thought. Furthermore, writing tends to reify and make permanent the existing social and ideological culture.<sup>30</sup> Oral culture is not static, partly because it is not held as a whole in everyone’s or anyone’s memory store.<sup>31</sup> It cannot be monopolized.

If it be argued that, in a world dominated by literate elites, mass literacy is liberatory, it need only be said that the inequality of knowledge and capacity for expression between literates and illiterates is simply recreated as the same kind of inequality between the highly-educated elite and the nominally literate masses. To put it another way, it is the inequality between the producers and consumers of ideology and specialized knowledge. Today, the ever worsening disadvantages of the computer-illiterate recapitulate the disadvantages of the illiterate in traditional and modern societies. After computers it’ll be something else.

That literacy is still a tool for domination is evident from the Nicaraguan literacy campaign in 1979. Over half the population was illiterate. Almost the first thing the bourgeois intellectuals of the Sandinista *junta* did was to orchestrate, in metaphors and terminology purposefully military, a “Crusade” for literacy with the assistance of Cuban advisors. As one of the Sandinistas stated, they appreciated that “no matter in what nation, education serves the interests of those with power, those who dominate and control society.” Now, that was them. According to Valerie Miller, the doting “sandalista” author of a book on the Campaign, its primary purpose was political socialization, and “during the campaign, increased emphasis was given to the sociopolitical dimensions of the campaign.” The first word of the primer was “la revolucion,” and its contents were crude propaganda. Literacy would strengthen the state and its satellite organizations:

As individuals were strengthened by this learning, so, too, would the organizations and institutions to which they belonged be strengthened because of the increase in group skills. Moreover, an effective campaign would earn legitimacy and credibility for the new government and instill a sense of national consensus and pride in its citizens. The experience of helping to implement the campaign would give institutions —

---

<sup>28</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII*, tr. Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin Group, 1973), 96.

<sup>29</sup>Robert A. Nisbet, *Community & Power* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), esp. ch. 6.

<sup>30</sup>D.P. Pattanayak, “Literacy: An Instrument of Oppression,” in *Literacy and Orality*, ed. David R. Olson & Nancy Torrance (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 107 (quoted); Jack Goody & Ian Watt, “The Consequences of Literacy,” in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (New York & London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 62, 37–38.

<sup>31</sup>Jack Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, DC & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 44, 46.

government agencies, citizens' associations, and labor federations [but strikes were illegal] — practice in planning, organization, and evaluation.<sup>32</sup>

This is what comes of privileging the ideal over the real. Literacy serves power, although it did so in very different ways in ancient Sumer and modern Nicaragua. In American history, compulsory education was instituted, not to widen anyone's intellectual horizons, but to Americanize immigrants. Bismarck instituted it in Germany to inoculate the workers against socialism. The ignorance of history in the younger generation which the Director Emeritus deplors is not the result of an oversight but rather of protracted miseducation.<sup>33</sup> Never has so much education at every level been extended to so many people. Students may not learn history (they never learned honest history), but they learn time-discipline, obedience to impersonal authority, a facility for carrying out meaningless tasks, and they learn to accept as normal the daily alienation of most of their waking hours. They learn how to work.<sup>34</sup> I think the powers that be who control education have a more realistic conception of its functions than does Bookchin, befogged by abstractions.

Law versus Custom, like the ex-Director's other antitheses, fails to bring out what the contradiction is really about: which is, disputing *processes* and their relations to forms of social organization. Thus Laura Nader and Harry Todd, in the introduction to their anthology on disputing processes, write:

We shall not deal here with the question of whether these procedures are law or social control or "merely" custom. We will take a more neutral position and say that whatever we label these procedures, there are a limited number of them... The crucial variables are the presence or absence of a third party and the basis of the third party's intervention, and the type of outcome (if any). The same basic procedural modes are used worldwide in attempts to deal with grievances, conflict, or disputes: adjudication, arbitration, mediation, negotiation, coercion (or conquest, in Kenneth Boulding's terms), avoidance, and "lumping it."<sup>35</sup>

Even this briefest of introductions to the anthropology of law begins to expose the fallacy of the eternal blood feud. The duration of a feud is likely to depend heavily on whether or not there is third party intervention and, if so, of what kind. Thus the first case study in the anthology, obviously intended as a cautionary example, is the Jale of New Guinea, among whom "any conflict can escalate into a war." The author does not consider the significance of the fact that such an escalation almost never happens, or else the Jale would always be at war, which is not the case. Disputes within a patrilineage where the parties live in the same men's house may be resolved through the intervention of other residents, but if the lineage has split to live in several locations, they may not be. If disputants are nonkin neighbors, a peaceful outcome is likely, but not if they reside at a distance. But in other combinations, there may not be enough cross-linkages to prevent retaliation and then feud drawing in larger groups: in the absence of a role for third

---

<sup>32</sup>Valerie Miller, *Between Struggle and Hope: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade* (Boulder, CO & London: Westview Press, 1985), 20, 24–25, 25 (quoted), 27 (quoted), 29, 36–37, 37 (quoted), 39 (quoted). The book was commissioned by the Nicaraguan Government and must be considered to enunciate its line. *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>33</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 334.

<sup>34</sup>Black, "Abolition of Work," 30.

<sup>35</sup>Laura Nader & Harry F. Todd, Jr., "Introduction: The Disputing Process," in *The Disputing Process — Law in Ten Societies*, ed. Laura Nader & Harry F. Todd, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 8–9.

party intervention, disputes “snowball.”<sup>36</sup> The Jale are atypical; usually there are cross-linkages and third party agencies to resolve or localize disputes. But even this tendentious account implies that ties of kinship and neighborhood usually avert war, which is never the war of each against all, but the war of certain individuals with socially specific identities against others also socially identifiable. As a brief for the law of the state this is ludicrous at a time when the United States is on a worldwide military rampage.

Elizabeth Colson introduced the concept of cross-linkages in a famous article intended to explain the Plateau Tonga, an anarchist society “where there are no obvious political institutions concerned in the maintenance of order.” The crucial fact is that the Tonga live in small villages most of whose people are unrelated to one another. The Tonga recognize matrilineal descent but neolocal residence, so their clans, the units implicated if a feud breaks out, have no corporate character and their members are scattered. The father’s clan provides important material and ritual support for the son although he is not a member, so it, too, takes an interest in his disputes. In marriage, then, four groups are linked, and their concern will extend to offspring. Finally, there is much lending of cattle to friends and kinsmen who live elsewhere. If a dispute flares up, there are always many people obligated but reluctant to take sides in a conflict, often because they are aligned, at least remotely, with both parties. Although each disputant is in theory free to settle the dispute as he pleases, “in societies of this type, it is impossible to have the development of the feud and the institutionalization of repeated acts of vengeance, for each act of vengeance, like each original incident, mobilizes different groups whose interests are concerned in the particular case and that alone.” Hostilities are impossible within a village or between villages if kinsmen of both parties reside in the village or villages, as is usually the case.<sup>37</sup> Peace prevails without law enforcement. The notion of cross-linkages is related to Max Gluckman’s notion of “multiplex” (multi-functional) relationships whose prevalence determines the form of the disputing process (negotiation or mediation).<sup>38</sup>

What disputing processes are appropriate to an anarchist society? All the voluntary ones: negotiation, mediation/conciliation, and (nonbinding) arbitration — also avoidance, but not in the form of resignation to one’s powerlessness as it is among us. In negotiation the parties work things out by themselves: “They seek not to reach a solution in terms of rules, but to create the rules by which they can organize their relationship with one another” (P.H. Gulliver).<sup>39</sup>

In mediation, a third party facilitates a resolution, but not the way a judge does. The mediator may just engage in shuttle diplomacy (as a go-between or “crosser”); in effect this is negotiation without face to face confrontation between the parties. More often, though, the mediator helps shape a settlement to which the parties consent. That’s how it works among the Plateau Tonga, whose social structure harmonizes with mediation. In mediation, both parties agree on the mediator (who usually has a certain position of authority or prestige), and for mediation to succeed, both parties must accept the settlement. Any resort to rules is subordinate to the goal of a mutu-

---

<sup>36</sup>Klaus-Friedrich Koch, “Pigs and Politics in the New Guinea Highlands: Conflict Resolution Among the Jale,” in *ibid.*, 41–58.

<sup>37</sup>E. Colson, “Social Control and Vengeance in Plateau Tonga Society,” *Africa* 23(3) (July 1953), 199–211, 199 (quoted), 210 (quoted).

<sup>38</sup>Max Gluckman, *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1955), 18–20; Nader & Koch, “Introduction,” 12–14.

<sup>39</sup>P.H. Gulliver, “Negotiations and Mediation,” Working Paper No.3 (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Program in Law and Society, 1973), 2–3, quoted in Nader & Todd, “Introduction,” 10.



ally acceptable resolution which typically accomplishes, and is accomplished by the restoration of a relationship not confined to the matter at hand, *i.e.*, a multiplex relationship. For the mediator it is more important to know the people than to know the facts of the case: "Since successful mediation requires an outcome acceptable to the parties, the mediator cannot rely primarily on rules but must construct an outcome in the light of the social and cultural context of the dispute, the full scope of the relations between the disputants and the perspectives from which they view the dispute."<sup>40</sup>

Mediation is ill-suited to hierarchic or culturally heterogeneous societies, which explains why attempts to attach mediation to the American legal system failed: "While mediation appears to be tremendously valuable in disputes between equals, in the available prototypes it appears that in disputes between nonequals, it simply replicates existing power relationships." Its proponents touted it as getting to the root causes of disputes. Unfortunately, the root causes of many disputes include capitalism, poverty, patriarchy, racism, and other problems which are difficult to understand and impossible to resolve at the individual level. To the extent social inequalities cause disputes, "community mediators seem merely to induce disputants to accept these structural inequalities."<sup>41</sup>

In arbitration, the parties select the arbitrator and agree beforehand to abide by his decision; otherwise it resembles adjudication in that the parties present evidence and the arbitrator finds the facts and applies rules. My impression is that arbitration is rare in primitive societies (the Jale sometimes used it), although the famous Kpelle moot, usually assumed to be mediation, looks more like arbitration to me, and the Kpelle moot is integrated into the judicial system of the Liberian state.<sup>42</sup> In the contemporary United States, most arbitrations take place pursuant to collective bargaining agreements or contracts between businesses, and their awards are enforced by courts, in some cases in order to employ a decision-maker with more expertise in a specialized field than the average judge. Arbitration was also important, however, in the relatively simple preindustrial society of colonial America. As that society grew more complex and commercialized, the courts usurped the function of arbitration and all but banned it.<sup>43</sup> Now if any aspect

---

<sup>40</sup>Nader & Todd, "Introduction," 10; William L.F. Felstiner, "Influences of Social Organization on Dispute Processing," in *Neighborhood Justice: Assessment of an Emerging Idea*, ed. Roman Tomasic & Malcolm M. Feeley (New York & London: Longman, 1982), 48–50, 49–50 (quoted); see, *e.g.*, P.H. Gulliver, "Dispute Settlement Without Courts: The Ndeneuli of Southern Tanzania," in *Law in Culture and Society*, ed. Laura Nadar (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 24–68.

<sup>41</sup>Sally Engle Merry, "Defining 'Success' in the Neighborhood Justice Movement," in Tomasic & Feeley, eds., *Neighborhood Justice*, 182 (quoted); Roman Tomasic, "Mediation as an Alternative to Adjudication: Rhetoric and Reality in the Neighborhood Justice Movement," in *ibid.*, 222–223, 223 (quoted).

<sup>42</sup>Klaus-Friedrich Koch, *War and Peace in Jalemo: The Management of Conflict in Highland New Guinea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 28; James L. Gibbs, Jr., "The Kpelle Moot: A Therapeutic Model for the Informal Settlement of Disputes," *Africa* 33(1) (Jan. 1963): 1–11, reprinted in *Law and Warfare: Studies in the Anthropology of Conflict*, ed. Paul Bohannon (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1967), 277–289. I say this because the plaintiff alone selects the so-called mediator, there's an evidentiary hearing (including cross-examination), and the mediator announces a decision as the consensus of those present, a decision whose observance is compelled by public opinion. This procedure could easily be called adjudication, and has been. Felstiner, "Influences of Social Organization on Dispute Processing," Tomasic & Feeley, eds., *Neighborhood Justice* 57. Gibbs does stress that the parties air all aspects of the dispute and their relationship, with hardly anything excluded as irrelevant. But he never says if the decision is based, or is supposed to be based on pre-existing rules. If it is, it is adjudication, even if it takes place at home and out of doors on the day of rest. If not, it smacks of what Max Weber called kadi-justice.

<sup>43</sup>Jerald S. Auerbach, *Justice Without Law? Non-Legal Dispute Settlement in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 25–30.

of colonial history is worth looking into from an anarchist perspective, it's arbitration, which was correctly seen by the state's judges as a voluntaristic alternative to the state, and dealt with accordingly. But Murray Bookchin has never looked because of his myopic preoccupation with town meetings.

Adjudication is the disputing procedure unique to the state. In adjudication, third party intervention is coercive, and the decision-maker resolves the dispute by the application of impersonal rules of law, without regard to the relationship, if any, between the parties or anything else deemed "irrelevant" to just the one dispute itself. Where a mediator ideally knows the disputants, or at least is intimately familiar with their culture (which is his own), personal knowledge of a party now disqualifies a judge from resolving a dispute. Because of the heterogeneity of modern society, with its divisions by race, gender, class and creed, the judge is likely to be separated from some parties by these criteria, and he is further removed from their social reality by his professional training. The applicable rules are abstract and impersonal. The proceeding is indeed, as it is called, "adversarial," it is itself a conflict about a conflict, which does not make for conciliation. Ideally, and usually, the result is a dichotomous decision, with a winner and a loser: every grey area in the evidence has been resolved into black or white. Psychological effects of either the process or the outcome, especially for the loser, are disregarded. But what has to be grasped as the essence of adjudication is that it is the imposition of *law* by *coercion*. Not surprisingly, a cross-cultural survey found specialized institutions of coercion in 23 of 27 societies which had adjudication.<sup>44</sup>

Adjudication is where law and coercion intersect and complete each other. It is inimical to anarchy,<sup>45</sup> which is why law singles out anarchists for oppression (only anarchists among all radicals cannot enter the United States), and why courts have so often vented their special fury on Parsons, Lingg, Berkman, the *Abrams* defendants, Sacco and Vanzetti, Kaczynski, and many more. Because an anarchist society is a human-scale society, its people will know one another well enough so that any dispute is understood to involve relationships which will often be more important than the subject in dispute. Those relationships will usually be multiplex, because there will be no sharply differentiated roles like those which constitute a complex modern state society. Thus negotiation, mediation and occasionally avoidance would be how disputes are resolved — and not, for instance, by voting, as the Director Emeritus would have it. Conceivably arbitration might be used where the disputants are relatively unfamiliar with each other, such as a dispute between communities, or perhaps if it's a technical matter. But — no courts, no judges, no jurors, no police, no jails, no gallows — no legal system whatsoever, and *no institutionalized coercion*. Bookchin may not know it, or he may just maintain a prudent silence for a change, but by espousing law, he espouses adjudication and disclaims anarchism.

The ex-Director's nomophilia caught me by surprise. This revolutionary anarchist shares Sergeant Joe Friday's faith in the law. The policeman is your friend — potentially, which for Bookchin is always better than the real thing. Granted, in real life the cops kick your ass, but that is merely adventitious, contingent, fortuitous and secondary. I don't know in what capacity I was more incredulous: as an anarchist or as a lawyer. It does not occur to Bookchin that a written law is necessarily more accessible to a ruling elite, which is literate or employs the

---

<sup>44</sup>Felstiner, "Influences of Social Organization on Dispute Processing," 47–54.

<sup>45</sup>"Anarchy is social life without law, that is, without governmental social control." Donald Black, *The Behavior of Law* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 123. This book's final chapter, "Anarchy" — whose return is predicted — deserves to be better known among anarchists.

literate in its service, than it is to the illiterate masses. More accessible, and more manipulable. You can forge a document, like the Donation of Constantine, but you can't forge a custom. As Stanley Diamond writes, "law is not definite and certain while custom is vague and uncertain. Rather, the converse holds. Customary rules must be clearly known; they are not sanctioned by organized political force; hence serious disputes about the nature of custom would destroy the integrity of society. But law may always be invented ..."<sup>46</sup>

Law may always be invented. And it may always be repealed. What's more, it may always be interpreted, which comes to much the same thing. In the words of John Chipman Gray: "It is not as speedy or as simple a process to interpret a statute out of existence as to repeal it, but with time and patient skill it can often be done."<sup>47</sup> After a generation, Draco's code was superseded by Solon's, and Plutarch has this to say about that: "Besides, it is said that he was obscure and ambiguous in the wording of his laws, on purpose to increase the honor of his courts; for since their differences could not be adjusted by the letter, they would have to bring all their causes to the judges, who thus were in a manner masters of the laws."<sup>48</sup> For a thousand years, the Twelve Tables were nominally the basis of Roman law, but long before then, they'd been interpreted almost out of existence.<sup>49</sup> And look at how the Torah was swamped by the Talmud.

In U.S. constitutional law, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was for many decades interpreted almost out of existence, then interpreted back into efficacy as a restraint — a judicial restraint, not a popular restraint — on legislative power.<sup>50</sup> Written law is more an opportunity for expert mystification than a guide or protection for the citizenry. The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, for instance — dealing with warrants and with search and seizure — is a single sentence of 54 words. A treatise on the law of search and seizure is four volumes long.<sup>51</sup> If you want to know your Fourth Amendment rights, you are better off ignoring the words of the Fourth Amendment and navigating the treatise, if you can. But unless you're a lawyer, you probably can't.

The published availability of the vast mass of American statutory, regulatory and case law makes a mockery of the Director's childish faith in the liberatory power of the Logo, the Word revealed. There are just too damned many words. Every San forager knows all the rules of his society. No North American or European, not even the most learned lawyer, knows one-tenth of one percent of the rules of his society. Caligula, one of the more over-the-top degenerate Roman emperors, was criticized for enforcing new tax laws without previously publicizing them: "At last he acceded to the urgent popular demand, by posting the regulations up, but in an awkwardly cramped spot and written so small that no one could take a copy."<sup>52</sup> For all practical purposes,

<sup>46</sup>Diamond, "The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom," 118.

<sup>47</sup>Gray, *Nature and Sources of the Law*, 192.

<sup>48</sup>*Plutarch's Lives: The Translation Called Dryden's*, corr. & rev. H.H. Clough (5 vols.; Philadelphia, PA: John D. Morris & Company, n.d. [1860?]), 1: 169–170.

<sup>49</sup>Gray, *Nature and Sources of the Law*, 180–181.

<sup>50</sup>Howard N. Meyer, *The Amendment that Refused to Die* (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company, 1973).

<sup>51</sup>Robert C. Black, "FIJA: Monkeywrenching the Justice System?" *UMKC Law Review* 66(1) (Fall 1997), 31, citing Wayne R. LaFare, Jr., *Search and Seizure: A Treatise on the Fourth Amendment* (4 vols.; 2d ed.; St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1987).

<sup>52</sup>Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, tr. Robert Graves (2d ed.; Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1979), 174. It may be that Hammurabi had a similar sense of fun. His code was inscribed — written sideways — on a pillar 19½ feet tall. Norman Yoffee, "Law Courts and the Mediation of Social Conflict in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Order, Legitimacy, and Wealth in Ancient States*, ed. Janet Richards & Mary Van Buren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 47.

this is the situation of the ordinary modern citizen with respect to the law. The lawyer is not much better off. In the words of an unusually candid Federal judge: “Any competent lawyer, during any rainy Sunday afternoon, could prepare a list of hundreds of comparatively simple legal questions to which any other equally competent lawyer would scarcely venture to give unequivocal answers.”<sup>53</sup> Speaking professionally, I agree.

So what is there to the ex-Director’s supposition that written tradition is more reliable, more tamper-proof, than oral tradition — as to law or anything else? Bookchin inconsistently denounces oral tradition as rigid and frozen and at the same time as manipulable by self-serving elites. Those who have compared oral and written traditions haven’t identified any major difference in their reliability as historical sources. Both forms of transmission are subject to the influences of “selectivity” (what is interesting enough to preserve) and “interpretation” (the meaning of what was preserved). Sometimes the written record can be refuted by the oral, and sometimes the other way around; often they agree.<sup>54</sup>

If anything, it may be better for the cause of liberty that written law fails to fix forever the meaning of the law as it was understood at the time by those who promulgated it. In the Anglo-American legal tradition, for instance, Magna Carta, the Great Charter of 1215, is revered as the fountainhead of liberty under law. If so, it is not because of its specific provisions. Nearly all of them address the private grievances of certain barons against the reigning king or else deal with obsolete aspects of feudalism. Only three of its 64 chapters remain in some version on the English statute books.<sup>55</sup> The Charter is historically important as myth — the “mythopoesis” the ex-Director despises — because of the ways jurists later misinterpreted it and ordinary people misunderstood it.<sup>56</sup>

Bookchin calls for a return to left anarchist orthodoxy, but his tribute to legalism contradicts a basic tenet of classical anarchism, the outright rejection of written law. No doubt anarchists like Alexander Berkman,<sup>57</sup> for whom law is merely a support for capitalism, are simplistic, but at least they are not utterly wrong. Kropotkin wrote that “the first duty of the revolution will be to make a bonfire of all existing laws as it will of all titles to property.”<sup>58</sup> Proudhon agreed with Bookchin that law is a limit on government, but he still insisted on doing away with “the *reign of law*.”<sup>59</sup> Bakunin wrote: “We reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage, convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them.”<sup>60</sup> Even the orthodox anarchist Luigi Galleani, himself a lawyer, was of this opinion.<sup>61</sup> Similar statements could easily be multiplied.

---

<sup>53</sup>Jerome Frank, *Law and the Modern Mind* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Anchor Books, 1963), 6.

<sup>54</sup>Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), ch. 7.

<sup>55</sup>Holt, *Magna Carta*, 1 & n. 1.

<sup>56</sup>Holt, *Magna Carta*, ch. 11; Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Roots of Liberty: Magna Carta, Ancient Constitution, and the Anglo-American Tradition of Rule of Law* (Columbia, MO & London: University of Missouri Press, 1993); Robert C. Black, “Constitutionalism: The White Man’s Ghost Dance,” *The John Marshall Law Review* 31(2) (Winter 1998): 513–520.

<sup>57</sup>Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), chs. 3 & 8.

<sup>58</sup>“Law and Authority,” 212.

<sup>59</sup>P.-J. Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, tr. John Beverley Robinson (London: Freedom Press, 1923), 132, 112 (quoted).

<sup>60</sup>“God and the State,” in Lehning, ed., *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 135.

<sup>61</sup>Luigi Galleani, *The End of Anarchism?* (Sanday, Orkney, U.K.: Cienfuegos Press, 1982), 48.

Bookchin is not taking the position, as did Bakunin, that law, like the state, was once a civilizing influence, but one we have outgrown. Law is a permanent part of the ex-anarchist ex-Director's utopia: "In a libertarian municipalist society it would be necessary to fully explicate, on a rational basis, the rights and duties of people, the laws or *nomoi* of the society, and their modes of self-management. And these *nomoi* would derive from a rational constitution that the people who live under it would draw up."<sup>62</sup> If there is as yet not much in the way of a distinctive anarchist critique of law, it is probably because most anarchists take it for granted that the abolition of the state involves the abolition of law. State and law imply each other.<sup>63</sup> William Godwin is one anarchist who said so: "law is merely relative to the exercise of political force, and must perish when the necessity for that force ceases, if the influence of truth do[es] not still sooner extirpate it from the practice of mankind."<sup>64</sup> (And yet Godwin ventures some shrewd criticisms of law that go beyond its function of defending property.<sup>65</sup>)

Unanimity about the goal of abolishing law does not make it obvious how anarchists are to pursue that goal, or even how to conduct their lives, in a law-ridden world. It is a topic on which their abstract armchair edicts, as several of them demonstrated during the Jim Hogshire affair, tend to be more than usually foolish.<sup>66</sup> "If I am weak, I have only weak means," says Stirner, "which yet are good enough for a considerable part of the world... I get around the laws of a people, until I have gathered strength to overthrow them."<sup>67</sup> To the thinking anarchist, this much, in the words of Thoreau, is clear: "I quietly declare war with the state, after my fashion, though I still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases."<sup>68</sup> Regardless, the antinomian goal is clear, except to the Director Emeritus. *His* goal is the city-state, not anarchy, which will express its sovereignty through law. But its law will not, as he claims, limit power, because the self-governing *polis* acknowledges no limits on its self-realization through the practice of politics.

---

<sup>62</sup>"Interview with Murray Bookchin," 172.

<sup>63</sup>Barclay, *People Without Government*, 23; Diamond, "The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom," 136; Black, *Behavior of Law*, 105.

<sup>64</sup>William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 695.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 684–695.

<sup>66</sup>Compare Feral Ranter [now Wolfi Landstreicher], "When Is a Duck Not a Duck?" with Bob Black, "Playing Ducks and Drakes" (unpublished MSS.).

<sup>67</sup>Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 150.

<sup>68</sup>Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," in *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (New York: New American Library, 1960), 236.

## Chapter 11. Humanists and Subhumans

The Director Emeritus identifies himself as a humanist. Indeed, he has devoted an entire book to chastising the “antihumanists” in the ecology movement. It is as a humanist, for instance, that he is scandalized by the “blatant callousness” of David Watson.<sup>1</sup> He has dirtied the word. A humanist is supposed to believe in the dignity and equal worth of men. What Bookchin believes is shockingly otherwise. Not only does he deny that all men are created equal, he denies that all men are men. Not only does he consider the societies and cultures of primitives inferior, he denies that primitives are social and cultural beings. They are “merely natural” — in other words, they are nothing but animals (see Chapter 10). In Bookchin’s peculiar terminology, they engage in “animalistic adaptation rather than [ ] activity”; put another way, “human beings are capable not only of *adapting* to the world but of *innovating* in the world. Innovation means, for Bookchin if not for the dictionary, to engage in practices “beyond everyday eating, sleeping, reproducing, excreting, and even playing.”<sup>2</sup> “Even playing” is denigrated as mere animality (and animals *do* play) — as if it were not the case that “a certain play-factor was extremely active all through the cultural process and that it produces many of the fundamental forms of social life.”<sup>3</sup>

Herbert Read produced language very similar to Bookchin’s — to characterize the world-view of the designing “political fanatic”:

Living is fundamentally an instinct — the animalistic scrounging for food and shelter, for sexual mating, for mutual aid against adversities. It is a complicated biological activity, in which tradition and custom play a decisive part. To the pure mind it can only seem monstrous and absurd — the ugly activities of eating, digesting, excreting, copulating. It is true that we can idealize these processes, or some of them, and eating and lovemaking have become refined arts, elaborate “games.” But only on the basis of long traditions, of social customs that are neither rational nor consistent — what could be more “absurd” than a cocktail-party or the love-making in a Hollywood film? The political fanatic will denounce such customs as aspects of a degenerate social order, but his new social order, if he succeeds in establishing it, will soon evolve customs just as absurd, and even less elegant.<sup>4</sup>

Purposeless play is an “affirmation of life” (John Cage).<sup>5</sup> Hence Bookchin is against it.

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 284; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 36; Murray Bookchin, *Re-Enchanting Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism and Primitivism* (London: Cassell, 1995); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 194 (quoted); Bookchin, *Limits of the City*, 101, 124.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 139, 203.

<sup>3</sup>Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 307; Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1955), 173 (quoted); Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 151–152.

<sup>4</sup>Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 16–17.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Richard Neville, *Play Power: Exploring the International Underground* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 276.

It was the rise of the city which uplifted our species — most of it, anyway — from animality to true humanity (see Chapter 10):

Human beings emerged socially out of animality, out of societies organized according to biological realities like blood ties, gender differences, and age differences that formed the real structure of aboriginal societies, and they developed the concept — *as yet unfulfilled in practice* — that we share a common humanity. This idea was made possible with the emergence of the city, because the city made it possible for people from different tribes that were formerly hostile to each other, to live together without conflict. City culture made it possible for us to begin to communicate with each other as human beings, not as tribal members, and to shake off in various degrees the superstition, mystification, illusion, and particularly the authority of the dream world, which had ideological priority in tribal society.<sup>6</sup>

There are premonitions of this viewpoint in earlier Bookchin writings in which he referred to “the biological realities of the tribal world, rooted in blood ties, gender, and age groups,”<sup>7</sup> but only now are the implications spelled out with brutal clarity. It doesn’t trouble the Director Emeritus at all that his individual/social unbridgeable chasm does not match up with his animal/human unbridgeable chasm. As Kropotkin, a *real* social ecologist, emphasized, “Society has *not* been created by man; it is anterior to man.”<sup>8</sup> The underlying flaw is absolutizing the nature/culture dichotomy itself: “Even the idea that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are two relatively distinct kinds of objects is probably not universal.”<sup>9</sup> Like the notion of objectivity, the nature/culture distinction is itself an example of parochial Western native folk taxonomy. Theories of opposites are among the baleful aspects of our Hellenic heritage. They are not universal; “in certain Near Eastern societies,” writes G.E.R. Lloyd, “there was simply no conscious distinction drawn between the realm of Nature on the one hand and the realm of Society on the other.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course it’s all crazy. The difference between animal “adaptation” as opposed to human “innovation” or “activity” is undefined and does violence to the ordinary understanding of these words. “Adaptation” and “innovation” are near-synonyms, not antonyms. “Innovation” and “activity” are not synonyms at all; the former is a subset of the latter. If adaptation means changing

---

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 140. Without parsing all the piffle in the passage, the claim that the city pacified hitherto hostile tribesmen is incredible coming from a self-proclaimed close student of the Greek city-states. The Greeks had reason to believe that *stasis*, social conflict, was inherent in the life of the polis, and the greatest of evils; it preoccupied a political theorist like Aristotle. M.I. Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. Brent D. Shaw & Richard B. Saller (New York: The Viking Press, 1982), 80; Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. Carnes Lord (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 112–114. In 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek Sicily, on average there was a revolution every seven years. Shlomo Berger, *Revolution and Society in Greek Sicily and Southern Italy* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Historia. Einzelschriften [Monographs]), 1992). Archeology in nine areas of the world including Greece indicates social conflict in every city-state. Norman Yoffee, “The Obvious and the Chimerical: City-States in Archaeological Perspective,” in *The Archaeology of City-States: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, ed. Deborah L. Nichols & Thomas H. Charlton (Washington, DC & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 260. In any event, as with any state, the tenuous internal unity of the polis merely resulted in the displacement of conflict outward, against other city-states.

<sup>7</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 26.

<sup>8</sup>Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 54 n. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Sherry B. Ortner, “So, Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?” in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 179.

<sup>10</sup>G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 80, 211 (quoted).

the environment instead of just living in (and off of) it, then it fails to distinguish primitive from civilized behavior. Primitives may transform their environment — by firing the bush, for instance, as the San do — as I pointed out in *Anarchy after Leftism*. The Director Emeritus said so himself in *SALA*.<sup>11</sup> And he has also confirmed the tautology that primitive society is social: “A tribe (to use this term in a very broad sense to include bands and clans) was a truly social entity, knitted together by blood, marital, and functional ties based on age and work.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, just *who* is innovative? “Man”? What man? What’s his address? How many world-historical innovators are alive today? If innovation is the hallmark of the human, and if innovation means invention, then there are about six billion animals in human form walking the earth today who have never innovated anything.

Bookchin’s critique is of “the community, based on kinship *alone*,”<sup>13</sup> but it is doubtful if many, or even any such communities ever existed. Primitive social organization is not based exclusively on kinship, gender and age. The community, for instance, “the maximal group of persons who normally reside together in face to face association,” is, besides the nuclear family, the only universal social group. Propinquity is, after all, an even simpler idea than the blood-tie.<sup>14</sup> Largely kin-based communities exist, but so do others. Furthermore, there is more to kin ties than “blood ties,” there are also affines in every type of family organization — as Claude Levi-Strauss observes, “the incest prohibition expresses the transition from the natural fact of consanguinity to the cultural fact of alliance.”<sup>15</sup> Thus it was the primitives, not the civilized, who accomplished the transition from nature to culture.

The Director Emeritus cannot conceive of kinship as anything but ascriptive, arbitrary and exclusive. Presumably that’s why the “blood oath” is needed to validate kin-based society — as if without it no one would follow the rules of consanguinity and affinity. In reality, kinship, through marriage, is the basis for alliances with outside groups.<sup>16</sup> Kinship can be flexible and adaptive, as it is in cases of classificatory or fictive kinship or adoption. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sir Henry Maine stated that the family has been “constantly enlarged by the absorption of strangers within its circle.” Kinship can be negotiable, even volitional. In general, people enact multiple roles which may not correspond to their membership in a descent group, and the “use of kin terms often turns out to be a political strategy, not an everyday social nicety”:

Kinship norms specify how people should or would behave toward one another in a world where only kinship mattered. But actual kinsmen are also neighbors, business competitors, owners of adjacent gardens, and so on; and their quarreling and

<sup>11</sup>John H. Bodley, *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1996), 50; Heinz & Lee, *Namkwa*, 56; Wiessner, “Risk, Reciprocity and Social Influence,” 65; Black, *AAL*, 115–116; Bookchin, *SALA*, 63. The Indians of northeastern America fired the bush once or twice a year. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 54–56. Northwest Coast Indians likewise made various uses of fire. *Indians, Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Robert Boyd (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup>Murray Bookchin, “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” *Our Generation*, 5.

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 54 (emphasis added).

<sup>14</sup>G.P. Murdock, C.S. Ford, A.E. Hudson, R. Kennedy, L.W. Simmons, & J.W.M. Whiting, “Outline of Cultural Materials,” *Yale Anthropological Studies* 2 (1945), 29 (quoted); William Graham Sumner & Albert Galloway Keller, *The Science of Society* (4 vols.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1927), 1: 420.

<sup>15</sup>Murdock, *Social Structure*, 41; Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, tr. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, & Rodney Needham (rev. ed.; Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969), 30 (quoted).

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 86; Levi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 478 & *passim*; Barclay, *People Without Government*, 70.



enmity characteristically derive from these relationships, as well as competition for inheritance, power in the family or lineage, and so on. Brothers should support one another. But the owner of a pig who eats your garden should pay damages. If the owner is your brother — and in small-scale tribal societies it is your kin who will most often be your neighbors and rivals — there is a “gulf” between the ensuing quarrel and ideal behavior between kin.<sup>17</sup>

Among important forms of non-kin organization, Robert H. Lowie speaks of sodalities, which include men’s tribal clubs, secret societies, age-class systems, and guilds: “The concept is of some utility in bringing home the fact that individuals associate irrespective of whether they belong to the same family, clan, or territorial group; and that such associations play a dominant part in the social lives of many peoples, rivalling sporadically and even overshadowing other ties.”<sup>18</sup> Another non-kin social formation is moieties — divisions of a community into two groups — these are rather common.<sup>19</sup> Trade relations, such as the famous *kula* ring in Melanesia, connect unrelated trading partners, sometimes at distances of hundreds of miles, as they did throughout Australia and New Guinea. Even the San engage in *hxapo* (direct reciprocity) relations with partners within a radius of 200 kilometers.<sup>20</sup> Religious and recreational associations are widespread and often cut across kinship lines. The relation of villagers to their chief, where there is a chief, is not necessarily based on filiation. As often happens, the Director Emeritus has refuted himself: “Tribal peoples form social groups — families, clans, personal and community alliances, sororal and fraternal clubs, vocational and totemic societies, and the like.”<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, family, gender and age are fundamental principles of organization in *civilization*. Even today they are of the foremost importance, and in the past, for thousands of years, they were even more important. Bookchin has mutilated the master-cliché of modern social theory, the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* (community/society) dichotomy. He has travestied the notion of development from status to contract, in Sir Henry Maine’s famous phrase, until it is even cruder than it appears in 19<sup>th</sup> century social evolutionism. Urban anthropologists are no longer sure that the urbanization of the Third World, for example, inevitably emancipates the individual and the family from the larger kinship groupings of rural society. One of them writes: “Recent studies by anthropologists of urban situations in Africa and elsewhere attest to the remarkable vitality of traditional kinship concepts and practices.”<sup>22</sup> The modernization thesis itself, including its deformed Bookchinist version, is a product of modernization. It is Western native folk ideology expressing “the occidental world’s obsession with its uniqueness and historical destiny.” “Building on the best of the Western heritage,” brays the ex-Director, “in the great tradition of European intellectuality,” humanity will at last reach its destiny to dominate nature and attend many meetings.<sup>23</sup> The West is the best. All hail Jim Morrison and Murray Bookchin.

---

<sup>17</sup>Henry Maine, *Ancient Law* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 110 (quoted); Roger M. Keesing, *Kin Groups and Social Structure* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975), 125–127, 126 (quoted).

<sup>18</sup>Robert H. Lowie, *Social Organization* (London: Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), 309.

<sup>19</sup>Murdock, *Social Structure*, 79, 88–89

<sup>20</sup>Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, 51; Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, 85–86; Wiessner, “Risk, Reciprocity and Social Influence.”

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 57.

<sup>22</sup>A.L. Epstein, *Urbanization and Kinship: The Domestic Domain on the Copperbelt of Zambia, 1950–1956* (London: Academic Press, 1981), 2–5, 193 (quoted).

<sup>23</sup>John Gledhill, “Introduction: The Comparative Analysis of Social and Political Transitions,” in Gledhill, Bender &

The earliest urbanists, the Sumerians, knew that blood is thicker than water: “Friendship lasts a day, Kinship endures forever.” It *has* endured forever. The ancient Greeks, the ex-Director’s paragons, by no means transcended the family. For them it was always the primary institution through which most of life was organized and continuity assured. Even Bookchin speaks of the power of the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus “over an ancient Greek audience that had yet to exorcise the blood oath and tribal custom from their enchanted hold on the human psyche.”<sup>24</sup> It is almost impossible to believe that the Director Emeritus is serious about the blood oath, but he has made his meaning quite clear. His perverse position is only explicable in terms of his visceral hatred of the family, which he would replace with communes (not Communes) — a rare spasm of lifestyle anarchism.<sup>25</sup>

One has to wonder how bad his childhood and marriages were. He was an only child, and the father deserted the family when he was five. That is within the age range (2–6) of the prelogical, preoperational, egotistical cognitive stage in which the child, confronted with contradiction, concludes that the evidence must be wrong, since *he* cannot be wrong: “The preoperational child’s thinking was dominated by egocentrism, an inability to assume the viewpoint of others, and a lack of the need to seek validation of her own thoughts.” Normally the child progresses to concrete operational thought as social interaction with his peers gradually dissolves his cognitive egocentrism.<sup>26</sup> My hypothesis is that the too-successful resolution of the Oedipal problem (by the father’s desertion), the spoiling of the only child by the single mother, and premature isolation from his peers (by immersion in the adult world of Stalinist politics) fixed the future Director in the prelogical egocentrism and intolerance which he exhibits as an adult. Still egotistical,<sup>27</sup> still convinced he is infallible, still unable to enter into another’s point of view even to the extent necessary to refute him, Murray Bookchin has never grown up.

As the Director Emeritus describes his parents, they were fanatic leftists obsessed with politics, just like their son. This is almost the only thing he deems important enough to tell us about them. As far as the ex-Director is concerned, his life began when he joined the Young Pioneers at age nine: “In fact, it was the Communist movement that truly raised me, and frankly they were amazingly thorough.” This much is obvious. At the tender age of 13 he became a soapbox Stalinist.<sup>28</sup> Here are the makings of a monster. Bookchin recounts his story with such satisfaction that he seems truly unaware that he was robbed of something irreplaceable: his childhood. He who was never fully a child will never be fully adult. In effect, he was deprived of family and raised to be a vanguard Platonic Guardian. Ever since, when he hears about a vacancy for philosopher-king, he sends his resume. The Communist Party spurned him. The Trots spurned him. SDS

---

Larsen, eds., *State and Society*, 4 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 140 (quoted), 136 (quoted).

<sup>24</sup>Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 124 (quoted); Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 123; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 54 (quoted). It occurs to me that this may be where the Director Emeritus got this gory “blood oath” stuff: he mistook Aeschylus, as he has mistaken himself, for a historian.

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 333–334; Ecology Action East, “The Power to Destroy — The Power to Create,” *Ecology and Revolutionary Thought* (New York: Times Change Press, 1970), 54; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 42. In hating the family *because* it is natural, the Director Emeritus is only instantiating his hatred of nature itself.

<sup>26</sup>Barry J. Wadsworth, *Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers, 1996), 37 n. 1, 66–67, 93 (quoted).

<sup>27</sup>Lawrence Jarach, “Manichean Anarchism or Dishonest Anarchism: Judging a Bookchin by His Cover-Ups,” *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* No.43, 15(1) (Spring-Summer 1997), 53.

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 17–39, 24 (quoted).

spurned him. The Clamshell Alliance spurned him. The Greens spurned him. Now the anarchists have every reason to spurn him.

But I digress.

Quite absurd is the nonsense category of “biological” relations consisting of kinship, gender and age. Malinowski pointed out 90 years ago that maternity and paternity are socially determined. The Director Emeritus never got the word that family, gender and age roles are socially constructed. They presuppose certain “biological realities,” but when you think about it, so do all other roles.<sup>29</sup> There cannot be a disembodied worker, soldier, priest or professor. Kinship, wrote Robert H. Lowie, “is not biology, and kinship is differently conceived in different societies. That biological relationships merely serve as a starting point for the development of sociological conceptions of kinship. Societies may ignore or restrict the blood tie; it may artificially create a bond of kinship, and again it may extend a natural bond to an indefinite extent.”<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, “sexual relations are not a matter of sheer biology; marriage and family are the cultural superstructure of a biological foundation.”<sup>31</sup> Whatever their other shortcomings, hereditary monarchy and aristocracy are not animalistic; Marx was clothing critique with irony when he treated the distinguishing feature of the monarch as his reproductive capacity.<sup>32</sup> Bookchin is of course incapable of irony. The gender-exclusive Masons and the gender- and ancestry-exclusive Daughters of the American Revolution are not based on biology. The Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts are not hominid packs. A boys’ tree-house is no more biologically based than the Institute for Social Ecology. The Catholic priesthood is not biological. The Hair Club for Men is not rooted in animality. By Bookchin’s criterion, presumably the Mile High Club is biological. That’s the club for people who have had sex (= biological) at an altitude of at least one mile. My application is pending.

Even if the other biological characterizations made sense, age does not. Not only is age itself a cultural construct, so is our Western “folk construct” that aging is only biological.<sup>33</sup> Anyone over 50 is eligible to join the American Association of Retired Persons. Bookchin and I are both eligible. But if we joined (I have), that would not establish a biological relation between us or between either of us and the organization or any of its members. The subject of age is one which always seems to bring out the sillies in the ex-Director. Thus his theory of the origin of hierarchy and domination is that the old men somehow take over (gerontocracy) to make sure they will be cared for when they become infirm.<sup>34</sup> The implication is that hierarchy and domination are natural. Why did anyone ever think that this guy was an anarchist?

---

<sup>29</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines* (London: University of London Press, 1913), 179; Peter J. Richerson & Robert Boyd, “Culture Is Part of Human Biology. Why the Superorganic Concept Serves the Human Sciences Badly,” in *Science Studies: Probing the Dynamics of Scientific Knowledge*, ed. Sabine Maassen & Matthias Winterhager (Bielefeld, 2001), 151.

<sup>30</sup>Lowie, *Social Organization*, 50 (quoted), 57.

<sup>31</sup>Lowie, *Social Organization*, 86.

<sup>32</sup>“What is the final, solid, distinguishing factor between persons. The *body*. Now the highest function of the body is *sexual activity*. The highest constitutional act of the king, therefore, is his sexual activity; for by this alone does he *make* a king and so perpetuate his own body.” Karl Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State,” *Early Writings*, tr. Rodney Livingstone & Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 100.

<sup>33</sup>Robert L. Rubinstein, “Nature, Culture, Gender, Age: A Critical Review,” in *Anthropology and Aging*, 109–115. Rubinstein is explicitly analogizing from the literature on what by now is the conventional wisdom, the social construction of gender. E.g., Ortner, “So, Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?,” 21–42, 173–180.

<sup>34</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 80–83.

It is ridiculous to say that civilization enabled people “to communicate with each other as human beings, not as tribal members.” In civilization we relate to one another as family members, neighbors, employers or employees, co-religionists, “customer service representatives” or customers, bureaucrats or their supplicants, classmates, roommates, professionals or clients, tenants or landlords, stars and fans — in fragmentary ways almost always mediated by specialized roles. The regime of roles is the social organization of alienation. From the individual’s perspective, he is compelled to play “hybrid parts, parts which appear to answer our desires but which are really antagonistic to them” — constricting yet compensatory. To play a role is always more or less to play yourself false.<sup>35</sup> No one’s self is fully expressed, much less fulfilled, by the sum of her roles. Civilization does not enable us to communicate as fully ourselves (as human beings, if you prefer — I don’t), rather, it impedes unmediated expression beyond the instrumental and categorical, channeling it through roles. The role of the revolutionary, as of the proletarian, is to understand the role of rules and abolish the rule of roles including his own.<sup>36</sup> In band or tribal societies, or in traditional village communities, people may rarely communicate with outsiders,<sup>37</sup> but the people they *do* communicate with, they communicate with as, and with, whole human beings.

The synoecism<sup>38</sup> by which several tribes united (without amalgamating) to form the city of Athens did not result in tribesmen communicating with each other as human beings: it resulted in them communicating with each other as Athenians. City chauvinism simply replaced tribal chauvinism. The chronic wars of the Greek city-states indicate that their citizens barely communicated with each other as Greeks, much less as abstract universal men. If any Hellenic Greek even took a step toward recognition of universal humanity, as the Director Emeritus states, it was Pericles; and yet by the law of Pericles (451/450 B.C.) (see Chapter 14), Athenian citizens were forbidden to marry noncitizens, a measure which was, as M.I. Finley says, “accepted without a murmur.”<sup>39</sup> Given the intense parochialism of the polis, the absence of universalist feeling among the Hellenic Greeks is to be expected.

Instead, it was the succeeding Hellenistic period of cosmopolitan empires which brought forth correspondingly cosmopolitan views of man. In the fourth century B.C., the man who first called himself a citizen of the world, *cosmopolites*, was Diogenes the Cynic, the first Lifestyle Anarchist: “He coined the term ‘cosmopolitan’ — citizen of the world — to underline his rejection of conventional city states and their institutions.” As Lewis Mumford put it, “a polis could not become a cosmos.”<sup>40</sup> But a universalistic religion could: “few epochs have had a stronger and better sense than the Western and Christian Middle Ages of the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries of the

---

<sup>35</sup> Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 37; Crispin Sartwell, *Obscenity, Anarchy, Reality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 67.

<sup>36</sup> Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 131 (quoted), ch. 15, 131.

<sup>37</sup> Black, *Behavior of Law*, 42–43.

<sup>38</sup> “The term ‘synoecism’ which uses here (literally, ‘settling together’) carried implications both of state-formation and of urbanization.” S.C. Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 131. On whether Athens was a state (it was), see Chapter 14.

<sup>39</sup> Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Mulgan, “Liberty in Ancient Greece,” in *Conceptions of Liberty in Political Philosophy*, 14; M.I. Finley, *The Ancient Greeks: An Introduction to Their Life and Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 113; Gay, *The Enlightenment*, 1:164; Mumford, *City in History*, 170 (quoted).

universal and eternal existence of a human model.”<sup>41</sup> All are the same before God (see Chapter 8).

Bakunin observed that “the Greeks and Romans did not feel free as human beings and in terms of human rights; they thought themselves privileged as Greeks or Romans, in terms of their own society.”<sup>42</sup> The very existence of the Greek distinction between Greeks and “barbarians,” *i.e.*, between Greeks and everybody else, indicates that Greek civilization failed to foster a sense of common humanity. The ancient Greeks, as Simmel observes, denied the specifically and purely human attributes to the barbarians. Aristotle thought them inferior to Greeks. Polis Greeks indulged in self-flattering national stereotypes. Thus Plato spoke of the vigor and energy of Thracians and Scythians, the commercial instincts of Phoenicians and Egyptians, and “intelligence, which can be said to be the main attribute of our own part of the world.” One is reminded of the “muscularity of thought” which Bookchin modestly attributes to himself. The Athenians considered even other Greeks inferior because only the Athenians were autochthonous, born from from the very soil of Attica.<sup>43</sup>

Aristotle thought that barbarians were slaves by nature and that slavery was a natural relationship. And for him, slaves were much like domestic animals: “Moreover, the need for them differs only slightly: bodily assistance in the necessary things is forthcoming from both, from slaves and from tame animals alike.”<sup>44</sup> Athenian interest in communicating with barbarians may be gauged by the fact that foreign languages were not taught in Athenian schools.<sup>45</sup> Since nearly all Athenian slaves were barbarians,<sup>46</sup> it is understandable that Aristotle blurred the categories. Slaves were one-fourth to one-third of the population of Attica; they were widely employed in agriculture and mining as well as in personal service; one-fourth to one-third of the slaves were worked to death in the Laureion silver mines at their peak. The attitude toward barbarians “was a mixture of something akin to modern racism and nationalism.”<sup>47</sup> Thus slavery was not, as Bookchin so often insists, a surface blemish on the polis. Even aside from its economic necessity, slavery was a natural expression of polis exclusivity.

Another anarchist opinion is Rudolf Rucker’s: “Plato, the only one among the Hellenic philosophers to whom the idea of national unity of all Hellenic peoples is at all clearly apparent, felt himself exclusively Greek and looked down with unconcealed contempt upon the ‘barbarians.’”<sup>48</sup> And

---

<sup>41</sup>Jacques Le Goff, “Introduction: Medieval Man,” in *Medieval Callings*, ed. Jacques Le Goff, tr. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>42</sup>“State and Society,” 147.

<sup>43</sup>“The Stranger,” 407; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 111, 151; Plato, *Republic*, 210; Bookchin, “Thinking Ecologically,” 3, quoted in Black, *AAL*, 18 — this is a quotation I never tire of; Barry S. Strauss, “The Melting Pot, the Mosaic, and the Agora,” in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, ed. Peter Euben, John R. Wallach, & Josiah Ober (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 254–257.

<sup>44</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, 36, 37 (quoted); Josiah Ober, *The Athenian Revolution: Essays on Ancient Greek Democracy and Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 173. Another of the Master’s conceits was the slave as prosthetic: “a slave is a sort of part for the master — a part of his body, as it were, animate but separate.” Aristotle, *Politics*, 43. Plato also casually equated animals and slaves in speaking of “mere uninstructed judgement, such as an animal or slave might have ...” Plato, *Republic*, 200.

<sup>45</sup>William Stearns Davis, *A Day in Old Athens: A Picture of Athenian Life* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1960), 70.

<sup>46</sup>E. Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 360.

<sup>47</sup>Paul Cartledge, “Rebels and Sambos in Classical Greece: A Comparative View,” in *CruX: Essays in Greek History Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on His 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1985), 34 (quoted), 34–35.

<sup>48</sup>Rudolf Rucker, *Nationalism and Culture* (Los Angeles, CA: Rucker Publications Committee, 1937), 80.

if this was true of Greek civilization, it was probably still more true of earlier, more archaic urban civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus valley. In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin told us that Pericles' Funeral Oration may take a step toward humanism but "it provides us with no reason to believe that the 'barbarian' world and, by definition, the 'outsider,' were on a par with the Hellene and, juridically, the ancestral Athenian."<sup>49</sup> But now he says that tribesmen are not human beings. We might as well enslave them, as did the godlike Greeks. Bookchin's utopia rests on (nonexistent) high technology which he explicitly states is the functional counterpart of Athenian slave-labor, thus fulfilling one of Aristotle's fantasies. But since another of Ari's fantasies is that the slave is a mechanical extension of the master, whether our machines are of metal or meat would seem to be morally indifferent.<sup>50</sup>

And geography is just as limiting, even as irrational a basis for consociation as kinship; and for most people, only marginally more voluntary. Many people interest or concern me more than my next door neighbors; none of my significant others resides in my neighborhood; most are at great distances. It seems I am typical. Thus in Pittsburgh as in Toronto, those with whom people have the most intimate ties are not in the neighborhood. With impressive unanimity, studies based on network analysis — identifying who, for what and how often a person relates to others — identify "personal communities" which are mostly not based on locality. These consist of half a dozen intimate ties and a dozen other active ties, half kin, half nonkin; only one or two intimate neighborhood or workplace relationships, and 6–12 further community ties to neighbors *and* workmates. Similarly, in the Zambian city of Ndola, men know only one or two neighbors well, and avoid neighborhood visiting, whereas personal kinship networks are very important.<sup>51</sup>

If, as Bookchin believes, there is any liberatory high technology, it can only be the communications and transportation technology which abolishes distance and renders localism irrelevant: but "With fast trains, the generalization of air travel, and the diffusion of cable networks and the Internet, the city has no boundaries. This change marks a shift from the old principle of contiguity to the new principle of connectivity." What civilization and its technology have really brought us to is the brink of an atomistic contractual society of frictionless transactions, "one that transcends all geographical barriers to human relationships as well as the shackles of prenatally determined bondage that we are fond of calling citizenship."<sup>52</sup> We come up against the state and civil society as givens. As Stirner complained, "Our societies and states *are* without our *making* them, are united without our uniting, are predestined and established, or have an independent *standing* [*Bestand*] of their own."<sup>53</sup> Blood *and* soil tie us down arbitrarily; roots restrain us. If the permanence of relationships declines far enough, arguably the result may be called the Union of Egoists, Temporary Autonomous Zones, or "situational anarchy."<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 151.

<sup>50</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 189; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 129; Aristotle, *Politics*, 43.

<sup>51</sup>Roger S. Ahlbrandt, Jr., "Using Research to Build Stronger Neighborhoods: A Study of Pittsburgh's Neighborhoods," in *Urban Neighborhoods: Research and Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 289; Wellman, "Community Question," 121; Barry Wellman, "The Community Question Re-Evaluated," in *Power, Community and the City*, ed. Michael Peter Smith (Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 87–89; Epstein, *Urbanization and Kinship*, 165–167, 224–225, 231–248.

<sup>52</sup>Dominique Lorain, "Gig@city: The Rise of Technological Networks in Daily Life," *Journal of Urban Technology* 8(3) (Dec. 2001), 3 (quoted); F.A. Harper, "Foreword" to Spencer H. MacCallum, *The Art of Community* (Menlo Park, CA: Institute for Humane Studies, 1970), vii (quoted).

<sup>53</sup>Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 198.

<sup>54</sup>Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 160–161, 186, 192 & *passim*; Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Onto-*

Having renounced the blood oath, why affirm the dirt oath? Isn't it objectionable in just the same way? If blood ties represent the animal in us, so do geographical ties: some animals are territorial. Communism does not require Communes in Bookchin's sense, namely, omnifunctional geographically bounded units: there might be "extraterritorial communes," free associations for particular common purposes.<sup>55</sup> To a significant degree, they already exist, even as states, neighborhoods and other mud-based social forms decay.

The ex-Director must mean it about primitives being animals, because he says it in several ways. If you strip away the "psychic layers" imposed by civilization and "our various civilized attributes," there will be little if anything left except "our barest physical attributes, instincts, and emotions."<sup>56</sup> (Isn't that true by definition?) But it follows that foragers, horticulturalists, herds-men and some peasants possess nothing but physical attributes: they don't even have minds! This understanding of primitive animality resolves several knotty problems, such as primitives' attitude toward nature — they don't have one, because they are part of nature themselves! "Aboriginal peoples could have no attitude toward the natural world because, being immersed in it, they had no concept of its uniqueness."<sup>57</sup> Never mind that they *do* have well-documented and by no means homogeneous attitudes toward nature,<sup>58</sup> because they "could have" no such thing. But as Alexander Hamilton wrote: "However proper such reasonings might be, to show that a thing *ought not to exist*, they are wholly to be rejected when they are made use of to prove that it does not exist, contrary to the evidence of the fact itself."<sup>59</sup>

The Director Emeritus has also written that in primitive society "Nature is *named* even before it is deified." How can primitives name nature if they have no concept of it? Also, that "the aboriginal vision of nature was also strikingly nonhierarchical." How can they have any vision of nature if they don't see it's there? By parity of reasoning, civilized peoples can have no attitude toward civilization because, being immersed in it, they have no concept of its uniqueness. Presumably Bookchin has no concept of reality because he has nothing else to compare it with. As appalling as the ex-Director's attitude is, he has Marx to vouch for him. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx says that the natural relation predominates in pre-capitalist societies; in those where capital rules, the social, historically created element predominates.<sup>60</sup> Bookchin must prefer capitalism.

The instrument of our humanization was *the state*: "Here an evil became the means for humanity to extract itself from animality, and it seems to have been unavoidable." "Humanity had to be

---

*logical Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1991), 97–134; Black, *Behavior of Law*, 40–44, 132, ch. 7. These are convergent, not equivalent concepts. Being the Immediatist that he is, Bey conceives the T.A.Z. as an expedient in the here-and-now which is at once an anticipatory experience of the revolution and a "tactic" toward realizing it permanently. Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 101. But his idea may be bigger than that. Perhaps the revolution is a society (better, a social field) of Temporary Autonomous Zones.

<sup>55</sup>A. Grachev, "Anarchist Communism," in *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, 65 (quoted); Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 131–134 — which is exactly what's happening in contemporary cities: Wellman, "Community Question Re-Evaluated," 86–87.

<sup>56</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 121–122.

<sup>57</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 188 (quoted); Bookchin, *SALA*, 41.

<sup>58</sup>*E.g., Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*, ed. John A. Grim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, Center for the Study of World Religions, 2001).

<sup>59</sup>[Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, & John Jay,] *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for the Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 209 (No.34) (Hamilton).

<sup>60</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 48 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 48 (quoted); Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 107. Marx may have changed his opinion later, Mikhail A. Vitkin, "Marx and Weber on the Primary State," in *The Study of the State*, ed. Henri J.M. Claesson & Peter Skalnik (The

expelled from the Garden of Eden to attain the fullness of its humanness.”<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere the Director Emeritus credits the city, not the state — but they’re inseparable anyway. For the realization of freedom, something has to be added to the “limited passions” of mere animality, and Hegel tells us what: “This essential being is the union of the subjective with the rational will; it is the moral whole, *the State*.”<sup>62</sup> To say that the state created civilization is to say that the state created civilized society or, in Hegel’s and Marx’s phrase, civil society.<sup>63</sup> Hegel believed this; Marx did not: “He [Hegel] wants the ‘absolute universal,’ the political state, to determine civil society instead of being determined by it.”<sup>64</sup> Marx pointedly did not regard either civilization or the state as accomplishing the emergence from animality. Something else did that: “Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation.” Bookchin once quoted this passage with seeming approval.<sup>65</sup> By this criterion, all members of *homo sapiens* have transcended animality, except retirees like the Director Emeritus. Thus Bookchin is a bad Marxist. Aristotle, who is second to none in his appreciation of urban civilization, believed that we are rendered human by speech.<sup>66</sup> Thus Bookchin is a bad Aristotelian.

The trouble with identifying the human essence is that there are many attributes which arguably distinguish humans from animals, but there can be only one human essence. In addition to (as we have seen), the city, the state, and labor, other plausible candidates include reason, language, religion, and possession of a soul. Nietzsche nominated laughter. According to conservative Paul Elmer More, the human essence is property: “Nearly all that makes [life] more significant to us than to the beast is associated with our possessions — with property, all the way from the food which we share with the beasts, to the products of the human imagination.” Anthropologist Edmund R. Leach suggests that “the ability to tell lies is perhaps our most striking human characteristic,”<sup>67</sup> in which case Bookchin is indeed human, all-too-human. No rational method exists for adjudicating these inconsistent claims.

---

Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1981), 452–453 — but Bookchin never did.

<sup>61</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 279 (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 26 (quoted). The Director Emeritus states that Bakunin called the state a “historically necessary evil.” Bakunin did say this, although he failed to say what the state was necessary *for*. Sam Dolgoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (n.p.: The Free Press of Glencoe & London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), 145. “This is not to say — as Marxists might believe — that the state was ‘inevitable.’” (Why the quotation marks?) Bookchin emends Bakunin and the hypothetical Marxists: the state was, not a historically necessary evil, not a historically inevitable evil, but a historically *unavoidable* evil. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 279. Which is puzzling, since “unavoidable” means “inevitable.” *New Shorter OED*, q/v “unavoidable.” Even if Bakunin believed this, Kropotkin — and Lewis Mumford — did not. Senex, “A Scientific Basis for Regional Anarchy,” in Leonard I. Krimerman & Lewis Perry, eds., *Patterns of Anarchy: A Collection of Writings on the Anarchist Tradition* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), 347.

<sup>62</sup>Hegel, *Reason in History*, 49.

<sup>63</sup>Civil society is not the state, it’s society *with* the state. Peter Skalnik, “The Concept of the Early State,” in Claesson & Skalnik, eds., *Study of the State*, 343.

<sup>64</sup>Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State,” 158.

<sup>65</sup>Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed.; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 37; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 266.

<sup>66</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, 37; Arlene M. Saxenhouse, *Athenian Democracy: Modern Mythmakers and Ancient Theories* (Notre Dame, IN & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 124; see also Leslie A. White, *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: Grove Press & London: Evergreen Books, 1949), ch. 2, “The Symbol: the Origin and Basis of Human Behavior.”

<sup>67</sup>Quoted in Robert Nisbet, *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986),



As everyone but the Director Emeritus knows, what distinguishes humans from animals is not civilization or the state, it is culture. Every society, even a small band society of almost propertyless foragers, has a culture. There must be a small spot somewhere under Bookchin's beret where he knows that too. His shrill denunciations of primitive mysticism, custom (Chapter 9), shamanism (Chapter 8), mythopoesis, etc. are nothing but condemnations of aspects of primitive *cultures*. The Director Emeritus deplores the same things the missionaries did, but the missionaries censured the primitives as culturally inferior and, at worst, morally depraved, not as *Untermenschen*.

There is nothing to the postulated antagonism of territoriality and blood. Both are self-evidently universals. "Blood and soil" went together in Nazi ideology. "Perceived ethnic distinctiveness" is so characteristic of the city-state that it is often included in the definition, and "there is no ancient (city)state in which kinship does not play a major role." It even appears that in the ancient Greek order of battle, kinsmen and tribesmen were stationed together.<sup>68</sup> To trick up the appearance of an unbridgeable chasm, the Director Emeritus heroically, and arbitrarily excludes the pre-industrial cities of the Near East, Asia, and pre-Columbian America — *i.e.*, most cities — from consideration as cities. The Aztec State, for instance, was for him merely a chieftainship, and its so-called cities — such as Teotihuacan, population 200,000–300,000, where the Spaniards "saw things unseen, nor ever dreamed" (Bernal Diaz) — were just "grossly oversized" pueblos! By way of comparison, contemporaneously the population of Geneva, "the largest city in a siz[e]able region," was 10,300.<sup>69</sup> The ex-Director's discussion is not only self-serving, it "reveals a disappointing ethnocentrism" (Karen L. Field).<sup>70</sup> Disappointing, but not surprising. Bookchin is a bigot.

Bookchin would no doubt exclude African cities too if he knew they existed. 60 years ago, the Yoruba of Nigeria were as urbanized as France, and more urbanized than Canada, and they had been so for centuries. In 1953, 12 Yoruban cities had a population of over 40,000; one of them, Ibadan, had over 100,000 people — peopled by farmers, craftsmen of many specialized goods, and long-distance traders. These communities were thus economically differentiated, just as cities are supposed to be. And yet there were nine strata in the ethnically homogeneous population, and the lower five, with at least 95% of the people, were organized in patrilineal clans which occupied and defended their own neighborhoods, as in Renaissance Italy (see below). Even in the 1950s there was no evidence that city life weakened the lineages. By 1978, all but two cities were still kinship-dominated, typically with a population of 70% farmers, 10% craftsmen and 10% traders.<sup>71</sup> But there's a crucial distinction between the Italian and Yoruban urbanites: Italians are white.

---

55; Edmund R. Leach, "Men, Bishops, and Apes," *Nature* 293 (Sept. 3–9, 1981), 21. Cf. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, tr. William Weaver (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Inc., A Harcourt Book, 1974), 48: "There is no language without deceit."

<sup>68</sup>Thomas H. Charlton & Deborah L. Nichols, "The City-State Concept: Development and Applications," Nichols & Charlton, eds., *Archaeology of City-States*, 5 (quoted); Yoffee, "The Obvious and the Chimerical," *ibid.*, 261 (quoted); Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 121–123.

<sup>69</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 139–140, 169; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 68; Bookchin, *Limits of the City*, 7 (quoted), 7–8; 68; Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest*, tr. Patrick O'Brian (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970), 9 (Bernal Diaz quoted); E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), 2 (quoted). In the sixth century A.D., Tenochtitlan in Mexico, with a population of perhaps 125,000, was the sixth largest city in the world. Susan Wise Bauer, *The History of the Medieval World: From the Conversion of Constantine to the First Crusade* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2010), 187.

<sup>70</sup>Field, review, 162.

<sup>71</sup>William Bascom, "Urbanization Among the Yoruba," in Ottenburgh & Ottenburgh, eds., *Cultures and Societies of*

Bookchin believes that it is “by building on the best of the Western heritage” that the democratic revolutions must be renewed.<sup>72</sup> However, even European cities can be refractory. Kinship was a central principle in the Italian city-states dubiously claimed to be Communes, where “little neighborhood ‘communes’” with fortified towers were “held by noble families in *consortia* or sworn family groupings [the blood oath!].”<sup>73</sup> Bookchin tells us this without even trying to square it with his claim that urbanism is the “solvent” of extended family ties. These city-states were wracked with conflict, often violent, “along all the lines of cleavage so familiar today: family, kinship, neighborhood, occupation, class, religion.” Here’s a description fully applicable to the Renaissance city-state as discussed by historian Lauro Martines: “Each family controls its own territory — rural village or town, an urban street or neighbourhood. Incursions are considered slights and invite a violent response. The territory is closely identified with the family as seen from the prevailing naming practices and sensitivity to even minor forms of trespassing.”

What anthropologist Anton Blok (a former teacher of mine) is describing is, however, not a Renaissance city but the modern Sicilian Mafia. He concludes: “Overwhelming evidence suggests that the power base of *mafiosi* is always local.” For the medieval city dweller generally, “ties of blood sheltered him, as well as those of work, class, and religion”<sup>74</sup> — this from E.A. Gutkind, the real founder of Social Ecology. Aristocracies of large extended families form the ruling elites of pre-industrial cities; indeed, such families are achievable only in full-blown form only by urban elites. Intermarrying aristocratic or patrician families were normal in pre-industrial cities.<sup>75</sup> Viewed objectively and inclusively, the historic city could and normally did incorporate considerable kinship organization.

Nor can such examples be dismissed as transitional, as the tenacious resistance of the “primal blood oath,”<sup>76</sup> not unless there are no failed prophecies, only prophecies which have not been fulfilled yet. We already saw the Yoruban case. A contemporary example studied in the 1950s was Bethnal Green, an old working-class neighborhood in London’s East End. There the kindred, often centered on a mother/daughter tie, structured much social interaction. Kinship was used (for kinship is not just something that happens to people, it is something they do), not to exclude

---

*Africa*, 255–267; P.C. Lloyd, “The Yoruba of Nigeria,” in Gibbs, ed., *Peoples of Africa, Abridged*, 325; for other examples of stable, kinship-structured urban life, see Edward M. Bruner, “Medan: The Role of Kinship in an Indonesian City,” in *Pacific Port Towns and Cities*, ed. Alexander Spoehr (Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press, 1963), 1–12; Douglas S. Butterworth, “A Study of the Urbanization Process among Mixtec Migrants from Tilantongo to Mexico City,” in *Peasants in Cities: Readings in the Anthropology of Urbanization*, ed. William Mangin (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 98–113. The fact that most residents of Yoruban cities are peasants does not distinguish them from the inhabitants of the Transalpine European cities of the early Middle Ages. E.A. Gutkind, *The Twilight of Cities* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe & London: Macmillan, 1962), 21.

<sup>72</sup>Field, review, 161–162 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 140.

<sup>73</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 101.

<sup>74</sup>Robert A. Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1982), 10 (quoted); Anton Blok, “The Blood Symbolism of Mafia,” in *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2001), 88 (quoted); Gutkind, *Twilight of Cities*, 24. According to Marx, it was the village community, not the city, which accomplished the passage from kinship to territoriality: “The village community was the first association of free men not related to one another by close blood ties.” Karl Marx, “Letter on the Russian Village Community (1881),” in Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, ed. Paul W. Blackstock & Bert F. Hoselitz (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1952), 220. This was “the last phase of the primitive form of society.” *Ibid.*, 221. This was also Kropotkin’s opinion. *Mutual Aid*, 120–121. An example is the Germanic Mark. Engels, “Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,” 571–572.

<sup>75</sup>Gideon Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City: Past and Present* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960), 110–113, 220–223.

<sup>76</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 90–91. Why “primal”? Primal means first. Was there a second blood oath later?

non-kin, but to network with them. Thus people met friends through relatives, and the relatives of friends through friends. Ties of extended family, class and community were compatible.<sup>77</sup> My parents met on what used to be called a blind date, set up by mutual friends. Because they did, the world is a better place.

In East York, a Toronto suburb, most of the intimates identified by respondents were kin, whereas only 13% of their intimates (be they kin or non-kin) lived in the neighborhood, and few have more than one intimate in the neighborhood.<sup>78</sup> Admitting that in his theory, the city is both cause and effect of the shift from kinship to territoriality, the ex-Director bids farewell to common sense: “In fact, urban life from its inception occupies such an ambiguous place in the commonsense logic of cause and effect that we would do well to use these concepts gingerly.”<sup>79</sup> If there’s an unbridgable chasm between Bookchinism and the commonsense logic of causality, then, so much the worse for logic and causality.

His latest effusions reveal that Bookchin’s atavistic obsession with blood is more than just another example of his freakish choice of words. Consider this grotesque conceit: “Nature literally permeated the community not only as a providential environment, but as the blood flow of the kinship tie that united human to human and generation to generation.” He actually believes that the blood of the parents literally runs in their children’s veins! How the father’s blood gets in there boggles the mind.

Just as there is much that is childish about Bookchin’s fetishes, so there is much that is primitive about them. As Sumner and Keller observed, “the thought of the race has centered so persistently about blood” that it must have bulked large in primitive life. The bloodline is the boundary of the kin group, the ex-Director explains, as the skin is the boundary of the body. The ex-Director’s shuddering revulsion against “blood ties” (never *family* ties) and “the blood oath” expressly extends to the bodily functions: “eating, sleeping, reproducing, excreting, and even playing.” (*Fucking* is too disgusting even to mention.) When he accuses anarcho-primitivists of aspiring to “four-legged animality,”<sup>80</sup> an outright fear of the feral has to underly this extraordinary phrase. His denial of the animal nature of humans is, because we *are* animals, an expression of profound sickness and self-loathing. And we know that the ex-Director was then a sick man.<sup>81</sup>

You can arrive at the same diagnosis by another route. Bookchin’s rigid ideology is structurally simple: it consists of dualisms, like the “unbridgeable chasm” he posited between the imaginary entities Social Anarchism and Lifestyle Anarchism. Thus, “As the Greeks well knew [but seem not to have written down anywhere], the ‘good city’ [why the quotation marks? this is not a Greek quotation] represented the triumph of society over biology, of reason over impulse, of humanity over folkdom [sic].” Another list devoted to this topic enumerated *five* antitheses. Another, four.<sup>82</sup> Anything more complex than a binary opposition is correspondingly ambiguous

---

<sup>77</sup>Michael Young & Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1957). If Bethnal Green sounds vaguely familiar to the anarchist reader, that’s because it was where Rudolf Rocker edited the *Arbeter Frainst* for Jewish workers. Rudolf Rocker, *The London Years*, tr. Joseph Leftwich (London: Robert Anscombe & Co., 1956), 135.

<sup>78</sup>Barry Wellman, “The Community Question: The Intimate Networks of East Yorkers,” *American Journal of Sociology* 84(5) (March 1979), 120–121.

<sup>79</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 90.

<sup>80</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 51 (quoted), 52; Sumner & Keller, *Science of Society*, 1: 420 (quoted); Bookchin, *SALA*, 39 (quoted).

<sup>81</sup>Sartwell, *Obscenity, Anarchy, Reality*, 156–157; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 249 n. 9.

<sup>82</sup>Black, *AAL*, 57–58; Jarach, “Manichean Anarchism,” 16; anonymous review of *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anar-*

and thus a source of anxiety. For the authoritarian personality, binary thinking is a mechanism to circumvent ambivalence or keep it unconscious: “The most outstanding of these mechanisms consist in terms of dichotomies, *i.e.*, in terms of pairs of diametrical opposites, and in an inclination toward displacement. Thus, glorification of the ingroup and rejection of the outgroup, are familiar from the sphere of social and political beliefs, can be found in as a general trend in some of our clinical data, predominantly to those relating to high scorers [on the authoritarianism index].”<sup>83</sup> So says one of Bookchin’s oft-quoted favorites, Theodor Adorno. Humanists, according to Philip Slater, often try “to devise a conceptual system in which all the things one likes fall into one conceptual category and all those things one dislikes into another. But ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are always orthogonal to important distinctions.”<sup>84</sup>

Bookchin’s idea of an argument is to assign his preference to the positive side of his list of dichotomies:

Social Anarchism & Lifestyle Anarchism

Mind & Body

Society & Individual/Biology

Politics & Statecraft

Humanity & Animality

Culture & Nature

Reason & Emotion/Faith

The General Interest & Self-Interest

Potentiality & Actuality

Moralism & Mysticism

Civic Compact & Blood Oath

Temporality & Eternality

City & Country

Delegation & Representation

Territory & Kinship

Civilized & Primitive

Social Ecology & Deep Ecology

History & Cyclicity [sic]

Two Legs & Four Legs

Rationality & Custom/Myth

---

*chism*, *Green Anarchist* 42 (Summer 1996), 22; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 174 (quoted), 24; Bookchin, *SALA*, 51. Here’s another one, upholding “the claims of society over biology, of craft over nature, of politics over community.” Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 97.

<sup>83</sup>T.W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, & R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969), 451–452.

<sup>84</sup>Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1970), 154.

Majority Rule & No Rule [An-archy]  
 Western Civilization & Eastern Civilization  
 Organization & Spontaneity  
 High Technology & Convivial/Appropriate Technology  
 Paris 1793, 1871, 1936 & Paris 1968  
 Moral Economy & Zerowork  
 Craft & Nature  
 Literalism & Myth/Metaphor  
 The 30s & The 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s ...  
 The Left That Was & The Post-Left That Is  
 The Town Meeting & The Town Drunk  
 Old age & New Age  
 Etc.

Some of these polarities might seem relatively unimportant, but that is to misunderstand the ex-Director's dynamic dualism. Every dichotomy is equally important because every dichotomy is *all*-important. Every dichotomy is all-important because every dichotomy manifests the same dichotomy, the master dichotomy, which can be called either *Good vs. Evil* or *Us vs. Them*.

Dualism is the simplest form of classification. Mythic thinking, which the Director Emeritus supposedly detests, is binary.<sup>85</sup> It is the imperatives of the policing process, defining in ever more detail the distinctions between regulated and unregulated behavior, which multiply binary oppositions.<sup>86</sup> Philosophies of the Many authorize pluralism; philosophies of the One authorize inclusiveness; but philosophies of the Two condemn half of reality to hell or nihilism. They are about *shutting out*. Totalitarian ideologies are always dualistic. Dualistic thinking has an affinity for what Hakim Bey calls gnostic self-disgust.<sup>87</sup> And thus it is the organizing principle of moralism, a prominent feature of the ex-Director's ideology.<sup>88</sup> Anarchist James L. Walker speaks of "how far the philosophy of Egoism differs from the logomachy of the Moralists, who, not content with dividing men into sheep and goats, would be glad to divide ideas of facts in the same way and on the lines of their own prejudices. With them the facts must be opposites, absolute opposites all the way through, if there be opposition in them in some relation."<sup>89</sup> All difference is opposition.

<sup>85</sup>G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1966), 80; *Essential Edmund Leach*, 2: 30.

<sup>86</sup>Patrick H. Hutton, "Foucault, Freud, and the Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, & Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 126 (summarizing the early historical research of Michel Foucault).

<sup>87</sup>Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 38, 41; cf. Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Spiritual Anarchism: Topics for Research," *Fifth Estate* No.359, 37(4) (Winter 2002–2003), 28. Bey and Wilson are the same person. This is, however, unfair to the Gnostics, who, going by what little survives of their writings, exhibit no self-disgust, and usually no ultimate dualism (they were not Manicheans or Zoroastrians), but rather garden-variety mystics like Wilson/Bey himself, only they took it more seriously.

<sup>88</sup>Heider, *Anarchism*, 76.

<sup>89</sup>James L. Walker, *The Philosophy of Egoism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Ralph Myles Publisher, 1972), 29.

Despite its bracing negativity, anarchism is not dualistic: “The traditional dualism in human thought that pitted humanity against animality, society against nature, freedom against necessity, mind against body, and, in its most insidious form, man against woman is transcended by due recognition of the continuity between the two, but without a reductionalism [sic] or ‘oneness’ that yields, in Hegel’s words, ‘a night in which all cows are black.’”<sup>90</sup> That’s what Bookchin used to say.

To think one’s way into some overworld is to deny and devalue this world, the real world of which we are each an infeasible part, and thus to deny and devalue oneself/one’s self.<sup>91</sup> At first blush, the doctrine of essentialism might seem to protect a thing’s irreducible integrity, but you can always redefine a whole as a part of a larger whole — a citizen, for instance, as a part of the state — if you like *its* essence better. Thus Murray Bookchin’s whole bloody philosophy of social ecology would reject wild nature, nature as it is, by *humanizing* it, as if to correct a defect. Because conscious humanity is the highest form of being, it is ultimately the only part of nature which is allowed to be itself.<sup>92</sup> It’s not that the relation of humanity to nature is *like* the relation of mind to body — analogy and allegory are too complex for Bookchin — humanity *is* nature’s mind, and nature is humanity’s body. As a mythical charter for the domination of nature, this tops even the Biblical assignment of dominion to man. As an ecofeminist critic acutely observes, “Bookchin rarely mentions nonhuman nature without attaching the word ‘mere’ to it.”<sup>93</sup> It’s a travesty for the Director Emeritus to identify his philosophy, as he does, as any kind of naturalism.<sup>94</sup> You cannot be a naturalist if you loathe nature. He misconstrues the value of consciousness: “The fundamental mistake is simply that, instead of understanding consciousness as a tool and particular aspect of the total life, we posit it as the standard and the condition of life that is of supreme value... But one has to tell [the philosophers] that precisely this turns life into a monstrosity,” adds Nietzsche.<sup>95</sup>

It is Bookchin’s ideology, not Watson’s, which is anti-humanist, unless Adorno is right about humanism: “In the innermost recesses of humanism, as its very soul, there rages a prisoner who, as a Fascist, turns the world into a prison.” The Director Emeritus has to be the only humanist (note my restraint in abstaining from ironic quotation marks) who believes that “humanity ... is still less than human.”<sup>96</sup> This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of assigning potentiality a higher order of reality than actuality: finally, nothing that exists is real, which makes nonsense of the words “exists,” “is,” and “real.” It is also pure Buddhism: the experienced world is *Maya*, illusion. If man is less than human, he must be an animal — a “mere” animal — after all! Nietzsche was right: man is something to be surpassed:

Most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear. Whole ages, whole peoples are in this sense somewhat fragmentary; it is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should

---

<sup>90</sup>Murray Bookchin, *The Modern Crisis* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1986), 80.

<sup>91</sup>Sartwell, *Obscenity, Anarchy, Reality*, 3–4, 62.

<sup>92</sup>Black, *AAL*, 97–99.

<sup>93</sup>Val Plumwood, “The Ecopolitics Debate and the Politics of Nature,” in *Ecological Feminism*, ed. Karen J. Warren (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 67.

<sup>94</sup>Murray Bookchin, *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays in Dialectical Naturalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed.; Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1995).

<sup>95</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 376.

<sup>96</sup>Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 89 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 202 (quoted).

evolve piece by piece. But that should not make one forget for a moment that the real issue is the production of synthetic men; that lower men, the tremendous majority, are merely preludes and rehearsals out of whose medley the whole man appears here and there, the milestone man who indicates how far humanity has advanced so far ... [W]e have not yet reattained the man of the Renaissance, and the man of the Renaissance, in turn, is inferior to the man of antiquity.<sup>97</sup>

Murray Bookchin: Ecce Homo! Zarathustra!

Bookchin is a racist. His delineation of the true humans precisely traces the color line. The tableau of primitives doing nothing but eating, sleeping, reproducing, excreting, and (as if all this were not vile enough) *even playing* evokes the crudest racist caricatures of lazy, dirty, lascivious Africans, Arabs, Amerindians and other “natives.” So does the ex-Director’s comic book caveman image of the prehistoric man who “grunted” as he tried and failed to practice the division of labor.<sup>98</sup> Fully developed urban civilization was created only by European whites, whose superior civilization he stoutly affirms. Amerindians, Asians and Africans tried and failed at urbanism — although it is an Asian invention — as the primitives tried and failed with the division of labor. Contemporary primitives, the object of Bookchin’s piggish prejudices, are also nonwhites who have failed to become civilized or else they “literally devolved.” If only in principle, Bookchin’s humanism is worse than Nazism. At least the Nazis grudgingly acknowledged that the Jews were a depraved, demonic kind of human being. That is a higher status than the Burlington humanist accords the aborigines (and, apparently, all the rest of us). To him they are, as I prophetically put it in *Anarchy after Leftism*, little more than talking dogs.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup>Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 470–471. “One recognizes the superiority of the Greek man and the Renaissance man — but one would like to have them without the causes and conditions that made them possible.” *Ibid.*, 471.

<sup>98</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 40.

<sup>99</sup>Black, *AAL*, 121.

## Chapter 12. Nightmares of Reason

Unconscious irony has become a hallmark of Late Bookchinism, the Highest Stage of Leftism. Well-known examples include Bookchin's denunciations of leftists with alluring academic careers just as the then-Director retired from an alluring academic career; his scathing contempt for John P. Clark's "cowardly" hiding behind a pseudonym the way Bookchin did in the 60s<sup>1</sup>; his personalistic abuse of individuals he accuses of personalism; his vilification of other writers for appearing in the same yuppie publications he's been published by or favorably reviewed in; his denunciation of the political use of metaphor in a book whose title, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, contains a political metaphor; and his denunciations of anarchists for agreeing with what he used to say. Although inconsistency, not to say hypocrisy, is nothing new for Bookchin, lately the devolution of his reasoning powers is dizzying. Paradoxically – or is it? – his intellectual decline coincides with his increasingly shrill defense of Reason with a Capital R against the Lifestyle Anarchists and the rest of the irrationalist hordes. To borrow one of the ex-Director's favorite cliches, you might say that his commitment to Reason is honored in the breach.

The Director Emeritus taxes David Watson (that poor "philosophical naif") for referring "to science (more properly, the sciences, since the notion of a Science that has only one method and approach is fallacious)"<sup>2</sup> – for speaking of Science in the singular. In *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Bookchin, who is never fallacious, or even facetious, nonetheless found it meaningful, not only to speak of Science in the singular, but to say strikingly Watsonish things about it: "Indeed, we have begun to regard science itself as an instrument of control over the thought processes and physical being of man. This distrust of *science* and of *the* scientific method is not without justification."<sup>3</sup> Distrust of Murray Bookchin is likewise not without justification. He has never understood that science is a social practice, not a juristic codification of information or a rulebook.

Someone who admires or pities the Director Emeritus more than I do might like to interpret this as a cautious condonation of methodological pluralism, what the late Paul Feyerabend called "epistemological anarchism." Alas, it is not so. Bookchin is no more an epistemological anarchist than he is any other kind of anarchist. Elsewhere in the same interminable paragraph, the ex-Director rules out any such possibility: "Watson is free to say anything he wants without ever exposing it to the challenge of reason or experience. As Paul Feyerabend once wrote: 'Anything goes!'"<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>So successfully that in 1968, his Situationist critics thought that Lewis Herber was his follower, not his pseudonym. *Situationist International: Review of the American Section of the S.I. No.1* (June 1969) (reprint ed.; Portland, OR: Extreme Press, 1993), 42. They must have been taken in by Bookchin's citations to Herber. Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," 35 nn. 1 & 3. These footnotes, and a section on "Observations on 'Classical' Anarchism and Modern Ecology," are omitted from *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. I wonder why? Perhaps because the section openly reveals what Bookchin now denies, his extreme technophilia, as well as his pseudonym chicanery. *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 200; a point I have made too: Black, *AAL*, 97.

<sup>3</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 57 (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 199–200.



In the sequence in which Bookchin places it, the Feyerabend quotation — unreferenced — looks like a summons to freak out. In fact, it was only an endorsement of pluralism in methodology. Feyerabend's point was that scientific discovery does not necessarily or even normally result from following rules, including the rules of *the* scientific method (which, Bookchin formerly agreed, does not exist). The tales of Archimedes in the bathtub or Newton under the apple tree may be mythical, but, as good myths do, they express a truth non-literally. In principle, any context may serve as the logic of discovery: religion, drugs, psychosis, chance — anything. "Irrational processes" may sustain the context or logic of discovery, because "there is no such thing as 'scientific' logic of discovery."<sup>5</sup>

According to the Director Emeritus, "mythopoesis" (mythmaking) has a place, but only in art. But the "experience" to whose authority he so selectively appeals confirms a wider role for mythopoesis and nonsystematic sources of insight. As Feuerabend put it: "There is no idea, however ancient or absurd that is not capable of improving our knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Thus one stimulus to the theory that the earth moves was Hermetic writings (also carefully studied by Newton<sup>7</sup>) reviving that long-discredited Pythagorean teaching. The research of Copernicus, who believed in astrology, was guided in part by "the Renaissance revival of an ancient mystical philosophy which saw the sun as the image of God." Copernicus saw himself as going back beyond Ptolemy and Aristotle to Plato, Pythagoras and the Pre-Socratics.<sup>8</sup> The earliest explorers of chemistry were alchemists and craftsmen.<sup>9</sup> Kepler and Tycho Brahe, like Ptolemy before them, practiced astrology. "All the great discoveries of modern science," writes Kropotkin, with only a little hyperbole, "where do all these originate if not in the free cities [of pre-industrial Europe]?"<sup>10</sup> Nor was Bookchin's beloved Enlightenment as scientific and secular as the Director Emeritus imagines: "The eighteenth century was far too deeply involved with the occult to have us continue to associate it exclusively with rationalism, humanism, scientific determinism, and classicism. Manifestations of irrationalism, supernaturalism, organicism, and Romanticism appeared throughout."<sup>11</sup>

The ex-Director's reverence for Reason rises in inverse proportion to his practice of it. He now says that he has "long been a critic of mythopoesis, spiritualism, and religion," although I have found no such criticism in his extant writings of the 60s and 70s.<sup>12</sup> He also claims to be a longstanding critic of conventional, analytic, instrumental Reason. Much more revelatory, he

---

<sup>5</sup>Imre Lakatos, *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology: Philosophical Papers*, ed. John Morrall & Gregory Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2: 137 (emphasis deleted).

<sup>6</sup>Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Verso, 1978), 27–28. The young André Breton wrote: "When will we grant arbitrariness the place it deserves in the creation of works or ideas?" "For Dada," in *The Lost Steps*, tr. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln NE & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 51.

<sup>7</sup>Betty Jo Teeters Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy: or, "The Hunting of the Greene Lyon"* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>8</sup>Feuerabend, *Against Method*, 47 (quoted), 49; Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), vii; Alexandre Koyre, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 28–29.

<sup>9</sup>Allen G. Debus, "Renaissance Chemistry and the Work of Robert Fludd," in Allen G. Debus & Robert P. Multhauf, *Alchemy and Chemistry in the Seventeenth Century* (Los Angeles, CA: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1966), 3–29.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn, "The Function of Measurement in Modern Physical Science," in *The Essential Tension: Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 214, 276–277; Kropotkin, "The State: Its Historic Role," in Baldwin, ed., *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets*, 234 (quoted).

<sup>11</sup>Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*, 7.

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 198.

says, is dialectical reason, “the rationality of developmental processes, of phenomena that self-elaborate into diverse forms and complex interactions — in short, a secular form of reason [there’s a religious form?] that explores how reality, despite its multiplicity, unfolds into articulated, interactive, and shared relationships.”<sup>13</sup>

What, if anything, this means is anybody’s guess. Do all “developmental processes” partake of an inherent rationality? What’s rational about gangrene or cancer? Bookchin died of developmental processes. By definition, relationships are interactive and shared, so what do these adjectives add to whatever the Director Emeritus is blabbing about? Are there no editors at AK Press? Casting about for a dimension of reality which, despite its multiplicity, unfolds into articulated, interactive, and shared relationships, what first comes to mind is capitalism.

In *Anarchy after Leftism*, I quoted the ex-Director’s admission that his is “a fairly unorthodox notion of reason.”<sup>14</sup> To say the least. His brand of reason, he claims, is dialectical, but only in the sense I once defined dialectics, “a Marxist’s excuse when you catch him in a lie.” Like Nietzsche, “I consider dialectic as a symptom of decadence.”<sup>15</sup> To hear the Director Emeritus talk, what dialectical reason adds to the ordinary variety is the developmental dimension, but none of his bombast makes any more sense diachronically than synchronically. Processes which make sense to the rational mind are precisely what are lacking in his connect-the-dots histories of urbanism (Chapter 13) and of the emergence of hierarchy (Chapter 5).

Bookchin denounces his renegade disciple John P. Clark for mistaking dialectics for functionalism, which is (he says) the notion that “we can identify no single cause as more compelling than others; rather, all possible [sic<sup>16</sup>] factors are mutually determining”:

This morass of “reciprocity,” in which everything in the world is in a reciprocal relationship with everything else, is precisely what dialectical causality is not, unless we want to equate dialectics with chaos. Dialectics is a philosophy of development, not of mutually determining factors in some kind of static equilibrium. Although on some remote level, everything does affect everything else, some things are in fact very significantly more determining than others. Particularly in social and historical phenomena, some causes are major, while others are secondary and adventitious<sup>17</sup>. Dialectical causality focuses on what is *essential* in producing change, on the underlying motivating [sic<sup>18</sup>] factors, as distinguished from the incidental and auxiliary.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 199.

<sup>14</sup>Black, *AAL*, 100, quoting Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 10.

<sup>15</sup>Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo,” Kaufman, ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 679.

<sup>16</sup>Misspeaking yet again, the Director Emeritus says “possible” when he must mean “actual.” No one claims that possible but nonexistent factors are even a bit determining, although that position would be consistent with Bookchin’s teleological metaphysics.

<sup>17</sup>Here the Director Emeritus collapses two distinctions. The dichotomy between primary and secondary causes is not the same as the dichotomy between necessary and contingent (“adventitious”) factors. A contingent factor — such as the death of an important individual — may be a primary cause, a weighty cause, although it is not a necessary cause rooted in an underlying process of social development. Writes Peter Laslett, “there is no point in denying the contingency even of epoch-making historical occurrences.” Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: Further Explored* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1984), 334 n. 8.

<sup>18</sup>Motives are not causes. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 15; Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), 83–93.

<sup>19</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 176.

So then what's so distinctive, so dialectical about it? Every positivist knows that in explaining change, some things are more important than others. Is that what the fuss is all about? As Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel have written, "[Marxist] dialecticians have never been able to indicate exactly how they see dialectical relations as different from any of the more complicated combinations of simple cause/effect relations such as co-causation, cumulative causation, or simultaneous determination of a many variable system where no variables are identified as dependent or independent in advance... there is only the word and a lot of 'hand waving' about its importance." Peter Kropotkin, who — unlike Bookchin — was an anarchist and a scientist, dismissed dialectics as unscientific.<sup>20</sup>

Murray Bookchin can kiss my morass.

What the Director Emeritus denounces is not functionalism. As a prominent functionalist explains, "'function' is the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part. The function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the total social life as the functioning of the total social system." A social system exhibits functional unity when all the parts work together without persistent, unregulable conflicts.<sup>21</sup> Nothing is assumed about how weighty a particular structure's contribution is or even that it is necessary to sustain the totality, only that it does in fact contribute thereto. Thus another prominent functionalist, criticizing a different theory, wrote that "a serious limitation to this [other] point of view is that it is bound to treat everything in social life as of equal weight, all aspects as of equal significance." Functionalism has been heavily criticized, and no one nowadays calls himself a functionalist.<sup>22</sup> "But any attempt at describing the structure of a society must embody some assumptions about what is most relevant in social relations. These assumptions, implicitly or openly, must use some concepts of a functional kind, by reference to the results or effects of social action" (Raymond Firth).<sup>23</sup>

If functionalism cannot explain change, dialectical naturalism cannot explain observed stability and coherence. Thus Bookchin's criticism recoils on himself. For lack of a systemic dimension, his dialectics, far from elaborating forms, are mired in a formless world of evanescent moments — a Heraclitean "world of Yuppie nihilism called postmodernism." As Feuerbach said of Hegel, "his

---

<sup>20</sup>Michael Albert & Robin Hahnel, *Unorthodox Marxism: An Essay on Capitalism, Socialism and Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1978), 52–53 (quoted); Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 152. The quotation does not imply that I agree with Kropotkin's positivism, which was out of date even in his lifetime: "Kropotkin wants to break up all existing institutions — but he does not touch science." Paul Feyerabend, "'Science.' The Myth and Its Role in Society," *Inquiry* 18(2) (Summer 1975), 168. Nor should quotation from Michael Albert imply approval of this businessman statist and unscrupulous manipulator who, well aware that he is no anarchist, nonetheless pretends to be one — but only when trying to sell something to anarchists.

<sup>21</sup>A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier Macmillan, 1965), 181 (quoted); Meyer Fortes, "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups," *American Anthropologist* 55(1) (Jan.-March 1953), 20; Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (rev., enl. ed.; New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1957), ch. 1. Functionalism has been denounced as conservative, but the anarchist Paul Goodman espoused it. "On Treason Against Natural Societies," in *Drawing the Line: The Political Essays of Paul Goodman*, ed. Taylor Stoer (New York: Free Life Editions, 1977), 11. In fact, Radcliffe-Brown knew Kropotkin and was called Anarchy Brown in his university days. Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70.

<sup>22</sup>Fortes, "Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups," 20 (quoted); Percy S. Cohen, *Modern Social Theory* (London: Heinemann, 1968), ch. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, 35.

system knows only *subordination* and *succession*; co-ordination and coexistence are unknown to it.”<sup>24</sup>

The ex-Director’s phrase “static equilibrium,” used as an aspersion, indicates that his thinking is not remotely ecological. If it is not a tautology, the expression can only refer to a system of unchanging immobility, such as Marx’s Asiatic mode of production, which has probably never existed. Ecology is about systems in dynamic equilibrium. Sir Arthur Tansley, in the seminal article which introduced the word *ecosystem*, wrote:

The relatively stable climax community is a complex whole with a more or less definite structure, *i.e.*, inter-relation of parts adjusted to exist in the given habitat with one another. It has come into being through a series of stages which have approximated more and more to dynamic equilibrium in those relations.

As leading ecologist Eugene P. Odum explains, the components of an ecosystem “function together”: “The ecosystem is the basic functional unit in ecology.”<sup>25</sup> Ecology, therefore, is broadly functionalist. If Social Ecology is not functionalist, it is not ecology. But wasn’t it Bookchin who, in praising Greek science, stated: “Analysis must include an acknowledgement of functional relationship, indeed of a metaphysical *telos*, which is expressed by the intentional query, ‘why’?”<sup>26</sup> Why indeed?

Social conflict, as Georg Simmel and Lewis Coser have argued, can be functional.<sup>27</sup> Machiavelli thought that conflict in Republican Rome was functional for liberty: “I maintain that those who blame the quarrels of the Senate and the people condemn that which was the very origin of liberty, and that they were probably more impressed by the cries and noise which these disturbances occasioned in the public places, than by the good effect which they produced.”<sup>28</sup> Edwin R. Leach, while he insisted that the functionalist assumption of equilibrium is an analytical fiction, demonstrated that it was consistent with chronic conflict in highland Burma where the equilibrium operates as a cycle over a period of 150 years.<sup>29</sup> In social change there is always something which persists: “Even a changing system must be seen as structured at a point of time if it is to be called a system at all.”<sup>30</sup>

Objective ethics; the subjectivity and directionality of nature; articulated multiplicity; humanity as second nature; collective consciousness; “the actualizing of rationally unfolding possibilities” (what about *irrationally* unfolding possibilities? and doesn’t “actualizing” = “unfolding”?) — all this jargon and gibberish mark mucid Murray as mystical. He admits that the source of his untutored visions is *intuition*: “Indeed, every intuition tells us that human beings and their consciousness are results of an evolutionary tendency toward increasing differentiation, complexity,

---

<sup>24</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 165 (quoted); Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, tr. Zavar Hanfi (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), 54 (quoted).

<sup>25</sup>A.G. Tansley, “The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts and Terms,” *Ecology* 16(3) (July 1935), 291, 306 (quoted); Eugene P. Odum, *Basic Ecology* (Philadelphia, PA: Saunders College Publications, 1983), 13 (quoted).

<sup>26</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 102.

<sup>27</sup>Georg Simmel, *Conflict & The Web of Group Affiliations*, tr. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1955); Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>28</sup>Machiavelli, “Discourses,” 119.

<sup>29</sup>Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, ix-xii; E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone Press, 1961), 1–2.

<sup>30</sup>J.H.M. Beattie, *The Nyoro State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 244.

and subjectivity.”<sup>31</sup> Except that there is no such tendency in natural history. Since humans are part of nature, “their destruction of nature can be seen as a function of natural evolution.”<sup>32</sup> The ex-Director’s doctrine is theistic: “Thus the purpose of God is an idea, true or false; but the purpose of Nature is merely a metaphor; for obviously if there is no God there is no purpose” (G.K. Chesterton).<sup>33</sup> Bookchin’s pseudo-system is exactly what Marx said Hegel’s system was: “logical, pantheistic mysticism.”<sup>34</sup> The ex-Director may not refer to God by name, but his abstract universal principle of directional development is the World-Spirit which Hegel identified with the Christian God. Bookchin’s philosophy resembles that of the Catholic theologian Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>35</sup> If it looks like a God, acts like a God, and (through His oracle, the Director Emeritus) quacks like a God, it’s probably God, up to His old tricks. Calling Him, or It, Something Else makes no difference.

For the Director Emeritus, “there is existent and permeating, on earth, in the air and in the water, in all the diverse forms assumed by persons and objects, one and the same essential reality, both one and multiple ...” It explains “the existence and activities of all forms of being, their permanence and their metamorphoses, their life and death... this principle is present everywhere at once, and yet it is individual in certain persons.”<sup>36</sup> Another of my tricks: Lucien Levi-Bruhl is describing primitive thought (in his terms, “pre-logical” thought) — which is the same as Bookchin’s. The ex-Director’s cosmology is what the Victorian anthropologist E.B. Tylor called animism, a “theory of vitality” which posits a world of spirit beings. Animism “characterizes tribes very low in the scale of humanity.”<sup>37</sup> The Director Emeritus is basically an animist who believes everything is more or less alive (and life, he affirms, is not an accident) — that there is “a latent subjectivity in substance itself.”<sup>38</sup> In his utopia, as he has written, “culture and the human psyche will be thoroughly suffused by a new animism.” The “animistic imagination” senses the subjectivity of nature.<sup>39</sup>

Animism, after all, is not confined to the worship of a multiplicity of spirits. The Director Emeritus believes that a principle of self-activity is inherent in nature. The natives call it *mana*, something “present in the atmosphere of life,” “an active force,” an impersonal power which “attaches itself to persons and things.” “Bookchin and others talk about latent potentialities, but what

<sup>31</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 43.

<sup>32</sup>Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Press, 1996); Lori Gruen, “Revaluing Nature,” in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 358. Although Charles Darwin could be equivocal in public about progress, the master-myth of his own Victorian England, in private he denied that it was any part of his theory of evolution. “Never say higher or lower,” he wrote to an evolutionist paleontologist in 1872: “After long reflection, I cannot avoid the conviction that no innate tendency to progressive development exists.” Quoted in Gould, *Full House*, 137. Just as Hobbes rejected, in advance, Bookchin’s Hobbesian political anthropology, so Darwin rejected, in advance, his notion (“theory” is too grand a word) of biological evolution.

<sup>33</sup>G.K. Chesterton, “The Republican in the Ruins,” *What I Saw in America* (London: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1922), 196.

<sup>34</sup>Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State,” 61.

<sup>35</sup>Black, *AAL*, 100–101; Robyn Eckersley, “Divining Evolution: The Ecological Ethics of Murray Bookchin,” *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989), 104.

<sup>36</sup>Lucien Levi-Bruhl, *The “Soul” of the Primitive*, tr. Lillian A. Clarke (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), 16–17.

<sup>37</sup>Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1: 109, 421 (quoted), 424–427, 436 (quoted). “Hunting peoples” have “strong animist beliefs.” Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 2.

<sup>38</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 355–356, 364 (quoted).

<sup>39</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 119 (quoted); Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 234–238.

are these? It seems that defining inherent value in terms of such intangible natural properties doesn't help much."<sup>40</sup> Bookchin really should trade in his toga for a loincloth.

Even if none of his other doctrines did, the ex-Director's moralism would discredit his already shaky claim to reason. There is no such thing as an objective ethics: "For these words of Good, Evil, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so" (Hobbes).<sup>41</sup> As Thrasymachus maintained in *The Republic*, what is passed off in certain times and places as objectively true morality is only the morality which then and there is imposed by power.<sup>42</sup> To say something is good simply expresses approval of it and invites agreement. At one time, Bookchin reported approvingly that "organic societies do not make the moral judgments we continually generate," instead, they "are normally concerned with the *objective* effects of a crime and whether they are suitably rectified, *not* with its subjective status on a scale of right and wrong." Some disagreements over ethics may be rooted in disagreement about the facts, but not all of them, and insofar as they are not, there is no rational method for resolving the difference in values.<sup>43</sup> The only difference between objective morality and subjective morality is the police.

As John Locke observed, no matter how far you range across space and time, you will never find a universally accepted moral tenet.<sup>44</sup> And if you did, that wouldn't prove that it was true. Anarchists, of all people, should appreciate that a near-universal belief can be false — such as the beliefs in God and the state — as did Bakunin: "Until the days of Copernicus and Galileo everybody believed that the sun revolved around the earth. Was not everybody mistaken? ... Nothing, in fact, is as universal or as ancient as the iniquitous and absurd."<sup>45</sup> Already many of the favorite theories of 20<sup>th</sup> century science — *tabula rasa* behaviorism, nondrifting continents, table climax ecosystems — have turned out to be "ridiculous nonsense." It is a sobering truth that "all past beliefs about nature have sooner or later turned out to be false" (Thomas S. Kuhn).<sup>46</sup> If that is the fate of the truths of our physics, it is surely the fate of our ethics. The only universal truth about moral propositions is that they express the subjective values of those who believe in them. In the words of the anarchist egoist James L. Walker, "What is good? What is evil? These words express only appreciations."<sup>47</sup> This is one respect in which Bookchin's regression to

---

<sup>40</sup>Codrington, *Melanesians*, 119 (quoted), 191; Gruen, "Revaluing Nature," 358 (quoted).

<sup>41</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 120. "Our judgments concerning the worth of things, big or little, depend on the *feelings* the things arouse in us." William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in *Pragmatism and Other Essays* (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), 251.

<sup>42</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 75–101. As presented, Socrates refutes the crude version of Thrasymachus, but then Adeimantus and Glaucon restate the case for injustice. Instead of refuting their formulation, Socrates enters upon a digression on the ideal society which occupies the remaining 75% of the dialog. He never answers their arguments directly. Socrates regularly hijacked topics the way Bookchin tried to hijack "social anarchism," changed the subject, and then often didn't even answer his own question, as in *Charmides* and *Laches*.

<sup>43</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 115; Charles L. Stevenson, *Facts and Values: Studies in Ethical Analysis* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1963), 11–12, 24–25, 28–29.

<sup>44</sup>John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1975), 66–84.

<sup>45</sup>Bakunin, "God and the State," 121.

<sup>46</sup>Anderson, "New Textbooks Show Ecological Anthropology Is Flourishing," 238 (quoted); Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Trouble with the Historical Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Department of the History of Science, 1992), 14 (quoted).

<sup>47</sup>Walker, *Philosophy of Egoism*, 54.

Marxism has not gone far enough, for Marx and Engels noticed early on that morality was not only relative, it was relative to class interests.

As usual with Bookchin's dichotomies, his moralism/amoralism distinction fails to match up with his Social Anarchism/Lifestyle Anarchism distinction. Some Lifestyle Anarchists, such as David Watson, also subscribe to objective moralism. And some Social Anarchists reject it, such as Emma Goldman. In her essay "Victims of Morality," anarcho-communist Goldman denounced the unimpeachable "Lie of Morality": "no other superstition is so detrimental to growth, so enervating and paralyzing to the minds and hearts of the people, as the superstition of morality."<sup>48</sup> For elaborations, look into Stirner, Nietzsche, Benjamin Tucker and Raoul Vaneigem. Bookchin has never even tried to justify a belief which, in our culture, invariably derives from revealed religion. But it is not just that he affirms moralism and falsifies reason — he equates them: "What is rational is 'what ought to be,' and we can arrive at that 'ought' through a process of dialectical reasoning."<sup>49</sup>

What Bookchin describes is determinism, not dialectics. It's what Marx called mechanical materialism. The assertedly distinctive feature of dialectical reasoning is the progressive approximation to truth through the clash of opposites and their supersession: "Truth exists not in unity with, but in refutation of its opposite. Dialectics is not a monologue that speculation carries on with itself, but a dialogue between speculation and empirical reality" (Feuerbach).<sup>50</sup> The ex-Director has never engaged in genuine dialogue with anyone, much less with empirical reality. Faced with empirical reality, the Director Emeritus talks to himself, a habit which long preceded his senility. In action, Bookchin deploys the rhetoric of dialectic as camouflage or cover on those occasions when he does not understand the subject at hand. These arise often, as his self-miseducation ranges all across the sublunary sphere. The mystifications obscure the political ambitions. George Orwell: "When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms like a cuttlefish squirting out ink." Political language — and it is the only language Bookchin speaks — "is designed to make lies sound truthful ... and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."<sup>51</sup> Like Stalin, his first teacher in politics, Bookchin unleashes the jargon of dialectics to justify his extreme ideological reversals and his opportunistic changes of "line."

Bookchin's dialectical naturalism may be restated as follows: nature follows a "law of evolution" consisting of "an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."<sup>52</sup> Not to keep you in suspense — it's Herbert Spencer, high priest of so-called Social Darwinism<sup>53</sup> and laissez-faire capitalism. There's something developmental but nothing dialectical about Spencer's

---

<sup>48</sup>Emma Goldman, "Victims of Morality," in *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman (New York: Random House, 1972), 127.

<sup>49</sup>Bookchin, *Marxism, Anarchism*, 347.

<sup>50</sup>Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," 110.

<sup>51</sup>"Politics and the English Language," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonya Orwell & Ian Angus (4 vols.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 4: 137, 139.

<sup>52</sup>Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York: D. Appleton, 1912), 367.

<sup>53</sup>Using the term in its popular, but literally inaccurate sense. Spencer's social evolutionism preceded Darwin's biological evolutionism, which might be called Biological Spencerism. Harris, *Rise of Anthropological Theory*, 122–125, 209 (quoted). Another Spencer affinity is method. As Edwin R. Leach says with reference to another ex-Stalinist, Karl Wittfogel, Bookchin's "method of demonstration is that of Herbert Spencer and the very numerous later ex-

“rigid and mechanical” formula.<sup>54</sup> Its political implications are as conservative as Spencer was. Industrial capitalism with its division of labor is the supreme example of definite coherent heterogeneity. In the words of Spencer’s disciple William Graham Sumner, “the sentimentalists have been preaching for a century notions of rights and equality, of the dignity, wisdom and power of the proletariat, which have filled the minds of ignorant men with impossible dreams.” Society must be left alone to work out its destiny “through hard work and self-denial (in technical language, labor and capital).” Should we arrive at “socialism, communism, and nihilism,” “the fairest conquests of civilization” will be lost to class war or mob rule.<sup>55</sup>

As is typical of Stalinist disputation, vulgar determinism in the abstract accompanies an opportunistic voluntarism in practice. In George Orwell’s *1984*, one day Oceania would be at war with Eurasia — it had always been at war with Eurasia — the next day, Oceania would be at war with Eastasia, it had always been at war with Eastasia.<sup>56</sup> Do I exaggerate? Am I unfair? The Director Emeritus claimed to be an anarchist for 45 years. “Today,” he writes, “I find that anarchism remains the very simplistic individualistic and antirationalist psychology [sic] *it has always been.*”<sup>57</sup>

It is the same with John P. Clark, the ex-Director’s Emmanuel Goldstein. Bookchin says that “it is difficult to believe that from the mid-1970s to early 1993, the author was a close associate of mine,” that they “had a personal friendship that lasted almost two decades.”<sup>58</sup> Betrayed and insulted by his erstwhile acolyte, the Director Emeritus asks: “How could Clark have so completely misjudged me for almost two decades?” *Clark* misjudged *him*? A better question would be: How could Bookchin the Great have so completely misjudged Clark for almost two decades? How could so penetrating, so principled an intellect as Bookchin’s have failed for so long to detect this snake in the grass?

The ex-Director’s answer, what there is of it, is Orwellian. “Our ideas,” he says, “indeed, our ways of thinking, are basically incompatible”: “I could never accept Clark’s Taoism as part of social ecology.” And yet, he continues pharisaically, “despite the repugnance I felt for some of his ideas, I never wrote a line against Clark in public”<sup>59</sup> — not until he had no further use for Clark, or Clark had no further use for him. Bookchinism is basically incompatible with Clarkism, starting today. Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia, starting today.

I have no interest in defending Clark, who is at least as much in need of excuses as Bookchin for their long-term relationship. And Taoism is so peripheral to anarchism that how reconcilable they may be hardly matters to most of us (see Chapter 2). But there’s something important, and disturbing, about the way the Director Emeritus is going about discrediting Clark. Clark, says Bookchin, came to anarchism from the right; he was “never a socialist.” As a young man, Clark was a “right-wing anti-statist,” a Goldwater Republican in 1964: “Causes such as the workers’ movement, collectivism, socialist insurrection, and class struggle, not to mention [but men-

---

ponents of nineteenth-century ‘comparative method.’ The investigator looks only for positive evidence which will support his thesis; the negative instance is either evaded or ignored.” E.R. Leach, “Hydraulic Society in Ceylon,” *Past & Present* 15 (April 1959), 5.

<sup>54</sup>Harris, *Rise of Anthropological Theory*, 209.

<sup>55</sup>William Graham Sumner, “Sociology,” in *Darwinism and the American Intellectual: An Anthology*, ed. R. Jackson Wilson (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Chicago, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1989), 123, 124.

<sup>56</sup>George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet Books, 1950), 123, 124.

<sup>57</sup>Bookchin, “Communist Project,” n. 18, unpaginated.

<sup>58</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 217, 218, 220.

<sup>59</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 220.



tion them he does] the revolutionary socialist and anarchist traditions, would have been completely alien to him as a youth; they were certainly repugnant to the rightwing ideologues of the mid-1960s, who afflicted [sic] leftists with conservatism, cultural conventionality, and even red-baiting.”<sup>60</sup> The Director Emeritus prefers reverse red-baiting:

In any case, 1964, the year Goldwater ran for president, was also the year when the best and the brightest Americans of Clark’s generation were journeying to Mississippi (in the famous Mississippi Summer), often risking their lives to register the state’s poorest and most subjugated blacks for the franchise. Although Mississippi is separated from Louisiana, Clark’s home state, by only a river [the Mississippi is “only a river”?], nothing Clark ever told me remotely suggests that he was part of this important civil rights movement movement. What did Clark, at the robust age of 19, do to help these young people?<sup>61</sup>

What an extraordinary reproach! Probably no more than 650 volunteers participated in Freedom Summer.<sup>62</sup> SNCC turned many volunteers away. If by this demanding standard Clark should be condemned as a political or moral slacker, then so must virtually the entire 60s generation, since only a small percentage participated, and few of them in more than a small way.<sup>63</sup> But Bookchin only began bashing the 60s generation, as he does now,<sup>64</sup> after that became fashionable and when his prospects for recruiting from it dimmed. At the time, the Director Emeritus slobbered all over the New Left and the counterculture in the essays collected in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. These scornful words are nothing but part of a personalistic vendetta, yet they recklessly censure a generation.

Assuming all Bookchin says to be true, what are the implications for anarchist revolution? Apparently, anyone who has never been an old-fashioned revolutionary leftist can never be, or be trusted to be, a revolutionary anarchist today. Very few living Americans have ever been socialists or social anarchists, and most of them are elderly. Even those who were Old Leftists in the 50s and 60s, when the Director Emeritus competed with them, are by now in their 60s and 70s, and there were very few recruits thereafter. Bookchin, who reflexively accuses Clark and other so-called Lifestyle Anarchists of elitism,<sup>65</sup> is the one who is imposing an extremely exclusionary entrance requirement on the millions of Americans he claims are itching for anarchism. In opinion polls, twice as many Americans identify with the right as with the left. No doubt the prevailing level of political consciousness is a major obstacle for revolutionaries, but to approach almost everybody as a forever damned political enemy is to give up. It is the action of a provocateur. There will be

---

<sup>60</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 218–219. Another affliction for the English language. To afflict someone with something is to do something to him. The right did not afflict the left with conservatism and cultural conventionality, it simply thought and acted in those ways, as the left thought and acted in its own ways.

<sup>61</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 220.

<sup>62</sup>John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL & Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 244. 43 is not as robust an age as 19, but there were men of Bookchin’s generation, such as Walter Reuther and Martin Luther King, Jr., who took their chances in Mississippi to serve the cause. Far more than most Americans, the Director Emeritus had that opportunity: his own CORE chapter sent volunteers, including Mickey Goodman, who was killed in Mississippi. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 65. He could have served if he hadn’t been lazy or cowardly.

<sup>63</sup>Russell Hardin, “Participation,” in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 487.

<sup>64</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 346.

<sup>65</sup>*Anarchism, Marxism*, 237 (“the little professor is a blooming elitist!”).

no anarchist revolution unless there come to be more than a handful of anarchist revolutionaries. The Director Emeritus has devoted two books to reducing their numbers still further. So long as ideologues like Bookchin continue to think in terms of left and right, so long as they choose their enemies by these obsolete criteria, the right will always win, or if the left wins, it will make little difference. Bookchin's nostalgia for the Left That Was is literally reactionary.

Bookchin's expressed horror for critics of reason (other than himself), insofar as it is not ingenuous, itself reflects an irrational dread of profanation of the holy. He has so far reified and privileged one method of apperception as to turn it into an object of reverence. As such it is beyond criticism, and anything beyond criticism is beyond understanding. Thus for the Director Emeritus, reason does this and reason does that, whereas it is really the reasoner who does this and that by an intellectual process which nearly always involves axioms and shared antecedent suppositions (faith and traditions) and which is psychologically impossible without emotional impetus. His critique of instrumental reason is "unorthodox," Watson's is "irrational," but these adjectives do not disclose the difference, they only judge it. Bookchin claims to surpass instrumental reason so as to divert attention from his inability to master it. Bookchin does not even want to think about whether, as Paul Feyerabend wrote, "science has ceased to be an ally for the anarchist."<sup>66</sup> The Age of Reason was one thing; the Old Age of Reason is something else again.

Himself a superficial thinker ("not strikingly original"<sup>67</sup> either), Bookchin in his childlike nominalism regularly mistakes words for their objects. To criticise reason as the critic understands it is to criticise reason as the ex-Director understands it, if he did. It is almost as if other discourses, even other people don't really exist for him. He does not even conceive of the possibility that someone else might have the right to depart from the everyday meaning of a word with the same free rein he does (see Chapter 12). His attitude is all too familiar: "Ecological rationalism merely puts a new, 'radical' spin on the old reason supremacy of the Western tradition which has underlain so much of its history of colonization and inferiorization [sic] of those 'others' cast as outsider."<sup>68</sup> Many criticisms in this vein I consider caricatures, but Bookchinism *is* a caricature, a self-caricature. My previous writings have been criticized as knocking down a straw man. Bookchin *is* a straw man. He cannot be parodied, only quoted. Perhaps the lesson in all this, if there is one, is what Paul Feyerabend wrote in his last book: "The notion of reality makes excellent sense when applied with discretion and in the appropriate context."<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup>Feyerabend, "Science," 177.

<sup>67</sup>Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future*, 151, noticing that Bookchin owes much to Lewis Mumford's organicism.

<sup>68</sup>Plumwood, "Ecopolitics Debate and the Politics of Nature," 68.

<sup>69</sup>Paul Feyerabend, *Conquest of Abundance: A Tale of Abstractness Versus the Richness of Living*, ed. Bert Terpstra (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 9.

## Chapter 13. The Communalist Hallucination

The ex-Director's emphatically prioritizing the social over the individual does not apply when *he* is the individual. When it comes to English usage, he is, in the rugged individualist tradition of Thoreau, a majority of one.<sup>1</sup> Bookchin expresses his sovereignty in many ways. Redundancy makes for a vigorous, emphatic style: thus, "airless vacuum," "fly apart in opposite directions," "etymological roots," "presumably on the assumption," "determining cause," "arduous toil," "unique, indeed unprecedented," "domination and rule," "mechanical robots," and "direct face-to-face." Superfluous tics like "as such" and "in effect" add style if not substance. Like raising one's voice, *italics* promote understanding. Bookchin is at liberty to reverse a word's meaning, such as using "explicitly" to mean "implicitly," as where the right to bear arms "explicitly goes far beyond the reticent wording of the Second Amendment."<sup>2</sup> (One wishes he were explicit, in his sense, more often.) The Director Emeritus denounces metaphors except when they are mixed, like his: "to lift oneself up by one's bootstraps from the rich wealth of historical facts," as his often are.

In a departure from normative punctuation practice, the Director Emeritus does not confine quotation marks to quotations, he more often employs them to indicate disagreement or disapproval, as his reviewer Karen Field does when she refers to "Murray Bookchin, 'social ecologist.'" Bookchin freely coins words even though corresponding terms are available in standard English: "precivilizational," "utopistic," "evidentiality," "civicism," "respiritization," "decentralistic," "matricentricity," "existentiality," "spiritized," "folkdom," "equivocable," "antiscientism," "civically," "mentalizing," "progressivistic," "bureaucratism," "cyclicality," "sectoriality," "clannic," "entelechial," and "statified" (he complains of having had to coin this final word, so he must think the rest of them really exist).<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, wrestling with Bookchin's muscular prose, I thought I was reading English as a second language. It turns out that I was.<sup>4</sup>

Most important — yea, essential — to the ex-Director's discourse is the redefinition of key words like "state," "politics," and "anarchism," assigning them meanings not only different from but contrary to their use in ordinary language and in standard anarchist usage. Given these inversions, it follows that Bookchin and his libertarian municipalism are anarchist by definition (until yesterday), and his critics are unimaginative, obtuse contrarians.

The dictionary bedevils the Director Emeritus at every turn. *Polis*, he grumbles, "is commonly mistranslated as the 'city-state,'" and so it is.<sup>5</sup> This is a particularly egregious failing: "Defined in terms of its etymological roots [as opposed to its etymological branches?], *politics* means the management of the community or *polis* by its members, the citizens. *Politics* also meant the recog-

---

<sup>1</sup>"Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors, constitutes a majority of one already." Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (New York: New American Library, 1960), 230.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 237.

<sup>3</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 70 (quoted); Field, review, 161 (quoted); Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 32.

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 18.

<sup>5</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 33; *New Shorter OED*, q/v "polis" ("A city-State, esp. in ancient Greece; *spec.* such a State considered in its ideal form").

inition of civic rights for strangers or ‘outsiders’ who were not linked to the population by blood ties. That is, it meant the idea of a universal *humanitas*, as distinguished from the genealogically related ‘folk.’<sup>6</sup> Who would have thought one word could mean so much? Not the ancient Greeks. There’s a whole civics lesson in this one word.

Etymologically — in other words, for the Greeks themselves — “polis” meant “city”: “In normal usage, *polis* meant ‘city-state.’”<sup>7</sup> The Director Emeritus speaks Greek better than the Greeks, just as he speaks English better than the Anglo-Americans. By definition — his definition — the polis is a democracy, although most Greek city-states were oligarchies.<sup>8</sup> Where Bookchin draws a crucial distinction between “politics” and “statecraft,” the dictionary defines them to be synonymous.<sup>9</sup> Even the dictionary definition of “communalism,” which, he says, is not as defective as some others, is riddled with errors: “a theory and system of government [sic — his sic, not mine] in which virtually autonomous [sic — him again] local communities are loosely in a federation.”<sup>10</sup> For the Director Emeritus, there is something *sic* about the dictionary defining words as what they contingently, superficially mean and not what they essentially, processually mean.

For Hobbes, “in wrong, or no Definitions, lyes the first abuse [of Speech]: from which proceed all false and senseless Tenets.”<sup>11</sup> The ex-Director’s reliance on a private language discourages disputation, since the critic has to fight to recover his vocabulary before he can even begin to argue. But the mysterious terminology also has a direct repressive effect. Posing the political alternatives as “politics” and “statecraft,” Bookchin forecloses an alternative which rejects both because of what they have in common. Prior to Bookchin, that alternative was known as anarchism. If he has his way, it will lose its name — he will expropriate it — and what cannot be named cannot even be spoken of, as he appreciates: “something that cannot be named is something that is ineffable and cannot be discussed.”<sup>12</sup> For the ex-Director, “lifestyle anarchism” is literally unspeakable in every way.

Like a sovereign lifestyle Stirnerist, Bookchin wields a power Roman Emperors refused, according to John Locke: “And therefore the great *Augustus* himself in the possession of that Power which ruled the World, acknowledged, he could not make a new Latin Word: which was as much to say, that he could not arbitrarily appoint, what Idea any Sound should be a sign of, in the

---

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” 7.

<sup>7</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “polis”; Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks*, 130 (quoted).

<sup>8</sup>Finley, *Economy and Society*, 88; Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology and the Power of the People* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>9</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 32–33, 40–41, 53–54, 57–58 & *passim*; *New Shorter OED*, q/v “politics,” “statecraft.”

<sup>10</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 151.

<sup>11</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 106.

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 230. In accord is the arch-fiend Stirner: “Stirner [who is speaking in the third person] speaks of the Unique and says immediately: ‘Names (345) name you not.’” Max Stirner, “Stirner’s Critics,” *Philosophical Forum* 8(2–4) (1978), 67; see also Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 324. Apparently the Director Emeritus has never read Stirner, for while he often takes his name in vain, he never cites him accurately, e.g., Bookchin, *SALA*, 64–65 n. 38 (references to a nonexistent subsection and a nonexistent subtitle). He probably gleaned his notions of Stirner from Marx and from Sydney Hook in his Stalinist phase. Bookchin claims that “Stirner’s own project, in fact, emerged in a debate with the socialism of Wilhelm Weitling and Moses Hess, where he evoked egoism precisely to counterpose to socialism.” Bookchin, *SALA*, 54. This is what the ex-Director’s source really said there: “A social associate of Friedrich Engels, published in one of the journals edited by Karl Marx, Stirner’s socialist antagonists were Weitling and Hess and the French propounders of the same ideology, all more prominent at that moment.” James J. Martin, “Editor’s Introduction,” Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, tr. Steven Byington (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963), xviii. Martin does not say that Stirner worked out egoism in debate with Weitling and Hess, only that he and they were “antagonists.” In fact, Hess’s critique of egoism was a *rebuttal* to Stirner and so

Mouths and Common Language of his Subjects.”<sup>13</sup> The anarchists were not the first beneficiaries of the ex-Director’s creativity: “‘Ecological’ is a term of distinction for Bookchin, one that applies only to approaches congruent with his own ‘social ecology.’”<sup>14</sup> We must perforce review Bookchin’s vocabulary. In 1982, in some moods he despaired of rehabilitating so ruined a word as “freedom”: “Thus, “to merely ‘define’ so maimed and tortured a word would be utterly naive.”<sup>15</sup> (Why the quotation marks?)

In this desperate hour, he throws caution to the winds. “Autonomy” and “freedom” are not, he insists, synonymous, although the dictionary says they are.<sup>16</sup> Autonomy is (only) individual, and bad; freedom is (only) social, and good, “despite looser usages.”<sup>17</sup> Here is a clear example of elimination by definition. As we have seen (Chapter 3),<sup>18</sup> Sir Isaiah Berlin analysed, not freedom vs. autonomy, but “two concepts of liberty,” positive freedom (Bookchin’s “freedom”) vs. negative freedom (Bookchin’s “autonomy”). He too had a definite preference – for negative freedom – but he did not try to expropriate and monopolize the word freedom. He refined the ordinary meaning, he did not replace it. Nothing is lost. In contrast, Bookchin covets the word for its favorable connotation, which he would deny to dissenters from his new orthodoxy. He has narrowed its meaning to suit his program. If there are one or two concepts of freedom, there might be a third, or maybe two other ones,<sup>19</sup> and they might all be valued and conceivably even synthesised. But autonomy and freedom, since they are not synonymous, must refer to two different things, neither of which admits of subdivision (a single meaning is indivisible). What is more, they are exhaustive by definition, and between them stretches an unbridgeable chasm.

“Democracy” is an even more straightforward case of elimination by definition, and the departure from normal usage is still more extreme: “By democracy, I do not mean a type of representative government but rather face-to-face, direct democracy.”<sup>20</sup> Of the two types of democracy – direct and representative – Bookchin denies the definition to the only kind that presently exists, the kind to which the word, sans adjective, always refers in common parlance.<sup>21</sup> First he assigns to the word an unfamiliar (but admissible) meaning, then he denies the word its familiar meaning. The gambit is something like what Imre Lakatos charged Rudolph Carnap with doing: “So Carnap first widens the classical problem of inductive justification and then omits the original part.” But “it has no meaning to say that a game has always been played wrong” (Wittgenstein).<sup>22</sup>

---

played no part in the formation of Stirner’s theory. Moses Hess, “The Recent Philosophers,” Stepelevich, ed., *Young Hegelians*, 359–375 (published in 1845). Stirner devoted only a small number of pages to criticizing socialism and communism. Bookchin always assumes that what is important to him has always been important to everybody.

<sup>13</sup>Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 408.

<sup>14</sup>John M. Meyer, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2001), 31.

<sup>15</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 142.

<sup>16</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “autonomy,” “freedom.”

<sup>17</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 144–145.

<sup>18</sup>See Ch. 10 *supra*.

<sup>19</sup>Samuel Fleischacker, *A Third Concept of Liberty: Judgment and Freedom in Kant and Adam Smith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 118–119 (“counter-extractive” versus “developmental” liberty).

<sup>20</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 146 (quoted), 147;

<sup>21</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “democracy.”

<sup>22</sup>Imre Lakatos, *Mathematics, Science and Epistemology*, ed. John Morrall & Gregory Currie (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 144 (quoted, emphasis deleted); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright (New York & Evanston, IL: J. & J. Harper Editions, 1969), 65e (quoted).

As Jeremy Bentham exclaimed, “How childish, how repugnant to the ends of language, is this perversion of language! — to attempt to confine a word in common and perpetual use, to an import to which nobody ever confined it before, or will continue to confine it!” As Wittgenstein says, “it is shocking to use words with a meaning they never have in normal life and is the source of some confusion.”<sup>23</sup> No kidding.

The dictionary defines “politics” in several ways. All include the state explicitly or implicitly, except for a clearly analogous and derivative sense in which there can be office politics, etc.<sup>24</sup> In the case of this crucial word, the Director Emeritus dismisses the ordinary meaning. *His* definition “reserves the word *politics* for the self-administration of a community by its citizens in face-to-face assemblies, which in cities with relatively large populations would coordinate the administrative work of the city councils, composed of mandated and recallable assembly deputies.” In short, “politics” means Bookchin’s politics. The antithesis of politics is “*statecraft*, the top-down system of professional representation that is ultimately based on the state’s monopoly of violence.”<sup>25</sup> For the Director Emeritus, politics is what it is not, and it is not what it is. George Orwell anticipated Bookchin’s method: “[Newspeak’s] vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods.”<sup>26</sup>

As for whether Communalism is anarchism or not, anarchism by definition seeks the abolition of the state. Definitions of the state vary, but one widely favored by social scientists, historians and (I had supposed) anarchists goes something like this (from Charles Tilly): “Let us define states as coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories.”<sup>27</sup> In the near-absence of any statement by Bookchin on this vital matter, we have to resolve it indirectly, by examining cities he considers communes to see if they are states. We need also examine whether they are Communes, *i.e.*, whether they are — ruled? managed? or whatever you call that thing they do — by a face-to-face citizen assembly. We have to assume that the Director Emeritus in selecting examples is putting forward the clearest cases of Communal politics.

---

<sup>23</sup>“Anarchical Fallacies,” in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (11 vols.; New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 2: 505 (quoted); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge, 1930–1932*, ed. Desmond Lee (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 73 (quoted); see also J.P. Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 2. “For a large class of cases — though not for all — in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., n.d.), 20 (§ 43).

<sup>24</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “politics.”

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 324–325. Statecraft is simply “the art of conducting State affairs; statesmanship.” *New Shorter OED* q/v “statecraft.”

<sup>26</sup>Orwell, 1984, 246 (Appendix, “The Principles of Newspeak”).

<sup>27</sup>Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (rev. pbk. ed.; Cambridge & Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 1. Tilly immediately relaxes the requirement of substantial territory, as well he might in a world where at least 73 states have populations of a million or less. Jose Villamil, “Size and Survival: Planning in Small Island Systems,” in *Microstate Studies 1*, ed. Norwell Harrigan (Gainesville, FL: The Center for Latin American Studies & The University Presses of Florida, 1977), 1. For present purposes it does not matter, for Tilly considers the Renaissance city-states and similar polities to be states, and Bookchin considers some of them Communes in his sense.

Above all there is Athens. Despite his show of indignation that anyone should claim that he regards Athens as an ideal or a model,<sup>28</sup> that's exactly what Bookchin has said that it is: "My concern with the way people commune — that is, actively associate with each other, not merely form communities — is an ethical concern of the highest priority in this work... To a great extent, this is the Greek, more precisely, the Athenian, *ideal* of civicism [sic], citizenship, and politics, an *ideal* that has surfaced repeatedly throughout history."<sup>29</sup> Again: "Athens and Rome ultimately became legendary *models* for two types of 'popular' government: a democracy and a republic." (Actually, these words have always meant the same thing.<sup>30</sup>)

Athens must be our primary focus because it is the model for all later self-governing cities, the first and the most fully realized: "In contrast, later ideals of citizenship, even insofar as they were modeled on the Athenians, seem more unfinished and immature than the original — hence the very considerable discussion I have given to the Athenian citizen and his context." The declension is surprising since, as Aristotle says, "most ancient things are less fully articulated than modern things." It suits me fine to regard Athens, as others including Robert A. Dahl regard it, as the closest as well as the best-known approximation to direct democracy.<sup>31</sup> We shall judge Athens in the next chapter. First we consider the more unfinished, immature examples. In the absence of any systematic definition from the Director Emeritus, I shall use the following as requisites for a full-fledged urban Commune: (1) most or all policy-making power belongs to a citizen assembly which (2) meets face-to-face and (3) frequently. (4) There are few if any elected or appointed officials and they are without independent authority and answer to the assembly. (5) At least a substantial minority of adult males is enfranchised and (6) at least a substantial minority of those eligible to attend the assembly actually do. (7) The military consists of a nonprofessional citizen army or militia. (8) The city or town is federated with others. (If it were up to me, I would not incorporate (8) into the *definition* of a commune, but it's a part of the dictionary definition which meets with the ex-Director's approval.)

In parts of *Switzerland*, open-air popular assemblies have functioned for centuries, but there is nothing in the contemporary situation to support the Director Emeritus. Only a few of the smaller cantons, the *least* urbanized ones, still practice assembly democracy, where the citizens assemble just once a year to elect representatives to public office, which is not direct democracy.<sup>32</sup> Bookchin's source, Benjamin Barber, hymns the early modern assembly in Graubünden but does not describe its workings. It would not be an example of Bookchin's urban Commune anyway because it is not urban, although Bookchin himself seems confused on this point.<sup>33</sup> (If the ex-

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 157 n. 4, 158 n. 9, 325

<sup>29</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 14. Communalism is treated as an uninterruptedly existent, usually subterranean *being* which occasionally comes to the surface like the sand-worms in *Dune*. For Fredy Perlman, on the other hand, the worm was civilization. *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1983), 27. Since the Director Emeritus thinks Mesopotamian cities were originally Communes, Bookchin apparently believes the worm is coterminous with urban society. Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 58. Why the worm never surfaced in the cities of Africa, the Far East or the New World he does not explain. Nor has the worm ever visited the same place twice.

<sup>30</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 47, 14 (quoted); Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 16–17.

<sup>31</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 83 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 176; Aristotle, *Politics*, 78 (quoted); Dahl, *On Democracy*, 12.

<sup>32</sup>Hanspater Kriesi, "Political Power and Decision Making in Switzerland," in *Switzerland in Perspective*, ed. Janet Eve Hilowitz (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 36.

<sup>33</sup>Benjamin Barber, *The Death of Communal Liberty* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 115, 229–230, 12.

Director knew that the *urban* Swiss cantons were all centralized oligarchies,<sup>34</sup> the irony would be lost on him. He thinks they were Communes.<sup>35</sup>) These rural *Landsgemeinden* only assembled annually.<sup>36</sup> And when they did, it was to elect a council to conduct everyday business. They were representative democracies with public voting, not direct democracies.<sup>37</sup> Bookchin gratefully quotes Alexis de Tocqueville's encomium on the New England town meeting. He ignores the same author's statement that from an early time the Swiss cantons were small aristocracies, closed or self-recruiting, and in most of them, three-quarters of the population was excluded from even indirect participation, not to mention that each canton had a subject population. Only one-thirteenth of the population was governed by direct democracy.<sup>38</sup> So much for Communes in Switzerland.

*Spanish* cities are best known to history for the revolt, in 1520–1521, of the *comuneros*, thrillingly recounted by the Director Emeritus, albeit without source references.<sup>39</sup> We are presumably to assume that the insurgent cities were democratic. They were not. They revolted out of resentment of foreign influence over the new king, Charles V, and against taxation, and perhaps for greater autonomy from the state, but not to defend or create democratic institutions. It was “members of the urban oligarchies and lower nobility in Castile [who] rose up in arms in what is known as the *Comunero* movement (from community or communal).” In the more radical Valencia uprising, the violence was directed against “city officials and local nobility”; thus it is reasonable to assume the absence of sovereign popular assemblies. Contrary to Bookchin, “the cities never tried to create a form of political organization that could have been a Castilian version of the urban republics.”<sup>40</sup>

A monograph on the revolt by Stephen Haliczzer dispells the myth — not that there even is one outside of Bookchin's head — of an urban democratic revolution. Prior to the uprising, Spanish cities were governed by royally appointed *corregidores* who presided over city councils of *regidores*, who were royal appointees for life. The uprising was as much a revolt *by* as against these officials. In Valencia, for example, the ruling revolutionary Junta was “dominated by the members of the city council and by delegates from the cathedral chapter and parishes.” Only the parish delegates, a minority, were elected democratically by assemblies.

Where the *Comunero* movement departs most drastically from the model is at the level few of the ex-Director's other examples even get to, the federated communes or, we might say, the Junta of Juntas, or, officially, the Cortes. In some cities this Junta appointed *corregidores* and judges as the Crown had done. It also demanded payment, to it, of the very royal taxes which were a major cause of the revolution. The Junta reached all the way down to the parishes, appointing several members to be responsible for collections. At the death of the archbishop of Toledo, it forced the canons to elect its nominee as successor. Dissatisfied with the performance of the local militias

---

<sup>34</sup>James Murray Luck, *A History of Switzerland, The First 100,000 Years* (Palo Alto, CA: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1985), 58; Ursula K. Hicks, *Federalism: Failure and Success — A Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 159 (in the 14<sup>th</sup> century “there was not a breath of democracy”).

<sup>35</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 97.

<sup>36</sup>Luck, *History of Switzerland*, 58.

<sup>37</sup>W.D. McCrackan, *The Rise of the Swiss Republic: A History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. & enl.; New York: AMS Press, 1970), 184. I do not have access to good sources on Swiss history, but Bookchin's are worse.

<sup>38</sup>Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969), 738, 740.

<sup>39</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 167–169.

<sup>40</sup>Teofilo F. Ruiz, *Spanish Society, 1400–1600* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), 28, 195.



(another Bookchin favorite) — which looted villages regardless which side they were on — the Junta raised a standing army recruited from former royal guards.<sup>41</sup> In its internal arrangements, the Cortes was as anti-federal as in its tax policies: “In order to provide for efficient decision-making, the Junta operated by majority vote and took policy decisions on the spot, without waiting for delegates to ask their cities for further instructions.”<sup>42</sup> Only in its final failing phase did radicals displace former council members and *hidalgos* (minor nobility) and take power in a few of the local Juntas, and by then the movement had lost so much popular support that these transient takeovers cannot be considered democratic.

Otherwise, I found only scattered scraps of information on the governance of Spanish cities, but all conform to the standard model of pre-industrial urban oligarchy, its composition varying somewhat at different times and places. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the monarchy sanctioned the *regimiento*, an oligarchy of the urban gentry.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, non-noble “knights” controlled urban government; in the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the *ricos hombres ciutans*, “rich citizens,” a small number of very rich men, controlled city government.<sup>44</sup> In medieval Aragon, including Catalonia, municipal government was in the hands of patricians (“honored citizens”), *jurats* elected by the citizens or, in some cases, choosing their own successors (cooptation). They were expected to consult the general assembly of townsmen on important matters.<sup>45</sup> In Barcelona specifically, government was by a Council of the One Hundred presided over by five or six of the councillors. The Council had the sole legislative initiative and authority over expenditures. By Crown directive, “honored citizens” (who were rentiers) monopolized the Council and coopted their successors.<sup>46</sup> In Galicia in 1633, positions were reserved for a handful of men picked by their colleagues for life; later the urban gentry were admitted to share power.<sup>47</sup> There is no hint of a governing popular assembly anywhere.

In *Italy* the Renaissance city-states were just that, states. Only a handful of Italian cities were independent, and they all rested on the exploitation of their *contados* — extensive rural hinterlands administered by officials from the city, as even Kropotkin admits.<sup>48</sup> Exploitation of powerless peasants seems to be a universal feature of sovereign cities (except for Athens, which exploited its empire and its slaves instead of its hinterland). The Director Emeritus avers that the Italian commune was more than a town, “it was above all an association of burghers who were solemnly united by an oath or *conjuratio*” which committed them to subordinate personal interest to the common good and even “to orderly and broadly consensual ways of governing themselves with a decent respect for individual liberty and a pledge to their mutual defense.”<sup>49</sup> The word “burghers”

---

<sup>41</sup>Stephen Haliczer, *The Comuneros of Castile: The Forging of a Revolution, 1475–1521* (Madison, WI & London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 125, 162 (quoted), 162–175, 198–199, 205; Pablo Fernandez Albaladejo, “Cities and the State in Spain,” *Theory and Society* 18(5) (Sept. 1989), 730 (quoted).

<sup>42</sup>Haliczer, *Comuneros of Castile*, 169.

<sup>43</sup>Pablo Fernandez Albaladejo, “Cities and the State in Spain,” in *Cities and the Rise of States, 1000–1800*, ed. Charles Tilly & Wim P. Blockmans (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1944), 172.

<sup>44</sup>Joseph F. O’Callahan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1975), 290, 613.

<sup>45</sup>T.N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 164; H.J. Chaytor, *A History of Aragon and Catalonia* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 116.

<sup>46</sup>James S. Ameleng, *Honored Citizens of Barcelona: Patrician Culture and Class Relations, 1490–1714* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 18, 25, 30; see generally ch. 2, “The Evolution of Oligarchy.”

<sup>47</sup>James Casey, *The Kingdom of Valencia* (Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 167.

<sup>48</sup>Giorgio Chittolini, “Cities, ‘City-States,’ and Regional States in North-Central Italy,” in Tilly & Blockmans, eds., *Cities and the Rise of States*, 30–31; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 202–203.

<sup>49</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 99.

is carefully chosen to mislead. It can mean merely a townsman, but that meaning is obsolete.<sup>50</sup> It suggests the common people, or perhaps all the people of a town. The common people were never invited into these sworn brotherhoods. The parties to the *conjuratio* were aristocrats and later, also rich commoners. A chapter title from a source Bookchin quotes says it all: “The Early Commune and Its Nobility.” Entirely excluded were the poor, self-employed craftsmen, wage workers, and even merchants of the middling sort. Even at their most democratic, under the rule of the *popolini*, the active citizenry still excluded unskilled and farm workers, recent immigrants – the Stranger! – and many artisans. When their guilds came to power, they forbid new guilds from forming.<sup>51</sup>

It required a lot of cutting and pasting to turn this source, Lauro Martines, into a support for Bookchin’s thesis: “We know that its members [the consulate] were chosen at a general assembly of the commune itself, a popular assembly that ‘was quite likely convened with some regularity, and in times of trouble even more often,’ Lauro Martines tells us. ‘Here the views of leading men were heard and important decisions taken, usually by acclamation. We know, too, that this general assembly ‘of all the members of the commune’ was the ‘oldest communal institution’ of these Italian cities, and further, that the consuls usually ‘sounded out’ the general assembly’ before they made any major decisions about such issues as war and peace, taxes, and laws.”<sup>52</sup> Even after spinning his source like a top, the Director Emeritus offers an account which shows that the commune of history is not the Commune as he has redefined it. The assembly elects the consuls but, having done so, its role is reduced to consultation at the option of the consuls, who decide war and peace, taxes, laws – in short, everything.

It proves interesting to restore these fragments of quotation (italicised) to their context: The *oldest communal institution* was the general assembly of *all the members of the commune*.

These were the founding members and their descendants, in addition to all those who were taken into the commune from time to time. The consuls were always drawn from this corps. During the first generation or so of the commune’s existence, the general assembly *was quite likely convened with some regularity, and in times of trouble even more often. Here the views of leading men were heard and important decisions taken, usually by acclamation.* Later, as the commune expanded and assembly meetings became more difficult to manage, the “parliament of the whole” was called less often – on Sundays, say, or even once a year – and it carried less weight, save in emergency sessions.

Voting in the general assembly was done by fiat: men shouted yes or no. All real communal authority issued from this body and could return to it. A parliament was the supreme authority, the final decision-making body. But the legislative initiative, the power to move change, lay with the consuls; and historians suspect that no true discussion was permitted in the general assembly. The consuls intro-

---

<sup>50</sup>New Shorter OED, q/v “burgher.”

<sup>51</sup>Martines, *Power and Imagination*, ch. 3 (esp. 18–19), 66–67, 186. Inasmuch as the short-lived *popolo* phase consisted of guild rule, it is an example, not of a Bookchin Commune, but of syndicalism, which the Director Emeritus considers antithetical to Communalism. Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 262–263; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 326–327.

<sup>52</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 99–100.

duced all proposals. One of the leading consuls defended the motion before the assembled commune; then, possibly, two or three of the more experienced notables were invited to speak and the assembly moved directly to a vote by acclamation.

The consulate, the assembled body of consuls, was the commune's highest executive and judicial magistracy. All important daily matters were discussed and decided here. Having *sounded out the general assembly*, the consuls made war and peace, led the communal armies, were responsible for the defense of the city, levied taxes, sired legislation, and served as the final appellate court. The consulate was the focus of power in the early commune: it was always coveted, always prized by the ambitious. The number of consuls varied according to time and place. A range of from four to twenty consuls was not uncommon; more often they numbered from four to twelve. Generally speaking, a term of office was for one year — initially at Genoa for three years — and an incumbent could not return to the consulate until after the elapse of one or two additional terms. But this practice was abolished. The commune sheltered groups in favor of a tighter hold over elections and over the sorting out of power. Triumphant, these groups evolved the practice whereby consuls elected their own successors directly or indirectly. To be effective, consulates doubtless sought to have amicable relations with the commune's collective manifestation, the general assembly. But it is clear, too, that some limiting principle, attaching most likely to *quality* [Martines' italics] as a function of property and status, served to restrict effective power to a select number of men and families.<sup>53</sup>

And here is something else the ex-Director did not quote: "The nobility dominated the consulate, manipulated the general assembly, and ruled the city ..."<sup>54</sup> So cynical an instance of deceit by selective quotation does not come along often unless one often reads Bookchin.

The Director Emeritus must think his readers have the attention span of a hyperactive toddler. At one point he admits the real import of the sources: "What is insufficiently known about the Italian commune is the extent to which it became a stage for a working democracy and its actors a new expression for [sic] an active citizenry." Translation: *we don't know* if the Italian communes were democratic. He ought not to be even talking about them. But *two sentences later* his knowledge is now sufficient and the findings are gratifying: "Democracy clearly emerged in the early Italian cities, not only representative forms of governance and oligarchies of various kinds, only to submerge and then reappear again for a short time in richly articulated forms."<sup>55</sup>

Only a tiny fraction of the "burghers" could hold office — elites numbering in the hundreds ruling city populations numbering in the tens of thousands.<sup>56</sup> In Venice, with a population of 120,000 in 1300 and 115,000 in 1509, 200 patrician families belonged to the Great Council. In Florence at its most democratic (1494–1512), 3,500 males out of a population of 60,000 belonged to the officeholding class. Generally, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the officeholding class was

---

<sup>53</sup>Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 27–28.

<sup>54</sup>Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 29.

<sup>55</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 98.

<sup>56</sup>Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 47.

about 1% of the population.<sup>57</sup> Bookchin repeats the old cliché that “urban air makes for freedom,” but very often it did not:

Benefiting from this collective solidarity supposed a citizenship that was in reality difficult to acquire. It implied admission, sponsorship, and inclusion in a trade or the purchase of property. Becoming a part of the people was not an easy matter, and most inhabitants without means proved incapable of penetrating the internal walls erected by jealous minorities.

“The elusive citizen” that Bookchin stalks through history is elusive because he is one among a small select elite.<sup>58</sup>

In most cities, assemblies met only annually and were passive, “of a formal character,” and were later reduced to an annual exchange of oaths of service and obedience with the consuls who held the real power. The trend was toward tighter oligarchy. “The true core of the city-state was formed by the magistracy of the consuls” who chose their own successors and whose offices were family monopolies. As another historian puts it — another irony for Bookchin the anarchist — “virtually all Italian cities developed true governments with consuls.”<sup>59</sup> All these so-called Communes were oligarchies.<sup>60</sup> Talk of their “richly articulated forms” is moonshine. The Director Emeritus is no doubt correct that the Italian communes were inferior to Athens in their realization of the ideal. They selected their rulers by indirect election or by cooptation or by lot, but never by direct election. As Peter Burke writes, “there was no true Italian parallel to the Athenian assembly.”<sup>61</sup> No assembly, no democracy.

Before we depart sunny Italy for the stony fields of New England, let us pay a courtesy call on Niccolo Machiavelli, who has fallen into bad company: Bookchin’s. The Director Emeritus claims that “Machiavelli’s argument clearly tips toward a republic and an armed citizenry rather than a prince and a professional army.”<sup>62</sup> Never mind that he titled his book *The Prince* and dedicated it to Lorenzo di Medici! As I have remarked, his “*Il Principe* was clearly not directed to a mandated and revocable delegate responsible to the base, but rather to a man on horseback, somebody like Caesare Borgia.”<sup>63</sup> Machiavelli offered no argument that even tipped toward a republic. His preference for militia over mercenaries is explicitly addressed to princes and republics alike: one chapter title is “Princes and Republics Who Fail to Have National Armies are Much to Be Blamed.”

---

<sup>57</sup>William J. Connell, “City-states, communes, and republics,” in *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (4 vols.; Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1995), 1: 222; Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 148.

<sup>58</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 96; Jacques Rossiaud, “The City-Dweller and Life in Cities and Towns,” Le Goff, ed., *Medieval Callings*, 141, 142 (quoted); Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 55 (quoted).

<sup>59</sup>David Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City: From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London & New York: Longman, 1997), 159–160 (quoted); Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 27–29; John H. Mundy & Peter Riesenbergh, *The Medieval Town* (Princeton, NJ: D.V. Van Nostrand Company, 1958), 50–51. The Director Emeritus quotes the latter book on another point, *Rise of Urbanization*, 94, 290 n. 33, but he somehow overlooked the pages that refute his conception of the medieval commune. He is similarly selective in using other sources, such as Lauro Martines and Robert Gross.

<sup>60</sup>C.W. Previte-Orton, “The Italian Cities Till c. 1200,” in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. J.R. Tanner, C.W. Previte-Orton, & Z.N. Brooke (8 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company & Cambridge: at the University Press, 1924–1936), 5: 220–237; Connell, “City-states, communes and republics,” 222.

<sup>61</sup>Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; London & New York: Longman, 1988), 37; Peter Burke, “City-States,” in Hall, ed., *States in History*, 148 (quoted).

<sup>62</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 48–49, 49 (quoted).

<sup>63</sup>Black, *AAL*, 78.

Machiavelli, like other Florentine intellectuals, rejected Athens and favored Sparta as a model. He had ideologues like the ex-Director in mind when he wrote that “it appears to me more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality.”<sup>64</sup> It used to be that Bookchin grossly distorted what his sources say. As now he soon fatigues, he takes it easy and just makes it all up.

Cities in the rest of *medieval Europe* lend not even a shadow of support to the ex-Director’s line. Emperors and kings held a share of power; as Ptolemy of Lucca observed at the time, “cities live politically [*i.e.*, they are self-governing] in all regions, whether in Germany, Scythia or Gaul, although they may be circumscribed by the might of the kings or emperors, to whom they are bound by established laws.” The South German free cities “never attained the full autonomy of city-states.” They were usually ruled by oligarchies of mixed merchants and rentiers. Bookchin claims the Hanseatic League for direct democracy, but, “although the Hanse often forced kings and princes to capitulate, no one had the idea of founding a ‘modern’ city-state.”<sup>65</sup>

Contrary to Bookchin,<sup>66</sup> the *Flemish* cities were representative, not direct democracies. There were no assemblies. Even after revolutions made the guilds participants in political power, “the administration of the town remained in the hands of the *echevins* [magistrates] and the council, and no essential modification took place.”<sup>67</sup> In *the Netherlands*, “a state of 55 cities,” the *vroedschap*, a council chosen for life by cooptation, elected two to four burgomasters and seven or more aldermen. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the size of the council was reduced, and so was the number of families admitted to government.<sup>68</sup> Contrary to Bookchin,<sup>69</sup> *German* towns were ruled by “elected bourgeois city councils” which were always oligarchical. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century, they increasingly adopted the “law of Lübeck” whereby the councils renewed their memberships by cooptation.<sup>70</sup> *French* communes of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries elected mayors and *juries* (magistrates), but they would lose even that much autonomy to the centralization of the French state.<sup>71</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, towns were governed by corporations of municipal magistrates.<sup>72</sup>

Bookchin speaks vaguely of a “European” communal movement, but the great cities of Europe — Paris, London, Madrid, Lisbon, Palermo, Rome, Naples, Vienna, Moscow, Constantinople — were under direct royal control, and so were the cities and towns of entire countries. In late

---

<sup>64</sup>Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 85; Machiavelli, *Prince and the Discourses*, “The Prince,” 3–4 (dedication); “The Discourses,” 175–176 (quoted), 56 (quoted).

<sup>65</sup>Ptolemy of Lucca, *On the Government of Rulers. De Regimine Principum*, tr. James M. Plythe (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 217 (quoted); Thomas J. Brady, Jr., *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1 (quoted), 1–2; Peter Moraw, “Cities and Citizenry as Factors of State Formation in the Roman-German Empire of the Late Middle Ages,” *Theory and Society* 18(5) (Sept. 1989), 654 (quoted).

<sup>66</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 97.

<sup>67</sup>Henri Pirenne, *Early Democracies in the Low Countries: Urban Society and Political Conflict in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 162.

<sup>68</sup>Marjolein t’Hart, “Intercity Rivalries and the Making of the Dutch State,” in Tilly & Blockmans, eds., *Cities and the Rise of States*, 199; Connell, “City-states, communes and republics,” 222.

<sup>69</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 97.

<sup>70</sup>Nicholas, *Growth of the Medieval City*, 228–229, 234; Fritz Roerig, *The Medieval Town* (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 25–27; Peter Moraw, “Cities and Citizenry,” 110 (quoted).

<sup>71</sup>Nicholas, *Growth of the Medieval City*, 150–152; R.H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 88–90.

<sup>72</sup>Janine Garrisson, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483–1598: Renaissance, Reformation and Rebellion*, tr. Richard Rex (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 32.

medieval and early modern times, oligarchy was universal along the Dalmatian coast, in Austria, England, Serbia and Bosnia, Poland, Hungary, Portugal and throughout northern Europe.<sup>73</sup> This should surprise no one but libertarian municipalists.

Only Bookchin believes that the *New England* town meeting is now more than a remnant of what it was, and it was never as robust as its celebrants believe. A creature of state legislation, it spends considerable time executing state mandates. It meets annually, and the officials it elects are not answerable to anyone between town meetings. Most townspeople stay home rather than bother with administrative technicalities. In Massachusetts it is not unusual for attendance to fall below 10%; in one Vermont town in the early 60s, attendance was barely 15%; in another, in 1970, it was 25%; in others, hardly anyone is present except officials who are required to be.<sup>74</sup> James Thurber, attending his first town meeting in 1940 (with one-seventh of the population present), summed it up thusly: “It had the heat and turmoil of the first Continental Congress without its nobility of purpose and purity of design.” Town meetings narrowed considerably in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> But how vital was the town meeting in its prime? Were Communes scattered across the stony New England landscape?

The government of Massachusetts Bay created the town meeting system for its own administrative convenience. In the early years, the General Court (the legislature) legislated in reference to the most important internal affairs of the towns. At all times “no one was allowed to treat the orders of the General Court with disrespect.” The courts, an important institution of governance, were at all times controlled by the General Court.<sup>76</sup> At the town meeting, attendance was compulsory, which is probably why attendance was not recorded. (In 18<sup>th</sup> century Rhode Island, where attendance was voluntary, it never exceeded 30%, and was usually much less — much like Athens [see Chapter 14].) Low attendance was also chronic in Connecticut.<sup>77</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>73</sup>Barisa Krekic, “Developed Autonomy: The Patricians in Dubrovnik Dalmatian Cities,” in Tilly & Blockmans, eds., *Cities and the Rise of States*, 213; Sergij Vilfon, “Towns and States at the Juncture of the Alps, the Adriatic, and Pannonia,” in *ibid.*, 446–447, 449–450; Stephen Rigby, “Urban ‘Oligarchy’ in Late Medieval England,” in *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. John A.P. Thomson (Gloucester, England & Wolfboro, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1988), 63–64; Jennifer I. Kermode, “Obvious Observations on the Formation of Oligarchies in Late Medieval English Towns,” in *ibid.*, 87–106; Hilton, *English and French Towns*, 91–92; Lorraine Attreed, *The King’s Towns: Identity and Survival in Late Medieval English Boroughs* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 33–41 & *passim*; Sima Cirkovic, “Unfulfilled Autonomy: Urban Society in Serbia and Bosnia,” in *Urban Society of Eastern Europe in Premodern Times*, ed. Barisa Krekic (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 175; Barisa Krekic, “Developed Autonomy: The Urban Development of Medieval Poland with Particular Reference to Krakow,” in *ibid.*, 63–136; Andrei Wyrobisz, “Power and Commonwealth in the Polish Gentry Towns: The Polish-Lithuanian State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in Tilly & Blockmans, eds., *Cities and the Rise of States*, 152; Marianna D. Birnbaum, “Buda Between Tatars and Turks,” in *ibid.*, 137–157; Antonio Manuel Hespanha, “Cities and the State in Portugal,” in *ibid.*, 184, 191; Nicholas, *Growth of the Medieval City*, 228–229.

<sup>74</sup>Black, *AAL*, 67; Andrew E. Nuquist, *Town Government in Vermont* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Government Research Center, 1964), 4–5, 10–11, 18–19; Jane L. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 48, 346 n. 1; Joseph F. Zimmerman, *Town Meeting: A Tenacious Institution* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Graduate School of Public Affairs, 1967), 27–29, 77.

<sup>75</sup>James Thurber, “Town Meeting,” in *One Man’s Meat* (new enl. Ed.; New York & Evanston, IL: Harper & Row, n.p.), 150, 151 (quoted); J.G. Bullpitt, “Participation and Local Government: Territorial Democracy,” *Participation in Politics*, ed. Geraint Perry (Manchester, England & Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1972), 295.

<sup>76</sup>Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 10–13; Anne Bush Machear, “Early New England Towns: A Comparative Study of Their Development,” *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* 29(1) (1908), 21 (quoted), 44; Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*, 18–19.

<sup>77</sup>Bruce C. Daniels, *Dissent and Confrontation on Narragansett Bay: The Colonial Rhode Island Town* (Middletown CT:

the town meeting met, on average, twice a year; in the 18<sup>th</sup>, its modest apogee, four or five times a year. Although its authority extended, in principle, to almost anything, in practice, most matters were decided by the “selectmen” — annually elected magistrates.

A 1639 resolution reveals to what extent the townspeople resemble Bookchin’s civic-minded yeomen: “whereas it has been found by general experience that the general meeting of so many men in one [assembly to consider] of the common affairs thereof has wasted much time to no small damage, and business is nothing furthered thereby, it is therefore now agreed by general consent that these seven men hereunder named we do make choice of and give them full power to contrive, executie, and and perform all the business and affairs of this whole town — unto the first of the tenth month next.”<sup>78</sup> In 17<sup>th</sup> century Dedham, Massachusetts, selectmen served an average of ten terms each, in effect for life; in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for half that long.<sup>79</sup> In another Puritan colony, Connecticut, the town meeting transferred administrative authority to six or seven selectmen from among the town’s most prominent citizens.<sup>80</sup> In Rhode Island, the most radically democratic colony, legislation required town meetings only quarterly, and sometimes towns met less often, although the 18<sup>th</sup> century average — the highest anywhere — was over five meetings a year.<sup>81</sup>

The Massachusetts (and Connecticut) towns fail to be Communes by still another test: they were not federated. There is nothing to Bookchin’s claim that they “were networked into [sic] the interior of the New England colonies and states.”<sup>82</sup> They had no political ties to one another; each was subordinated to the central government.

The Director Emeritus, supposing it confirms his vision of New England towns as places for “the active involvement of the citizen in participatory politics, public security, and the direct face-to-face [as opposed to the indirect face-to-face?] resolution of community problems,” quotes historian Robert A. Gross: “When the eighteenth-century Yankee reflected on government, he thought first of his town. Through town meetings, he elected his officials, voted his taxes, and provided for the well-ordering of community affairs. The main business of the town concerned roads and bridges, schools, and the poor — the staples of local government even today. But the colonial New England town claimed authority over anything that happened within its borders. [Examples follow.]” Bookchin fails to notice that only the second sentence refers to the town *meeting*. The rest of it refers to the *town*, which acts through selectmen and other officials as well as, and much more often than, the town meeting. With characteristic dishonesty, the Director Emeritus forbears to quote the next page: “Democracy and equality played no part in their view of the world.”<sup>83</sup>

The real social context is missing from the ex-Director’s sentimental invocation of “the strong-minded yeomanry” of the interior towns — 70% of the colonial population — bearers of the

---

Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 96–98.

<sup>78</sup>Quoted in Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (enl. ed.; New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985), 38.

<sup>79</sup>Haskins, *Law and Authority in Puritan Massachusetts*, 72–79; Lockridge, *A New England Town*, 37–49, 119–138.

<sup>80</sup>Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Structure in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), 35–36.

<sup>81</sup>Daniels, *Dissent and Confrontation on Narragansett Bay*, 100; Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island — A History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975), 147.

<sup>82</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 233.

<sup>83</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 237–238; Robert A. Gross, *The World of the Minutemen* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 10–11 (quoted), 12 (quoted).

democratic legacy, whose farming for subsistence rather than trade was “a challenging moral statement” that theirs was “a virtuous life, not a bountiful one.”<sup>84</sup> Actually, “never a purely subsistence society, the New England colonies were thus from early in their histories [before 1660] and increasingly during the seventeenth century heavily involved in trade.”<sup>85</sup> It goes without saying that the farmers started out, as a matter of survival, producing for subsistence. But, “early in the colonial era, New England developed a diverse and tightly integrated economy.”<sup>86</sup> After 1700, during the Golden Age of the town meeting, “more and more of the migrants began to produce wheat, cattle, and horses for sale in the coastal cities and in the West Indies [to sustain plantation slavery].” Commercial agriculture underpinned the towns with their peculiar political systems. The commercial orientation of colonial New Englanders, as of Americans generally, was expressed in their intense involvement in land speculation.<sup>87</sup>

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Americans generally viewed virtue and self-interest as compatible, even mutually reinforcing. They had never shown a lot of public spirit, and now they showed less. Colonial politics offered little prospect of fame and fortune, “indeed, throughout the course of the early eighteenth century, there seems to have been a significant devaluation of the public realm ... every society in colonial British America, including New England after about 1700, exhibited a basically private orientation, a powerful underlying predisposition among the members of its free population to preoccupy themselves with the pursuit of personal and family independence.”<sup>88</sup>

According to the ex-Director’s paramour Biehl,

[...] their town-planning practices reflected this orientation toward democratic community. The original group who founded a town would collectively receive from the colony itself a deed to the land, which they divided among themselves. Each male inhabitant was given a one-to-ten acre plot of land as a freehold, on which he could support himself and his family. Land ownership was thus kept roughly egalitarian ...<sup>89</sup>

The size of the allotments is grossly understated to substantiate the egalitarian myth. They corresponded to the social hierarchy. In Sudbury, the largest allotment, 75 acres, went to the minister; the smallest was one acre. The town “ranked all of these men in an economic hierarchy which was to be fixed and final,” as reflected by their previous holdings in Watertown, their previous place of residence; in Sudbury, allotments ranged from zero acres of upland (10 out of 50 settlers) to 124 acres, with just 7 men receiving 30 acres or more. Similarly, a man’s “rank and quality,” in Dedham, was a major criterion for allotment: “a clearly defined social hierarchy was also a part of the ideal of the founders, and the town’s land policies were set accordingly.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 233–236, 234 (quoted).

<sup>85</sup>Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 62.

<sup>86</sup>John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 110.

<sup>87</sup>James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700–1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1973), 6 (quoted); Gordon S. Wood, “Inventing American Capitalism,” *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 1994, 44–49.

<sup>88</sup>Greene, “The Concept of Virtue in Late Colonial America,” in *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities*, 222–223, 226–232, 229 (quoted), 231 (quoted).

<sup>89</sup>Janet Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology* (Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1997), 32.

<sup>90</sup>Powell, *Puritan Village*, 84 (quoted), 189–190 (Appendix VI); Lockridge, *New England Town*, 12 (quoted), 11 (quoted).



While town founders were religious communicants, “at the outset, those attending the town meeting consisted of the proprietors to whom allotments of land had been made.” The towns were founded by profit-seeking entrepreneurs who obtained grants, negotiated with the Indians, created a landholding corporation, admitted shareholders, etc.: “every town reflected the character of a business in either the structure of its institutions or the apportionment of rights.” I quote from a study with the witty title *Profits in the Wilderness*.<sup>91</sup> Bookchin has elaborated out of the ether a New England with neither Puritans nor Yankees.

Invoking the aid of yet another discredited old theory, the Director Emeritus evokes (without credit) Frederick Jackson Turner’s hoary theory that the frontier promoted American democracy: “An incredibly loose democracy and mutualism [sic] prevailed along a frontier that was often beyond the reach of the comparatively weak national government.”<sup>92</sup> (But usually within reach of the comparatively *strong* state governments.<sup>93</sup>) The frontier was no more democratic than the older settled areas. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Connecticut town of Kent, for instance, had a town meeting system just like the one we have seen in eastern Massachusetts, which was not a frontier area. That is, the assembly met annually to elect selectmen and other officials (constables, grand jurors, tax listers, tax collectors, tithing men and fence viewers). Justices of the peace were chosen by the colonial government.<sup>94</sup> Quite democratic for its time ... but not by Bookchin’s definition. A very thorough, quantified study of the frontier period in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin — which, like Kent, had annual town meetings — found town and county governments very democratic, but *less* so at its frontier beginnings than after two decades of development.<sup>95</sup> And even Turner dismissed the cliché of the weak and distant national government: “The frontier reached by the Pacific Railroad, surveyed into rectangles, guarded by the United States Army, and recruited by the daily immigrant ship, moves forward at a swifter pace and in a different way than the frontier reached by the birch canoe and the pack horse.”<sup>96</sup>

The frontier was never much different politically from the rest of the country, and it was always as much like the rest of the country as the settlers could make it. Thus, as Richard Hofstadter concludes, “while it is probably true that life was frequently more egalitarian in frontier communities than in settled areas, the truly significant facts are the brevity of the frontier experience, the small numbers of people who are involved in and directly affected by it, and the readiness with which, once the primitive stage of settlement is past, the villages and cities only recently removed from their frontier life reproduce the social stratification, political forms, and patterns

---

<sup>91</sup>Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 73 (quoted); John Frederick Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 294–299, 303 (quoted).

<sup>92</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 296.

<sup>93</sup>William J. Novak, *The People’s Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>94</sup>Charles S. Grant, *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 133–135.

<sup>95</sup>Merle Curti, *The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959), 448. Nor did the settlers create democracy out of their wrestlings with nature. The structures of local government were laid out beforehand by state statute: “We are confronted with the semantic absurdity, in Trempealeau at least, of the frontier being self-governing before it was settled.” *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>96</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American history,” in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 10.

of leadership and control that exist in similar communities far to the east.” New towns quickly fell under the control of powerful local elites.<sup>97</sup>

The traditions of the Puritans were hierarchic, deferential and thoroughly undemocratic; civil authority was of God.<sup>98</sup> Democracy was a dirty word in 17<sup>th</sup> century America as it was everywhere else. The emergence of the town meeting was unintended, fortuitous and adventitious. Clearly it was never autonomous or direct-democratic enough to qualify as a Commune. The towns reveal a dysjuncture between Bookchin’s political and social ideals to which he is oblivious. In his usual dualistic way, the Director Emeritus assigns everything to categories of good and evil and then affirms the connection or coherence of the items in each category. For Bookchin, the politically good is the Commune, and the socially and economically good is the “moral economy” (*i.e.*, subsistence farming consciously chosen instead of commerce), communitarian solidarity, and the pursuit of virtue rather than prosperity.

Anticipating the obvious empirical objections to this ideological construct, the ex-Director pulls a dialectical rabbit out of his beret, insisting on considering the Puritan towns “not simply as they existed at any given moment of time, but as they evolved, eventually to become centers of social rebellion, civic autonomy, and collective liberty.”<sup>99</sup> Fine, let’s think developmental. Evolving political and social trends did move — *in opposite directions*. As the political system moved toward a broader franchise, more frequent and vigorous town meetings, and greater town power relative to the colonial government, there was simultaneously economic diversification, increasing production for sale instead of use, continued land speculation on an ever wider scale, movement out of the country towns to the commercial centers or the frontier, dispersal out of the original nucleated settlements into the countryside, increasing litigation, religious diversity, the breakdown of congregational discipline, and in general, the ascendancy of individualism and material self-interest. The town meeting became more active precisely because communal consensus was giving way to contention premised on heterogeneity.<sup>100</sup> The oligarchic communally-oriented Puritan mutated into the acquisitive democratic Yankee. The ex-Director’s analysis could not be more wrong.

In any case, at no time during these developments was the town meeting truly democratic. If only because of stringent control over access to eligibility, “the town meetings of Massachusetts fall short of any decent democratic standard.”<sup>101</sup> Still less was it ever even slightly libertarian. Historians “emphasize the degree to which nearly every aspect of town life was minutely regulated by town officials, far beyond what might be supposed to have been the needs of local government.”<sup>102</sup> While there is some doubt about how democratic any of Bookchin’s showcase

---

<sup>97</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner and Beard* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 130–131(quoted); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., “Frontier Democracy: The Turner Thesis Revisited,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 13(2) (Summer 1993), 148–149. “Like democracy, individualism was brought to the frontier.” Hofstadter, *Progressive Historians*, 142. Comparative history supports this interpretation. There seems to have been nothing democratizing about the South African, Brazilian and Siberian frontiers.

<sup>98</sup>Haskins, *Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts*, 17–19; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, ch. 1; Lockridge, *New England Town*, 10–12; Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts*, 4–5.

<sup>99</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 233.

<sup>100</sup>Jamil Zainaldin, “The New Legal History: A Review Essay,” *Northwestern University Law Review* 73(1) (March-April 1978), 216–220.

<sup>101</sup>Michael Zuckerman, “The Social Context of Democracy in Massachusetts,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 25(4) (Oct. 1968), 539.

<sup>102</sup>Haskins, *Law and Authority in Puritan Massachusetts*, 77.

direct democracies were — not only the Puritan towns but also Athens and revolutionary Paris — there is no doubt about their extremely intrusive paternalism bordering on totalitarianism. The regimes he commends to anarchists aren't merely non-anarchist, they stand out as exceptionally authoritarian.

At last we come to Bookchin's prize exhibit, the Parisian sections during the French Revolution. He has more to say about them than about anything since the polis, although his learning rests on a slender scholarly base. He does not cite the foremost expert on the "sections," Albert Soboul, but I will. The sections, originally electoral districts, were later used as governing bodies (note their statist origin). The National Assembly reduced their number from 60 to 48, but the sections "largely ignored the National Assembly's decrees" — except that one. In July 1792, the sections abolished the distinction between "active" and "passive" citizens — eliminating a property qualification — and welcomed the sans-culottes of the lower classes. A year later, the National Assembly voted to pay the poor 40 *sous* to attend assembly meetings, but at the same time reduced the meetings to twice a week. Each section had a president, renewed monthly, and a committee to assist him; drawn from a small number of militants, they were routinely reelected every month.<sup>103</sup>

According to the Director Emeritus, "attendance fluctuated widely from a hundred or less when the agenda was routine to overflowing halls (usually in state-commandeered churches and chapels) when serious issues confronted the revolutionary people."<sup>104</sup> But he also says that "they were often attended by only fifteen or twenty people out of one or two thousand." Actually, attendance was usually small even for important meetings. In the militant Droits de l'Homme, the section of *enrage* Jean Varlet, over 3,000 citizens were eligible to vote, but on June 17, 1793, only 212 voted in the critical election for commander-in-chief of the Paris National Guard.<sup>105</sup>

Finally the Director Emeritus tells us what the sections do. They appoint committees: civic committees, police commissions, vigilance committees, military committees, agriculture committees, etc. Each section had a court system and justices of the peace. Among the assembly's "enormous powers" were spying ("sources of information on counterrevolutionaries and grain speculators"), vigilantism ("dispensers of a rough-and-ready justice"), social work (poor relief, refugee relief), and relieving the peasants of their crops.<sup>106</sup> It's unusual for an anarchist to celebrate a government's possession of enormous powers, but Bookchin is nothing if not an unusual anarchist.

Bookchin is more comfortable with structure than function: "The forty-eight sectional assemblies, in turn, were coordinated by the Paris Commune to which each section elected three deputies at an *assemblée primaire*." That "special assembly" elected the *Bureau* of the Commune, which was the mayor and several executive officials associated with him. The Communal Assembly elected from its members 16 *administrateurs* whose duties are not specified, but have something to do with the executive committee. With the addition of 32 more members the Bureau becomes the 48-member General Council of the Commune.<sup>107</sup> The division of responsibil-

---

<sup>103</sup> Albert Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes: The Popular Movement and the Revolutionary Government, 1793–1794*, tr. Remy Inglis Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 164–167, 118–125, 179.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 164–165, 168–177; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 116–118, 118 (quoted).

<sup>105</sup> "Interview with Bookchin," 157; R.B. Rose, *The Enrages: Socialists of the French Revolution?* (Sydney, Australia: Sydney University Press, 1968), 16–17.

<sup>106</sup> Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 38.

<sup>107</sup> Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 118–120.

ities among these bureaucrats, which is rather involved, is not described. But it's clear that the Commune of Paris acted as a separate power from the sections<sup>108</sup> – a violation of Bookchin's confederal requirements.

Even from this version, it's obvious that sectional sovereignty was severely compromised by the existence of other levels of government. Bookchin scoffs at the national legislature (it went through several names), but almost anytime it felt like intruding into the sectional system, it did so. It reduced the number of sections, reduced the number of meetings, and put the poor on its own payroll. Although there were several popular irruptions into the National Assembly, it was nonetheless always the case that the central government commanded the army and at least part of the National Guard. The government tolerated the sections because each successive regime used them as its popular base, until the day came when the new regime (the Revolutionary Government of the Jacobins) decided that it could dispense with the sections, and then it put them out of business within a few months: "The Revolutionary Government had decided to govern; as soon as it did that, there was an end to the 'popular movement.'"<sup>109</sup> In 1795, Napoleon with his "whiff of grapeshot" proved that the people in arms felt no qualms about firing on the people in the streets.

Bookchin is wary of the Paris Commune and rightly so: it didn't "coordinate" the sections, it governed the city as a representative democracy invested, says Kropotkin, with extensive and diverse powers. In composition it was much less representative than the sections; only a third of its members were plebeians (small masters, artisans, shopkeepers, and two workers). If, as Bookchin says, the Commune was consistently less radical than the sections,<sup>110</sup> what does this say about his scheme of federated sectional assemblies? Would the Commune of Communes be less radical still?

The Sections were not the exclusive vanguard of the Revolution. The political clubs and popular societies – in 1793 there were over 1,500 of them in France – likewise played major mobilizing roles. Many were affiliated with the Jacobin Society, many others with the Cordeliers Club, a few with both. Clubs and sections both sent forth emissaries to radicalize the Army. After September 9, 1793, when daily meetings of the sectional assemblies were banned, the militants continued to meet as societies whose membership was a fraction of the citizen body; they served more or less as the assemblies' radical caucuses. In the following months of sans-culotte ascendancy, the societies controlled sectional offices. By their power to issue or withhold *certificates de civisme*, they could control the appointments to municipal government and even remove officeholders.<sup>111</sup> Territorial units are not uniquely revolutionary forms; in the French Revolution, non-territorial associations were more consistently radical.

---

<sup>108</sup>Ferenc Feher, *The Frozen Revolution: An Essay on Jacobinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press & Paris, France: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1987), 92.

<sup>109</sup>Cobb, *French and Their Revolution*, 226–227.

<sup>110</sup>Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution* (Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980), 364; Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 139–141; R.B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas in Paris, 1789–92* (Manchester, England & Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1983), 167; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 119.

<sup>111</sup>Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 193–196, 203–221; Morris Slavin, *The Hebertistes to the Guillotine: Anatomy of a "Conspiracy" in Revolutionary France* (Baton Rouge, LA & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 54. Michael L. Kelly, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793–1795* (New York & Oxford, England: Berghahn Books, 2000); Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 147; Cobb, *Police and the People*, 179.

And now to consider what else the ex-Director left out. He has repeatedly said that the Parisian sections refute the critics who say that a major city is too big for direct democracy.<sup>112</sup> The smallest section had 11,775 inhabitants; the largest, 24,977.<sup>113</sup> After the property qualification was dropped, a few thousand men (and in a few cases women) would be eligible to attend the assembly in even the smallest section. That's not a face-to-face group; even a substantial minority of that would not be a face-to-face group; not even Notre Dame could hold them. The example proves that the critics are right.

Except that a substantial majority of citizens did not attend — at any time. By one estimate, attendance was never more than 10%; by another, the range was 4–19%. There existed a rather small elite of politically conscious *sectionnaires*, 3,000 to 4,000 in a population of 650,000 to 700,000, or 12 to 20 men per section at the most.<sup>114</sup> The entry of the sans-culottes, important municipal elections, “crises” — nothing ever produced more than a small spike in attendance. In a careless interview, Bookchin himself admits that the assemblies “were often attended by only fifteen or twenty people out of one or two thousand.” (No section was as small as 1,000.) They were the best of times, they were the worst of times, but most people didn't have the time for the times. Or the inclination. The assemblies did not fulfill the ex-Director's dream of mentally muscular deliberation: “As a rule, meetings appear to have been disorderly, with many heated arguments even when the sans-culottes were in complete control; frequently, no discussion at all was possible.”<sup>115</sup> As at Athens, mass citizen abstention was the prerequisite for self-appointed elites to rule in the name of the people.

The remarkable unity of the sections derives from more than mass solidarity. When the sans-culottes entered the assemblies, moderates left. Militants from a radical section would drive out the “aristocracy” [sic] in control of another section (this was called “fraternization”). “There was nothing democratic in this type of action, of course,” notes Morris Slavin. Or militant “hard bottoms” might just outsit the majority, until twenty-odd determined militants remained to act in the name of the assembly.<sup>116</sup> Within the assemblies, in the most radical phase voting was by acclamation, intimidating dissenters, as it was intended to do. According to Janet Biehl, “during even the most militant periods of the revolution, royalists and moderates still turned out for meetings, as well as extreme radicals.”<sup>117</sup> According to history, they stayed away in droves, but this was not always enough to save them from arrest or even execution. It is no accident that summer and autumn 1793, “the high tide of the *sans culotte* movement,” corresponds to the Reign of Terror, which was launched on September 5. Militants sought out the counterrevolutionaries who, they supposed, lurked everywhere. There were men who were arrested only because they did not attend the assembly or did not have a record of active support of the revolution. It was in this spirit that St. Just denounced Danton: “Are you not a criminal and responsible for not having hated the

---

<sup>112</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 115.

<sup>113</sup>Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 26.

<sup>114</sup>Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 179; Albert Soboul, *The Parisian Sans-Culottes and the French Revolution, 1793–94* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 168; R. Cobb, “The People in the French Revolution,” *Past & Present* 15 (April 1959), 63–64; Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest, 1789–1820* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1970), 122.

<sup>115</sup>“Interview with Murray Bookchin,” 157 (quoted); Soboul, *Parisian Sans-Culottes*, 167.

<sup>116</sup>Soboul, *Parisian Sans-Culottes*, 170; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 119–120; Rose, *The Enrages*, 54, 17; Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde*, (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 159 (quoted) & ch. 2.

<sup>117</sup>Cobb, *Police and the People*, 183, 206; Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 38 (quoted).

enemies of the fatherland?”<sup>118</sup> Failure to wear the tricolor cockade in one’s hat was grounds for arrest. There was every reason to stay away: “To the ‘silent majority,’ after four years of uproar still too bored or too busy to involve themselves in interminable assembly debates and committee business, the vindictiveness and potentially lethal violence of factional power struggles added fresh reinforcements.”<sup>119</sup> To speak out against the government in the assembly would be suicide. Even to mutter against it on the street invited arrest. Under these circumstances, democracy, direct or otherwise, is a sham.

In listing the administrative personnel elected by the sections, the Director Emeritus failed to mention that they were detailed to the Commune — they were city employees — and thus not exclusively answerable to their appointing bodies. Increasingly they identified with their employer, who paid them: “The civic committees, developed in the same fashion as the autonomous sectional institutions. At first, agents of their fellow citizens, the status of the commissars changed as the revolutionary government increased its control by creating a cadre of low-grade officials, soon to be nominated by committees, finally salaried by the municipality.” Likewise the Commune indemnified the members of the revolutionary committees (in charge of security), transforming them into its salaried employees.<sup>120</sup> The Commune drained off the most active militants, turning them into bureaucrats, lost to their sections. After five years of activism, other militants were burnt out — still a common phenomenon on the left. One study found that out of 400 Revolutionary Committee members, 150 went into the state bureaucracy, often the police department. A paid job in the War Ministry or the police, says Cobb, offered consolation to disappointed democrats: “The government bought off some of the best militants, ‘bureaucratized’ some of the most effective popular institutions — there was no doubt an agreeable irony in getting the militants to do the government’s dirty work and in transforming former *tribunes* into policemen.”<sup>121</sup>

In a final irony, the sections fell victim to their own bellicosity. They had always been the war hawks, flourishing in the wartime atmosphere of 1793, and supporting the *levee en masse* of August 23. In the army there were promotions for some “who had served their apprenticeship in the Paris sections.” The majority of the militants were now conscripted themselves. Even the army recruited in Paris, with many *sans-culottes*, was unwaveringly loyal to the revolutionary government and the Convention, with no desire to replace them with direct democracy or a new hierarchy of sectional societies.<sup>122</sup>

The domination of the sections by several thousand ideologically supercharged militants, many of them commencing careers in government, calls for qualification of Bookchin’s claim “that this complex of extremely important activities was undertaken not by professional bureaucrats but,

---

<sup>118</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 117; Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 147–148; St. Just quoted in Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 182; F. Furet, C. Mazauric, & L. Bergeron, “The Sans-Culottes and the French Revolution,” in *New Perspectives on the French Revolution: Readings in Historical Sociology*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplow (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965), 235. The last source is the only one cited by Bookchin, except an idiotic Stalinist book by Daniel Guerin criticized in this same article, *ibid.*, 232, but wherever the ex-Director got most of his material, it wasn’t here. He is unacquainted with the modern authorities on the popular movement in the Revolution (Cobb, Rude, Rose, Slavin, and Soboul).

<sup>119</sup>Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 179; Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 169–170, 183.

<sup>120</sup>Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 189–191.

<sup>121</sup>Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 181–182; Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 259–262; Richard Cobb, *The French and Their Revolution*, ed. David Gilmour (New York: The New Press, 1998), 226 (quoted); Cobb, *Police and the People*, 192.

<sup>122</sup>Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 179–190, 259–262; Alan Forrest, *The Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1990), 55 (quoted); Cobb, *French and Their Revolution*, 81.

for the most part, by ordinary shopkeepers and craftsmen.”<sup>123</sup> In the first place, they were not quite so “ordinary.” The *sans-culottes*, who were not a class, were rather a socially heterogeneous political coalition whose only common material interest was as consumers (hence the primacy of the price of bread as an issue). They were mostly self-employed artisans and craftsmen, along with their journeymen and apprentices who expected to become self-employed someday. The better-off owners and masters shaded into the bourgeoisie. The lower reaches of the bourgeoisie, sometimes including merchants, factory owners and lawyers, supplied most of the sectional militants and officials. Offices requiring literacy were closed to most *sans-culottes*. Justices of the peace were mostly drawn from the former legal professions (which had been technically abolished in 1791<sup>124</sup>). Years of activism turned the militants into political professionals who in many cases brought their skills into government (especially the police and the military). In experience, temperament and employment prospects, they were different from the masses, and so were their interests. What was supposed to be a shining example of direct democracy is actually a striking example of the Iron Law of Oligarchy.

Superficially — that is to say, on Bookchin’s level — the revolutionary sections might look like “the most dazzling, almost meteoric example of civic liberty and direct democracy in modern times.” If so, it is only because there are no other examples. In reality, the sections had even less power than the New England town meetings. The town meeting had the power to tax and money to spend. The Parisian section, which had neither, had mainly a population, and it even lost some of that to national conscription. New England had locally based militias in a colony lacking a standing army. The *sectionnaires* gained partial control of the National Guard, but the rest of it along with the enormous army was under central government control, and *sans-culotte* National Guardsmen never came to the defense of the sections. Their supporters were armed but not organizable for anything except crowd action. New England towns controlled local administration. The apparently extensive administrative powers of sectional officials actually belonged to the municipal government. The sections were not federated; the Paris Commune was not a Commune of Communes. The fundamental contradiction was their support for policies, from war to price controls, which strengthened the central government. From the pinnacle of their influence they plummeted to nothing: “After the decree of 5 frimaire [November 26, 1794], the sections played no part at all in the revolutionary government.”<sup>125</sup>

The *sans-culottes* were not “pushed from the stage of history and shot down by the thousands in the reaction that followed the tenth of Thermidor (July 28, 1794), when Robespierre and his followers were guillotined.”<sup>126</sup> Robespierre and his colleagues and followers (104 of them) were indeed guillotined,<sup>127</sup> but they were not *sans-culottes*. Some *sans-culottes* were even released from prison then. The sections were quiet during the coup. There was no widespread repression of *sans-culotte* militants until after the later failed insurrection of Prairial (May 20–23, 1795). Then some 1200 were arrested, and others were disarmed. While this gave a strong impetus to the nascent White Terror, it was outside Paris, especially in the south of France, that patriots were

---

<sup>123</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 161.

<sup>124</sup>Donald B. Kelley & Bonnie G. Smith, “What was Property? Legal Dimensions of the Social Question in France (1789–1848),” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128 (1984), 203.

<sup>125</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 115; Soboul, *Sans-Culottes*, 104.

<sup>126</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 120–121.

<sup>127</sup>Georges Fefevre, *The French Revolution From 1793 to 1799*, tr. John Hall Stewart & James Friguglietti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 136.

slaughtered in large numbers: “But, in Paris at least, there were no massacres” (Albert Mathiez). Thermidor was not particularly bloody even for Section Droits-de-l’Homme, where, “in numerous individual cases, [the Thermidorians] released their political opponents and allowed them to return to normal life.”<sup>128</sup>

Actually, Bookchin also tells another story of the demise of the sections: “The movement for sectional democracy met defeat during the insurrection of June 2, 1793 — not at the hands of the monarchy, but by the treachery of the Jacobins.”<sup>129</sup> The insurrection of June 2 was in support of a Jacobin coup directed at the majority Girondins in the Convention, using muscle from the sections. The Girondin deputies were expelled and two dozen were guillotined. The Girondins did not support, and were not supported by, the sans-culottes, whom they held in “open contempt.” It’s ludicrous to say, as does Biehl, that “[the sans-culottes’] leaders were among the first to be arrested by the Jacobin regime when it came to power in June 1793.”<sup>130</sup> If direct democracy didn’t flourish in June-December 1793, it never did. The sections regarded the putsch as their victory. They supported the new regime’s policies of war, conscription, and price controls on staples.

The months following June 2 and preceding Thermidor were the “high tide of the sans-culotte movement,” in Bookchin’s words. However, the sections came to see that the centralization and regimentation imposed by the revolutionary government undermined their power (whereas the Reign of Terror taking place at the same time neither threatened nor displeased them — indeed, they were its foot soldiers). The sans-culottes were sufficiently disenchanting with the Jacobins as to make no move to defend them at Thermidor; some even participated in the anti-Jacobin coup. But the new regime correctly concluded that with the newly strengthened military and police apparatus at its disposal (including sans-culottes from the sections), the sections were irrelevant; soon they were nonexistent.<sup>131</sup> The short life of sectional direct democracy corresponds to the Reign of Terror, which was inherently anti-democratic. It holds no lessons, except authoritarian ones, for our time.

The Parisian Sections were remarkable if short-lived institutions, but they were not Communes, nor was the Paris Commune a Commune of Communes. Bookchin claims the sections were “coordinated by a commune that, at its revolutionary highlight [sic], called for a complete restructuring of France into a confederation of free communes.” The sections weren’t “coordinated” by anyone. The Paris Commune never made a ludicrous appeal to federate 44,000 French communes. The pamphleteer Jean Varlet, the foremost ideologue of sectional democracy, could not even get his own ultra-radical Droit l’Homme section to mandate its Convention delegates to support direct democracy.<sup>132</sup>

As a Marxist, the Director Emeritus has to claim that history is behind him as well as ahead of him. He excoriates Nietzsche, but borrows his most preposterous idea, Eternal Recurrence. Communes, which never existed anywhere, he sees everywhere: “The historical evidence of their efficacy and their continual reappearance in times of rapid social change is considerable and

---

<sup>128</sup>George Lefebvre, *The Thermidorians & The Directory*, tr. Robert Baldick (New York: Random House, 1964), 128–137; Albert Mathiez, *After Robespierre: The Thermidorian Reaction*, tr. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Universal Library, 1965), 178–183, 183 (quoted); Morris Slavin, *The French Revolution in Miniature: Section Droits-de-l’Homme, 1789–1795* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 405 (quoted).

<sup>129</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 155.

<sup>130</sup>Kropotkin, *Great French Revolution*, 344; Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 39 (quoted).

<sup>131</sup>George Rude, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1959), 113–114; Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 182; Slavin, *Making of an Insurrection*, 4 (quoted).

<sup>132</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 116 (quoted); Rose, *Making of the Sans-Culottes*, 169.



persuasive.”<sup>133</sup> To obtain such “historical evidence,” Bookchin has invented it or (as with respect to Renaissance city-states) selectively censored sources so outrageously that it is tantamount to forgery. His theory that communes appear in times of rapid social change is easily falsified: the Industrial Revolution, for instance, produced no Communes, whereas the democracy of Athens was the result of political maneuver, not social change. *We* live in a time of rapid social change, and Bookchin has been predicting Communes for decades, but there are none. In revolutionary Paris, in colonial America, and throughout preindustrial Europe — throughout the civilized world! — society, especially urban society, was hierarchic and deferential.

To sum up: such European cities as escaped royal control for any period of time were sometimes redefined as self-governing by exclusive organizations of the wealthy who dominated the general assemblies, in the minority of cities where they ever existed, and soon instituted ruling magistracies elected or coopted by, and from, their own ranks. The communal movement was about urban autonomy from kings, bishops and feudal lords, and nothing else. To employ Carl Becker’s distinction, it was about home rule, not who was to rule at home, much less how. Certainly there never existed, not even briefly, under normal conditions of life, a broad-based urban general assembly which met frequently and which elected and controlled all functionaries. By Bookchin’s own criteria, the urban Commune never existed in medieval or modern Europe. Did it even exist at Athens?

---

<sup>133</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 247.

## Chapter 14. The Judgment of Athena

If Athens was not *by his own definition* anarchist, Murray Bookchin is not an anarchist.

Whatever it was, Athens was exceptional. Most of the Greek city-states were oligarchies. Indeed, in an atypically accurate statement which refutes his whole theory of urban destiny, Bookchin says that city-states naturally tend toward oligarchy.<sup>1</sup> The Director Emeritus errs in claiming that Aristotle (and Plato!) approved of democracy in the right circumstances. Aristotle clearly stated his preference for “polity,” described as a mixture of democracy and oligarchy. He disapproved of democracy, as M.I. Finley puts it, “on principle.” What’s more, he thought Athens was democracy at its worst, the worst being lawless democracy based on vulgar people, merchants, and the multitude of laborers.<sup>2</sup> Socrates and Plato, and lesser Athenian intellectuals, were anti-democratic. For Plato the worst form of government was tyranny followed by “extreme” — *i.e.*, Athenian — democracy. If for Plato democracy was not the worst form of government, neither was it the best — that would be monarchy.<sup>3</sup> The only possible exception to the anti-democratic consensus might be Herodotus (his is the earliest extant use of the word democracy), who was not Athenian, and he’s not a clear case.<sup>4</sup>

“It is curious,” writes A.H.M. Jones, “that in the abundant literature produced in the greatest democracy in Greece there is no statement of democratic theory.”<sup>5</sup> Nothing curious about it: no Athenian democrat was up to the job. Athenian democracy has found its critics among those who knew direct democracy by direct experience, and it has found its champions among those who have not. (Since writing the previous sentence, I found that Hegel agreed with me: “Those ancients who as members of democracies since their youth, had accumulated long experience and reflected profoundly about it, held different views on popular opinion from those more a

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 40; Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 88; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 76; Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 7; Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 83.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 11; Aristotle, *The Politics*, 187; Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 453; M.I. Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (2d ed.; London: Hogarth Press, 1985), 5 (quoted), 29; David Held, “Democracy: From City-States to a Cosmopolitan Order,” in *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 80 (Aristotle is “one of the most notable critics of Greek democracy”); Richard Mulgan, “Was Aristotle an ‘Aristotelian Social Democrat’?” *Ethics* 111(1) (Oct. 2000), 84–85. For Aristotle, the worst form of democracy is one where majority rule is unconstrained by law; then “the people are a sort of monarch.” Aristotle, *Politics*, 125–126.

<sup>3</sup>Arihiro Fukuda, *Sovereignty and the Sword: Harrington, Hobbes, and Mixed Government in the English Civil Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>4</sup>A modern study mentions his “frosty view of the young Athenian democracy ...” Daniel Gillis, *Collaboration with the Persians* (Wiesbaden, West Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1979), 16.

<sup>5</sup>Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 84–85; Anthony H. Birch, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), 45; Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 112; David Held, *Models of Democracy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 16; A.H.M. Jones, *Athenian Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 41 (quoted); David Stockton, *The Classical Athenian Democracy* (Oxford & New York: Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1972), 167–168; Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, 49.

priori views prevalent today.”<sup>6</sup> I have several times had such agreeable experiences in writing this book.)

Every Greek would have agreed with M.I. Finley that “Athens had gradually stretched the notion of a direct democracy (as distinct from a representative system) about as far as was possible outside utopia.”<sup>7</sup> Something else every Greek would agree with is that the Athenian polis was a state. Plato thought so. Aristotle thought so.<sup>8</sup> And Aristotle even reveals the source of confusion on that score: it is “our use of the word polis to mean both the state and the city.”<sup>9</sup> It’s impossible to cite more than a small fraction of the historians, philosophers and social scientists who have considered Athens, as a polis, a state, because they all do.<sup>10</sup> That is also the Marxist position.<sup>11</sup>

In Chapter 13, I use eight requisites which, if present together, denote a Commune according to the Director Emeritus. As best I can tell, anyway. Considering how much he talks about the Commune, Bookchin is very reticent about the specifics. It is not always clear which features of the Athenian polity he considers constitutive of direct democracy. I will show that, with respect to every one of these eight criteria, Athens did not meet it, or barely and debatably met it, or met it formally by means divesting the institutions of democratic content. Athens was not a Commune; it was not even close.

But even before entering into those specifics, Athens must be disqualified as a democracy, and even as an urban society, because it was founded on a non-political, biological, animalistic basis. The turning point of human history, as Bookchin so often reminds us, is the urban revolution against the mindless exclusivity of kin organization, with the polis in the urban vanguard and Athens the first and finest example. The city

[...] exorcises the blood oath from the family with its parochial myths and its chauvinistic exclusivity, while retaining or reworking its concept of socialization... The municipal space of Athens, in effect [sic], was expanded to create a largely civic citizenry [?], unencumbered by the mindless tribal obligations and blood oaths that

---

<sup>6</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, “On the English Reform Bill,” in *Political Writings*, ed. Laurence Dickey & H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 235.

<sup>7</sup>M.I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 35.

<sup>8</sup>Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 13;

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Ian Morris, “The Early Polis as City and State,” in *City and Country in the Ancient World*, ed. John Rich & Andrew Wallace-Hedril (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), 25.

<sup>10</sup>E.g., Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 460; Finley, *Use and Abuse of History*, 48; James F. McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 149–150; Alvin L. Gouldner, *Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory* (New York & London: Basic Books, 1965), 5; C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 177; Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1877), 269–270, 273; R.K. Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6; Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 4, 113; Bruce G. Trigger, *Time and Tradition: Essays in Archaeological Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 163. “The ancient cities were absolutely identical with the state.” Henri Pirenne, *Early Democracies in the Low Countries: Urban Society and Political Conflict in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 16. For all its vaunted democracy, the politicized Athenian stratification system approximated the typical pre-industrial city far more than it does a modern city. Sjoborg, *The Preindustrial City*, 80.

<sup>11</sup>*The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx: Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock*, ed. Lawrence Krader (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1972), 215 (referring to the Athenian *Stadtsbuenger*, i.e., state citizen); Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,” ch. 5, “The Rise of the Athenian State.”

impeded the rights of the stranger but in a form that wore the symbols and enjoyed the prestige of tribal tradition.<sup>12</sup>

It is not so. *The Athenian polis was based on the blood oath.* The Athenian body politic was defined by heredity just as surely as any other aristocracy, and as exclusively as any, even the Brahmin caste. By a law moved by Pericles himself — Pericles, whose funeral oration is the supreme expression of Athenian democracy — the citizen body was restricted to current citizens and their descendants. At the same time, it was made illegal for an Athenian to marry a foreigner; thus their children would be bastards as well as noncitizens, and the noncitizen spouse would be sold into slavery. According to Plutarch, many lawsuits over legitimacy ensued, and over 5,000 unsuccessful claimants to citizenship were sold into slavery, 14,040 having passed the test.<sup>13</sup> This had unswerving citizen support; introduced in 451/450 B.C., reaffirmed (after irregularities during the Peloponnesian War) in 403–402 B.C., and further buttressed during the fourth century by ancillary legislation and procedural innovation.<sup>14</sup>

When an Athenian male turned 18, he applied for ratification of his citizenship to his deme (local district), in which membership was likewise hereditary. Citizens felt race pride, like the two con-artists in the “Birds” of Aristophanes who congratulate themselves: “we *are*/Family-tree perfect: Athenians/For generations, afraid of no one.” Or the “Wasps”: “We are the only/Aboriginal inhabitants — the native race of Attica,/Heroes to a man, and saviours of this city.”<sup>15</sup> Athens took its racism seriously. In 403/402 B.C., after the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants put in power by Sparta, the assembly voted down a bill to extend citizenship to the slaves who had helped to overthrow the tyrants: “Allowing slaves to be citizens would deny the linkage between patriotism and citizen blood.”<sup>16</sup>

We have already seen what the Director Emeritus means by the blood oath (Chapter 9). If it means that relatives jointly swear to defend or avenge family members, then I am unaware of any primitive societies which have or ever had this practice. They may exist, but this is not the normal practice of kin-based societies. Your kin are the people you can take for granted. It’s when people are *unrelated* that they may feel the need for an artificial support for their solidarity, such as medieval townsmen entering into a *conjuratio*, as the Director Emeritus has described (Chapter 13). Besides, the point of an oath is to intimidate the oath-taker with supernatural sanctions, which is irrational,<sup>17</sup> whereas trusting one’s blood relatives is often a rational course of action, and that is not how the pineapples are supposed to line up according to Book’s gutter *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* schedule. Athenian racism really renders further discussion unnecessary: nonetheless I proceed to consider the case for Athens as a Commune.

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 30.

<sup>13</sup>Plutarch, “Pericles,” 1: 335–336; “Birds,” *Aristophanes: Plays: I*, 71.

<sup>14</sup>David Whitehead, “Norms of Citizenship in Ancient Greece,” in *City-States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, ed. Anthony Molho, Kurt Raaflaub & Julia Emlen (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 140.

<sup>15</sup>Aristophanes, “Birds,” 6; “Wasps,” 205.

<sup>16</sup>Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 97–98.

<sup>17</sup>There was plenty of emotionalism and institutionalized irrationality in Greek culture. Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 117, 125; Mumford, *City in History*, 158; E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1957). Fifth-century B.C. Athenians were pre-Stoic, and their psychology and values, Finley suggests, are best represented by the *Bacchae* of Euripides. At all levels of society, “crude magical and superstitious practices flourished.” Finley, *Ancient Greeks*, 125, 117 (quoted). Indeed, a recent anthology of translations contains *three hundred* supernatural classical texts. Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Source Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

*Policy-Making Assembly.* Athens, of course, had an assembly which met often, but the evidence of its influence over policy is “slender.” It shared a substantial amount of this authority with another body. The council (*boule*) of 500 met whenever the assembly did not, that is, nine days out of ten — and on assembly days after the meeting — about 275 out of 354 days. Its most important function was to prepare the agenda for assembly meetings to which no proposal could be added from the floor. Except for the generals (see below), nobody outside the council had a right to address it or move proposals, nor could there be proposals from the floor of the assembly. One of Robert A. Dahl’s five requirements for democracy is that the body of citizens (in his word, the *demos*) should have exclusive control over the political agenda.<sup>18</sup> The council could always prevent assembly action; it had, in effect, an anticipatory veto power over all legislation.<sup>19</sup>

This arrangement might raise fewer objections on democratic grounds if the assembly elected the council; but it did not. Council members were nominated annually from men aged 30 and over not in the lowest income class, from those who put themselves forward, by the demes (see below) grouped in tribes for this purpose. Demes were units of local government wherein membership was hereditary, and because they were of very disparate sizes, the council was malapportioned.<sup>20</sup> At least twice the number of officeholders required were supposed to be nominated, thus providing for alternates.

The final decision was by lot conducted by the outgoing council, which usually amounted to deciding which nominees would be council members and which would be substitutes.<sup>21</sup> Thus council members were chosen by a combination of local election and sortition, but not by the assembly. The Director Emeritus is thus twice incorrect in saying that each tribe selected its council members by lot.<sup>22</sup> In the initial phase, selection was by election, and in the final phase, the outgoing council, not the tribe, conducted the lottery. In any event, the council members were not answerable to the assembly; they could not be recalled or mandated. They were, in a word, *representatives*.<sup>23</sup>

Council membership was limited to citizens 30 and over and from the top three of the four income classes (what are these doing in a Commune?). It is not clear how strictly the income limitation was enforced, but the age limitation substantially restricted participation. Over 60% of Athenians, and one-third of Athenians reaching adulthood, never lived to age 30.<sup>24</sup> The significance of this fact has escaped the attention of historians who claim that almost all citizens could expect to serve on the council sooner or later. For many of them it was sooner or never. Despite the alleged “emergence of the city, followed by the increasing supremacy of town over country and territorial over kinship ties,”<sup>25</sup> the council, like the court system, was something of a gerontocracy, which Bookchin would have to consider a biological institution, like the family.

---

<sup>18</sup>Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, 6, 9.

<sup>19</sup>P.J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1972), 63.

<sup>20</sup>Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 59. Specifically, the city was substantially underrepresented relative to the coast and the interior.

<sup>21</sup>Rhodes, *Athenian Boule*, 3–6, 211–213; Robin Osborne, *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attica* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 77–82.

<sup>22</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 72.

<sup>23</sup>Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 90; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 247–248, 250–251, 253; Hansen, *Athenian Assembly*, 36–37; Dahl, *On Democracy*, 22; Walter Eder, “Who Rules? Power and Participation in Athens and Rome,” in *City-States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, 175.

<sup>24</sup>Richardson, *Old Age Among the Ancient Greeks*, 231.

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 63.

Anyone who has ever been involved with a parliamentary body appreciates the tremendous importance of setting the agenda. Scarcely less important than power over what goes on the agenda is power over the order of business. That can influence the outcome and, in at least two situations, absolutely determine it: when the meeting adjourns before decision, and in those circumstances where the Voter's Paradox (discussed in Chapter 17) creates a situation of a closed cycling majority.<sup>26</sup> The assembly was passive; the council took the initiative: "Certainly the assembly had sovereign power and consented to or dissented from the motions put before it, but this final responsibility is not the same as effective power to initiate the policy."<sup>27</sup>

With, to be sure, several important exceptions, the council exercised the powers of the assembly between meetings. The exceptions included limitations on imprisonment without bail, on the death penalty, on the imposition of large fines, and on war and peace. Otherwise the council could promulgate decrees on its own authority, of which the assembly ratified about half. In addition, assembly decrees might authorize the council to make additions and amendments.<sup>28</sup> The council exercised comprehensive supervision over the many boards of officials. "It is impossible to give a full account here of all the Council's administrative duties and powers," writes a recent historian of Athenian democracy:

It was involved in the control of all sanctuaries in Athens and Attica and the running of many of the religious festivals; it had the duty to inspect all public buildings, most notably the defenses of the city and the Piraeus; it was responsible for the navy and the naval yards, for the building of new vessels and the equipping and despatch of fleets, and it had oversight of the cavalry. It acted as administrator of the public finances in collaboration with various other boards; and, last but not least, it had daily responsibility for foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

Bookchin's depiction of Athenian government as the work of part-timers and amateurs begins to look misleading. Council members may not have been the trained career professionals of an ideal-type Weberian bureaucracy, but for a year they were paid, full-time legislators and administrators.<sup>30</sup> A bureaucracy of amateurs is still a bureaucracy. They might be reelected once, and in any given year, 100–125 of them would have had previous council experience.<sup>31</sup> Bookchin's distinction between policymaking and administration is not as sharp as he announces it. Denounce it though he will, the "melding" of policy and administration is normal in public administration.<sup>32</sup>

The judicial system is another branch of administration with a popular character but not responsible to the assembly. 6,000 judges were elected from the demes for one year of paid service. Eligibility was as for the council: at least 30 years old and not poor. On a daily basis, if there was business for them, they would be empanelled in "batches of hundreds" of jurors, usually

---

<sup>26</sup>Kenneth Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; John Wiley & Sons, 1963), 2–3, 94–95.

<sup>27</sup>Osborne, *Demos*, 65.

<sup>28</sup>Rhodes, *Athenian Boule*, 179–180, 188–190; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 255. However, on occasion the council ordered executions on its own authority. MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 189–190.

<sup>29</sup>Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 255–256, 259 (quoted).

<sup>30</sup>Hignett, *History of the Athenian Constitution*, 249.

<sup>31</sup>Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 249.

<sup>32</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 215–216; Aaron Wildavsky & Jeffrey L. Pressman, *Implementation* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., exp.; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 143.

200–1,000, to hear cases.<sup>33</sup> Decision was by secret ballot, without deliberation, and there was no appeal from the jury's verdict. Without going into the details of this system, it may be noted that there was no due process as we would understand it. The parties made set speeches as best they could. They could not normally employ advocates, although they could hire speech-writers. The parties might question each other, but they could not testify themselves. There was no cross-examination of non-party witnesses. The only witnesses were, in our terms, character witnesses, friends and family vouching for the virtue of the party they advocated for.<sup>34</sup> Slaves might testify – but only if they had been tortured (I'm not making this up). There were emotional appeals to the jury, as in modern systems, but unrestrained by the court. Aristophanes shows us a dog put on trial for stealing a Sicilian cheese; the bitch has her puppies whine for her.<sup>35</sup> There was no one to instruct the jurors in the law, because the presiding officers were as ignorant as they were.

In fact, the Draconian innovation of written law, hailed by the Director Emeritus, sometimes failed to provide the legal certainty claimed as its great virtue. A party relying on a law had to prove it as a fact; it was not assumed that the law, being written, was known to everyone. Evidently there were cases of the law being faked, as “a law prescribed death as the penalty for anyone found to have presented a non-existent law.”<sup>36</sup> There was no right to counsel. Juries expected litigants to speak for themselves unless they were utterly incapable, and it was a crime to represent another professionally, *i.e.*, to practice law.

It was an all-amateur legal system. But while there were no lawyers, there were “sycophants,” individuals who brought frequent groundless prosecutions to obtain either blackmail money or 20% of any fine imposed.<sup>37</sup> They are reminiscent of our ambulance-chasers. Finally, some of the punishments prescribed were cruel and unusual. The painless, peaceful death of Socrates was exceptional. The usual methods of execution were extremely brutal. An early form was “precipitation,” where the condemned was thrown off a precipice and left for dead. That is cruel enough, but as the Athenians became more civilized, their punishments became even more brutal. In the method favored later, the condemned was fitted with a heavy iron collar and clamped to a pole in a standing position to suffer a lingering death by starvation, exposure and something like crucifixion, only it lasted longer. Some of the Samian prisoners were tortured in this way for ten days and then their tormentors grew impatient and bashed their heads in.<sup>38</sup> Contemporaries judged the Athenian legal system harshly. Plato and Aristotle divided democracy, like monarchy and aristocracy, into good and bad variants. The bad variant was where the rule of law did not prevail. They considered Athens the worst kind of democracy, the lawless kind.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 160–161; Hignett, *History of the Athenian Constitution*, 249; Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 99–101; MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 34.

<sup>34</sup>MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 243; Sally Humphreys, “Witnesses in Classical Athens,” *History and Anthropology* 1 (pt. 2) (1985): 313–369. Slave testimony was admissible only if produced under torture. MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 245–246.

<sup>35</sup>“Wasps,” 1970), 188, 199–203.

<sup>36</sup>MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 251–252, 242 (quoted).

<sup>37</sup>Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 97–99; MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 62–63, 250–252. If, however, less than 20% of the jurors voted to convict, the prosecutor was heavily fined. MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 64.

<sup>38</sup>MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 254–255; Gernet, *Anthropology of Ancient Greece*, 254, 268 n. 10. Although it is not *criminal* punishment, it merits mention that during the Peloponnesian War the Athenians executed thousands of prisoners of war. From Mytilene alone, “rather more” than 1,000 were executed – and that was in lieu of executing all the men and enslaving the rest! Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 212–223.

<sup>39</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, 126; *The Laws of Plato*, 121 (optimal population is 5,040).

Conclusion: a substantial share of policymaking authority was exercised by a full-time council which, as Aristotle stated, represented an oligarchic element, a check on the assembly.<sup>40</sup>

*Face-to-Face Assembly Meetings.* “Face-to-face” is an expression beloved of Bookchin, among too many others, but his use of it is fraught with confusion. Is he talking about a face-to-face *assembly* or a face-to-face *society*? Properly the phrase refers to a local community in the anthropological or sociological sense — something social, not political. It was originally applied by Peter Laslett to the pre-industrial English village community; later it was extended to other localities, like urban neighborhoods, where people know each other.<sup>41</sup> Band societies are such communities. So are tribal societies, as the Director Emeritus has observed.<sup>42</sup> So were the pre-industrial English villages studied by Laslett, with populations in the hundreds.<sup>43</sup> Aristotle thought the optimum population of a polis is one in which the polis can be taken in at a single view. The urban architect Constantinos Doxiadis points out that prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in 99% of cities one could walk from the center to the periphery in ten minutes. Laslett himself, in working out the meaning of a face-to-face community, stated that a polis never had more than 10,000 citizens and often only 1,000<sup>44</sup> — obviously overlooking Athens.

Thus the face-to-face model is “an absurd model” for Athens, with its population of 250,000–300,000. In an article on the origins of the Athenian polis, Ian Morris states that Athens was no face-to-face society. As early as 500 B.C., the population was probably 25,000, rising to 30,000 by 450 B.C. Historian Josiah Ober, in a generally sympathetic account of Athenian democracy, points out that Athens was neither a village nor (had he been reading Bookchin?) a confederation of villages. He puts the *citizen* population at 20,000–40,000.<sup>45</sup> Even Ober’s lower figure is far beyond a size at which everyone knows, or at least knows *of*, everybody else. A passage from Thucydides reveals just how impersonal life was in Athens. In 411 B.C., a coup installed an oligarchy, the Thirty, which held power for eight months. Thucydides gives one reason why the pro-democratic majority acquiesced in the collective tyranny: “They imagined that the revolutionary party was much bigger than it really was, and they lost all confidence in themselves, being unable to find out the facts because of the size of the city, and because they had insufficient knowledge of each other.”<sup>46</sup>

Was the assembly, then, a face-to-face gathering? Not to nearly the extent that, say, the United States Congress is, but not since the Anti-Federalists has anyone thought the size of the legislature was critical to its democratic character.<sup>47</sup> A highly sympathetic account of the assembly acknowledges that “in an assembly attended by 6,000 citizens it was impossible to have an open

---

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 106–107.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Laslett, “The Face to Face Society,” in *Philosophy, Politics and Society, First Series*, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 157–184.

<sup>42</sup> Bookchin, “Toward an Ecological Solution,” *Ecology and Revolutionary Thought*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Laslett, *World We Have Lost*, 54–55.

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 163; Constantinos A. Doxiadis & Truman B. Douglass, *The New World of Urban Man* (Philadelphia, PA & Boston, MA: United Church Press, 1965), 64–65; Laslett, “Face to Face Society,” 162–163.

<sup>45</sup> Osborne, *Demos*, 64–65 (quoted); Hansen, *Athenian Assembly*, 34, 37–38; Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 31–32. Sociologists call the face-to-face group a primary group. Homans, *Human Group*, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponesian War*, tr. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 576.

<sup>47</sup> And they wanted a *larger* legislature to reflect a wider range of interests. Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 17–18.



discussion.” Robert Michels made the same point about assemblies on that scale.<sup>48</sup> That would be like calling the fans at a major league baseball game a face-to-face group because, if gifted with hawklike vision, almost everyone would be in a line of sight from everyone else. But the crowd cannot deliberate, and the only decision it ever makes is when to do “the wave.” Aristotle asked, “For who can be the general of such a vast multitude, unless he have the voice of Stentor?”<sup>49</sup> If each of 6,000 citizens attending a 12 hour assembly meeting speaks, he will speak for an average of 12 seconds (but it was rarely 12 hours, as the meeting almost always adjourned by noon).<sup>50</sup> Obviously a handful of people did the talking; the rest were, at best, *represented* by the speakers. Less than one hundred full-time politicians (*rhetores*) dominated the debates.<sup>51</sup>

Conclusion: Athens was neither a face-to-face society nor a face-to-face democracy.

*Few if Any Elected or Appointed Officials.* Finley states that “there was no bureaucracy or civil service, save for a few clerks, slaves owned by the state itself, who kept such records as were unavoidable, copies of treaties and laws, lists of defaulting taxpayers, and the like.”<sup>52</sup> That is the traditional story, but the situation rewards closer examination. As Finley also says, Athens employed financial and engineering experts. Treasurers of the Delian League (which was turned into the Athenian Empire) were probably elected.<sup>53</sup> Ambassadors and official negotiators were elected. So were holders of certain technical jobs, like architects; certain religious officiants; and the secretaries and treasurers of various boards in charge of funds. Since state and church were one, there were cults whose funds were under public control.<sup>54</sup> There were enough of these offices for Aristophanes to complain of placemen and sinecures.<sup>55</sup> Even taken together, these positions might be considered minor exceptions. But there are, in addition to the council, three major exceptions to assembly sovereignty: the generals, the police, and the demes.

The assembly annually elected a board of ten generals (*strategoï*), and they were the most powerful men in the government. It was in this capacity that Pericles and his successor Cleon dominated the assembly. In a state which was at war, on average, two out of every three years,<sup>56</sup> the Generals had considerable power, and it was not limited to strictly military matters:

[T]he Board of Generals must, at any rate in the fifth century, have exercised *de facto* a considerable power. Its members were not only supreme in military matters; they had the functions of a treasury as well as those of a war-office, and were concerned in raising the funds which they required. They had charge of foreign affairs; and they must even have exercised some sort of discretionary power, in order to discharge their duties of preventing and punishing treason, and protecting the democratic constitution. They were appointed by election, and not by lot; on them depended much

---

<sup>48</sup>Hansen, *Athenian Assembly*, 56; Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, tr. Eden & Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1962), 65.

<sup>49</sup>Aristotle, *Politics*, 163.

<sup>50</sup>Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 73.

<sup>51</sup>Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 108.

<sup>52</sup>Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, 18.

<sup>53</sup>Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, 15; James Day, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967), 182.

<sup>54</sup>Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 107; Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 195.

<sup>55</sup>“Lysistrata,” *Aristophanes: Plays: II*, 99.

<sup>56</sup>Finley, *Economy and Society*, 88.

of the security of the Athenian democracy; and they supplied along with the Council something of that executive strength which a democracy particularly needs.<sup>57</sup>

In a departure from usual Athenian practice, generals might be reelected, and some of them were, year after year, like the wealthy aristocrat Pericles,<sup>58</sup> who served without interruption for 15 years. In the fifth century, generals largely overlapped with the career politicians, the *rhetores* or demagogues who drafted, moved and debated bills in the assembly. Often the *rhetores* were formally trained in “rhetoric.” The ruling elite was invariably drawn from the wealthy and well-educated.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the centralized state focused on council and assembly, Athens had units of local government: the demes, which were numerous enough (there were over 100) to be true face-to-face assemblies. Most of the demes were individual villages outside the walls — a reminder that only one-third of the citizens lived in the city. In size they ranged from 130 to 1,500, resulting in extreme malapportionment. In direct contradiction of the ex-Director’s central theme — that cities in general, and the polis in particular, phased out “the biological facts of blood, sex, and age” — deme membership was hereditary.<sup>60</sup>

The elected demarch, who presided over the deme assembly, had several executive functions: renting out deme property, policing religious practices and rituals, collecting the tax on non-demesmen owning land in the deme, listing the property of public debtors, and — very important, where citizenship is so highly valued — judging who in the deme was an Athenian citizen. The demarch, then, was “little more than an executive cog in the machinery of central government.” And yet he was not accountable to the assembly. If we are surprised to hear of “central government” at Athens, it is because the glorificatory accounts like Bookchin’s ignore the part of the state that was genuinely local and face-to-face — and *its* democracy was representative, not direct.<sup>61</sup> The demes, grouped in tribes, nominated the Council candidates by vote. As Robin Osborne, the expert on the demes, writes: “Through the demes, what was in theory a direct democracy was in practice a subtle representational one.”<sup>62</sup> An innovation of Cleisthenes, “these new demes formed the groundwork of the Athenian state in the fifth century.”<sup>63</sup> The principles of the groundwork of the Athenian state, then, were blood and representation. The power of the hereditary demesmen and the elected demarchs, taken in conjunction with the power of the elected Generals, establishes that Athens was not a direct democracy “as such,” as the Director Emeritus might say: it was in substantial part a representative democracy also.

Finally, Athens had that quintessential state institution, a police force. As Friedrich Engels (no less) relates:

Thus, simultaneously with their state, the Athenians established a police force, a veritable gendarmerie of foot and mounted bowmen — *Landjaeger*, as they say in

---

<sup>57</sup>Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 457.

<sup>58</sup>Hignett, *History of the Athenian Constitution*, 249.

<sup>59</sup>Hansen, *Athenian Assembly*, 51–66; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 268–274; Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 93; Eder, “Who Rules?” 184; Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation*, 137.

<sup>60</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 225–226, 226 (quoted); Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 153, 156; Osborne, *Demos*, 64, 45.

<sup>61</sup>Deme membership was inherited; in time considerable numbers of demesmen lived outside their demes. Still, demesmen mostly knew each other and lived near each other. Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 65.

<sup>62</sup>Osborne, *Demos*, 64, 74–92, 92 (quoted).

<sup>63</sup>Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 154.

South Germany and Switzerland. This gendarmerie consisted — of *slaves*. The free Athenian regarded this police duty as being so degrading that he preferred being arrested by an armed slave rather than perform such ignominious duties himself. This was still an expression of the old gentile [= clan] mentality. The state could not exist without a police force, but it was still young and did not yet command sufficient moral respect to give prestige to an occupation that necessarily appeared infamous to the old gentiles.<sup>64</sup>

Barely mentioned by Athenian apologists like Zimmern, never mentioned by Bookchin, the police were numerous and ubiquitous: “The ‘Scythians’ as they are called from their usual land of origin, or the ‘bowmen’ from their special weapon, which incidentally makes a convenient cudgel in a street brawl. There are 1200 of them [another estimate is 300], always at the disposal of the city magistrates. They patrol the town at night, arrest evil-doers, sustain law and order in the Agora, and especially enforce decorum, if the public assemblies or the jury courts become tumultuous.”<sup>65</sup> The use of foreign slaves (equipped with bow, whip and saber) as a public force anticipates the Janissaries of Turkey and the Mamlukes of Egypt. In our time another dubiously democratic city-state, Singapore, uses foreigners — Gurkhas — as its political police. Here the Athenian penchant for amateurism and taking turns has slammed to a stop.

It goes without saying that the slave police stood ready to repress revolt. In “Lysistrata,” when the women staged a sex strike (is this the first General Strike?) and occupied the Acropolis, it was the Scythian police who were routed trying to retake the place.<sup>66</sup> It is where a regime seems to act out of character that one should look for its secrets. The Athenians did not trust each other with police powers because they would put them, as they put everything, to political use. It’s happened in other urban democracies, namely, American cities — whose police traditionally were also foreign-born, tools of the political machine, and disrespected by the citizens. Nearly all discussions of the Athenian polity assume that it lacked that state requisite, a distinct coercive force. Here it is: “Athens was no different [from other states], having a prison and prison officials, the Eleven, who were responsible for some aspects of the public order. The Eleven had at their disposal a group of public slaves who functioned inter alia as prison attendants, executioners, and police.”<sup>67</sup>

Conclusion: Without denying the assembly’s broad power, so much authority was vested elsewhere, in critical matters (law enforcement, the military, foreign affairs, initiating legislation) and other areas less critical but still important (local government, citizenship, religious practice), that Athens could not be said to have been governed in substantially all important respects by the assembly.

*At Least a Substantial Minority of Adult Males are Enfranchised.* One estimate of population in fifth-century Athens is 250,000 to 300,000. That includes 30,000 adult male citizens, 25,000 metics, and 80,000 slaves, as well as the women and children of citizens. Citizens were thus not more than 30% of the adult male population,<sup>68</sup> and 12% of the total population, probably less —

---

<sup>64</sup>Engels, “Origin of the Family,” 545.

<sup>65</sup>Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 176 n. 2, 301; Davis, *A Day in Old Athens*, 56.

<sup>66</sup>Aristophanes, “Lysistrata,” 94–95.

<sup>67</sup>Virginia J. Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits, 420–320 B.C.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 186.

<sup>68</sup>Thorkey, *Athenian Democracy*, 77.

evidently enough to satisfy Bookchin, but others might find that rather small for *the* exemplary direct democracy of all time. If we count the subject people of the over 200 cities in the Athenian Empire (see below), who had no political rights in Athens, then the Athenian citizen body appears in its true character as a narrow oligarchy.

*At Least a Substantial Minority of Citizens Attend the Assembly.* There were 20,000–40,000 citizens eligible to attend the assembly. Bookchin always says 40,000 to make Athens look less oligarchic, but it was probably much less, and by the close of the Peloponnesian War it was certainly much less, 21,000–25,000. A recent estimate of how many usually attended the assembly is approximately 6,000, which was also the quorum for certain decisions (for most decisions there was no quorum). That is also the number of people who could find room on the Pnyx, the hillside which was the usual meeting place. Another estimate is that one-seventh to one-fifth of the citizens attended.<sup>69</sup> Thus the typical assembly meeting involved 2%–2.4% of the entire population, excluding powerless imperial subjects. It is easy to consider this system an oligarchy.

How many have to participate to make participatory democracy meaningful is of course somewhat arbitrary and subjective. Bookchin, normally so loquacious, is silent on this crucial issue, but what he calls “the zeal with which the Greeks served their communities”<sup>70</sup> is not conspicuous at Athens. I find 15–30% of eligibles to be startlingly low, considering the inducements to attend. The Athenian citizen’s vote counted for far more than anyone’s vote in a modern representative democracy. The anti-individualist public-service ideology encouraged attendance, which in theory was compulsory. Many citizens were free for assembly meetings and other political responsibilities because their slaves relieved them of the need to work. Slave ownership was very widespread above the pauper class: it is said that “every Athenian citizen tries to have at least *one* slave.”<sup>71</sup>

In theory, attendance was compulsory, but attendance must have fallen to what was considered too low a level, judging from what was initiated at the beginning of the fourth century B.C.: payment for attendance. The majority attended because they were paid to. Payment was instituted, according to Aristotle, because previously “the people would not come.”<sup>72</sup> One fourth-century politico, Demades, sounding like a Tammany ward heeler, called the payments “the glue of the democracy.”<sup>73</sup> Bookchin opposes both compulsion and payment to secure attendance, so in this respect he concedes an Athenian departure from democracy. He says that citizens were paid to participate only “in the declining period of the *polis*.”<sup>74</sup> Yes, but before that they had to be compelled, which is no better. Either way, the point is that most Athenians were at no time civic-minded enough to exercise their democratic birthright without extrinsic inducement, and usually not even then. In their indifference to politics, they resemble the citizens of all states, always and everywhere.

*Nonprofessional Army or Militia.* Athens had a nonprofessional army, all right: it had a *conscript* army. And beginning after the Peloponnesian War, Athenian male citizens aged 18–20 underwent

---

<sup>69</sup>Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Athens*, 114–118; Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 84.

<sup>70</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 178.

<sup>71</sup>Cartledge, “Rebels and Sambos in Classical Greece,” 32–33; Davis, *A Day in Old Athens*, 54 (quoted).

<sup>72</sup>*Aristotle’s Constitution of Athens and Related Texts* (New York & London: Haffner Publishing Company, 1964), 114 (quoted); Aristotle, *Politics*, 150.

<sup>73</sup>Hansen, *Athenian Assembly in the Age of Demosthenes*, 14–19, 46–47, 47 (quoted), 125, 193 n. 804.

<sup>74</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 337–338, 338 (quoted).

compulsory military service and performed garrison duty.<sup>75</sup> Thereafter they were called up as required, up to age 60, an age attained by very few. The conscripts were paid. No doubt most of them went to war willingly to protect their privileges, but the fact remains: military conscription is the essence of statism and the antithesis of anarchy.

*Federation with Other Cities.* Athens belonged to a federation in only an ironic sense. She emerged from the Peloponnesian War as the head of the Delian League (478/477 B.C.), an anti-Persian defensive alliance which Athens, as treasurer and by far the strongest military power, converted into a tributary empire in 454 B.C. When the allied cities (there were almost 200 of them) revolted or fell in arrears on their tribute payments, they were subjugated.<sup>76</sup> In 452 B.C., Athens appropriated the league treasury, providing funds for general purposes including the major public works program which built the Parthenon and employed many poor citizens.<sup>77</sup>

A federation is voluntary by definition. The Athenian empire was not confined to states whose membership was initially voluntary. Athens added others by outright conquest. The most famous example is Melos, an island which maintained its neutrality during the Peloponnesian War for 16 years until Athens sent an army and fleet to compel submission. In the famous dialog with the Melians, the Athenian representatives claimed no right but the right of the stronger: "Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can." When the Melians refused the ultimatum, the Athenians besieged the Melians — starving them out, as Aristophanes casually remarks — until they surrendered; then they killed the men, enslaved the women and children, and planted a colony of their own.<sup>78</sup>

A cardinal principle of federation is non-intervention in the internal affairs of the members. Athens actively intervened to support or install democratic, *i.e.*, puppet regimes, installed garrisons, and sent out officials to guide the local magistrates and archons. According to a contemporary critic known as the Old Oligarch, "they realize that it is inevitable that an imperial power will be hated by its subjects ... that is why they disfranchise the respectable element and fine, exile or kill them, but support the masses." In the imperial context, "democracy" meant rule by the pro-Athenian faction: "the word *demokratia* in the fifth century had emotive force but little empirical content."<sup>79</sup> The Athenians were not always welcomed as liberators; oligarchy must have had some popular support if most city-states were oligarchies. In 441 B.C., Athens seized Samos, took hostages, and installed a democracy. Soon the Samians revolted and set up an oligarchy. After an eight-month siege, Athens reconquered the island and imposed democracy again. Ironically, then, the oligarchic revolt had popular support.<sup>80</sup> This was positive freedom at its most muscular. This was not without precedent. In the anti-Persian revolt of the Ionian cities which brought

---

<sup>75</sup>Davis, *A Day in Old Athens*, 101–102; Stockton, *Classical Athenian Democracy*, 106;

<sup>76</sup>Day, *Aristotle's History*, 181–182.

<sup>77</sup>Plutarch, "Pericles," 1: 304–305.

<sup>78</sup>Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 400–408, 404 (quoted); Aristophanes, "Birds," 12.

<sup>79</sup>Russell Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1972), 206–213; Day, *Aristotle's History*, 182; [Old Oligarch,] "The Constitution of the Athenians," in *Aristotle and Xenophon on Democracy and Oligarchy*, tr. J.M. Moore (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 40 (quoted); Rafael Sealey, *A History of the Greek City-States, ca. 700–338 B.C.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 305 (quoted).

<sup>80</sup>Plutarch, "Pericles," 1: 320–324; Graham Shipley, *A History of Samos: 800–188 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 43, 116–119.

on the Persian Wars, the revolutionaries often replaced democracies with tyrannies. When the Persians regained control, they ousted the tyrants and restored democracy!<sup>81</sup>

To speak of an “Athenian empire” (his ironic quotation marks) is, according to the Director Emeritus, “overstated.”<sup>82</sup> Tell it to the Melians. Other Greeks spoke of the “rule” (*arkhe*) of the Athenians over their ostensible allies. The Athenians themselves were unapologetic, not shyly about their imperialism. Pericles, the principal architect of empire, was frank about its nature: “Your empire is now like a tyranny: it may have been wrong to take it; it is certainly dangerous to let it go.” He should know: he raised the tribute by 33%. His successor Cleon, also a general, told the assembly “that your empire is a tyranny exercised over subjects who do not like it and who are always plotting against you.”<sup>83</sup> Thucydides, relating the various reasons Athenians supported the disastrous Sicilian expedition, mentions that “the general masses and the average soldier himself saw the prospect of getting pay for the time being and of adding to the empire so as to assure permanent paid employment in future.”<sup>84</sup> The citizens were regularly reminded of their imperialism: every year, during the Great Dionisia festival when the tragedians competed, “there was a display of the tribute that had been paid by the subject states in Athens’ empire.”

Athenian domination went well beyond exploitation: “In addition to their military and financial responsibilities, fifth-century Athens required the states it ruled to adopt its coinage, present legal cases to its juries, and even to honor its deities and make religious contributions to Athens as if [they were] its colonies.” Athens planted some 10,000 colonists amidst the territories of their subjects or where the original inhabitants had been, like the Melians, exterminated: thus “the most naked kind of imperial exploitation directly benefited perhaps 8–10 per cent of the Athenian citizen body.”<sup>85</sup>

So far, with little help from Bookchin, we have toiled to measure Athens by his own standards of direct democracy, and found it more or less wanting in every way. But he is not the only one with ideas about what a democracy should be. He invokes Rousseau’s “praise of the Greek popular assembly based on face to face democracy.” No such praise is to be found in Rousseau. Like Machiavelli before him, Rousseau “was seized by a fervid passion for the Spartans which led him to deploy the Athenians as a foil to their legendary virtues.” Rousseau, the great (and almost the only) theorist of direct democracy, thought that “Athens was in fact not a Democracy, but a very tyrannical Aristocracy, governed by philosophers and orators.”<sup>86</sup> As I am not a democrat, I am not putting forward my own requirements, but rather address a point which democrats have usually considered essential.

I refer to individual rights, especially freedom of speech. There was no individual freedom in ancient Greece. Most scholars agree that the ancient Greeks had no rights as we understand them and no conception of rights, much less natural or constitutional rights. Indeed they had no concept of the individual — as even the Director Emeritus comes close to admitting — in this

---

<sup>81</sup>Gillis, *Collaboration with the Persians*, 16.

<sup>82</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 148.

<sup>83</sup>Sealey, *History of the Greek City-States*, 304; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 161 (quoted), 213 (quoted); Plutarch, “Aristides,” 2: 239; McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture*, 184.

<sup>84</sup>David Konstan, “Introduction” to Euripides, *Cyclops*, tr. Heather McHugh (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5 (quoted); Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 425 (quoted).

<sup>85</sup>McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture*, 183–184; Old Oligarch, “Constitution of the Athenians,” 40–41; Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, 84; Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 51–52, 52 (quoted).

<sup>86</sup>Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 86; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 102 (quoted); Rousseau, “Discourse on Political Economy,” 291 (quoted).

respect resembling some primitive peoples, such as the Jívaro headhunters.<sup>87</sup> There was almost no “negative freedom.”<sup>88</sup> There was formal protection against only a few flagrant abuses, such as execution without trial.<sup>89</sup> In principle, the state was absolute. The best example is ostracism, by which a citizen, without any charge of wrongdoing, could be exiled by majority vote (by secret ballot, unlike usual Athenian practice). With, no doubt, some bias, Aristotle stated that ostracism removed those superior in virtue, wealth and abundance of friends, or some other kind of political strength. Plutarch says it was applied to those “whose station exposed them to envy.” In the American system this is known as a bill of attainder and it is unconstitutional. Ostracism could be imposed almost frivolously. Aristides the Just was ostracized by citizens who were tired of hearing him called “the Just.” Victor Ehrenberg has written: “When we read the names of Aristides, Themistocles, Cimon, etc., scratched on ancient potsherds, often wrongly spelt, we may be excused from casting some doubt on the propriety of popular sovereignty.”<sup>90</sup> As Benjamin Constant observed, ostracism rests on the assumption that society has total control over its members. As a modern scholar also observes, “ostracism symbolizes the ultimate power of the community over the individual and the individual’s relative lack of rights against the community.”<sup>91</sup>

In Athens, the law may permit this or that privilege from time to time, but there is no notion of a claim to an entitlement as against the state. What at first glance looks like a right, the honor (*time*) of holding office, is more like a duty.<sup>92</sup> And that is the secret of the Athenian state and its law: it proceeds from the assumption that the citizen exists to serve the state, not the state to serve the citizen. Thucydides has the Corinthian delegation to the Spartans say about the Athenians, “as for their bodies, they regard them as expendable for their city’s sake, as though they were not their own.” Similarly, freedom of speech means freedom to speak in the assembly. In contrast, most of our rights are instrumental for the accomplishment of our diverse non-political ends.<sup>93</sup> Socrates was not the only philosopher to be silenced. The philosophers Anaxagoras, who was Pericles’ teacher, and Protagoras were ostracized. The books of Anaxagoras were ordered burned in the agora — the earliest known case of book-burning.<sup>94</sup> Even Aristophanes was prosecuted for slandering Pericles’ successor, Cleon. The prosecution of Socrates for the vague and undefined crime of “impiety” was not exceptional. Athenian democracy recognized no rights of

<sup>87</sup>Mulgan, “Liberty in Ancient Greece,” 9; Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 92; Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 10; Constant, “Liberty of the Ancients,” 312; Martin Ostwald, “Shares and Rights: ‘Citizenship’ Greek Style and American Style,” in *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 54–57; Robert W. Wallace, “Law, Freedom, and the Concept of Citizens’ Rights,” in *ibid.*, 107; Victor Ehrenberg, *Man, State, and Society: Essays in Ancient History* (London: Methuen & Co., 1974), 23; Laslett, “Face to Face Society,” 166; Birch, *Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, 45; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 323 (hailing the Greeks’ “faltering steps toward individuality”); Karsten, *Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas*, 272–273.

<sup>88</sup>Wallace, “Law, Freedom,” 107; Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ch.5.

<sup>89</sup>Wallace, “Law, Freedom,” 111.

<sup>90</sup>Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* 116; Aristotle, *Politics*, 106–107; Plutarch, “Aristides,” 2: 211, 217–218; U.S. Const., art. I, § 9; Ehrenberg, *Man, State, and Society*, 30 (quoted).

<sup>91</sup>Constant, “Liberty of the Ancients,” 321.

<sup>92</sup>Ostwald, “Shares and Rights,” 54; Mulgan, “Liberty in Ancient Greece,” 14 (quoted).

<sup>93</sup>Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 76 (quoted); Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 82.

<sup>94</sup>MacDowell, *Law in Classical Athens*, 200–201.

conscience. Whether Socrates was guilty as charged is, for present purposes, beside the point, which is: disbelief in the traditional gods was a capital crime.<sup>95</sup>

As for the extreme patriarchal dimension of the Athenian state and society, it would take a book to describe it. Happily, that book has already been written: *The Reign of the Phallus* by Eva C. Keuls. I am sometimes dubious, at best, about what is supposed to be feminist scholarship, but this one's a slam dunk. The plentiful illustrations alone, which rarely appear in print and never massed as they are here, would indict the Athenians as phalocrats even without any text. I'll just quote the first sentence of the book:

In the case of a society dominated by men who sequester their wives and daughters, denigrate the female role in reproduction, erect [!] monuments to the male genitalia, have sex with the sons of their peers, sponsor public whorehouses, create a mythology of rape, and engage in rampant saber-rattling, it is not inappropriate to refer to a reign of the phallus. Classical Athens was such a society.<sup>96</sup>

Without having undertaken systematic comparative history, my casual opinion is that I know of no Western society in any period which was as oppressive and devaluing of women as Murray Bookchin's Athens.

The reader who has persevered this far is in for a real treat: Murray Bookchin's own arguments why Athens was not a state. Finding even as many as I did was what the ex-Director used to call (one of his redundant tautologies) arduous toil. He has usually been offhanded or dismissive, as if there were no serious issue about Athenian statism. Some of the following comments possibly were not even intended to be arguments. With him it's hard to tell.

*Athens had a "state" in a very limited and piecemeal sense. Despite its governmental system for dealing with a sizeable slave population, the "state" as we know it in modern times could hardly be said to exist among the Greeks, unless we are so reductionist as to view any system of authority and rule as statist. Such a view would grossly oversimplify the actual conditions under which people lived in the "civilized world."<sup>97</sup> [Why the quotation marks? Is Athens uncivilized?]*

Of course the state as we know it in *modern* times did not exist in *ancient* times. The question is whether Athens was a state, not whether it was a modern state. The subject, "state," takes several predicates: archaic state, patrimonial state, nation-state, capitalist state, city-state, feudal state, degenerated workers' state, modern state, even "theatre state"<sup>98</sup> and – why not? – post-modern state. If calling Athens a state grossly oversimplifies the living conditions of its people, than calling any political system a state grossly oversimplifies the living conditions of its people. The word "state" is not designed for characterizing living conditions. There are other words for that. And the implication that the "governmental system" was only for controlling the slaves is false.

---

<sup>95</sup>Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society*, ch. 8.

<sup>96</sup>Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 1.

<sup>97</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 34. It's ridiculous to pretend that Athens was a state vis a vis the slaves but anarchy vis a vis the citizens. Aside from this being self-evidently impossible, most of the same laws applied to both, although ostracism was only for citizens.

<sup>98</sup>Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,



Whether authority and rule are statist depends on what you mean by authority, rule, and state. The implication is that Athens had authority and rule, but no state. Something is missing. But what? The Director Emeritus does not say. Elsewhere, he makes clear that domination and rule are the same thing, namely, hierarchy, which in turn is the same thing as the state!<sup>99</sup> All he is doing is chasing his tail.

*To consider Athens a state, “we would have to assume that the notion of a state is consistent with a body politic of some forty thousand male citizens, admittedly an elite when placed against a still larger population of adult males possibly three times that number who were slaves and disenfranchised resident aliens. Yet the citizens of Athens could hardly be called a ‘class’ in any meaningful sense of the term.”<sup>100</sup>*

Apparently, the number of enfranchised Athenian citizens is, absolutely or relatively, relevant to whether they are the citizens of a state. Bookchin gives no reason why. He cannot mean 40,000 is too large, because the enfranchised citizen population of India is hundreds of millions, yet India is a state. He cannot mean that 40,000 is too small, because the Spartiate class in Sparta at its peak numbered barely 5,000,<sup>101</sup> yet Sparta was a state. Unless Bookchin were to take the position that Sparta was not a state, in which case none of the Greek cities were states, and Hellenic civilization was entirely anarchist. But in fact the Director Emeritus has referred to the Spartan State.<sup>102</sup> There have certainly been many ruling elites, taking in several thousand years and most parts of the world, which numbered less than 20,000–40,000, and there have been many that numbered more. The English electorate in 1704 was 200,000, or about one in thirty of the population — a manageable number in more ways than one. In pre-contact Nigeria, the kingdom of Shani consisted of three towns and the population of the town-state of Gulani was 2,000–3,000.<sup>103</sup>

This line of argument is also dispositive if relative numbers are determinative. The only possible meaning then is that when 25% of a body politic is enfranchised citizens, that is too large for the polity to be a state. But again, in the modern world, universal suffrage is indeed universal, so there are today much higher proportions of citizen voters in all the democracies, which are states.

Finally, whether or not the Athenian citizenry was a “class” is irrelevant to whether or not the polity was a state. The American electorate is not a class, but America is a state.

*We would also have to assume that the notion of a state is consistent with a consciously amateur system of governance, based on almost weekly popular assemblies, a judicial system structured around huge juries that represent the assemblies on an attenuated scale, the selection and rotation of civic officials by sortition, that is, the use of the lot,*

---

1980).

<sup>99</sup>“I was calling for the abolition of hierarchies as well, of states, not of economic power alone. Hierarchy was a kind of psycho-institutional power based on social status — in other words, *rule and domination*, not only exploitation for material gain.” Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 55. All of this may have been new to Bookchin — it would be new to most Marxists — but it was not new. His exciting discovery is called anarchism.

<sup>100</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 35.

<sup>101</sup>A.H.M. Jones, *Sparta* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 20.

<sup>102</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 68.

<sup>103</sup>J.H. Plumb, *The Origins of Political Stability: England, 1675–1725* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 29; Ronald

*and the absence of any political professionalism or bureaucratism, including military forces that are authentic militias of armed citizens instead of professional soldiers.*<sup>104</sup>

The presence of some oddball features does not imply that a polity is not a state. Some other indubitable states have had consciously amateur systems of governance. As discussed in Chapter 13, colonial America employed such systems. To a slightly lesser extent, so did medieval England, whose system was so decentralized and participatory that one historian calls it “self-government at the king’s command” and considers it proto-democratic.<sup>105</sup> There was no police force, and local face-to-face judicial institutions like tithings and hundreds performed most of the day-to-day work of social control.<sup>106</sup> There was no well-defined judicial hierarchy.<sup>107</sup> Juries were not as large as at Athens, but they were impanelled often, for a variety of purposes. The preeminent royal courts at Westminster had only twelve judges. Parliament rarely convened, and in the earlier part of the period it did not exist. There were no tax collectors and, usually, no taxes. There was no capital city; the king, like his judges, perambulated. The military, when it was raised, was a combination of feudal levies and mercenaries under the amateur leadership of feudal lords. Except for the central courts and the Exchequer, there was almost nothing in the way of a central administration. Clearly this was not a state “in the modern sense,” but no one has ever doubted that it was a state.

*Despite slavery, imperialism and the degradation of women, “by the same token, we cannot ignore the fact that classical Athens was historically unique, indeed unprecedented, in much of human history, because of the democratic forms it created, the extent to which they worked, and its faith in the competence of its citizens to manage public affairs.”*<sup>108</sup>

Read one way, the argument is that a social organization which is historically unique, or perhaps *very* historically unique, is not a state. But every state is historically unique. Athens was freakish, all right, but so was Sparta, whose government — drawn from a hereditary military class living off a class of state serfs — consisted of a popular assembly, a council of elders, magistrates (ephors), and *two* kings! As one of its historians remarks with some understatement, “the political development of Sparta was abnormal.” David Hume wrote: “Were the testimony of history less positive and circumstantial, such a government would appear a mere philosophical whim

---

Cohen, “Evolution, Fission, and the Early State,” in Claesson & Skalnik, eds., *Study of the State*, 111, 101.

<sup>104</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 35.

<sup>105</sup>Albert Beebe White, *Self-Government at the King’s Command: A Study in the Beginnings of English Democracy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1933).

<sup>106</sup>Peter Coss, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality: A Study in English Society, c.1180-c.1280* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4; C.T. Flower, *Introduction to the Early Curia Regis Rolls, 1199–1230* (London: Bernard Quaritch for The Selden Society, 1944), 65–66, 84; Reginald Lane Poole, *Obligations of Society in the XII and XIII Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 81, 87; A.J. Musson, “Sub-keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England,” *English Historical Review* 117(470) (Feb. 2002), 2–3 & *passim*.

<sup>107</sup>William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law* (17 vols.; London: Methuen & Co. and Sweet & Maxwell, 1956–1972), 2: 256.

<sup>108</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 69.

or fiction and impossible ever to be reduced to practice.” Nonetheless, Bookchin confirms that Sparta was a state.<sup>109</sup>

Read another way, the claim is that Athens was not a state because it had democratic institutions; these institutions worked; and the citizens believed in them. In other words, a democracy is not a state. But that begs the question, which is precisely whether a democracy is a state. The rest is verbiage. That governmental institutions work effectively does not make them democratic. The Chinese mandarin and the Prussian civil service functioned effectively in the service of states. Victorious armies, be they Roman, Mongol, Napoleonic or Nazi, have been effective, but they served states. Finally, to believe that a polity is democratic does not mean that it is democratic. Many people believe that the United States government is democratic, but according to the Director Emeritus, it is not.

*Statecraft refers to “armies, bureaucrats, judicial systems, police, and the like.”*<sup>110</sup>

With the debatable exception of bureaucracy, Athens had all these institutions “and the like.” Even if, as Bookchin claims, there are “degrees of statehood,”<sup>111</sup> Athens exhibits a high degree of statehood. We considered states which had less of these enumerated attributes than Athens did. Zululand, Norway, and Mongolia lacked bureaucrats, judicial systems and police, but they were states. Colonial America lacked bureaucrats, police and armies, but it was part of an imperial state. Statecraft does not refer to armies, bureaucrats, judicial systems and police. Statecraft refers to “the art of conducting State affairs; statesmanship.”<sup>112</sup> It refers to the behavior of government officials, not to the institutions of government, whatever they might be.

Perhaps the basic flaw in the system is ideological. For the ancients — for the Athenians — there was no connection between freedom and equality. In this respect it is interesting that Bookchin, when he identifies “the most basic principles” of leftism, or the “fourfold tenets” of anarchism, omits equality.<sup>113</sup> It is not something he often discusses. Even while trumpeting his renewed allegiance to leftism, he neglects its fundamental value. Indifference to equality accounts for his indifference to Athenian racism, slavery, patriarchy, imperialism, and even poorly attended assembly meetings, be they in ancient Athens or in tomorrow’s Communes. What he really wants is not democracy, except as a mystifying façade, but rather a meritocracy of mouth.

The time has come for the judgment of Athena. As even Bookchin concedes, where there is rule, there is a state. Aristotle confirms in several places that democracy is a system in which the citizens *rule* and *are ruled* in turn: “One principle is for all to rule and be ruled in turn.”<sup>114</sup> Anarchism is the refusal of both roles. As it is phrased in a poem by John Henry Mackay and quoted approvingly by Emma Goldman:

---

<sup>109</sup>Jones, *Sparta*, 13, 26, 27 (quoted); David Hume, “Of Commerce,” quoted in Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1970), 71–72; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 68.

<sup>110</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 69.

<sup>111</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 136–137.

<sup>112</sup>*Shorter OED*, q/v “statecraft.”

<sup>113</sup>Mulgan, “Liberty in Ancient Greece,” 10; Bookchin, *SALA*, 86, 60.

<sup>114</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 34; Aristotle, *Politics*, 71, 92, 144 (quoted), 205–206. In the “Ecclesiazuzai” of Aristophanes, the women take over the assembly. One woman had trouble understanding him when her husband tells her that the state is hers. Bewildered, she asks, “Mine to do what? Weave?” “No, boss, rule!” *Aristophanes: Plays: II*, 266.

I am an Anarchist! Wherefore I will  
Not rule, and also ruled I will not be.<sup>115</sup>

Athens was a state. In fact, I agree with Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills: Athens was a *totalitarian* state!<sup>116</sup> — but I'll demonstrate that some other time. For now, just this: Murray Bookchin is a statist.

---

<sup>115</sup>Quoted in *Red Emma Speaks*, 47. "I am fully capable of Ruling myself! I do not desire to rule anyone. I just want to be FREE!" Ernest Mann [Larry Johnson], *I Was Robot (Utopia Now Possible)* (Minneapolis, MN: Little Free Press, 1990), 63. Someone should restore to memory this loveable utopian and his inspiring works.

<sup>116</sup>C. Wright Mills & H.H. Gerth, *Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1953), 228.

## Chapter 15. City-Statism and Anarchy

Let us summarize what we know. The city of Athens was not a Commune and it was a slave-based imperialist state, and so it was not anarchist. The self-governing cities of pre-industrial Europe were not Communes and they were states. The towns of colonial New England were not Communes, again by Bookchin's definition, and they were subordinate to higher levels of state. Revolutionary Paris was not a Commune or a Commune of Communes, and it was subordinate to a national state. It is time for a general characterization of the relationship between the city and the state.

According to the ex-Director's latest ukase, the town and city "historically antedate the emergence of the state."<sup>1</sup> His opinion is dictated by his politics. If the state preceded the city, the city is at least in part the creation of the state. Another implication is that anarchy is prior to the city, since the state is prior to the city and anarchy is prior to the state. From which it follows that anarchy outside the commune is possible (and was once universal), whereas cities are always statist. The burden of proof is thus on those who espouse the anarchist city to demonstrate its very possibility.

When Bookchin states that *the* city preceded *the* state, if he is not making an abstract claim which is meaningless, he is making an empirical claim which is false. Most of the world's cities, aside from a few former city-states, originated by conquest or colonization. Many of my European readers live in cities founded by the Romans. Most of my American readers must reside in or near towns or cities which were founded under state auspices. In the American west the Federal government created local governments around its extension agents.<sup>2</sup> There were no cities north of Mexico until the Europeans invaded. The invaders of several nations sought various benefits here — land, gold, slaves, furs, sometimes even religious freedom — but anarchy was not one of them. On the contrary, they displaced or demolished the anarchist societies they found everywhere.

The discussion of the New England towns in Chapter 13 reveals how the towns were chartered by the Massachusetts Bay central government pursuant to legislation, which also prescribed the powers and duties of the towns. It was the same everywhere. Companies chartered by the Crown built the first towns and sponsored new settlements. Even when, later on, people settled in places where the authority of the central government was weak, they brought the state with them. As rapidly as possible the frontier civilized itself by erecting the courthouse, the gallows and the jail. Even wagon trains, which were only out of American jurisdiction for a few weeks, created an ambulatory legal system. Even squatters, lawbreakers themselves, formed "claims associations." Miners formed miners' meetings and claims clubs.<sup>3</sup> The Wild West was far more law-abiding

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 225.

<sup>2</sup>Don Martindale, "Prefatory Remarks: The Theory of the City," in Max Weber, *The City*, tr. Don Martindale (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1958), 11; Norton E. Long, "Political Science and the City," in *Urban Research and Policy Planning*, ed. Leo F. Schnore & Henry Fagin (Beverly Hills, CA & London: Sage Publications, 1967), 255.

<sup>3</sup>John P. Reid, *Law for the Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* (San Marino, CA: Hunting-

than legend has it.<sup>4</sup> I am not necessarily saying that no story of liberty can be told about the frontier and the west, but it will not make sense outside the context of state power.<sup>5</sup>

The truth is, as so often with Bookchin, the opposite of what he says: *there has never been a city which was not a state, or subject to a state*. The state always precedes and produces the city, as it did in the earliest (archaic) states. It did so in Mesopotamia, in China, in Mesoamerica and in Peru-Bolivia — the “pristine” states, *i.e.*, “those whose origin was *sui generis* out of local conditions and not in response to pressures already emanating from an already highly organized but separate political entity.”<sup>6</sup> All other historical states, and all existing states, are secondary states. The state preceded the city in archaic Greece, including Attica.<sup>7</sup> Two archaeologists of Mesoamerica state the case succinctly: “While urbanized societies are invariably states, not all states are urban.”<sup>8</sup> The statist origin of the city is not only a matter of inference, but of record. As Lewis Mumford states: “I suggest that one of the attributes of the ancient Egyptian god, Ptah, as revealed in a document derived from the third millennium B.C. — *that he founded cities* — is the special and all but universal function of kings.”<sup>9</sup> In a comparative study of 23 early states, pristine and secondary, urbanisation was absent in eight of them.<sup>10</sup> Truly urban agglomerations depend on the state, whose emergence is the political aspect of class society.<sup>11</sup> That is the “more modern view,” according to Elman R. Service: “We now know that some archaic civilizations

---

ton Library, 1997); John P. Reid, *Policing the Elephant: Crime, Punishment, and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1996); James Willard Hurst, *Law and the Conditions of Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 3–5; Stephen L. Schechter, “The Founding of American Local Communities: A Study of Covenantal and Other Forms of Association,” *Publius* 10(40) (Fall 1980), 171.

<sup>4</sup>Roger McGrath, *Gunfighters, Highwaymen, and Vigilantes: Violence on the Frontier* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the west was Federal territory, when the settlers were not whining about Federal oppression they were living off Federal subsidies, exploiting public land, and calling on the Army for protection. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988); Richard Hofstadter, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1960). Frederick Jackson Turner’s theory that the frontier promoted democracy has been demolished.

<sup>6</sup>Fried, “On the Evolution of Social Stratification and the State,” 13 (quoted), 6. Egypt is now thought to be a secondary state. Haas, *Evolution of the Prehistoric State*, 88.

<sup>7</sup>K.C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1983); John Baines & Norman Yoffee, “Order, Legitimacy, and Wealth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia,” in Beinman & Marcus, eds., *Archaic States*, 199, 216–218; John A. Wilson, “Egypt Through the New Kingdom,” in *City Invincible*, 126–130; Jorge E. Hardoy, *Pre-Columbian Cities* (New York: Walker and Company, 1964), 14, 25–27; Morris, “The Early Polis as City and State,” in Rich & Wallace-Heddrill, eds., *City and Country in the Ancient World*, 40, 43; William T. Sanders & Barbara J. Price, *Mesoamerica: The Evolution of a Civilization* (New York: Random House, 1968), 10, 29, 44–47, 53, 226; Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India to 1000 B.C.* (London: Cassell, 1962), 134–135, 140–141. “The State existed, in rudimentary form, before the city.” Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 70.

<sup>8</sup>Sanders & Price, *Mesopotamia*, 235.

<sup>9</sup>Mumford, *The City in History*, 35. Another ancient source is Lucretius: “Kings began to found cities [emphasis in original] and establish citadels for their own safeguard and refuge.” *On the Nature of the Universe*, tr. R.E. Latham (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1951), 205.

<sup>10</sup>Henri J.M. Claessen & Peter Skalnik, eds., *The Early State* (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton, 1978). I would not count Tahiti and Hawaii as states, as the editors do; on the other hand, I would move Norway into that category, as discussed below.

<sup>11</sup>Robert M. Adams, “Patterns of Urbanization in Early Southern Mesopotamia,” in Ucko, Tringham & Dimbleby, eds., *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, 735; see also Robert McC. Adams, *The Evolution of Early Society: Early Mesopotamia and Prehispanic Mexico* (Chicago, IL: Aldine, 1966).

lacked cities, while others became states before their cities developed.”<sup>12</sup> “Urbanization” can be very straightforward: “when a state-level society takes over and tries to control peoples who are not used to obeying kings and rulers (i.e., tribal and other nonstate peoples), a common practice is to force people to live in towns and cities where they can be watched and controlled more easily than if they live scattered across the landscape.”<sup>13</sup>

If the city preceded the state, then there can be states without cities. At first the notion of a cityless state may challenge the imagination, but actually, every reader has heard of the examples I will discuss. Eric R. Wolf mentions one way it was done: “in some societies, the rulers merely ‘camped’ among the peasantry, as the Watusi rulers did until very recently among the Bahuto peasantry of Ruanda Urundi.”<sup>14</sup> Another technique is itineration: the monarch and his retinue, having no fixed abode, move about the land, accepting the hospitality of his subjects. The earliest Dukes of Normandy did that,<sup>15</sup> and the kings of England still did it in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Although they were not ambulatory, the kings of the Zulus ruled a formidable cityless state until the Zulu War of 1879–1880. The Zulu nation was forcibly formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the conquest and amalgamation of many tribes by a series of ruthless kings. They controlled the population through massive terror. The kings eliminated the clans as corporate groups just as Cleisthenes eliminated the Athenian tribes as corporate groups. The rapid progress of military tactics corresponded to the progress of state formation. Low-casualty “dueling battles” characterized the tribal stage; “battles of subjugation” led to the development of chiefdoms; and “battles of conquest” gave rise to the state.<sup>16</sup> The king, who officially owned all the land, ruled a population of 250,000–500,000 through local chieftains, who might in turn have subchieftains under them. Power was delegated from the top down, and the lower the level, the less power. There were

---

<sup>12</sup>Elman R. Service, “Classical and Modern Theories of the Emergence of Government,” in *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, ed. Ronald Cohen & Elman R. Service (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 26 (quoted); Henri J.M. Claessen, “The Internal Dynamics of the Early State,” *Current Anthropology* 25(2) (April 1984), 367; e.g., Sanders & Price, *Mesoamerica*, 53, 226.

<sup>13</sup>Michael E. Smith, “The Earliest Cities,” in *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*, ed. George Gmelch & Walter P. Zenner (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2002), 7 (quoted); Haas, *Evolution of the Prehistoric State*, 211.

<sup>14</sup>Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: PrenticeHall, 1966), 10. This is the background of “the bloody warfare between the Tutsi and the Hutu” of which Bookchin speaks. Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 283. Bali prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a complex civilization of many contending kingdoms but with virtually no urban settlements. Geertz, *Negara*, 46.

<sup>15</sup>David Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (London & New York: Longmans, 1982), 151. When the Dukes became kings of England, they continued the practice, although their new realm included towns and cities. “Both Henry I [of England] and Philip Augustus [of France] received from their forebears regimes founded on two essential features: an ambulatory central court and fixed local officials. This system functioned effectively because the relatively small size of the royal dominions permitted the itinerant royal court to keep in contact with local officers.” C. Warren Hollister & John W. Baldwin, “The Rise of Administrative Kingship: Henry I and Philip Augustus,” *American Historical Review* 83(4) (Dec. 1978), 868. This well-known article reveals the nonsense of Bookchin’s claims that these two monarchs only “tried” to centralize their realms, and that after William the Conqueror, England was only “nominally centralized” for three centuries. Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 85 (“tried”); Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanism*, 139–140 (“nominally centralized”). Administratively and judicially, England was highly centralized under “administrative kingship” and became ever more so, regardless of the power fluctuations between kings and barons. J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 27–29.

<sup>16</sup>Eugene V. Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 188–189, 211–218; Keith F. Otterbein, “The Evolution of Zulu Warfare,” Bohannan, ed., *Law and Warfare*, 351–355.

no cities or towns; the king lived on a tract of land occupied by royal homesteads and military barracks. But “during the time of the kings, the State bulked large in the people’s lives.”<sup>17</sup>

Another warlike, expansionist state without cities was Mongolia under Genghis Khan. 1206, the year Temuchin became Genghis Khan, can be considered “the birthday of the Mongol state.” The Great Khan, who was neither libertarian nor municipalist, destroyed more cities than anyone in history. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Mongol society already included “a ruling class, a steppe aristocracy,” each noble having a retinue of bodyguards who followed him in war and managed his household in peacetime.<sup>18</sup> There were territorial divisions for fiscal and civil administration. A state signifier was the presence of “a purely military and permanent establishment.” There was an assembly of notables, the *khurildai*, a “quasi-political assembly under the direction and rule of the Khan.”<sup>19</sup> And yet this was still a society of pastoral nomads. The tribes migrated seasonally, and so did the Great Khan himself. Having no cities in which to make his capital, he itinerated long distances, moving seven times a year.<sup>20</sup> Qara Qorum, on which construction began in 1235, was only an enlarged camp which a European visitor in the 1250s likened to a large French village.<sup>21</sup> This was a no-frills, no-nonsense state barely beyond chieftainship, but it was state enough to conquer most of Eurasia.

A final example of a state without cities — I am deliberately choosing well-known societies — is Norway in the Viking Age. It was built on the basis of an aristocratic society of chieftains, free men and thralls (slaves). King Harold Fairhair (c. 870/880-900 A.D.) commenced the reduction of the chieftains of southwest Norway. There were no cities or towns, so, until 1050, he and his successors, with their retinues, their skalds and warriors, “travelled from farm to farm taking goods in kind, that is to say, living off the produce of their landed property as well as from contributions from the local population. This was the only way of effectively exercising royal power before a more permanent local administration was developed.” The king’s *hird* (bodyguard) was more than that, it was the permanent part of his army.<sup>22</sup> The relation of state to urbanism is straightforward: the kings promoted the development of towns in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and that was when towns appeared. Except for a few minor bishoprics, they would always be subordinate to the king. For the king, towns offered greater comfort and security than itineration, and better control over the surrounding districts.<sup>23</sup>

The city-state, then, is only a variant on the statist city, the only sort of city which has ever existed. The state preceded the city. The earliest states were, in fact, mostly city-states. As we learn from Murray Bookchin’s favorite authority — Murray Bookchin: “It was the Bronze Age ‘urban revolution,’ to use V. Gordon Childe’s expression, that slowly eliminated the trappings of

<sup>17</sup>Max Gluckman, “The Kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa,” in Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, eds., *African Political Systems*, 25–55, 46 (quoted).

<sup>18</sup>Anatolii M. Khazanov, “The Early State among the Eurasian Nomads,” in Claesson & Skalnik, eds., *Study of the State*, 162 (quoted), 161.

<sup>19</sup>Bat-Ochir Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the “Medieval” History of Mongolia* (Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press, 2001), 81–86.

<sup>20</sup>John Andrew Boyle, *The Mongol World Empire, 1206–1370* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), ch. 6.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas T. Allsen, “Spiritual Geography and Political Legitimacy in the Eurasian Steppe,” in *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, ed. Henri J.M. Claessen & Jarich G. Oosten (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1996), 122–123.

<sup>22</sup>Rolf Danielson et al., *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Times*, tr. Michael Drake (Oslo, Norway: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 21, 23–24, 24 (quoted), 25; Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 92, 145–147, 152–153.

<sup>23</sup>Danielson, *Norway*, 38; Anders Andren, “States and Towns in the Middle Ages: The Scandinavian Experience,” *Theory and Society* 18(5) (Sept. 1989), 587.



the social or domestic arena from the State and created a new terrain for the political arena.”<sup>24</sup> The self-governing city is the beginning but not, as the Director Emeritus claims, the climax of political development. The only one now existing, the Singapore police state, is a fluke of history and geography — it never sought independence but was expelled from Malaysia.<sup>25</sup> The Greek city-state was an evolutionary dead end, doomed to extinction: “Born at the conjunction of historical developments, some originating well outside the borders of Greece, Greek city-states were fragile and flourished briefly, to be submerged within the wake of larger historical trends and also undermined by their own success.” The Renaissance city-state, too, proved a dead end; it was not even antecedent to the nation-state.<sup>26</sup>

The trouble with arguing that the polis is not a fully modern state is that where the Director Emeritus stops — just shy of the polis — is arbitrary. Measured against some Platonic archetype of statehood, other political entities might come up short, and yet any anarchist would consider them states. Hegel believed that the United States was not a *real* state.<sup>27</sup> Surprisingly, some historians and political scientists agree with him. According to James Q. Wilson, “by European standards [the American government] is not truly a ‘state’ — that is, a sovereign body whose authority penetrates all aspects of the nation and brings each part of the nation within its reach.”<sup>28</sup> Statements like this one are common (I almost said “not uncommon”): “The United States moved from a society which was scarcely governed to one in which, by century’s end, government regularly touched the daily lives of the people.”<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, for anarchists, that government is best which governs not at all.

Most of an entire subfield of American history — policy history — holds that for much of its history, and certainly before the Civil War, the United States was not a state. Thus one of them writes that the Civil War “created” the American state, which “had become a mere shell by 1860,” with “only a token administrative presence in most of the states.”<sup>30</sup> In an oft-cited address, historian William Leuchtenburg asks: “When did we first have a state in America? Was it always here, or did it not really arrive until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, as the most recent scholarship indicates?”<sup>31</sup> I reject that opinion as I reject Bookchin’s, but at least these

---

<sup>24</sup>Bookchin, “Radical Politics,” 6.

<sup>25</sup>Michael Haas, “A Political History,” in *The Singapore Puzzle*, ed. Michael Haas (Westport, CT & London: Praeger, 1999), 19, 23–36; Darrick Davies, “The Press,” *ibid.*, 77–106; Francis T. Seow, “The Judiciary,” *ibid.*, 107–124.

<sup>26</sup>Walter G. Runciman, “Doomed to Extinction: The *Polis* as an Evolutionary Dead End,” in *The Greek City From Homer to Alexander*, ed. Oswyn Murray & Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 347–367; Yoffee, “Obvious and the Chimerical,” 263, 259 (quoted); Waley, *Italian City-Republics*, xvi; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 64–65.

<sup>27</sup>Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, tr. J. Sibree (New York: Willey Book Co., 1950), 85.

<sup>28</sup>James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy* (new ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2000), 310–311.

<sup>29</sup>Allen Steinberg, *The Transformation of Criminal Justice: Philadelphia, 1800–1880* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 2 (quoted); Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1968), 9.

<sup>30</sup>Richard Franklin Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ix, 2. In 1801, the Federal government had 3,000 employees. In 431 B.C., before the war, Athens had 17,000 citizens on the payroll. Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 175–177. In 1815, the post-war United States military establishment the authorized strength was 12,000, but it was never up to strength. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783–1846* (London: Macmillan Company, 1969), 119–120. Athens, with a fraction of the American population, had 6,000 men on active service in peacetime. Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, 177.

<sup>31</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, “The Pertinence of Political History: Reflections on the Significance of the State in America,” *Journal of American History* 73(3) (Dec. 1986), 594.

scholars aren't playing games with the concept of the state as the Director Emeritus does. I also point out that the policy historians are *much more plausible* than the Director Emeritus. Colonial America was far less statified than ancient Athens, but the easygoing statism of the colonies was still not anarchy.

Consider colonial Virginia. The House of Burgesses (the legislature), whose members were gentlemen amateurs, was the only elected body in the Old Dominion. Most counties had no towns; the county was the unit of local government. And that government was in the hands of — a court! Government existed only once a month, on court day. Gentlemen “conducted the court, lending their personal influence to what was nearly the sum and substance of government at the time — adjudicating disputes, recording transactions, and distributing small favors to the fortunate.” They swore in the juries, grand and petit, impanelled by the sheriff. In addition to its civil and criminal jurisdiction, the court was responsible for the administrative business of the county, such as issuing licenses and letting out contracts, and it “supervised the conduct of ordinaries” (taverns, one of which faced every courthouse). “The court was central to the organization of the society”: court day was also a market day, and it was the only time the community came together.<sup>32</sup> There was no legislative branch. The only other governmental institution was the militia, mustered intermittently under gentry officers.<sup>33</sup> Amending Skowronek's phrase, we could say that colonial Virginia was a state of courts and parties — without the parties.

In other colonies too, the county court “became the critical institution for dealing with important matters of local community concern,”<sup>34</sup> although in some colonies, as we have seen, elected town selectmen were also important. Either way, government consisted entirely of part-time amateurs (and that also goes for colonial and 19<sup>th</sup> century legislatures too, which held only brief intermittent sessions and most of whose members were newcomers<sup>35</sup>). Therefore, on Bookchin's criteria, there was no state (or rather, no states) prior to the Revolution. So much the worse for Bookchin's criteria.

Although the argument from authority should never be decisive, previous anarchist opinion as to the anarchist character of the Commune carries some weight. If anarchists have not often rejected the Commune explicitly, it is because it was considered it just another utopian pipedream if they thought about at all, a rival whose irrelevance was taken for granted. But they sometimes dealt with it, if only by pronouncing on the anarchist nature *vel non* of the Athenian Commune. To reject the alleged anarchy of Athens is to reject Bookchin's Communalism *in toto*.

Kropotkin is the only prominent anarchist claimed by Bookchin as supporting his view that Athens and the medieval communes were anarchist. So far as I can tell, Prince Kropotkin thought otherwise, judging from his hatred of the “commune-State”: “Sometimes as the central government, sometimes as the provincial or local state, now as the commune-State, it pursues us at each step, it appears at every street corner, it imposes on us, holds us, harasses us.”<sup>36</sup> I found nothing in *Mutual Aid* to support Bookchin's claim except possibly a passing reference to the “folknote.”

---

<sup>32</sup>Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 13–18; A.G. Roeber, “Authority, Law and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720–1750,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 37(1) (Jan. 1980), 32–34; Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 88–94, 90 (quoted), 93 (quoted).

<sup>33</sup>Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 109.

<sup>34</sup>David Thomas Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts: Essex County, 1629–1692* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 36 (quoted); Friedman, *History of American Law*, 40.

<sup>35</sup>James Willard Hurst, *The Growth of American Law: The Law Makers* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1950), 47–52.

<sup>36</sup>Quoted in *Quotations from the Anarchists*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 48.

I found a great deal of appreciative exposition of the self-governance of guilds and their federations, which if anything supports syndicalism, something the Director Emeritus roundly criticises.<sup>37</sup> If Kropotkin is really a libertarian municipalist, then in this, as in his anarcho-trenchist support for the Allies in World War I, he stands virtually alone. But in fact, in *Mutual Aid* — and in a passage Bookchin has quoted! — Kropotkin clearly identifies the medieval communes as states:

Self-jurisdiction was the essential point, and self-jurisdiction meant self-administration. But the commune was not simply an autonomous part of the State — it was a State in itself. It had the right of war and peace, of federation and alliance with its neighbors. It was sovereign in its own affairs, and mixed with no others. The supreme political power could be vested in a democratic forum, as was the case in Pskov, whose *vyeche* sent and received ambassadors, concluded treaties, accepted and sent away princes, or went on without them for dozens of years; or it was vested in, or usurped by, an aristocracy of merchants or even nobles as was the case in hundreds of Italian and middle European cities. The principle, nevertheless, remained the same: the city was a State ...<sup>38</sup>

“The structure of the law-and-order States which we see in Europe at present was only outlined at the end of the eighteenth century.”<sup>39</sup> So it seems to be Kropotkin’s position that medieval cities were real states, not just “outlined,” but that Bourbon France, Georgian England and the Prussia of Frederick the Great, which came later, were not quite states. A paradox worthy of the Director Emeritus, but not one that supports his position on city-states.

Proposals for “direct Government” were in circulation in Proudhon’s time. As he stated the case: “Let the Constitution and the laws become the expression of our own will; let the office holders and magistrates, who are our servants elected by us, and always subject to recall, never be permitted to do anything but what the good pleasure of the people has determined upon.” But government of all by all is still government:

The principle, that is to say, Government, remaining the same, there would still be the same conclusion.

“No more hereditary royalty,

“No more presidency,

“No more representation,

“No more delegation,

“No more alienation of power,

“Direct government,

“THE PEOPLE! In the permanent exercise of their sovereignty.”

“What is there at the end of this refrain which can be taken as a new and revolutionary proposition, and which has not been known and practised long before our time, by Athenians, Boeo-

---

<sup>37</sup>Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 181–199; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 193–194.

<sup>38</sup>Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 178–179, quoted in Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 128.

<sup>39</sup>Kropotkin, *Great French Revolution*, 5. In contrast, de Tocqueville, after describing the monarchy of the *ancien regime*, thought it to be essentially the system prevailing after the Revolution: “Is not this the highly centralized

tians, Lacedemonians, Romans, &c.?” For Proudhon, nothing. Direct government leads straight to dictatorship. Let there be no laws passed, either by majority vote or unanimously.<sup>40</sup>

Errico Malatesta, the anarchist’s anarchist, also addressed the issue directly. By “state,” anarchists mean “government”; other usages are to be distinguished. For anarchists, “state” does not mean society, and it does not mean “a special kind of society, a particular human collectivity gathered together in a particular territory irrespective of the way the members of the said collectivity are grouped or of the state of relations between them” — it does not mean, for example, a nationality. And it does *not* mean the Commune: “The word *State* is also used to mean the supreme administration of a country: the central power as opposed to the provincial or communal authority. And for this reason others believe that anarchists want a simple territorial decentralisation with the governmental principle left intact, and they thus confuse anarchism with *cantonalism* and *communalism*.”<sup>41</sup>

Emma Goldman, who emphatically prioritized the individual over the social, spurned “the majority for centuries drilled in State worship, trained in discipline and obedience and subdued by the awe of authority in the home, the school, the church and the press.” She considered that “more pernicious than the power of a dictator is that of a class; the most terrible — the tyranny of the majority.”<sup>42</sup>

No need for any extended explanation why the Anarcho-Syndicalists are anti-Communist. For them the basic political unit is not the town or neighborhood, it is the trade union. The unions in a locality federate in Industrial Alliances (Rudolf Rocker’s term) or Trade Federations (Pataud and Pouget’s term), and these federations federate, etc., to organize production. Local unions would also federate with the unions of their trade in other localities in Labor Cartels (Rocker’s term) or Labor Exchanges (Pataud and Pouget’s term), and these federations federate, etc., to organize consumption.<sup>43</sup> Pataud and Pouget made quite clear what this system implied for the commune: “Public life had henceforth other centres: it was wholly within the Trade Unions. From the communal and departmental point of view, the Union of local Trade Unions, — the Labour Exchange, — was about to gather to itself all the useful functions; in the same way, from the national point of view, functions with which the State had adorned itself were about to return to the Trade Federations, and to the Confederation, a union of district and national organisations, — Labour Exchanges and Trade Federations.”<sup>44</sup>

It goes without saying that Max Stirner would reject the polis as statist: “Political liberty means that the *polis*, the state, is free,” not the egoist.<sup>45</sup> Leo Tolstoy, the original Green anarchist, would

---

administration with which we are familiar in present-day France?” Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, tr. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 57.

<sup>40</sup>P.-J. Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* tr. John Beverley Robinson (London: Freedom Press, 1923), 109–110 (quoted), 110 (quoted); *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, ed. Stewart Edwards, tr. Elisabeth Fraser (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969), 99.

<sup>41</sup>Malatesta, *Anarchy*, 14.

<sup>42</sup>“The Individual, Society and the State,” *Red Emma Speaks*, 93, 98. Malatesta also wrote of “the masses, accustomed to obey and serve,” who would submit to any social system imposed on them. “Anarchist-Communism,” in Richards, ed., *Malatesta*, 36–37, 36 (quoted).

<sup>43</sup>Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 93–95; Emile Pataud & Emile Pouget, *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution: Syndicalism and the Cooperative Commonwealth* (London: Pluto Press, 1990), 113–114, 124–127.

<sup>44</sup>Pataud & Pouget, *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution*, 113–114.

<sup>45</sup>Max Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 97. “Every state is a *despotism*, be the despot one or many, or (as one is likely to imagine about a republic) if all be lords, that is, despotize one over another. For this is the case when the law given

reject the urban commune if only because it was urban: he hated cities and favored the simple life of the peasant. He predicted (erroneously), and approved, a major shift of population from city to country: “All men should contribute equally to food production, and this requires men of all walks of life, not just peasants, to return to the countryside and perform manual labor.” He also rejected voting and officeholding: “To take a part in elections, courts of law, or in the administration of government is the same thing as a participation in the violence of the government.”<sup>46</sup>

The Individualist Anarchists would reject the Commune — not for being a collectivity, for they favored and formed intentional communities — but for its governance by majority rule. Lysander Spooner observed that “obviously, there is nothing in the nature of majorities, that insures justice at their hands.”<sup>47</sup>

Finally, William Godwin might be expected to accept the Commune, since his vision of anarchy does include the occasional meetings of parish assemblies. But Godwin rejected majority rule as emphatically as Thoreau did: “If the people, or the individuals of whom the people is constituted, cannot delegate their authority to a representative, neither can any individual delegate his authority to a majority, in an assembly of which he is himself a member.”<sup>48</sup>

Thus, with one possible exception, all major anarchist theorists reject Murray Bookchin’s Commune as not anarchist. Direct democracy is not anarchist. Thus Benjamin R. Barber — Bookchin’s source on Swiss democracy — opposes direct democracy to anarchy, and in fact penned the most scurrilous attack on anarchism in recent times. Communalism, considered as the self-governing community of equal citizens, “is nearly the opposite” of anarchist communism.<sup>49</sup>

---

at any time, the expressed volition of (it may be) a popular assembly, is thenceforth to be *law* for the individual, to which *obedience is due* from him or towards which he has the *duty* of obedience.” *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>46</sup>E.B. Greenwood, *Tolstoy: The Comprehensive Vision* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1975), 37; Walter Smyrniw, “Discovering the Brotherhood of the Destitute: Tolstoy’s Insight into the Causes of Urban Poverty,” in *Leo Tolstoy and the Concept of Brotherhood*, ed. Andrew Donskov & John Woodsworth (New York: LEGAS, 1996), 201–202; Leo Tolstoy, *Writings on Civil Disobedience and Nonviolence* (Philadelphia, PA & Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers, 1987), 300 (quoted). Tolstoy might have approved of cantonal and village peasant assemblies such as had been abolished in Russia as recently as 1861, but he left no record of such an opinion. David Redfeare, *Tolstoy: Principles for a New World Order* (London: Shephard & Walwyn, 1992), 61–62.

<sup>47</sup>“An Essay on the Trial by Jury,” in *The Collected Works of Lysander Spooner* (6 vols.; Weston, MA: M & S Press, 1971), 2: 206 (quoted), 206–207, 218–219.

<sup>48</sup>Godwin, *Political Justice*, 216.

<sup>49</sup>Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 98–102; Benjamin R. Barber, *Superman and Common Man: Freedom, Anarchy, and the Revolution* (New York & Washington DC: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 14–36; Johnson Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 108.

## Chapter 16. Fantasies of Federalism

One of its proponents insists that face-to-face direct democracy has to meet a very demanding standard:

The first and most important positive act of political recognition which a participatory democracy must pay to its members is to give each of them frequent and realistic opportunities to be heard, that is to say, access to assemblies sufficiently small so all can reasonably be assured time to speak, and to matters of sufficient moment to command practical attention.<sup>1</sup>

Bookchin's standard is just as high:

The Greeks, we are often reminded, would have been horrified by a city whose size and population precluded a face-to-face, often familiar relationship between citizens... In making collective decisions — the ancient Athenian ecclesia was, in some ways, a model for making social decisions — all members of the community should have an opportunity to acquire in full the measure of anyone who addresses the assembly. They should be in a position to absorb his attitudes, study his expressions, and weigh his motives as well as his ideas in a direct personal encounter and through direct face-to-face discussion.

Direct democracy must “literally be direct, face-to-face, of the kind that prevailed in the Athenian polis, the French revolutionary sections of 1793, and the New England town meetings.”<sup>2</sup> That is what did *not* prevail in the Athenian assembly, as we saw in Chapter 14, but that is what would *have* to prevail if libertarian municipalism is to be anything but a façade for oligarchy. Here, then, is the core of the ex-Director's grand theory, Libertarian Municipalism, filched from Milton Kottler.<sup>3</sup>

The Director Emeritus will not provide an estimate of the population of an urban Commune, but it would be within reasonable walking distance of its neighbors. He does put its area at one to twelve blocks. Elsewhere, he appears to approve of Plato's Pythagorean figure, in the *Laws*, of a polis population of 5,040.<sup>4</sup> Janet Biehl says that municipalities “may range from a small village or town in a rural area, to a small city, to a neighbourhood in a vast metropolis like New York.” The Director Emeritus seems to contemplate a lower upper limit when he says the Commune would

---

<sup>1</sup>H. Mark Roelofs, “Democratic Dialectics,” *Review of Politics* 60(1) (Winter 1998), 23.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 79 (quoted); Bookchin, “Radical Politics,” 8; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 215 (quoted).

<sup>3</sup>Milton Kottler, *Neighborhood Government: The Local Foundations of Political Life* (Indianapolis, IN & New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 195; Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 102–103; “Laws,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. B. Jowett (5 vols., rev. ed.; Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1875), 5: 309.

be based on neighborhoods, wards, “even blocks.”<sup>5</sup> But which wards? Which blocks? Bookchin ignores the questions where, how, and by whom, the all-important boundaries of the Commune are to be drawn.

The Commune is, we are told, an “organic” unit. For once the ironic quotation marks are unwittingly appropriate. The constituent elements of Communal society are treated as givens: “Popular, even block, assemblies can be formed irrespective of the size of the city, provided its organic cultural components can be identified and their uniqueness fostered.” (Identified by whom? And what happens to the people in areas where it can’t?) Cities consist of neighborhoods, “largely organic communities that have a certain measure of identity, whether they are defined by a shared cultural heritage, economic interests, a commonality of social views, or even an esthetic tradition such as Greenwich Village.”<sup>6</sup> Actually this approximates the definition of a *community*, a geographical clustering of people with shared interests, characteristics and association.<sup>7</sup> But for Bookchin the community is useless, despite its much greater functional reality, because it is usually not a face-to-face aggregation useable as the Commune’s atomic unit. Sad to say, neighborhood or community, call it what you will, cannot be taken for granted by the would-be builders of the municipal state: “The notion of a community as a cohesive, locally based social system with shared values and a sense of belonging is not the most useful way to conceptualize the complex textures of urban social systems. Communities in this sense do occur in cities, yet many urbanites live in areas which do not resemble the traditional community.”<sup>8</sup>

Even to speak of a *tribal* society as “organic,” as the Director Emeritus used to do,<sup>9</sup> is to speak metaphorically by analogy from living organisms. Bookchin may not know this, since he thinks primitive societies are biological, like wolf packs or anthills (Chapter 11). In fact, “organic” is the sort of political metaphor that he irrationally denounces as irrationalist, even fascistic.<sup>10</sup> The typical urban neighborhood is so far from resembling an organism as to make the metaphor mystifying. Except for incorporated villages, few territories of, say, 1,000 people serve any significant functions — if only *because* they now lack political institutions by which to function, and often also because their residents share few interests or attitudes. The boundary of a biological organism is its skin. The boundary of a state is the border. The boundary of a neighborhood is often vague and flexible.<sup>11</sup> Residents often disagree about the boundaries and with the opinions of outsiders as to where the boundaries are. Whether a city has neighborhoods at all is an empirical question.<sup>12</sup> Which is hardly surprising, since whether they exist or where they are is at present irrelevant. But it will be highly relevant under Communal rule.

The entire quixotic theory of urban municipalism presupposes that the politically viable municipalities are *already here*. Thus Biehl writes, “Libertarian municipalism refers to such potential political communities as *municipalities*. To be sure, the municipalities that exist today vary widely in size and legal status [sic: neighborhoods have no legal status]; they may range from a small vil-

---

<sup>5</sup>Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 54 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 312–313 (quoted).

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 246.

<sup>7</sup>Roland L. Warren, *The Community in America* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Chicago, IL: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1978), 5–6; Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 26.

<sup>8</sup>Merry, “Defining ‘Success’ in the Neighborhood Justice Movement,” 176.

<sup>9</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, ch. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 201–203.

<sup>11</sup>Bullpitt, “Participation and Local Government,” 285–286.

<sup>12</sup>Maurice R. Stein, *The Eclipse of Community: An Interpretation of American Studies* (exp. ed.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 104.

lage or town in a rural area, to a small city, to a neighborhood in a vast metropolis like New York. But they still have sufficient features and traditions in common that we may use the same name for them.”<sup>13</sup> Although the Director Emeritus has often ridiculed E.F. Schumacher, whose fame he envies, for saying “small is beautiful,” he is not above appropriating the positive resonance of “small.” The constant use of quantitative language without any quantification invites suspicion that Bookchin is being designedly vague because any figure he mentions could be pounced upon as inconsistent with one aspect or another of his utopia. I daresay any figure will be too small for viable sovereignty or too large for direct democracy. Indeed, he often speaks, as Biehl does here, of the municipality as the primary political unit; but elsewhere the municipality is a federation of neighborhoods, and *it* is the primary political unit. If the representative government of a municipality is the sovereign, then Communalism has none of the virtues claimed for it.

Communal boundaries are neither self-evident nor self-constructing. The only way all Communes could have “sufficient features and traditions in common” is the way Biehl makes sure they do — by definition. Do you need features *and* traditions or features *or* traditions? New communities will usually have features but no traditions in common. In others, the only “traditions” shared are what they share with millions of other massified middle-class whites, such as conventional piety and what Dwight Macdonald called Masscult. There may be nothing to distinguish them as people from the neighborhoods around them, not even an arbitrary sense of neighborhood. Such people tend to be those who are satisfied with the status quo and content to leave politics to representatives, experts and outsiders. If features-and-traditions is a requirement for municipality status, many neighborhoods don’t satisfy it. Will these attributes be engineered by the neighborhoods that *do* have them, exercising a colonial protectorate?

According to Bookchin, the spread of Communes will be a protracted, uneven process: “Some neighborhoods and towns can be expected to advance more rapidly than others in political consciousness.”<sup>14</sup> For an extended period of time, there will be assemblies in some neighborhoods but not others. A small, unrepresentative minority (of Organization militants, usually) will have a free hand to define the Commune’s identity more or less permanently in a manner at once self-serving and self-fulfilling. There will be a strong temptation to gerrymandering — to drawing the lines so as to benefit those who are drawing them, especially since there is no organized opposition across the boundary. The apportioners may draw the lines to exclude enclaves of minorities, on the pretext, if they feel they need one, that the minorities lack the requisite ethnic, economic or ideological “identity” with the designated dominant group. Neighborhoods will become more parochial than they already are — an odd consequence of a universalistic ideology. The line might be drawn to include valuable real estate (a street, a gas station, a library) and exclude nuisances (a laggard Commune may find itself stuck with the city dump). Belatedly organized Communes will not accept the justice of first-come, first-served, but there is no higher authority for them to apply to for redress.

Since Bookchin is almost indifferent to the economic organization of his ideal society (Chapter 17), it is hard to be sure what absurdities await there. There are resources critically important to cities — oil fields, hydroelectric power dams, mines — located far from them. Who owns them? The nearest one-horse town? Who maintains interstate highways, a string of truck stops? Does a college own its college town? Does a company town own its company? Does Washington’s Capi-

---

<sup>13</sup>Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 54.

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 327–328, 328 (quoted).



tol Hill neighborhood where I used to live own the Capitol and the Library of Congress? How does the common situation play out of a large factory in a small town? There may be far more workers than townsmen, maybe even more workers who live outside of town than townsmen. In Pittsburgh, for instance, in the 1980s, only 20% of workers worked in or near their neighborhoods.<sup>15</sup> The “capitalist industrial city” is characterized by segregation by land use function and by class-based neighborhoods. Everybody but Bookchin knows that productive industry has fled the cities for the suburbs and exurbs. No longer the center of production and distribution, the city is fortunate if it serves as a center of administration, information exchange and service provision.<sup>16</sup> Because we live in the kind of complex technological society celebrated by the ex-Director, neither neighborhood nor city self-sufficiency is even remotely possible. All the critical economic decisions are made elsewhere.

Taking the Director Emeritus at face value, it would seem that the town could manage the factory (or even a dozen factories in an industrial park) in its own interest, although such decisions are as important or more important to the workers (and to distant consumers) as to the townsmen. As workers without civic rights, they resemble the metics of Athens. It is no use their taking their problems home to their assemblies, because even if the assemblies cared about the personalistic extraterritorial problems of some of their citizens, they are powerless to act beyond their borders. About all that Bookchin says, and says often, relevant to the problem is that assemblies are not to legislate in their own “particularistic” interests, but in the general interest. That solves the problem all right, but only by justifying *any* form of government, since it doesn’t matter who rules as long as they are guided by the general interest. There would then be no need to set up anything as cumbersome and inefficient as libertarian municipalism.

How many levels of organisation would be required to federate a national population of 262,761,000 [when I first wrote these pages: now it is over 306 million], of which 189,524,000 are over 18? Bookchin and I have independently concluded that four federal levels beyond the Commune would be necessary to reach the national level. In his final pre-anarchist days as a democratic decentralist, Bakunin thought it would be three levels, but he was thinking of the much smaller nations of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, so his estimate is on the same scale as mine.<sup>17</sup> For a demonstration, we have to make some assumptions. The first is that the average size of a Commune is 1,000 people, of which, using the national average, 75.12% or 751 are adults.<sup>18</sup> The Director Emeritus would apparently go that high, maybe higher, since Communes may be based on “neighborhoods.”<sup>19</sup>

One thousand, I submit, is obviously too large to satisfy even a weak standard of face-to-face interaction — for everybody to know everybody else, more or less — especially considering the anomie prevailing in most urban neighborhoods. It is a rare individual in any neighborhood who knows even 50 of his neighbors, unless he is a politician. Many urbanites have contacts with

---

<sup>15</sup>Ahlbrandt, “Using Research to Build Stronger Neighborhoods,” 292.

<sup>16</sup>Rayna Rapp, “Urban Kinship in Contemporary America,” in *Cities of the United States: Studies in Urban Anthropology*, ed. Leith Mullings (New York: Columbia University Press), 222 (quoted); John D. Lasarda, “Deindustrialization and the Future of American Cities,” in *The Challenge of Social Control: Citizenship and Institutions in Modern Society*, ed. Gerald D. Suttles & Mayer N. Zald (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985), 183–192.

<sup>17</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 313; “Principles and Organization of the International Brotherhood” [1866], in Lehning, ed., *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 71–74.

<sup>18</sup>*U.S. Bureau of the Census. State and Metropolitan Area Data Book 1997–98* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998), 2 (Table A-3), 56 (Table A-55).

<sup>19</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 312–313.

very few neighbors. And characteristically they interact with others “in highly segmental roles” (Louis Wirth). In fact, urban social relations typically exhibit what Simmel called “reserve,” an indifference or even mild repulsion, such that “we frequently do not even know by sight those who have been our neighbors for years.” As the pioneering urbanist Robert E. Park put it: “We don’t ever really get to know the urbane person hence never know when to trust him.”<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, unlike the organic neighborhoods of urban legend, today’s urban neighborhoods are populated in great part by people coming from or, sooner or later, going to somewhere else. The “organic” ethnic neighborhoods are among the most transient, as Luc Sante states: “Neighborhood stability has been something of a chimera in Manhattan’s history. In many if not most cases, especially after the great waves of immigration, an ethnic group’s hard-fought settlement of an area was immediately followed by its moving elsewhere [as did Murray Bookchin]... When a relative degree of prosperity was achieved by the inhabitants of a quarter, they would throw that quarter away, and it would be picked up and moved into by their successors on the lower rung.”<sup>21</sup> The geographically mobile tend to believe, with some justification, that if any politics at all is relevant to their lives it is state and national politics. That’s why voter turnout is lowest – consistently so – in local elections, in which ordinary members of the general public rarely participate except to vote. Their indifference is justified: the general trend is toward reducing local autonomy still further.<sup>22</sup>

In a big city, there is the opportunity to meet more people, but there will be little tendency for one’s acquaintances to reside in one’s own neighborhood. In fact, for many the lure of the big city is precisely the possibility (which is usually a probability) of geographical and social separation of residence from occupational, religious, recreational and other associational activities.<sup>23</sup> Thus one source of local political apathy is that vocational interests have become more important.<sup>24</sup> In modern conditions, mere propinquity is a relatively unimportant basis of common interests, and without common interests, there is little reason to get to know the neighbors. The neighbors shop at 10 supermarkets and 5 malls instead of at the general store; they worship in 20 different churches or nowhere; they drink in a dozen different bars depending on whether they are gay, black, students, sports fans, singles, wine snobs, winos, etc. In Pittsburgh, for example – which has clearly delineated neighborhoods – less than half the residents use their neighborhoods for shopping or religious, health, or recreational services.<sup>25</sup> The reality is that “community implies an association of like minds, but the fact is that a residential neighborhood is generally an aggregate of strangers who happen to live next door to one another.”<sup>26</sup> The extreme yet revealing expression

---

<sup>20</sup>Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” in Smith, ed., *Urban Life*, 72 (quoted); Suzanne Keller, *The Urban Neighborhood: A Sociological Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1968), 97; “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *Sociology of Georg Simmel*, 415 (quoted); Robert E. Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950), 14 (quoted).

<sup>21</sup>Luc Sante, *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 20 (quoted), 21 (quoted); Bullpitt, “Participation and Local Government,” 285.

<sup>22</sup>Demetrios Carey, *City Governments and Urban Problems: A New Introduction to Urban Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 329, 337; Howard D. Hamilton, “Voting and Nonvoting,” *American Political Science Review* 65(4) (Dec. 1971), 1135; Stein, *Eclipse of Community*, 107–108.

<sup>23</sup>Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 416–417.

<sup>24</sup>Warren, *Community in America*, 17.

<sup>25</sup>Ahlbrandt, “Using Research to Build Stronger Neighborhoods,” 290.

<sup>26</sup>Richard C. Schrager, “The Limits of Localism,” *Michigan Law Review* 100(2) (Nov. 2001), 416.

of urban reserve is where urbanites ignore a crime or a crime victim when they could easily call 911.<sup>27</sup>

Highly neighborly neighborhoods do exist, usually resting on an ethnic base — what Bookchin calls “culturally distinct neighborhoods” or “colorful ethnic neighborhoods” — but there are not many of them and their number is dwindling.<sup>28</sup> Fantastically, the Director Emeritus claims that New York City *today* consists of “largely organic communities that have a certain measure of identity.” (There are many former New Yorkers like him, “now living elsewhere in a suburb or a small city, who wax nostalgic about their former lives in the ‘big city.’”) <sup>29</sup> You do tend to find the Bloods and Crips in different neighborhoods. But the ethnic neighborhood is usually, for the second generation (Bookchin is typical), a place of assimilation soon left behind. The Jewish radical Lower East Side which the Director Emeritus fondly remembers (as one of “a thousand villages”) is gone. Indeed, as he remembers it, it was never there. Its German, then Jewish and then Italian neighborhoods “were transformed within decades and eventually vanished as their cohort of residents voluntarily relocated to better neighborhoods only to be replaced by newcomers of different ethnic backgrounds.”<sup>30</sup> The “veneration of the Lower East Side” commenced at the end of World War II, by which time, not coincidentally, most of its Jewish population had moved elsewhere. It was young Jewish writers of the 1960s who created the myth of “the Lower East Side as a place where Jews had resisted the rule of bourgeois respectability.”<sup>31</sup> The Director Emeritus, who denounces myth, is an example of its power.

It was the same everywhere. In Brooklyn, early 20<sup>th</sup> century communities like Canarsie, Flatbush, Bensonhurst and Brownsville are communities no longer.<sup>32</sup> Gone too are Boston’s West End (Italian), Detroit’s Poletown, and many similar urban communities. And the irony is that those that remain feel more or less besieged by current urban trends and react with a defensive conservatism which makes them among the less likely neighborhoods to take up Bookchin’s radical proposals, unless in a reactionary way. I can think of only one argument which might attract them: when they are self-governing, no one can stop them from keeping out blacks, something zoning already serves to do. Even participatory democrat Benjamin R. Barber weakly admits that only “education” might thwart exclusivist bigotry. For Bookchin, the best neighborhood for a Commune is a homogeneous neighborhood. Let’s be blunt: “Homogeneous neighborhoods are almost always white neighborhoods.”<sup>33</sup> South Boston, after all, is as organic as a neighborhood gets.

---

<sup>27</sup>Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), 124; Stanley Milgram, “The Urban Experience: A Psychological Analysis,” in Smith, ed., *Urban Life*, 86–87; Bibb Lantane & John M. Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn’t He Help?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974).

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 334; Black, *AAL*, 84, quoting Bookchin, *Limits of the City*, 72.

<sup>29</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 246 (quoted); Walter P. Zenner, “Beyond Urban and Rural: Communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” in Smith, ed., *Urban Life*, 59 (quoted).

<sup>30</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 18 (quoted); Christopher Mele, “Private Redevelopment and the Changing Forms of Displacement in the East Village of New York,” in *Marginal Spaces*, ed. Michael Peter Smith (New Brunswick, NJ & London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 73–74 (quoted).

<sup>31</sup>Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton, NJ & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 167 (quoted), 173 (quoted), 181.

<sup>32</sup>Warren, *Community in America*, 3.

<sup>33</sup>Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 297; Catherine E. Ross, John R. Reynolds, & Karlyn J. Geis, “The Contingent Meaning of Neighborhood Stability for Residents’ Psychological Well-Being,” *American Sociological Review* 65(4) (Aug. 2000), 583 n. 1 (quoted); Robert H. Nelson, “Privatizing the Neighborhood: A Proposal to Replace Zoning with Private Collective Property Rights to Existing Neighborhoods,” in *The Voluntary City: Choice, Community, and Civil Society*,

In Pittsburgh, primary ties are strongest in white ethnic Catholic neighborhoods.<sup>34</sup> Then there are the gated communities with their physical barriers, security guards and well-screened affluent, homogeneous populations. These might be called “colorless ethnic neighborhoods.” There are 30,000 gated communities with almost four million residents, and they are increasing rapidly. Bookchin can only babble that “even these enclaves are opening up a degree of nucleation that could ultimately be used in a progressive sense.”<sup>35</sup>

Bookchin is convinced that his historical examples prove that direct democracy is workable even in large cities, such as Athens with over 250,000 people, or Paris with over 750,000 (one of the three figures he’s provided). Attendance would be on the level of revolutionary Paris or ancient Athens (how can he possibly know this?)<sup>36</sup> — which one? It was usually much higher in Athens. But Athens and Paris are *counter*-examples (Chapters 14 and 13). So is the New England town meeting (Chapter 13). In fact, every known example is a counter-example. After extolling Athenian democracy, M.I. Finley admits: “But, then as now, politics was a way of life for very few members of the community.”<sup>37</sup>

Whether attendance is large or small, here lies a contradiction. The more citizens who attend, the less the assembly can be said to be a face-to-face group. But the fewer citizens who attend, the less legitimacy the assembly has in claiming to speak for all. As in any case of sampling, the smaller the attending group, the less accurately it reflects the composition of the total population.<sup>38</sup> A larger group is more representative, but a smaller group is more effective. And the Director Emeritus ought not to take for granted the obedience of the predictable huge nonattending majorities which trouble him not at all. In 18<sup>th</sup> century Rhode Island, a colony founded by refugee dissidents, chronic low attendance provoked protests against the legitimacy of town meeting decisions. Poorly attended meetings hesitated to take action. And on six occasions, town meetings reversed the acts of the previous meetings when different people showed up.<sup>39</sup>

One might say that if certain people attend with regularity, they will get to know one another. But that does not escape the dilemma, it intensifies it. The regulars will know each other, work together, and together acquire political experience and skill. Because they interact frequently with each other, they will tend to like each other.<sup>40</sup> They will know more about the business of the assembly than those who attend occasionally; whereas, in a large group, the typical participant is less likely to prepare himself because he will not affect the decision anyway.<sup>41</sup> Through regular interaction, even the views of adversaries tend to converge, as happens, for instance, in “courtroom work groups” consisting of prosecutor, defense attorney and judge whose relations

---

ed. David T. Beito, Peter Gordon, & Alexander Tabarrock (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002) 318.

<sup>34</sup>Ahlbrandt, “Using Research to Build Stronger Neighborhoods,” 296.

<sup>35</sup>Mona Lynch, “From the Punitive City to the Gated Community: Security and Segregation Across the Penal Landscape,” *University of Miami Law Review* 56(1) (Oct. 2001), 49–50; Nelson, “Privatizing the Neighborhood,” 342; “Interview with Murray Bookchin,” 152 (quoted).

<sup>36</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 246; Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 160–164; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 341.

<sup>37</sup>Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, 82.

<sup>38</sup>Michael G. Maxfield & Earl Babbie, *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995), 189.

<sup>39</sup>Daniels, *Dissent and Confrontation on Narragansett Bay*, 96–97.

<sup>40</sup>Homans, *Human Group*, 111.

<sup>41</sup>Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 53.

are supposedly neutral or adversarial.<sup>42</sup> Groups exert pressure toward conformity, and the larger the group, the greater the pressure. Participation in a decision increases support for it.<sup>43</sup> In combination, these forces make for a cohesive in-group which, because it has its own stake in decisions once made, tends to differ in opinion to an ever-increasing degree from the amorphous general population.

The citizens were already unequal, before they entered the meeting room, in respects which always tend toward inequality of participation. Participants will differ from nonparticipants in the same ways that, among participants, leaders and active participants will differ from passive participants. Political participation as measured by voting is higher for those with higher income, education, occupational status, and age, and among whites and long-term residents.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the more influential jurors and those most likely to be chosen as foremen are those with higher levels of education, income and organizational skills. Persons of higher social rank have a wider range of interactions, and they are more likely to originate their interactions they “innovate” rather than “adapt”: — they are leaders.<sup>45</sup>

It is fine to posit that people will not be the same after the Revolution,<sup>46</sup> but education, occupation, age, race, gender and basic personality, will not be changed by the ex-Director’s revolution. Any crackpot can say that by a fantastic stroke of fortune, the process of constructing his utopia is exactly what it takes to trim people to fit it. Even if people entered the assembly as equals, small-group research demonstrates that, purely as a matter of group dynamics, “as members of a group interact in the performance of a task, inequality of participation arises.” And the larger the group, the greater the extent by which the most active person stands out.<sup>47</sup> With successive meetings, differentiation increases.<sup>48</sup> In any political setting, most decisions are made by groups of considerably less than 20 people.<sup>49</sup> There is no reason why the assembly should be any different. In Athens the activist elite, the *rhetores*, less than one hundred men out of 20,000 to 40,000 citizens, were superior in ability, education and wealth. They drafted the bills and did the talking.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, we know that there will be an elite group in Bookchin’s assembly because that is part of the plan. Although Organization militants are of course to play “leading roles” at the outset of revolution, it is after the revolution that their role is critical and they must form “a more structured type of vanguard” if they have not already done so. Like the Bolshevik Party in 1917,

---

<sup>42</sup>Homans, *Human Group*, 120, 133; David W. Neubauer, *America’s Courts and the Criminal Justice System* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1996), 70–75; James Eisenstein & Herbert Jacob, *Felony Justice: An Organizational Analysis of Criminal Courts* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1977), ch. 2. Lesser members of the group include the clerk, bailiff, and sometimes certain police officers.

<sup>43</sup>Sidney Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior: A Study of Leadership* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 2, 226.

<sup>44</sup>Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963), 189 (Table 1).

<sup>45</sup>Fred L. Stodt, Rita James, & Charles Hawkins, “Social Status and Jury Deliberations,” *American Sociological Review* 22(6) (Dec. 1957), 716; Homans, *Human Group*, 145–146.

<sup>46</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 280.

<sup>47</sup>Peter J. Burke, “Leadership Role Differentiation,” in *Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. Charles Graham McClintock (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), 516 (quoted), 520.

<sup>48</sup>Albert A. Harrison, *Individuals and Groups: Understanding Social Behavior* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1976), 392.

<sup>49</sup>Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior*, 4, 12.

<sup>50</sup>Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 113–118.

the vanguard Organization is not just for seizing power, it is for wielding it after the masses have overthrown the old ruling classes. It “would consist of interlinked affinity groups that would play a leading role in democratic popular assemblies in towns, neighborhoods, and cities.”<sup>51</sup>

Since “the establishment of popular assemblies would likely involve primarily the most politically concerned people, possibly only a fraction of a whole,”<sup>52</sup> assemblies would likely be founded by Organization activists. As the Director Emeritus wisely says, political parties are “often synonymous with the state when they are in power.”<sup>53</sup> The founders will bring to the assembly their working unity, organizational skills, ideological certitude, and the prestige of their victorious revolution. As a group, or as the nucleus of a broader insider group, they will dominate meetings. Citizens who occasionally attend, whose motivation to do so was not high anyway, will notice their own lack of influence and their attendance will decline, further enhancing the power of the clique. The outcome is oligarchy, just as it is under representative systems. Every Commune will be, not only a state, but a one-party state.

Thus a compact minority — a minority of the minority — has the power; power can be abused; and where power can be abused, it will be. Inevitably a clique will oppress minorities (and probably majorities), if only because it can. The people in power will be the same kind of people who were in power before.<sup>54</sup> Minorities will find themselves more susceptible to oppression than under the old government, in several respects. Small units tend to be more homogeneous than large ones, simply because their capacity to accommodate diversity is more limited, and the likelihood of a dissenter finding allies is lower. And the importance of allies cannot be overstated: “If even one person supports a dissenter against a group, the chance of the dissenter’s conforming drops drastically, and a dissenter is more likely in a large group to find someone to give such support.”<sup>55</sup> James Madison argued, in support of the Constitution, that “whilst all authority in [the federal republic] will be derived from and dependent on the society, the society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority. In a free government, the security for civil rights must be the same as the security for religious rights. It consists in the one case of the multiplicity of interests, and in the other, in the multiplicity of sects. The degree of security in both cases may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government.”<sup>56</sup> However effective this safeguard actually is, it will not affect the Commune very much. The smaller the group, the fewer the interests represented or to put it another way, the less proportionality, and the greater the likelihood of oppression.<sup>57</sup> There is some incentive not to oppress where the oppressive majority of today may be the oppressed minority of tomorrow. The Commune, in contrast, is as if designed to constitute permanent oppressive majorities.

---

<sup>51</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 296.

<sup>52</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 341–342.

<sup>53</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 243.

<sup>54</sup>Robert A. Dahl, *After the Revolution: Authority in a Good Society* (rev. ed.; New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1990), 54.

<sup>55</sup>Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 283.

<sup>56</sup>*Federalist*, 351–352 (No.51) (Madison) (quoted); *ibid.*, 63–65 (No.10) (Madison); *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, ed. Max Farrand (4 vols.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), 1: 36.

<sup>57</sup>Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 281; Arend Liphart, “Electoral systems,” *Encyclopedia of Democracy*, 2: 419; McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, 6.

To the evil of majoritarian tyranny is added that of faction. Although Madison was speaking of a government for a republic, direct democracy provided his examples:

From this view of the subject, it may be concluded, that a pure Democracy, by which I mean a society, consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the Government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of Government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party, or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is, that such Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives, as they have been violent in their deaths.

All the American Founders denounced Athens and/or direct democracy.<sup>58</sup> The Director Emeritus predicts factional struggles in the assembly. The founders would be in a minority, and “an attempt will be made by other interests, including class interests, to take over the assemblies.”<sup>59</sup> Take over from whom? From the founding faction whose dominance is assumed to be permanently desirable. An assembly is performing well for him so long as the Bookchinist ideological minority perpetuates its initial dominance.

No rights, not even rights of political participation, are fundamental or “entrenched” in the sense that the decrees of the assembly cannot violate them. Such rights are incompatible with the sovereignty of the assembly, whose power is in principle unlimited. Thus, as we saw in Chapter 14, the Athenian citizen had virtually no rights. Thus Murray Bookchin nowhere speaks of rights against the power of the assembly, and he denounces all negative freedom (Chapter 3), which is the form rights usually take. He once held that the assembly would have a constitution, but the only content he mentions is the structure of government, majority rule, and the right to vote. The perspicacious Hobbes denied that there was more liberty in a democracy than in monarchy: “For even if *liberty* is inscribed on the gates and towers of a city in the largest possible letters, it is not the *liberty* of the individual *citizen* but of the *city*; and there is no better right to inscribe it on a *popularly* governed than on a *Monarchically* governed city.”<sup>60</sup>

With his usual lying, disdainful quotation marks, the Director Emeritus spurns the “sovereign rights” and “natural rights” supposedly claimed by Lifestyle Anarchists.<sup>61</sup> Truly, any right purportedly assured by the Commune would be merely a quote/unquote “right.” Every individual right infringes positive freedom, which is, for him, the only kind of freedom there is.<sup>62</sup> The only apparent exception is also the only apparent exception at Athens: the right to participate in the assembly and hold office.<sup>63</sup> Freedom of speech means freedom to speak in the assembly and, at its most expansive, freedom to speak out of doors about matters which may come before the

<sup>58</sup> *The Federalist*, 61 (No.10) (Madison) (quoted); Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 87–95.

<sup>59</sup> “Interview with Bookchin,” 159.

<sup>60</sup> “Interview with Bookchin,” 172–173; Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. & tr. Richard Tuck & Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121 (quoted).

<sup>61</sup> Bookchin, *SALA*, 11–12, quoted in Black, *AAL*, 37. The ex-Director has never cited any such claim.

<sup>62</sup> Expressed in other words, “all rights are made at the expense of liberty — all laws by which rights are created or confirmed. No right without a correspondent obligation.” Bentham, “Anarchical Fallacies,” 503.

<sup>63</sup> Held, *Models of Democracy*, 17; Bullpitt, “Participation and Local Government,” 288.

assembly. That leaves open to mini-state control all the speech of most people and most of the speech of all people. In other words, there is freedom of speech when it serves the system, but not for the benefit of the individual. Bookchin cannot even imagine that people might want to talk about anything besides politics. Censorship is here a simple matter because the Commune owns the media.<sup>64</sup> And there is no suggestion of recourse, in case even these few participation-related rights are violated, to anyone except the body violating them, the assembly. As a last resort, Athens had ostracism; any Commune might also ostracise.

*Or so it seemed* from everything by Bookchin that I've seen. In *The Politics of Social Ecology*, his puppet Janet Biehl repeats his line that the Communes "retain their freedom and their identity and their sovereignty even as they confederate." By definition, the sovereign possesses the ultimate authority. Yet now we are told that any Commune could require a *popular referendum* of all the citizens of the federated Communes to vote on allegations that some other Commune "was wreaking ecological mayhem (dumping its wastes in the river) or violating human rights (excluding people of color)"! In direct contradiction to the principles of direct democracy, a majority of nondeliberative, non-face to face (yuk!) *individuals* drawn from other Communes could impose its will upon one supposedly sovereign Commune.<sup>65</sup> There is thus no Communal sovereignty; the Confederacy is sovereign; for sovereignty, as Rousseau and the Antifederalists<sup>66</sup> insisted, is indivisible. There is no escaping the confederal dilemma:

If a federal government possesses a constitutional authority to intervene by force in the government of a state for the purpose of ensuring the state's performance of its duties as a member of the federation, there is no adequate constitutional barrier against the conversion of the federation into a centralized state by vigorous and resolute central government. If it does not possess such an authority, there is no adequate assurance that the federal government can maintain the character of the system when vigorous and resolute state governments take full advantage of their constitutional freedom to go their own ways.<sup>67</sup>

One of two things happens: either the federation collapses or it becomes a centralized state. Collapse, such as befell the ancient Greek and medieval Italian federations, is by far the more common fate. But occasionally the central "coordinating" apparatus of a confederation transforms itself into a state, which usually takes a long time. Examples are the United States, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Quite recently, the Director Emeritus confirmed that his Confederation is the sovereign power. Proudhon and Bakunin regrettably "allowed for the possibility that a single community could opt out of the confederation if it so desired... But I don't agree that this should be permitted."<sup>68</sup>

"Why, then," one may ask, "is there reason to emphasize the assembly form as crucial to self-governance? Is it not enough to use the referendum, as the Swiss profess to do today, and resolve

---

<sup>64</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 147..

<sup>65</sup>Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 101 (quoted), 108 (quoted), 108–109.

<sup>66</sup>Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 108; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 527–529.

<sup>67</sup>Arthur N. Holcombe, "The Coercion of States in a Federal System," in *Federalism: Mature and Emergent*, ed. Arthur W. MacMahon (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 139–140.

<sup>68</sup>Vanek, "Interview with Murray Bookchin."



the problem of democratic procedure in a simple and seemingly uncomplicated way?” No, because, for one thing, “the autonomous individual *qua* ‘voter’ [why the quotation marks?] who forms the social unit of the referendum process in liberal theory is a fiction.”<sup>69</sup> Indeed he is a fiction — Bookchin’s fiction. If “voters” are fictions, how is it that they elect candidates who take office and rule? “The referendum, conducted in the privacy of one’s voting booth or, as some ‘Third Wave’ enthusiasts would have it, in the electronic isolation of one’s home privatizes democracy and thereby subverts it.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, voting is incompatible with democracy, which completes the severance of the word democracy from all terrestrial moorings. Just what does assembly voting add to voting? The assembly provides a forum for deliberation, of course — this, indeed, is the ex-Director’s only argument against the “farce” of electronic voting<sup>71</sup> — but deliberation need not coincide with voting and it need not take place in the assembly. So it must be something else. Bookchin’s real objection, which he is ashamed to express, can only be to the *secret ballot*. He seeks a return to the corrupt politics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when voting was public and voters were exposed to intimidation and reprisals. Public voting made a mockery of Italian and Parisian democracy, where it perpetuated the oligarchy of entrenched elites. This kind of freedom, if you care to call it that, is only formal, not substantive.

Biehl’s thoughtless, half-assed scheme teems with latent difficulties. As the proposal is phrased, any one Commune can trigger a referendum just by demanding one. Isn’t it obvious that Communes on the losing side in Confederal decisions will take a second bite out of the apple by compelling referenda? They have nothing to lose. Even if neighborly harmony prevails within Communes, it is not to be expected among Confederal delegates who have no authority to negotiate, compromise or even persuade. Referenda will thus be routine, perhaps weekly events. This will inconvenience everybody. In places where referenda are now held, although they are not frequent, often only a tiny minority votes. It may be that every assembly will have to devote a substantial part of its agenda to discussing and voting on referendum questions to the detriment of its own affairs. Or use Internet voting, which, “farce” or not, has already been tried successfully.<sup>72</sup> There’s no conceivable reason why the assemblies won’t just send in their vote tallies directly — by ConFederal Express! — as is done in all elections today, rather than dispatch their delegate with a briefcase. What’s more, the incessant practice of referenda will accustom citizens to voting on a Confederation-wide, translocal, equal suffrage basis. The value of deliberation declines when there is no opportunity to deliberate with the vast majority of the people voting. The citizens will adopt representation, and all the usual centralizing processes will go into play.

What happens if the wayward Commune refuses to abide by majority vote, as the Paris sectionnaires did when they expelled Girondin delegates from the Convention whom others had elected? Will the Confederation call out the militias the way an American president can “federalize” (*i.e.*, nationalize) the National Guard? That would establish beyond doubt the statist character of the Confederation. Or merely expel the wayward Commune? If that meant economic strangulation for the Commune, this is coercion as surely as is military force. But what if the miscreant Commune, whether it is in or out of the Confederation, persists in its wrongdoing? Its polluting or prejudicial practices remain as obnoxious as ever. The question of coercion arises either way.

---

<sup>69</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 248.

<sup>70</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 250.

<sup>71</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 342.

<sup>72</sup>Dahl, *After the Revolution?* 55; Ted Baker & Christina Slaton, *The Future of Teledemocracy* (Westport, CT & London: Praeger, 2000).

And what if the polluting or discriminatory Commune is in *another* Confederation? If it is, perhaps, just across that river it is polluting? The Communes of the virtuous Confederation have no right to compel a referendum anywhere else, and there is no guarantee that if one is held, that the cause of virtue will win. What if it doesn't? What then — war? Isn't this scenario substantially that of the American Civil War or, as the South refers to it, the War Between the States? Anyway, the faith of Biehl *qua* Bookchin in the referendum as a safeguard for minorities is self-refuting, since the proposal is precisely to use it to coerce minorities. Direct democracy through referenda “does have the further disadvantage of removing any power from minority groups.”<sup>73</sup>

Even if there were something like constitutional rights, there would be no courts to enforce them. In fact, there are apparently no courts to enforce anything. That courts may have a place in a direct democracy, Bookchin well knows, since he defends the Athenian system of hired mass juries and ad hoc judges, and he mentions that the sections of Paris had their courts and justices of the peace.<sup>74</sup> But I have found no references in his writings to courts as Communal institutions.

Now as an anarchist I am supposed to spurn paper laws and dismiss courts as merely a source of oppression, not a protection against it. That is too facile, although the history shows that courts are most likely to act as tools of the state, of which they are a part, against the enemies of the state.<sup>75</sup> Such factors as the relative independence of the judiciary, and the relative autonomy of the law as a professionally elaborated body of expert knowledge, imply that law cannot simply be deduced from immediate state (or class) interests, as Marx (a one-time law student) appreciated.<sup>76</sup> My insistence that state and law are mutually entailing (Chapter 10) implies, intentionally, that anarchy excludes law.

I further willingly agree that the “abstract, impersonal legal subject,” the legal person regarded in his juridical aspect, is the abstract Economic Man of bourgeois ideology.<sup>77</sup> Legal rights attain their highest development in the bourgeois state. They would be meaningless in an anarchist society as I understand it. But they would not be meaningless in the Commune, where they are not available, because the Commune is a state. Bookchin would not have boomed written law so stridently (Chapter 10) unless the rule of law, not the order of custom, is to govern the Commune. I would want rights there if I wanted them anywhere. The only thing worse than law is law without rights.

It's a bit beguiling to fantasize about the upper reaches of the worldwide Confederal hierarchy. Assuming Communes of about 1,000, there will be about 262,761 Communes in the United States. They will not be face-to-face groups but their dominant elites will be. Artificial city boundaries having become irrelevant, the Communes, which are really neighborhoods, will federate locally (the Municipal Confederation). Here the number of those federated has to be large enough to

---

<sup>73</sup>P.J. Taylor & R.J. Johnston, *Geography of Elections* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 485.

<sup>74</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 35.

<sup>75</sup>Robert G. McCloskey, *The Modern Supreme Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972). Concerning Sacco and Vanzetti, Mencken wrote: “No government is ever fair in its dealings with men suspected of enmity to it. One of the principal functions of all government, indeed, is to put down such men, and it is one of the few governmental functions that are always performed diligently and *con amore*.” H.L. Mencken, “Reflections on Government,” in *A Second Mencken Chrestomathy*, ed. Terry Teachout (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 43.

<sup>76</sup>Isaac D. Balbus, “Commodity Form and Legal Form: An Essay on the ‘Relative Autonomy’ of the Law,” *Law & Society Review* 11(3) (Winter 1977): 571–588; Maureen Cain, “The Main Themes of Marx’ and Engels’ Sociology of Law,” in *Law and Marxism*, ed. Piers Beirne & Richard Quinney (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1982), 63–73.

<sup>77</sup>Evgeny B. Pashukanis, *Law and Marxism: A General Theory*, tr. Barbara Einhorn (London: Ink Links, 1978), 115; Robert C. Black, “Legal Form and Legal Fetishism: Pashukanis and His Critics” (unpublished MS., 1983).

bring together Communes with substantial common interests, yet small enough for face-to-face relations between delegates.

Now we have to posit the optimal size for an assembly of delegates. Here we cannot count on apathy to keep attendance down. All but a few of the delegates will show up for meetings, first, because they want to and were chosen to, and second, because they will be replaced if they don't.

As Madison urged, the body must not be too small or too large, "for however small the Republic may be, the Representatives must be raised to a certain number, in order to guard against the cabals of a few; and that however large it may be, they must be limited to a certain number, in order to guard against the confusion of a multitude."<sup>78</sup> History offers some guidance. The Athenian Council, a full-time deliberative body, had 500 members, although even that is really too high for a face-to-face deliberative body. The U.S. House of Representatives, which has 435 members, has been considered a face-to-face group, but if it is, it's because the vast majority of members are incumbents, often with many terms behind them, and so they already know each other. If most members of our Council are long-term incumbents, we would suspect oligarchy. If they are not, we would suspect an atomistic, nondeliberative body. 1,000 people, initially strangers to one another, is just a crowd, unsuitable for widespread participation. Even with membership set at 500, and assuming continuity based on a core of incumbents (which tends toward oligarchy), the assembly of the local federation is a face-to-face group only in a very loose sense.<sup>79</sup> But anything much smaller would necessitate even more levels of federation than the five I envisage for the Tower of Babel we are erecting. So we will not exceed 500, and often go much lower.

For a reasonable next tier within statistical parameters, there is the Metro area. Anything smaller would arbitrarily divide an economic and ecological unity. Because the statistical metro area in my Albany example is small in population (under 900,000) and rather underestimates the centripetal influence of the three largest cities, it might be extended in several directions, and across state lines, to take in many small towns and much countryside for a population of perhaps 2 million. These areas could be represented at the national level by a convenient number of delegates, 132, but there's a vast political field to be traversed there. Surely there should be a Regional level, which might in a few cases correspond to a state, but would usually encompass a few of them. With populations of 20 million and more, the Regions could be represented at the National Council by as few as 12 or 13 delegates, although more would be preferable to reflect the wide diversity of interests within regions, except that nobody in this Roman melodrama is supposed to represent interests. There might be a Continental or Hemispheric Council, and assuredly an International Council.

Here is the whole hierarchy:

Communal → Municipal → Metropolitan → Regional → National → ... *n*

Thus the average comrade in the Commune is subordinate to at least five hierarchically ordered levels of government, counting the assembly. In Spain, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT proposed four,<sup>80</sup> which is the most I have ever heard suggested till now. No federation in history was ever like this. Our Federal system, whose complexities prolong law school by at least a year, is simple by comparison: two levels above the citizen. (Local government, which has no independent

---

<sup>78</sup> *The Federalist*, 62–63 (No.10) (Madison).

<sup>79</sup> Hansen, *Athenian Assembly*, 80.

<sup>80</sup> Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* (London: Freedom Press, 1972), 17.

constitutional standing, is just a department of state government.) Bookchin's system is not, as he calls it, the Commune of Communes. Rather, it is the Commune of Communes of Communes of Communes of Communes. The idea that the representative of the representative of the representative of my representative represents *me* is laughable. The Communal comrade will probably not even know the names of his representatives except maybe the lowest one, and vice versa.

There is no reason *a priori* why the number of levels which is optimal for effective administration is also optimal for effective representation. And just as they do in traditional representative systems, successively higher levels of government aggravate inequality. Indirect elections are well known to have this consequence, which is why they are the favorite kind of elections for conservatives. In his history of the French Revolution, Kropotkin noted that they favor the wealthy. The U.S. Electoral College, for instance, was supposed to consist of "a small number of persons, selected from their fellow citizens from the general mass, [who] will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to so complicated an investigation."<sup>81</sup> All the oligarchic influences within the Commune are multiplied, with cumulative impact, at each higher level. The Municipal delegates will be higher in class, wealth, education, political aptitude — and whiteness — than the Communards generally. The Metropolitan delegates will score even higher in these respects, and so forth twice more. The National Council will not look like America, it will look like the U.S. Senate or the Microsoft board of directors.

Direct democracy and federalism are antagonistic principles. Consider, for instance, a delegate to the Municipal Council. His claim to legitimacy rests on his familiarity with the people of his neighborhood as well as his election by a plurality of the minority that showed up for the assembly on election day. In the Municipal Council, in contrast, he is at first a stranger. He must ingratiate himself with his colleagues until he shares a community of experience with them as he does with his neighbors. In other words, he has to join a second face-to-face group in order to serve the first. But time devoted to one group is time taken from the other. He cannot serve his neighbors effectively without losing touch with them, with the result that, again, he cannot serve his neighbors effectively. He can serve effectively, but then it is not his neighbors whom he serves.

At the next level, what is a delegate supposed to do? Now he has *three* face-to-face groups to keep up with. As this is impossible, he is likely to slight the Commune, whose leash is the longest. Formally he represents the Municipal Council, but what if the Council mandates a position he believes to be against the interests of his Commune? His mandate precludes his reopening the question at the Metropolitan level, and the Council will recall him if he tries. He belongs to a deliberative body, but he cannot even speak his mind, much less deliberate in good faith. Conscientious or conflicted delegates will lose influence relative to opportunists and loose cannons who know what they want and go for it. It is the latter who will choose delegates (from among themselves) to the Regional Council, where the same process will assure that members of the National Council will be a different kind of people than ordinary Americans.

The rejoinder is that the higher the level, the less authority it possesses, implying that the Regional and especially the Federal levels are almost supernumerary. Thus the Director Emeritus claims that "Switzerland has rendered the nation-state utterly superfluous." To which I raised the

---

<sup>81</sup>Kropotkin, *Great French Revolution*, 309; *The Federalist*, 458 (No.68) (Hamilton). "It was also peculiarly desirable, to afford as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder." *The Federalist*, 458 (No.68)

obvious objection, “if the Swiss nation-state is *utterly* superfluous, why does it exist at all?”<sup>82</sup> His own sources confirm that the national (federal) government of Switzerland has been gaining power at the expense of the cantons for centuries.<sup>83</sup> That always happens in federations, as it has happened in the United States, unless they break up first. Since the Swiss state is superfluous now, somehow it must have been *less* than superfluous in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when de Tocqueville criticized it as the most imperfect confederation in history.<sup>84</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it must have been less than less than superfluous. It was, of course, never superfluous at any time.

As unsatisfactory as Bookchin’s historical examples of Communes are, he at least provides a little detail. When it comes to historic federations, he tells us nothing relevant. There were “at least 15” ancient Greek federations, for instance, but nearly all are now just names, and the Director Emeritus does not even provide most of the names. One striking feature of some of the Greek federations was intercity citizenship: if they made the trip, citizens of one city could attend the assembly of another city. The ex-Director does not advocate this aspect of Greek federal practice. From the little he says about their functions, it appears that the Greek federations were primarily military alliances, which again has no contemporary relevance.<sup>85</sup> Something he does not tell us is that they all had some sort of a central government.<sup>86</sup> James Madison undertook a more searching scrutiny of the Greek federations. He thought their bad example was an argument for the U.S. Constitution. But really the truth is that we know little about these federations except that they were failures, and usually short-lived failures.<sup>87</sup>

The United States, which also had a central government under the Articles of Confederation, is a glaring if understandable omission from the ex-Director’s discussion. The familiar story of how the failings of an American confederation led to the adoption of a more centralized national government is not one that Bookchin cares to tell. But the issue evokes another peevish outburst. “Even as a word,” he states — when Bookchin gets hold of a word, you know what to expect — “‘confederation’ implies a commitment to liberatory ways of associating.” Not so; in fact, it usually or especially refers to a union of states.<sup>88</sup> Somehow the Articles of Confederation were replaced in a devious way: “It is notable that the first American constitution was deliberately called ‘Articles of Confederation,’ which, for all its limitations, was cynically and secretly replaced by a so-called ‘federal’ constitution, one that Hamilton and his supporters foisted on the American people as the next best alternative to a constitutional monarchy.”<sup>89</sup> This tale is popular with uneducated leftists like Bookchin.

It is indeed true that the Articles of Confederation were named “deliberately,” not accidentally, but not because of the liberatory implications of the word “confederation,” because then, as now, the word had no such implications. Joel Barlow, for instance, referred to the system under the Constitution as a confederation. So did future Supreme Court Justice James Wilson addressing the

---

<sup>82</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 229 (quoted); Black, *AAL*, 72–73, 73 (quoted).

<sup>83</sup>Barber, *Death of Communal Liberty*; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 740.

<sup>84</sup>De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Appendix II, 744, quoted in Black, *AAL*, 73.

<sup>85</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 147–152.

<sup>86</sup>J.A.O. Larsen, *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* (Berkeley, CA & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1955), 49.

<sup>87</sup>*The Federalist*, 110–117 (No.18) (Madison); Dahl, *On Democracy*, 12; Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr., “Federal Unions,” in *The Greek Political Experience: Studies in Honor of William Kelly Prentice* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), 93–108.

<sup>88</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “confederation.”

<sup>89</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 258.

Convention. In 1787, the word “federate” “was almost exactly synonymous with “confederate.”<sup>90</sup> Addressing the House of Representatives in 1791, James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, referred to the system under the Constitution as “the Confederation.”<sup>91</sup> Actually, whatever “confederation” meant precisely to the person who made up the name, we know that, for him, it did *not* exclude a sovereign union with a Congress of theoretically unlimited authority, because that is what John Dickinson proposed in his first draft of the “Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union.”<sup>92</sup> His title, but little else of his draft — which designed a highly centralized state — was retained in the final version.

The Articles were not “secretively replaced” by the Constitution — that is childish conspiracy theory. They were superseded after extensive public debate (Anti-Federalist campaign literature alone fills five volumes<sup>93</sup>) as the conventions meeting in nine states (shortly joined by three more) publicly ratified the proposal. Because, until ratified, that’s all it was, a proposal, so it is not too important that it was formulated in closed session. The Convention followed the procedure established in the states for the writing or amendment of constitutions by an ad hoc body instead of the legislature, with the new constitution then placed before the people for ratification.

Indeed the Confederation Congress cooperated in its own overthrow. When the Convention forwarded the proposed Constitution to Congress, the latter had it “transmitted to the several Legislatures in order to be submitted to a convention of delegates chosen in each State by the people thereof, in conformity to the resolves of the convention.” After all, 10 of the 31 Congressmen were Philadelphia Framers. Not only was it Congress which summoned the delegates to Philadelphia, it paid the Convention’s expenses and even extended franking privileges to the delegates. Congress actively assisted in its own demise.<sup>94</sup> Devised in secret — and its critics made the charge of “conspiracy”<sup>95</sup> one of their strongest arguments — nonetheless, the Constitution “was widely, fully, and vigorously debated in the country at large; and it was adopted by (all things considered) a remarkably open and representative procedure.”<sup>96</sup>

The image of Hamilton the Machiavellian monarchist persists, although no historian has believed in it since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the Convention, Hamilton had no influence or supporters.

---

<sup>90</sup>Joel Barlow, “To His Fellow Citizens of the United States. Letter II: On Certain Political Measures Proposed to Their Consideration,” in Hyneman & Lutz, eds. *American Political Writing*, 2: 1106; “Speech in Convention of 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1787,” in *The Works of James Wilson*, 1: 559–560; Clinton Rossiter, *1787: The Grand Convention* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), 159. Barlow also states that “it has been concluded, and very justly, that *pure democracy*, or the immediate autocracy of the people, is unfit for a great state; it might be added, that it is unfit for the smallest state imaginable, even a little town.”

<sup>91</sup>*The Writings of James Madison*, ed. Gailard Hunt (New York & London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1906), 6: 38.

<sup>92</sup>Merrill Jensen, *The Articles of Confederation: An Interpretation of the Social-Constitutional History of the American Revolution, 1774–1781* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 130, 255 & ch. 5.

<sup>93</sup>*The Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (7 vols.; Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1981) (volumes 2–7 consist of Anti-Federalist texts).

<sup>94</sup>Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 144–145; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 318–319, 337–343; letter of Congress quoted in Ronald D. Rotunda, *Constitutional Law: Principles and Cases* (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1987), 578 n. 1; Rossiter, *1787*, 275–277.

<sup>95</sup>“Centinel” called the Convention “the most formidable conspiracy against the liberties of a free and enlightened nation, that the world has ever witnessed.” [Samuel Bryan,] *The Letters of Centinel*, ed. Warren Hope (Ardmore, PA: Fifth Season Press, 1998), 31.

<sup>96</sup>John P. Roche, “The Convention as a Case Study in Democratic Politics,” in *Essays on the Making of the Constitution*, ed. Leonard W. Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 180–181; Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 7–8, 3 (quoted); John Hart Ely, *Democracy and Distrust: A Theory of Judicial Review* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1980), 5–6.

He was consistently outvoted by his two New York colleagues (voting was by states), and when they went home early (going on to be prominent Antifederalists), that left Hamilton with not even a losing vote to cast, so he went home too. He was not a monarchist; he stated that Britain had the best form of government, not that it was the best form of government for the United States.<sup>97</sup> (As Fisher Ames — least democratic of Federalists — later recalled, “the body of the federalists were always, and yet are, essentially democratic in their political notions.”<sup>98</sup>) In a five hour speech to the Convention, Hamilton offered a plan for a highly centralized government (but not a monarchy) as a talking piece only. It was politely received and ignored. As another delegate put it, “the gentleman from New York ... has been praised by everybody, he has been supported by none.” Briefly returning in September, a few days before the final draft Constitution was completed, he bluntly expressed his “dislike of the scheme of government”! And in a self-epitaph he wrote in 1804, near the end of his life, he wrote that no one had done more to sustain the Constitution than he had, but “contrary to all my anticipations of its fate ... I am still laboring to prop the frail and worthless fabric.”<sup>99</sup>

Quite mysterious are the functions of Bookchin’s federations. The delegates thereto are mandated and revocable, but do not make policy decisions.<sup>100</sup> Then what are they mandated to do? And who does make the decisions? It has to be the Communes, but how do one thousand oil-consuming Communes in the northeast obtain their winter heating oil from one thousand oil-producing Communes in the southwest? The consumer Communes can send up their requisitions to be aggregated at the regional level, but has the corresponding producer federation the authority to assign production quotas to the federations at the next level down, and so forth? There are a hundred unanswered questions like these.

The federations are without coercive authority, they just “coordinate” — meaning what? To coordinate is to “Cause (things or persons) to function together or occupy their proper place as parts of an interrelated whole.”<sup>101</sup> How do you cause buyers and sellers to function together? The usual methods are through money (the market) or coercion (the state), but Bookchin rejects these institutions. Coordination is either consent or a euphemism for coercion. Consent is forthcoming only when the participants in an activity share a common purpose. Otherwise, coordination means coercion, and “telling another person to coordinate, therefore, does not tell him what to do. He does not know whether to coerce or bargain, to exert power or secure consent.”<sup>102</sup> The Communes have not told the federations what to do, only how not to do it. Power and market, the impersonal methods of coordination, are not the only ones. But coordination by personalized consent is only possible for a small number of participants usually already connected through preexisting relationships.

Actually, Bookchin could use some coordination himself. He says the confederations will coordinate the Communes, but he also refers to “the self-administration of a community by its

---

<sup>97</sup>John C. Miller, “Hamilton: Democracy and Monarchy,” in *Alexander Hamilton: A Profile*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 162–165.

<sup>98</sup>Fisher Ames, “The Dangers of American Liberty,” in Hyneman & Lutz, eds., *American Political Writing*, 2: 1303.

<sup>99</sup>Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1913), 89 (quoted), 94, 97; Hamilton quoted in Rossiter, *1787*, 225, and in Roger H. Brown, *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 7. The big speech was almost Hamilton’s only action at the Convention

<sup>100</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 271.

<sup>101</sup>*New Shorter OED*, q/v “coordinate.”

<sup>102</sup>Wildavsky & Pressman, *Implementation*, 133–134, 134 (quoted).

citizens in face-to-face assemblies, which in cities with relatively large populations would coordinate the administrative work of the city council, composed of mandated and recallable assembly deputies.”<sup>103</sup> If he is self-contradictory about who coordinates “the work,” he is silent as to who *does it*. This is one of those occasions on which the ex-Director’s head is in the clouds, or somewhere else: “The decision to build a road, for example, does not mean that everyone must know how to design and construct one.” After devoting four paragraphs to this topic, Biehl concludes, almost as an afterthought:

Finally, the road itself would have to be constructed [as if that were the easy part]. Unlike the other stages of the process, the construction of the road would be strictly an administrative responsibility — it would require no deliberation, no voting [what a relief]. The road-builders would carry out the decision made by the assembly, building the road according to the chosen plan. This strictly technical process of execution is an example of administration — in which no policy-making is involved.<sup>104</sup>

Building a road is *not* a strictly administrative process! And what if the construction workers *won’t* build the road according to the chosen plan — chosen by others — perhaps because they think they know better than voters and bureaucrats how to build a road, as they probably do? Execution is *not* administration, it is work, real work, and sometimes hard work, as in the case of road-building, judging from “the sound of the men/working on the chain ga-a-ang” (Sam Cooke).

The Director Emeritus has a naïve and simple-minded conception of administration:

The technical execution or administration of these policies would be carried out by the appropriate specialists. The most important functions of the confederal councils would be administrative. In fact, these city and confederal councils would have to ultimately refer all policy-making decisions to the assemblies and only with their approval undertake their administration. These policy decisions would be made by a *majority* of the people themselves in their face-to-face assemblies. The city and confederal councils would merely execute these decisions, or at most adjust differences between them.

There shall be no “melding of policy formation with administration,” which was the “regressive” practice of the Paris Commune.<sup>105</sup> In other words, “administration lies outside the proper sphere of *politics*. Administrative questions are not political questions.” This was, indeed the best political thinking of the 19<sup>th</sup> century — Woodrow Wilson wrote this in 1887. By now it has been confuted by the experience of every bureaucracy: “no structure can approach the old-fashioned textbook ideal in which bureaucrats merely carry out or execute policy directives chosen for them by legislative authorities.” On the contrary, “implementation should not be divorced from policy.”<sup>106</sup> Bookchin’s is the regressive view.

---

<sup>103</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 324–325.

<sup>104</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 247 (quoted); Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 106 (quoted).

<sup>105</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 313–314 (quoted); Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 215–216 (quoted).

<sup>106</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” *Political Science Quarterly* 2(2) (June 1887), 210 (quoted); James M. Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 161 (quoted); Pressman & Wildavsky, *Implementation*, 143 (quoted).



“Administration” is, as Benjamin Tucker pointed out, a euphemism for coercion: “Some champions of the State evidently consider aggression its principle, although they disguise it alike from themselves and from the people under the term ‘administration,’ which they wish to extend in every possible direction.”<sup>107</sup> Anarchists reject the Marxist distinction between the government of men and the administration of things. The Director Emeritus not only affirms it, he criticizes Marx for once ignoring it and taking a realistic view of the Paris Commune.<sup>108</sup>

All you have to do is walk around any city with your eyes open to see important governmental activity which it would be inefficient if not impossible to carry out at the level of a neighborhood of one thousand people inhabiting, says Bookchin, one to twelve blocks.<sup>109</sup> Sanitation and garbage collection must be organized citywide because germs and smells disrespect neighborhood sovereignty. Land use planning by tiny territorial units is an invitation to self-interested parochialism. Chodorkoff Commune will want to site a factory as far as possible from its population concentration — at the border with Biehl Commune, which derives no benefit from the factory but may get some of its noise and pollution. The organization, as opposed to the recruitment, of the militia — without which no Commune is complete — must be on a larger than neighborhood scale, or we will have 100 or 1000 little armies which, if they are ever to “federate” for war or to suppress Lifestyle Anarchist insurrections, will have to be standardized in everything from training to ammunition. Effective militias are critical, since Communes will co-exist with nation-states, or try to, for a protracted period. The medieval and Renaissance city-states succumbed to the overwhelming superior force of the nation-states.<sup>110</sup> The ex-Director’s Communes will have to do better with people mostly without any military experience, unlike the citizen-soldiers of Athens.

These are more than problems of coordination. They derive from imperatives of technology and geography which cannot be avoided, at least in the short run. Delegates truly responsive to the base will shuttle back and forth as the implementation of their instructions creates new situations which necessitate more instructions which will never anticipate every contingency.<sup>111</sup> The more the assemblies try to provide for contingencies, the more numerous and heterogeneous will be the mandates their delegates take back to the council, and the more difficult their aggregation into a decision will be. Arguing in the First Federal Congress against instruction, one Representative aptly stated: “Perhaps a majority of the whole might not be instructed to agree to any one point.” Usually nothing will be decided, or nothing will be decided until it is too late.

Sometimes something will be decided, not because it was what the majority wanted, but because it was what the majority failed to forbid, as when, as we saw (Chapter 13), delegates to the Junta of the Comuneros voted taxes without seeking new instructions from their cities. They might even enact what the constituencies did forbid. For example, the delegates to the Second Continental Congress were instructed, and their instructions were, whatever else they did, not to

---

<sup>107</sup> *Individual Liberty: Selections from the Writings of Benjamin R. Tucker*, ed. C.L.S. (New York: Revisionist Press, 1972), 21.

<sup>108</sup> Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 215–216; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 338; Marx, “The Civil War in France,” in Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, 291.

<sup>109</sup> Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 246.

<sup>110</sup> Dahl, *On Democracy*, 16; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 190.

<sup>111</sup> Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, 28–29.

declare American independence. But as every schoolboy used to know, that is what they did.<sup>112</sup> The delegates, supposedly coordinators, will be powerless to coordinate themselves.

In the 1780s, Noah Webster criticized the practice of “instructing” the representatives to state legislatures: instructions “imply a decision of a question, before it is heard — they reduce a Representative to a mere machine, by restraining the exercise of his reason.” In theory, delegates are nothing but errand boys: “The delegates’ functions would be to convey the wishes of the municipality to the confederal level” (Biehl).<sup>113</sup> No genuine discussion can take place in an assembly unless the members are prepared to listen to each other and perhaps change their minds.<sup>114</sup> Confined to a menial role, distrusted by their assemblies, the delegates will become resentful and reluctant to serve. (The ones who are never reluctant to serve are the ones to watch out for.)

Sooner or later, assemblies and delegates will get tired of wasting so much time and trouble on even seemingly simple decisions which don’t turn out right anyway. Undersupervised delegates will rediscover what John Dickinson, an instructed delegate to the Second Continental Congress, thought to do: he wrote his own instructions for the Pennsylvania Assembly to “impose” on him.<sup>115</sup> Tired of their robotic role, delegates will *interpret* their mandates to authorize various implementing decisions. They may look to the purpose of the mandate, or derive a decision by analogy from what the assembly did in a similar situation, or do what they think the assembly *would* have wanted had it foreseen the current situation, or even persuade themselves that the words of the mandate announce a decision after all. In other words, they will reinvent the creative methods that *judges* use when they apply the law.<sup>116</sup>

Which is not so surprising, because they will recapitulate judicial history. Originally the judicial function is not differentiated from the executive or administrative function. American courts still have important administrative functions, such as corporate reorganization and the administration of decedents’ estates.<sup>117</sup> In England, not only is the king originally the maker of law, as we saw in the case of the Anglo-Saxon codes (Chapter 10), he also applies it. King John, for instance, often sat with his judges, who itinerated as he did.<sup>118</sup> We also see the combination of administrative and judicial functions in 17<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts and 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia (Chapters 14 & 16). It is the old story of differentiation of functions leading to specialization of office. The delegates will not forever accept the duties of a legislature without the powers, *even if*

---

<sup>112</sup>Heliczer, *Comuneros of Castile*, 162; Gary Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 331–332.

<sup>113</sup>*A Second Federalist: Congress Creates a Government*, ed. Charles S. Heinman & George W. Carey (New York: Appleton-Croft, 1967), 227 (quoted); Webster quoted in Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 380; Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, 102 (quoted). The First Congress rejected the proposed constitutional amendment, strongly opposed by Madison, authorizing the instruction of Congressmen. Irving Brant, *James Madison: Father of the Constitution* (Indianapolis, IN & New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 273–274; *A Second Federalist*, 238–239.

<sup>114</sup>Richard Wollheim, “On the Theory of Democracy,” in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. Bernard Williams & Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and New York: Humanities Press, 1966), 263.

<sup>115</sup>Jensen, *Articles of Confederation*, 86.

<sup>116</sup>William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (4 vols.; repr. ed.; Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 1: 58–61; Gray, *Nature and Sources of the Law*, 170–181; Francis Lieber, *Legal and Political Hermeneutics* (3d ed.; St. Louis, MO: F.H. Thomas & Co., 1980); Terrance Sandalow, “Constitutional Interpretation,” *Michigan Law Review* 79(5) (April 1981): 1033–1072.

<sup>117</sup>Murray L. Schwartz, “The Other Things That Courts Do,” *UCLA Law Review* 28(3) (Feb. 1981), 438–439, 450.

<sup>118</sup>Doris M. Stenton, “Introduction,” *Pleas Before the King or His Justices, 1198–1202*, ed. Doris M. Stenton (London: Selden Society, 1944), 1: 86; Robert C. Black, “Amercements in the Reign of King John” (unpublished MS., 1998), 8–11.

they act in good faith. It is only one aspect of their inevitable development of common interests unshared by their constituents. Quoth Robert de Jouvenel: “There is less difference between two deputies of whom one is a revolutionary and the other is not, than between two revolutionaries of whom one is a deputy and the other is not.”<sup>119</sup>

The assemblies will likely abet the delegates in their tacit usurpation of legislative power. Even the more politically inclined Communards will weary of petty and repetitious importunities from their mandated and revocable delegates. Mandates will be framed more broadly, and discretion will be explicitly or implicitly conferred. Searching questions will not normally be asked of those assuming the thankless role of delegate. It may be that some assemblies will stop electing delegates at all, either because no one acceptable wants the job or because the council’s performance is not unsatisfactory. In 18<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts up to the Revolution, many towns failed to send representatives, or as many representatives as they were entitled to, to the colonial legislature. Even in 1765–1769, a period of high political excitement during the Stamp Act crisis, only 53% of towns sent representatives.<sup>120</sup> In Bookchin’s world, some neighborhoods may never have federated in the first place, perhaps because they are rife with individualists, or perhaps because they are rife with statist, or just because most people are not political animals, just animals.

---

<sup>119</sup>Quoted in Arnold Gomme, “The Democracy in Operation,” in *Democracy and the Athenians: Aspects of Ancient Politics*, ed. Frank J. Frost (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1969), 121 n. 2.

<sup>120</sup>Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms*, 27–29.

## Chapter 17. Anarchist Communism versus Libertarian Municipalism

Previous chapters demonstrate that libertarian municipalism, at the ground level, will be oligarchic and probably oppressive toward local minorities. At the level of the wider society, its federations and multiples of federations will be slow, cumbersome, internally unworkable, cumulatively elitist, and either too powerful or not powerful enough. Inevitably the system will evolve the features of the system it was supposed to supplant. It is objectionable, first, as being a blueprint for the future, and second, as a blueprint with too many pages missing. It has to be the most mundane utopia ever conceived<sup>1</sup> — at once an affront to sense and sensibility.

But is it anarchist?

Of course not, but here is a direct demonstration. Aside from the federalist frills, the ideology calls for a sovereign, self-governing local assembly, the Commune. Eminent anarchists, as we saw in Chapter 16, consider it a state. If it is a state, then it is not anarchy, and libertarian municipalism is not anarchist. Apologies to any reader who thinks I'm belaboring the obvious. I know I am. This whole book belabors the obvious. There are still some credulous anarchists about, even after my last book, and it is safer not to take too much for granted. The anarchists who think that Noam Chomsky is the foremost anarchist thinker,<sup>2</sup> for instance, are fully capable of accepting Bookchin as an anarchist too.

There are many definitions of the state, and I shall run the Commune past a few of them, but generally they approximate one of the three definitions identified by Malatesta. As we saw in Chapter 15, two that he rejects are (1) the state as society, or a special form of society, and (2) the state as a centralized administration as opposed to decentralized power, *i.e.*, the Commune — in his sense as in Bookchin's. Rather, (3) the state means government, period — the sum total of political, legislative, judiciary, military and fiscal institutions.<sup>3</sup> Athens had such institutions, and the Commune would too.

A crucial element — *the* crucial element, at least for anarchists, implicit in Malatesta's definition, is *coercion*. Anarchists Michael Taylor and Howard Ehrlich identify concentrated power as a necessary condition for the state. If those in whose hands the power is concentrated try to monopolise it by determining when others can use force, for Taylor the sufficient conditions of the state are present.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that in the Commune power is concentrated, not diffuse. Indeed, it is more concentrated than in an American city today, or in the United States generally, where

---

<sup>1</sup>Black, *AAL*, 102.

<sup>2</sup>As rated in one unscientific opinion poll. "Where is the Anarchist Movement Today? Results of the *Anarchy* Reader Survey," *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, No.53 (20)(1) (Spring-Summer 2002), 9. However, I tied Chomsky for best-of-the-best ratings. For an accurate anarchist evaluation, see Zerzan, "Who Is Chomsky?" *Running on Emptiness*, 140–143.

<sup>3</sup>Malatesta, *Anarchy*, 13–14.

<sup>4</sup>Howard Ehrlich, "Anarchism and Formal Organizations," in Ehrlich & Ehrlich, eds., *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, 59; Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, 5–6.

power is dispersed among discrete local, state and national authorities. The assembly has far more power than the individual citizens, even the citizens in attendance, at any given time and at every given time; in other words, all the time. The changing composition of the assembly no more renders its possession of power anarchic than the (more slowly) changing composition of the United States Congress renders its possession of power anarchic.

For Max Weber, a “state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory.” Definitions in the Weberian tradition define the state as an organization claiming and to some significant extent enforcing a monopoly of violence over a territory.<sup>5</sup> Although he never uses words like coercion and violence, the ex-Director’s affirmation of majority rule implies coercion, otherwise the majority is just one group of people deciding to do something that others, like Bartleby, would prefer not to. The Commune is to have a militia, “a free, and armed, citizenry.”<sup>6</sup> One suspects that, like ancient Athens and revolutionary Paris, it will have police. Thus the Commune is coercive. It is also clear that the Communes occupy delimited territories, since they consist of villages, neighborhoods, city blocks, etc. Thus the Commune is territorial. The definition is satisfied.

Consider two modern definitions of the state by scholars in the Weberian tradition who study its earliest forms. Ronald Cohen: “The criterion most often used as a rough and ready feature to distinguish state from nonstate is that of the centralized governmental structure, operating usually at a level above local authorities. This central authority has a monopoly over legitimate coercive power, and it serves as a central point for tribute and revenue collection and redistribution.”<sup>7</sup> The Commune has a centralized governmental structure because it has the only governmental structure, and it *is* the local authority. The fiscal policy of the Commune is something the Director Emeritus does not discuss, not even to indicate if the use of money will continue. But we are told that the Commune controls the distribution of consumer goods, which it must get from somewhere. Thus we have the collection and redistribution of wealth, whether or not it assumes a monetary form. Then there is the definition of Mogens Herman Hansen (the expert on the Athenian assembly): the state is “a *central government* in possession of the necessary *means of coercion* by which the *legal order* can be enforced in a *territory* over a *population*.”<sup>8</sup> We have already found a “central government” and the “means of coercion” in the Commune. And we may infer the presence of a legal order from Bookchin’s otherwise irrelevant endorsement of written law (Chapter 10). Finally, the Commune of course has a bounded territory and its own population of citizen-units.

The only way for Bookchin to exonerate the Commune of the charge of statism is to tamper with the definition of the state. He’s had plenty of practice at that sort of thing. The Director Emeritus needs to add a requirement met by conventional states such as nation-states but not by the Commune. He adds two closely related, possibly identical features: professionalism and bureaucracy. In the most succinct formulation, “the state is a professional system of social co-

---

<sup>5</sup>“Politics as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 78 (quoted); e.g., Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 1.

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 49.

<sup>7</sup>Cohen, “Evolution, Fission, and the Early State,” 92.

<sup>8</sup>Mogens Herman Hansen, “Introduction: The Concepts of City-State and City-State Culture,” in *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre* (Copenhagen, Denmark: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2000), 13.

ercion.”<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, in an obvious reference to the state, the Director Emeritus states that “the professional institutionalization of power and the monopolization of violence by distinct administrative, judicial, military, and police agencies occurred fairly early in history.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, “statecraft consists of operations that engage the state: the exercise of the entire regulative apparatus of the society in the form of legal and ordinance-making bodies, its governance of society by means of professional legislators, armies, police forces, bureaucracies, and the ancillary professionals who service its operations such as lawyers, educators, technicians, and the like.”<sup>11</sup> This definition fails because states can and do fulfill functions which are not distinctly governmental, “proprietary functions” in the language of constitutional law. Mail delivery, trash collection and, in the Tennessee Valley, the production and sale of hydroelectric power “engage the state” as surely as keeping up the Army does, but they fall outside the final definition. The question is what are the distinctive state operations.

Max Weber provides more detailed criteria for a bureaucratic administrative staff: (1) a clearly defined sphere of competence subject to impersonal rules; (2) a rationally established hierarchy; (3) a regular system of appointment on the basis of free contract; (4) technical training as a regular requirement; (5) (frequently) fixed salaries, typically paid in money. These, though, are not the criteria for the state, but rather for the administrative aspect of the modern bureaucratic state; it is that type of state which has an administrative and legal order. In fact Weber listed these criteria to show what was absent from even the *patrimonial* state.<sup>12</sup>

As Weber would agree, Bookchin’s requirements are far too exclusive. As Michael Taylor maintains, political specialisation is not definitive, although it tends to develop together with the monopolisation of violence.<sup>13</sup> The chieftain, especially in a rank society, occupies a specialised political role, but in the absence of a monopoly of violence, the society is anarchic.<sup>14</sup> The thoroughgoing professionalization of government is a relatively recent (and, some would say, incomplete) development in Western polities. In premodern America, public and private authority were conjoined to perform “undifferentiated leadership roles.” Leaders were selected for their social position in their communities, not for specialized expertise.<sup>15</sup> Surely the absence of professional judges and legislators does not make a system anarchic. There were none of either in colonial America, where these positions were filled entirely by part-time amateurs. The U.S. Supreme Court was the first court in America on which all the judges were lawyers. Theirs were part-time jobs (as were those of Congressmen for many decades); in its first twelve years, the Supreme Court heard no more than 87 cases. The British House of Commons was composed mainly of amateurs at least until the 19<sup>th</sup>, and I suspect until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first professional police forces in England and America were not created until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 66.

<sup>10</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 135.

<sup>11</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 243.

<sup>12</sup>Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich (3 vols.; New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 1: 229; *Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, tr. A.M. Henderson & Talcott Parsons (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1947), 156.

<sup>13</sup>Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, 8–9.

<sup>14</sup>Barclay, *People without Government*, 85–86; Clastres, *Society Against the State*, ch. 2; Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 125.

<sup>15</sup>William E. Nelson, *The Roots of American Bureaucracy, 1830–1860* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2.

<sup>16</sup>Julius Goebel, *The Oliver Wendell Holmes Devise — History of the Supreme Court of the United States* (11 vols.; New

The requirement of professionalism may also not be exclusive *enough*. There is no reason why the Commune could not spawn a cadre of professional politicians, such as the Athenian *rhetores* and the leading Parisian *sectionnaires*. Brian Martin suggests that the delegates to federations are likely to turn pro:

Delegates are normally elected, and this leads to the familiar problems of representation. Certain individuals dominate. Participation in decision-making is unequal, with the delegates being heavily involved and others not. To the degree that decisions are actually made at higher levels, there is great potential for development of factions, vote trading and manipulation of the electorate.

This is where the delegate system is supposed to be different: if the delegates start to serve themselves rather than those they represent, they can be recalled. But in practice this is hard to achieve. Delegates tend to “harden” into formal representatives. Those chosen as delegates are likely to have much more experience and knowledge than the ordinary person. Once chosen, the delegates gain even more experience and knowledge, which can be presented as of high value to the voters. In other words, recalling the delegate will be at the cost of losing an experienced and influential person.<sup>17</sup>

Other sources of oligarchy were discussed above (Chapter 16).

It may well be that for the Director Emeritus, professionalization and bureaucracy refer to the same thing — they form another of his redundant dyads, like “rule and domination.” If by professionalization he means government by a hierarchy of paid career functionaries, then it is just another name for bureaucracy. Assigned its distinct meaning, professionalization refers to the salience of professionals in large-scale organizations. A profession is signified by (1) a theoretical body of knowledge, (2) a set of professional norms, (3) careers supported by an association of colleagues, and (4) community recognition. Bureaucratic and professional cultures tend to clash.<sup>18</sup> I doubt Bookchin has ever given a thought to any of this.

In a definition of the state, the involvement of professionals is an even more extraneous element than bureaucracy. State formation can proceed quite far without professionalization. The profession closest to the state is of course the legal profession, although the work of most lawyers is not, and never has been “ancillary” to the state as Bookchin assumes. In 17<sup>th</sup> century America, lawyers played almost no role in government because they played almost no role anywhere, not even in the courtroom.<sup>19</sup> Then their numbers and activities increased, but still almost entirely outside of government. What’s more, they were not professionals by modern standards because they often lacked technical training, there was no recognized body of professional norms (“legal

---

York: Macmillan Company & London: Collier-Macmillan, 1971–1984), 1: 798; Wilbur Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830–1870* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970); James F. Richardson, *Urban Police in the United States* (Port Washington, NY & London: Kennikat Press, 1974), chs. 1–2.

<sup>17</sup>Brian Martin, “Demarchy,” in Ehrlich & Ehrlich, eds., *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, 129–130.

<sup>18</sup>Peter M. Blau & W. Richard Scott, *Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach* (San Francisco, CA: Chandler Publishing Company, 1962), 63–71; Joseph A. Raelin, *The Clash of Cultures: Managers and Professionals* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1986), 2–3 & passim; James E. Sorenson & Thomas L. Sorenson, “The Conflict of Professionals in Bureaucratic Organizations,” *ASQ* (1974), 99.

<sup>19</sup>Friedman, *History of American Law*, 94–98; Kermit L. Hall, *The Magic Mirror: Law in American History*, (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22–23.

ethics”), and there were no bar associations. In early national America, the Attorney General was the only Federal Government lawyer, and his was a part-time job, and he had no staff, no clerk, and no office.<sup>20</sup> Lawyers were conspicuous in early legislatures, but only as part-time amateurs like everybody else. The role of lawyers *qua* lawyers in government was so negligible that it would be ridiculous to predicate a professionalized government upon their presence. Unless we are to characterize 19<sup>th</sup> century America as anarchist, the professionalization requirement for a state must be dismissed.

It finally comes down to what counts as a state *for anarchist purposes*. Since the modern bureaucratic nation-state is the only kind of state now existing, that is the state which anarchists are accustomed to oppose. There is normally no reason to muse on the state’s essential versus incidental attributes, because contemporary states have them all. Anarchists like none of its attributes, at least when they belong to a state. But professionalization is only an annoyance compared to coercion, and the state would lose its power to annoy if not backed by coercion. It is difficult to imagine bureaucracy without coercion, but it is easy to imagine coercion without bureaucracy.

What anarchists fundamentally reject is concentrated coercive power.<sup>21</sup> They accept, at most, only minimal coercive power, maximally dispersed. When the feudal levies of William the Conqueror undertook the scorched-earth “harrying of the north” of England, or an Athenian jury condemned Socrates, they were doing the sorts of things states do which make anarchists want to deprive them of the power to do anything. From the anarchist point of view, it makes no difference that William the Bastard had no professional army, or that Socrates’ judges and jurors were part-time amateurs chosen by lot. The soldiers and jurors nonetheless acted as agents of the state. They are the enemy.

It is really astounding that Bookchin does not bother to justify rule, much less majority rule, at all. Even Hobbes did that much! Except for theocrats, modern statist — even Hobbes — find justification in the consent of the governed. Even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sir Matthew Hale felt constrained to argue, implausibly, that the English Crown, though it originated in conquest, had gradually secured the “implied Consent” of the people to a “Pact or Convention” with it. Mainstream statist philosophers contend that there is at least a presumptive case for liberty, and therefore that coercion requires justification.<sup>22</sup> Some of them admit that, since consent presupposes choice, hardly any modern citizens really consent, or ever had the opportunity to consent, to be governed. One of these philosophers, A. John Simmons, admits that this is the historic anarchist position.<sup>23</sup> For the Director Emeritus, in contrast, the state is a given. For Oscar Wilde, a much more acute political philosopher, “democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. It has been found out.”<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Leonard D. White, *The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), 164, 166; Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Library of America, 1986), 148.

<sup>21</sup>“Address of Albert R. Parsons,” *The Famous Speeches of the Chicago Anarchists in Court* (Chicago, IL: Lucy E. Parsons, Publisher, n.d.), 103 (“no concentrated or centralized power”).

<sup>22</sup>Matthew Hale, *The History of the Common Law of England*, ed. Charles M. Gray (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 51 (quoted); Joel Feinberg, *Social Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 20–21; H.L.A. Hart, *Law, Liberty, and Morality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 20–21.

<sup>23</sup>Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, 192; A. John Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy: Locke, Consent, and the Limits of Society*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 250, 260; Russell Hardin, “Coercion,” in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 81–82.

<sup>24</sup>“The Soul of Man Under Socialism,” 8: 294.



Having taken *rule* for granted, Bookchin reacts to rejections of *majority* rule with hurt feelings:

What is striking about these assertions is their highly pejorative language. Majorities, it would seem, neither decide nor debate: rather, they “rule” and “dictate,” and perhaps [?] command and coerce. But a free society would be one that not only permitted but fostered the fullest degree of dissent; its podiums at assemblies and its media would be open to the fullest expression of all views, and its institutions would be true forums of discussion. When such a society had to arrive at a decision that concerned the public welfare, it could hardly “dictate” to anyone. The minority who opposed a majority decision would have every opportunity to dissent, to work to reverse that decision through unimpaired discussion and advocacy.<sup>25</sup>

The irrelevance is breathtaking. The Director Emeritus just changes the subject to one where he might have an argument — from majority rule to freedom of speech, as if the only majority coercion that anyone might possibly object to is the infringement of speech. Since words are the highest value for him, he assumes they are the highest value for everybody. But some people might have nothing to say to the assembly but “don’t tread on me!” I just might want to ignore the state, not dissent from it. Like most people, I might sometimes rather talk about something else than politics. Whether the assembly can or cannot “dictate” to anyone has nothing to do with the yammer leading up to its decisions. If “rule” is pejorative, there might be a reason for that.

The only thing Bookchin says that’s to the point is that “those who decide to enter the assembly doors, sit down, listen to discussions, and participate in them are, ethically as well as politically, qualified to participate in the decision-making process... Those who choose not to enter the doors (allowing for difficulties produced by adverse circumstances) certainly have a right to abjure the exercise of their citizenship, but by their own volition they have also disqualified themselves from decision-making. Nor do they have the ethical right to refuse to abide by the assembly’s decisions, since they could have influenced those decisions merely by attending the assembly.”<sup>26</sup>

Damned if you do, damned if you don’t! You are bound by assembly decisions if you participate and you are bound by them if you do not. Herbert Spencer remarked upon this “rather awkward doctrine” (as I have):

Suppose that the citizen is understood to have assented to everything his representative may do when he voted for him. But suppose he did not vote for him, and on the contrary did all in his power to get elected someone holding opposite views — what then? The reply will probably be that, by taking part in such an election, he tacitly agreed to abide by the decision of the majority. And how if he did not vote at all? Why, then he cannot justly complain of any tax [or whatever], seeing that he made no protest against its imposition. So, curiously enough, it seems that he gave his consent in whatever way he acted — whether he said yes, whether he said no, or whether he remained neuter!<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 147.

<sup>26</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 342.

<sup>27</sup>Black, *Abolition of Work*, 83–84; Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1954),

What's the basis of these supposed obligations? Those who choose not to participate have not consented to be governed, in fact, they have clearly communicated by conduct their refusal to be governed.

Even those who participate have not necessarily consented to abide by the decisions. One who votes against a measure obviously does not consent to it, or he would have voted the other way.<sup>28</sup> Voting does not signify consent, in fact, expressing consent to be governed is rarely if ever why people vote. One might participate, for instance, precisely because these people are going to rule you whether you like it or not, so you might as well try to influence their rule — under duress. Duress does not signify consent, it negates it. So argued Lysander Spooner:

In truth, in the case of individuals, their actual voting is not to be taken as proof of consent, *even for the time being*. On the contrary, it is to be considered that, without his consent having even been asked a man finds himself environed by a government that he cannot resist; ... He sees, too, that other men practice this tyranny over him by the use of the ballot. He sees further, that, if he will but use the ballot himself, he has some chance of relieving himself of this tyranny of others, by subjecting them to his own. In short, he finds himself, without his consent, so situated that, if he use the ballot, he may become a master; if he does not use it, he must become a slave. And he has no other alternative than these two. In self-defense, he attempts the former. His case is analogous to that of a man who has been forced into battle, where he must either kill others, or be killed himself. Because, to save his own life in battle, a man attempts to take the lives of his opponents, it is not to be inferred that the battle is one of his own choosing.<sup>29</sup>

Nor is there any reason why even truly voluntary participation is binding. I might have no more influence on who wins by entering the assembly doors and attending the meeting than I have entering a baseball stadium and attending the game. When I cast a losing vote, by definition my participation and my vote had no influence on the decision. In fact, it is the same if I cast a winning vote, unless mine was the deciding vote, which it rarely is. Thus, the normal situation under direct democracy is that nobody has consented to any governmental measure, not even if he voted, and not even if he voted with the majority.

Is consent to be ruled to be inferred from residence in the Commune? Not as to those residents who have made clear that *they* do not intend for their residence to confer consent. After all, you have to live somewhere, and if Bookchin has his way, Communes will occupy the whole world.<sup>30</sup> Quite possibly my residence will have antedated the formation of the Commune. If my new neighbors later form an association, why am I suddenly subject to its rule? What if my anarchist neighbors and I post signs announcing a "Politics-Free Zone" or "Permanent Autonomous Zone" — does that mean that newcomers consent to our anarchy? I am not under any obligation just because a few other people have printed up some stationery. The residence argument proves

---

190. This is from chapter 19, "The Right to Ignore the State," which was omitted from later editions.

<sup>28</sup>Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 19–20.

<sup>29</sup>Lysander Spooner, "No Treason. No.6. The Constitution of No Authority," in *No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority and A Letter to Thomas Bayard* (Novato, CA: Libertarian Publishers, n.d.), 5.

<sup>30</sup>"Everything that is done has to be done somewhere. No one is free to perform an action unless there is somewhere he is free to perform it." Jeremy Waldron, "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom," *UCLA Law Review* 39(2) (Dec.

too much. If residence confers my consent to be ruled by the Commune — even if I insist that it does not — then residence confers consent to be ruled by any government.<sup>31</sup> The argument implies that the libertarian municipalists must obey our existing governments today, since they reside in their territories, although at some point their revolution will have to include illegal action including an unpredictable degree of violence, as the ex-Director admits.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, if the residence argument is valid, Bookchin is legally and morally obligated to renounce libertarian municipalism.

As Bookchin admits, “scores of libertarians” — actually, all of them — “have made this objection to democracy time and again.” Exactly: anarchism is avowedly anti-democratic. This is Malatesta’s version of the objection:

We do not recognise the right of the majority to impose the law on the minority, even if the will of the majority in somewhat complicated issues could really be ascertained. The fact of having the majority on one’s side does not in any way prove that one must be right. Indeed, humanity has always advanced through the initiative and efforts of individuals and minorities, whereas the majority, by its very nature, is slow, conservative, submissive to superior force and to established privileges.<sup>33</sup>

David Miller summarizes the position in an encyclopedia article on anarchism: “No anarchist would allow the minority to be forced to comply with the majority decision. To force compliance would be to reintroduce coercive authority, the hallmark of the state.”<sup>34</sup> Albert Parsons put it more colorfully: “Whether government consists of one over the million, or the million over the one, an anarchist is opposed to the rule of majorities as well as minorities.”<sup>35</sup> Majority rule comes down to might-makes-right.<sup>36</sup>

Coercion is the question. The majority can do whatever it pleases — with itself. In a further irrelevance, Bookchin demands to know how to make decisions if not by majority — the standard statist query, as noted by Robert Paul Wolff.<sup>37</sup> Not tarrying for an answer, the Director Emeritus launches into a long Thersitical tirade against consensus decision-making, as illustrated by what must be a personalistic, self-serving account of the Clamshell Alliance.<sup>38</sup> Consensus must have been frustrating for someone with Bookchin’s will to power, but an argument against consensus is not an argument for majority rule. He hates it so much that he calls it “degrading, not ‘democratic’” (!) because it elevates quantity over quality.<sup>39</sup> Plato or Nietzsche — I was about to write, “couldn’t have said it any better,” but, of course, they did.

There are other possibilities, including temporary inaction<sup>40</sup> and temporary separation. Brian Martin advocates demarchy, the random selection from volunteers of the members of functional

---

1991), 296.

<sup>31</sup>Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, 73–74 & ch. 4; Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, 225–232; Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 7–8.

<sup>32</sup>“Interview with Bookchin,” 163.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.; Richards, ed., *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, 72.

<sup>34</sup>David Miller, *Encyclopedia of Democracy*, q/v “Anarchism.”

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Berman, ed., *Quotations from the Anarchists*, 42.

<sup>36</sup>John Badcock, Jr., *Slaves to Duty* (Colorado Springs, CO: Ralph Myles Publisher, 1972), 10.

<sup>37</sup>Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, 42.

<sup>38</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 147–150.

<sup>39</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 337.

<sup>40</sup>Caroline Estes, “Consensus,” in Ehrlich & Ehrlich, eds., *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, 372.

decision-making groups. Barbara Goodwin proposes selection by lottery for a wide range of positions besides juror.<sup>41</sup> The decision-rule might not be that important in structures like those proposed by Vaclav Havel, which are “open, dynamic, and small” — and temporary.<sup>42</sup> The best method is, “whenever possible a solution is to be found whereby majority and minority can each follow their own policy and combine only to avoid clashes and mutual interference” (Giovanni Baldelli).<sup>43</sup>

Malatesta points out the obvious: “In our opinion, therefore, it is necessary that majority and minority should succeed in living together peaceably and profitably by mutual agreement and compromise, by the intelligent recognition of the practical necessities of communal life and of the usefulness of concessions which circumstances make necessary.” He also suggested arbitration, but expected it to be as occasional as formal voting. If separate options are impossible; if differences in opinion aren’t worth splitting up over; if “the duty of solidarity” argues for unity; *then* the minority should recede, but even then, only voluntarily.<sup>44</sup> Still another possibility is taking turns. In contrast, “democracy, as usually understood, does not include such a notion.”<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, majority rule was not really even the Athenian ideal, only the practice. The ideal was consensus; it is not clear if even a majority of issues was put to a vote. And as a matter of fact, according to the Director Emeritus, until the late 1960s, Vermont “town-meeting discussions favored a decent measure of public consensus”!<sup>46</sup>

Anarchists recognize consensus decision-making to be consistent with — not necessarily ordained by — their principles whereas majority rule is not. Some may be surprised to learn that it is also the only decision rule which is Pareto-optimal.<sup>47</sup> The ex-Director’s ego aside, the utility of consensus depends on the social setting. If the Commune is as organic as promised, the citizens, in making decisions, will decide not merely on the merits of a proposal but give due consideration to the effects of a decision on their continuing relationships with one another.<sup>48</sup> In small communities without much socioeconomic differentiation, relationships are commonly, using Max Gluckman’s term, “multiplex,” multipurpose — the guy next door is not just a neighbor, he is a

---

<sup>41</sup>Martin, “Demarchy,” 131–135; Barbara Goodwin, *Justice by Lottery* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); John Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible? The Alternative to Electoral Politics* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1985), ch. 5.

<sup>42</sup>Vaclav Havel, “Politics and Conscience,” in *Living in Truth* (Boston, MA: Faber & Faber, 1986), 118.

<sup>43</sup>Baldelli, *Social Anarchism*, 96. Baldelli goes on to point out that in order to make political equality real, those outvoted should be compensated with extra power in making some other decision. If in practice this means that “no government is possible,” then, well, no government is possible (no ethical government, that is). Id.

<sup>44</sup>Richards, ed., *Malatesta: Life and Ideas*, 72 (quoted); Errico Malatesta, *Fra Contadini: A Dialogue on Anarchy*, tr. Jean Weir (London: Bratach Dubh Editions, 1980), 36–37; Malatesta quoted in Andrea Crociani, “What I Know About Errico Malatesta,” *Flash Art* 50(666) (2002), 19.

<sup>45</sup>Steven Lee, “A Paradox of Democracy,” *Public Affairs Quarterly* 15(3) (July 2001), 264.

<sup>46</sup>Held, *Models of Democracy*, 21; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 272. How does the ex-Director know this? He didn’t move to Vermont until 1970. The Golden Age is always in the past.

<sup>47</sup>David Graeber, “For a New Anarchism,” *New Left Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 13 (Jan.-Feb. 2002), 71–72; Howard J. Ehrlich, Carol Ehrlich, David DeLeon, and Glenda Morris, “Questions and Answers About Anarchism,” in Ehrlich & Ehrlich, eds., *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, 5–6; Estes, “Consensus,” 368–374; Buchanan & Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 188. Pareto-optimality, restated by John Rawls as the “principle of efficiency” to apply to institutions, means that “a configuration is efficient whenever it is impossible to change it so as to make some persons (at least one) better off without at the same time making other persons (at least one) worse off.” Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 57.

<sup>48</sup>C. George Benello, “Group Organization and Socio-Political Structure,” in *The Case for Participatory Democracy: Some Prospects for a Radical Society*, ed. C. George Benello & Dimitrios Roussopoulos (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971), 44–45.

fellow parishioner, an occasional hired hand, a creditor, perhaps a second cousin, etc.<sup>49</sup> Thus the New England town meetings were not, in practice, direct democracies: in their “disdain for direct democracy,” they aspired to, and in large measure achieved, consensus. Debate and division were rare.<sup>50</sup>

In a genuinely organic society, consensus need not be difficult to arrive at. Among the Basseri tribesmen of southern Iran, who are pastoral nomads, camps of 10–40 tents are for most of the year the primary communities. Every day, the all-important decision how far to move, and where, is made unanimously by the household heads. Annual assemblies of thousands of Montenegrin tribesmen made generally realistic political decisions by consensus.<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly the Clamshell Alliance professed a communal *ideology*, but in reality it was a single-purpose interest group whose members associated instrumentally for a relatively narrow political purpose. Consensus in such an organization is likely to become a formality.

Although the Director Emeritus has no argument for majority rule, he quotes the most famous argument for direct democracy, from Rousseau, “the true founder of modern reaction,” as Bakunin called him:

Sovereignty, for the same reason as makes it inalienable, cannot be represented; it lies essentially in the general will, and will does not admit of representation: it is either the same, or other; there is no intermediate possibility. The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be its representatives: they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive acts. Every law the people has not ratified in person is null and void — is, in fact, not a law. The people of England regards itself as free: but it is grossly mistaken: it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing.<sup>52</sup>

Rousseau’s famous argument is no argument at all. It begs the question. Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated. Why not? Because “it consists essentially of the general will, and will cannot be represented.” Why not? Never mind about “sovereignty,” whether will *can* be represented is precisely the question. To say that laws passed by representatives are void is a deduction from a conclusion, not an argument in its support. “General” means “universal,” unanimous, so, as Jeremy Bentham says, by this reasoning, all laws have always been void.<sup>53</sup> If it means something else, as it seems to, “general will” must be “metaphorical language,” something Bookchin detests, because will is an attribute of individuals. J.P. Pla-

---

<sup>49</sup>Max Gluckman, *The Judicial Process Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1967), 18–20.

<sup>50</sup>Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms*, 93–106, 98 (quoted); Zuckerman, “The Social Context of Democracy in Massachusetts,” 527, 539. In the 1778 balloting for the state constitution, over half the towns voted unanimously. Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms*, 106.

<sup>51</sup>Frederik Barth, *Nomads of South Persia: The Basseri Tribe of the Khamseh Confederacy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 25–26, 127; Boehm, *Montenegrin Social Organization and Values*, ch. 12.

<sup>52</sup>Bakunin quoted in Robert A. Nisbet, *Community and Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 181; Rousseau, “Social Contract,” 94 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 174.

<sup>53</sup>Bentham, “Anarchical Fallacies,” 509. Bentham is parsing the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, a thoroughly Rousseauian instrument.

menatz points out that Rousseau treats as the general will the common good, which is not really will at all. Even the Director Emeritus hints that the concept is dubious.<sup>54</sup>

Now you can make a case, in my opinion a very good one, that will *will not* be represented, for all the reasons discussed in my critique of delegation by direct democracies, arguing for the tendency of delegates to evolve into representatives. Even if they did not, though, Rousseau's argument, such as it is, applies in both situations. If English subjects are only free when they vote for a representative, Communal citizens are only free when they vote for a delegate, or for a policy: "Once the election has been completed, they revert to a condition of slavery: they are nothing." Delegates may have less opportunity to substitute their own wills than representatives, but the difference is only in degree, and there is no other difference. Both face a possible future reckoning if they betray their trust, but between now and the future, they are sovereign and the voters are slaves. Bookchin, who is absurdly lacking in a sense of the absurd, does not appreciate that Rousseau is presenting an argument *ad absurdum* against direct democracy, as is quite obvious from his endorsement of elective aristocracy elsewhere in the same essay. Democracy, for him, is simply impossible:

If we take the term in the strict sense, there never has been a real democracy, and there never will be. It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed. It is unimaginable that the people should remain continually assembled to devote their time to public affairs, and it is clear that they cannot set up commissions for that purpose without the form of administration being changed.<sup>55</sup>

Not only does Rousseau's argument against representation also refute delegation, it refutes direct democracy too (if it refutes anything). Just as laws which "the People" have not ratified in person are null and void, laws which *people* have not ratified in person are null and void. The latter is, in fact, the better argument, because identifiable people exist in the same straightforward way that tables and chairs exist; but if *the* People means something else than the individual people, it is some sort of metaphysical if not mystical intellectual construct requiring independent demonstration. Only the individual can consent to be governed because, as anarchists contend, no amount of expatiation upon man's social nature alters the reality that the individual is real in a way that an abstraction like society is not.<sup>56</sup> William Godwin saw the implications of Rousseau's position:

If government be founded in the consent of the people, then it can have no power over any individual by whom that consent is refused. If a tacit consent be not sufficient, still less can I be deemed to have consented to a measure upon which I put an express negative. This immediately follows from the observations of Rousseau. If the people, or the individuals of which the people is constituted, cannot delegate their authority to a representative, neither can any individual delegate his authority to a majority, in an assembly of which he himself is a member.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, 29–32, 32 (quoted); Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 174. As a matter of fact, the very concept of will (as an occult mental faculty) is dubious. Ryle, *Concept of Mind*, ch. 3.

<sup>55</sup>Read, *Anarchy & Order*, 130–131; Michels, *Political Parties*, 73–74; Rousseau, "Social Contract," 67–68, 65 (quoted).

<sup>56</sup>"Anarchism: What It Really Stands For," *Red Emma Speaks*, 88.

<sup>57</sup>Godwin, *Political Justice*, 216. For a similar argument that a man can delegate "no legislative power whatever —

If Rousseau is right, no one can rightfully submit to majority rule *even if he wants to*. Because he never understood Rousseau's argument in the first place, recourse to Rousseau has left Bookchin worse off than before.

Consider the arguments against democracy.

1. The majority isn't always right. As Thoreau, Bakunin, Tucker, Malatesta and Goldman said, democracy does not assure correct decisions. There's no evidence for the claim, heard since Aristotle, that a multiplicity of decision-makers makes better decisions. Clearly corporations, unions, parties, families, and many other voluntary associations don't think so: in the private sector, oligarchy is the norm. It is even mathematically demonstrable (but not by me) that majority decision-making generates inefficient, socially wasteful, more or less self-defeating decisions.<sup>58</sup> Besides, why should anyone accept a decision he knows his wrong?
2. Democracy does not, as is sometimes promised, give everyone the right to influence the decisions affecting him, because a person who voted on the losing side had no influence on that decision. As Thoreau says, "a minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then."<sup>59</sup> Hobbes anticipated him: "And if the Representative consist of many men, the voyce of the greater number, must be considered the voyce of them all. For if the lesser number pronounce (for example) in the Negative, there will be Negatives more than enough to destroy the Affirmatives; and thereby the excesse of Negatives, standing uncontradicted, are the onely voyce the Representative hath."<sup>60</sup> "The numerical majority," wrote John C. Calhoun, "is as truly a *single power* — and excludes the negative as completely as the absolute government of one or a few."<sup>61</sup>
3. Democracy, especially in small constituencies, lends itself to the disempowerment of permanent minorities, who occupy the same position in the democracy as they would in a despotism. Shifting majorities only make it less likely, not unlikely, for some group to be always opposed to the winning gang.<sup>62</sup> In the American democracy, it has long been well-known, even to the Supreme Court in 1938, that "discrete and insular minorities" are at a political disadvantage beyond the mere fact (which is disadvantage enough) that they are minorities. And the smaller the constituency, the more likely that many interests may be represented "by numbers so small as to be less than the minimum necessary for defense of those interests in any setting."<sup>63</sup>

---

over himself or anybody else, to any man, or body of men," see Lysander Spooner, "A Letter to Thomas F. Bayard," *No Treason*, 51–52.

<sup>58</sup>McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, 120–127; Buchanan & Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 169; Elaine Spitz, *Majority Rule* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1984), 153; Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, 54–55.

<sup>59</sup>Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 231.

<sup>60</sup>Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 221.

<sup>61</sup>John C. Calhoun, *Disquisitions on Government and Selections from the Discourses* (Indianapolis, IN & New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1953), 29.

<sup>62</sup>Spitz, *Majority Rule*, 183; Juerg Steiner, "Decision-Making," in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 130–131.

<sup>63</sup>United States v. Carolene Products Co., 304 U.S. 144, 152–153 n. 4 (1938) (quoted); McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, 105 (quoted), 109.

4. Majority rule ignores the urgency of preferences. Preference varies in intensity, but it is not at all clear that consent varies in intensity. The vote of a person who has only a slight preference for a man or measure counts the same as the vote of someone passionately opposed: “A majority with slight preferences one way may outvote almost as many strong preferences the other way.” There could even be, as noted, a permanently frustrated minority, which is a source of instability. To put it another way, the opportunity to influence a decision is not proportionate to one’s legitimate interest in the outcome.<sup>64</sup> Democratic theorists usually ignore the issue or, like John Rawls, wave it away by dogmatizing that “this criticism rests upon the mistaken view that the intensity of desire is a relevant consideration in enacting legislation.” His Holiness notwithstanding, “the intensity question is absolutely vital to the stability of democratic systems.” — and a question to which pure majoritarian democracy has no answer.<sup>65</sup>

Rousseau at least addressed a related issue: he thought that “the more grave and important the questions discussed, the nearer should the opinion that is to prevail approach unanimity.”<sup>66</sup> But there is no way in which a priori to decide the importance of future questions. The question how important the question is has to be decided first, and the majority may well rule a question to be unimportant to make sure it will be answered as the majority wishes: “If the participants disagree on the voting rules, they may first have to vote on these rules. But they may disagree on how to vote on the voting rules, which may make voting impossible as the decision on how to vote is pushed further and further back.” Elsewhere in the same essay, Rousseau inconsistently asserts that “it is consequently against the nature of the body politic for a Sovereign to impose on itself a law which it cannot infringe.” By definition the sovereign power is absolute.<sup>67</sup>

5. Collective all-or-nothing balloting is irrational. A decision made on a momentous matter by a single vote is as valid as a unanimous vote on a trifle. That extreme rarity, the *one time* one’s vote makes a difference, is the very same situation — monarchy, autocracy, one-man rule — that democracy is supposed to be an improvement on!
6. Majority rule is not usually even what it purports to be; it rarely means literally the majority of the citizens.<sup>68</sup> Usually the majority of a majority means plurality rule,<sup>69</sup> in other words, the rule of the momentarily largest minority, which might be rather small. As Rousseau, champion of direct democracy, stated, “however small any State may be, civil societies are always too populous to be under the immediate government of all their members.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup>Jeremy Waldron, *The Dignity of Legislation* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 132, 142–143; Buchanan & Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 125–127, 132–133; Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 91–99; Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, 88–89; Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible?*, 5, 83 (quoted).

<sup>65</sup>Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 230 (quoted); Benjamin Barber, *The Conquest of Politics: Liberal Philosophy in Democratic Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 79 (quoted); Willmoore Kendall & George W. Carey, “The ‘Intensity’ Problem and Democratic Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 62(1) (March 1968): 5–24.

<sup>66</sup>Rousseau, “Social Contract,” 107.

<sup>67</sup>Rousseau, “Social Contract,” 16 (quoted), 28; Steiner, “Decision-Making,” 130 (quoted).

<sup>68</sup>Spitz, *Majority Rule*, 3.

<sup>69</sup>John Stuart Mill, “Representative Government,” in *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company & London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1951), 346–347; Barclay, *People Without Government*, 118.

<sup>70</sup>Rousseau, “Discourse on Political Economy,” 313.



7. Where voting is by electoral districts, outcomes are arbitrary because the boundaries of the districts determine the composition of their electorates. Redraw the boundaries and today's majority may become tomorrow's minority and vice versa, although no one has changed his mind about any policy. In a democracy, "the definition of the constituency within which the count is taken is a matter of primary importance," but democratic theory is unable to say who should be included in an electorate.<sup>71</sup> The smaller and more numerous the districts are, the greater the arbitrariness of majority rule. Thus Bookchin's Communes are extremely arbitrary. They may even fall prey to the absurdity of neighborhood irredentism.
8. Then there is the Voter's Paradox, a technical but very real contradiction in democracy discovered by Condorcet before the French Revolution. In every situation where two or more voters choose from three or more alternatives, if the voters choose consistently, the majority preference may be determined solely by the order in which the alternatives are voted on. It can happen that A is preferred to B, B is preferred to C, yet C is preferred to A!<sup>72</sup> This is no mere theoretical possibility: it has happened in real votes. There are, in fact, a number of these voting paradoxes. Under ideal conditions, majority rule almost always produces these cyclical preference orders. In fact, "the various equilibrium conditions for majority rule are incompatible with even a very modest degree of heterogeneity of tastes, and for most purposes are not significantly less restrictive than the extreme condition of complete unanimity of individual preferences."<sup>73</sup> What that means is that whoever controls the agenda controls the vote, or, at least, "that making agendas seems just about as significant as actually passing legislation."<sup>74</sup> Bookchin never talks about this. It is fitting that a

<sup>71</sup>Peter J. Taylor, Graham Gudgin, & R.J. Johnston, "The Geography of Representation: A Review of Recent Findings," in *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, ed. Bernard Grofman & Aren Lijphart (New York: Agathon Press, 1986), 183–184; McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, 92 (quoted); Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, 97–99; Bruce E. Cain, *The Reapportionment Puzzle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 36–37.

<sup>72</sup>Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 2–3, 94–95; "An Essay on the Application of Probability Theory to Plurality Decision-Making (1785)," in *Condorcet: Foundations of Social Choice and Political Theory*, tr. & ed. Iain McLean & Fiona Hewitt (Aldershot, Hants., England & Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1994), 120–130. It is interesting that leading early American democrats such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison owned this work. Paul Merrill Spurlin, *The French Enlightenment in America: Essays on the Times of the Founding Fathers* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 122–123. Dodgson invented the notion of "None of the Above" as a ballot option. "A Method of Taking Votes on More Than Two Issues," in *The Political Pamphlets and Letters of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Related Pieces: A Mathematical Approach*, ed. Francine F. Abeles (New York: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 2001), 95. Since Arrow's impossibility theorem, "the theoretical case that elections can assure desirable outcomes was dealt a blow from which it is unlikely ever to recover fully." William R. Keech, "Thinking About the Length and Renewability of Electoral Terms," in Grofman & Lijphart, eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, 104.

<sup>73</sup>William H. Riker & Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutional Regulation of Legislative Choice: The Political Consequences of Judicial Deference to Legislatures," *Working Papers in Political Science* No. P-86-11 (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1986), 13–18 (real-life examples of perpetual cyclical majorities); Hanno Nurmi, *Voting Paradoxes and How to Deal With Them* (Berlin, Germany: Springer, 1999); Peter C. Fishburn, "Paradoxes of Voting," *American Political Science Review* 68(2) (June 1974): 537–546 (five more paradoxes); Gerald H. Kramer, "On a Class of Equilibrium Conditions for Majority Rule," *Econometrica* 41(2) (March 1973), 285 (quoted). The only reason cyclical preference orders are not more common in real life is the influence of other undemocratic practices such as log-rolling (see below).

<sup>74</sup>Ian Shapiro, "Three Fallacies Concerning Majorities, Minorities, and Democratic Politics," in *NOMOS XXIII: Majorities and Minorities*, ed. John W. Chapman & Alan Wertheimer (New York & London: New York University Press, 1990), 97; William H. Riker, "Introduction," *Agenda Formation*, ed. William H. Riker (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 1 (quoted).

19<sup>th</sup> century mathematician who wrote on the phenomenon he called cyclical majorities also wrote under the name Lewis Carroll.<sup>75</sup> He came by his sense of the absurd honestly.

9. Another well-known method for thwarting majority rule with voting is logrolling. It represents an exchange of votes between factions. Each group votes for the other group's measure, a measure which would otherwise be defeated because each group is in the minority. (Note that this is *not* a compromise because the measures are unrelated.)<sup>76</sup> In a sense, logrolling facilitates some accommodation of the urgency of preferences, since a faction only trades its votes for votes it values more highly, but it does so through bribery and to the detriment of deliberative democracy. And those whose votes are unnecessary may be excluded from the logrolling process.<sup>77</sup> The interstate highway system in Bookchin's halloved Switserland was built by explicit logrolling among cantons,<sup>78</sup> so the practice occurs in direct as well as representative democracies.
10. In the unlikely event a legislative body eschews logrolling, it will probably succumb to gridlock. Take the ex-Director's favorite example, the building of a road. If three groups want a road but not in their back yards, they will gang up to scotch the project.<sup>79</sup> That is an even worse outcome than with logrolling, where at least the road gets built somewhere.
11. Democracy, especially direct democracy, promotes disharmonious, antisocial attitudes. The psychology of the *ekklesia* (assembly) is the psychology of the *agora* (marketplace): "Voters and customers are essentially the same people. Mr. Smith buys and votes; he is the same man in the supermarket and the voting booth."<sup>80</sup> Capitalism and democracy rose together as the goals of the same class, the bourgeoisie, which made a common world of selfish individualism — an arena of competition, not a field of cooperation. Furthermore, democracy, like litigation, is an adversarial decision method: "Majority rule belongs to a combat theory of politics. It is a contest between opposing forces, and the outcome is victory for one side and defeat for the other." Indeed, in one aspect, as Georg Simmel noticed, majority rule is really the substituted equivalent of force. Literally having to face an opponent publicly may provoke aggression, anger and competitive feelings.<sup>81</sup> In a winner-take-all system

---

<sup>75</sup>"Method of Taking Votes on More Than Two Issues," 46–58; Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, 59–63; Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 94.

<sup>76</sup>Buchanan & Tullock, *Calculus of Consent*, 132–133; Burnheim, *Is Democracy Possible?*, 6; McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy*, 111–112.

<sup>77</sup>John T. Noonan, Jr., *Bribery* (New York: Macmillan & London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1984), 580; Clayton P. Gillette, "Equality and Variety in the Delivery of Municipal Services," *Harvard Law Review* 100(1) (Nov. 1986), 959. In 12<sup>th</sup> century Italy, Genoa and Pistoia prohibited logrolling in consular elections. Martines, *Power and Imagination*, 29. The two-thirds majority for the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery was obtained by logrolling. Noonan, *Bribery*, 456–458.

<sup>78</sup>Gordon Tullock, *The Vote Motive* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1976), 45–46. Referenda, another expression of direct democracy, provide "the clearest example" of logrolling, putting to a single vote unrelated works projects grouped together to appeal to a majority. *Ibid.*, 48–49.

<sup>79</sup>Nicholas Rescher, "Risking D: Problems of Political Decision," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 13(4) (Oct. 1999), 298.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 5. Moral considerations aside (where they belong), majority rule with logrolling may lead to inefficient outcomes — peak efficiency requires, surprisingly, supermajorities: "Majority rule is thus generally not optimal." *Ibid.*, 51–55, 55 (quoted).

<sup>81</sup>Spitz, *Majority Rule*, 192 (quoted); Arend Lijphart, "Consensus Democracy," in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 90 (majoritarian democracy is "exclusive, competitive and adversarial"); "The Phenomenon of Outvoting," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, 241–242; Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 273.

there is no incentive to compensate or conciliate defeated minorities, who have been told, in effect, that not only do they not get their way, they are *wrong*. The unaccountable majority is arrogant; the defeated minority is resentful.<sup>82</sup> Coercive voting promotes polarization and hardens positions; deliberation “can bring differences to the surface, widening rather than narrowing them.”<sup>83</sup> These consequences, muted in systems of large-scale, secret voting in not-too-frequent elections, are accentuated by the Communal combination of very small electorates, extremely frequent elections, and public voting. Citizens will take their animosities and ulcers home with them and out into everyday life. Elections are undesirable everywhere, but nowhere would they be more destructive of community than in the ex-Director’s little face-to-face Communes.

12. Even where voting is voluntary, elections either coerce nonvoters or deny them equality. The validity of this apparent paradox is illustrated by an anecdote about elections in Prussia. Bismarck toyed with the idea of counting all nonvoters as voting for the government candidates.<sup>84</sup> Outrageous? Is it all that different from the elections we have now? In effect, the majority votes the proxies of the nonvoters. The nonvoter cannot oppose the system without becoming a part of what he is opposed to. There can be no equality for anarchists, for instance, in a democracy.
13. Another source of majority irresponsibility is the felt frivolity of voting, its element of chance and arbitrariness. As Thoreau (quoted by Emma Goldman) put it, “All voting is a sort of gaming, like chequers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it.”<sup>85</sup> The popularity of student government and Model UN confirms that there is a ludic element to deliberative decision-making which is independent of consequences. Here is another interest the delegates share with each other, but not with their constituents. Voting is a contest umpired by the majority with sometimes high stakes. To the extent that the assembled citizens are playing games with each other, that winning for its own sake (or for how you play the game, for that matter) is any part of their motivation, the quality of decision-making is reduced still further and the humiliation of submission to majority rule is that much deepened.
14. To these objections, generic to democracy, direct democracy adds its special defects. One which is not peculiar to direct democracy but is carried to extremes there is malapportionment or, when it is intentional, gerrymandering. Because Bookchin imagines the building

---

Manfield adds that because it is distressing to face a hostile majority, the meeting exerts pressure for conformity. Not the least of the many serious inequalities which inhere in the assembly is the inequality between extraverts and introverts. Assembly government discourages attendance by the kind of person who does not like to be in the same room with Murray Bookchin.

<sup>82</sup>“To see the proposal of a man whom we despise preferred to our own; to see our wisdom ignored before our eyes; to incur certain enmity in an uncertain struggle for empty glory; to hate and be hated because of differences of opinion (which cannot be avoided, whether we win or lose); to reveal our plans and wishes when there is no need to and to get nothing by it; to neglect our private affairs. These, I say, are disadvantages.” Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 120.

<sup>83</sup>Ian Shapiro, “Optimal Participation?” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10(2) (June 2002), 198–199.

<sup>84</sup>Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Process of Development* (New York: David McKay Company & Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1970), 31.

<sup>85</sup>Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience,” 226, quoted in Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” 60; Waldron, *Dignity*

blocks of society to be “organic” neighborhoods and so forth, these face-to-face units will not be of equal population. That Bookchin emphatically prioritizes the integrity of these units over one-man, one-vote is apparent from his discussion of the lower house of the Vermont legislature. Until the 1960s, legislators were elected from townships (effectively, he claims, from municipalities), not from electoral districts based on population. This meant that legislators represented unequal numbers of constituents and, in particular, that rural populations were overrepresented, but that’s okay, “politics was conducted in a more organic fashion than it is today.” The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Baker v. Carr* (1962) eliminated the system, mandating equality. Bookchin prefers the old system.<sup>86</sup>

15. If the face-to-face units were autarchic, it would be nobody’s business but theirs how many people they included. But their delegates to the level of the municipal council and beyond will speak for more or less citizens than others but cast equal votes. In a federal system of units of unequal population, voting equality for the units means voting inequality for individuals. Bookchin doesn’t care, but as Mencken wrote, “it must be plain that a community whose votes, man for man, count for only half as much as the votes of another community is one in which half of the citizens are, to every practical intent, unable to vote at all.”<sup>87</sup> The single-member, simple-plurality system evidently contemplated by the Director Emeritus is the least proportionate of all voting systems.<sup>88</sup> The inequality will be compounded at every higher level. In claiming that the entire confederal system produces majority decisions, the Director Emeritus affirms the impossible as an article of faith.<sup>89</sup>
16. Direct democracy, to an even greater degree than representative democracy, encourages emotional, irrational decision-making. The face-to-face context engenders strong interpersonal psychological influences which are, at best, extraneous to decision-making on the merits. The crowd is susceptible to orators and stars, and intolerant of contradiction.<sup>90</sup> The speakers, in the limited time allotted to them, sacrifice reasoning to persuasion whenever they have to choose. As Hobbes wrote, the speakers begin not from true principles but from “commonly accepted opinions, which are for the most part usually false, and they do not try to make their discourse correspond to the nature of things but to the passions of men’s hearts. The result is that votes are cast not on the basis of correct reasoning but on emotional impulse.”<sup>91</sup> Dissenters feel intimidated, as they were, for instance, when the Athenian assembly voted for the Sicilian expedition: “The result of this excessive enthusiasm of the majority was that the few who were actually opposed to the expedition were afraid of being thought unpatriotic if they voted against it, and therefore kept quiet” (Thucydides).<sup>92</sup> Democracy is the same today, as I am reminded when I notice I am writing this passage in the early hours of September 11, 2002.

---

*of Legislation*, 126–127.

<sup>86</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 272–273; *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962).

<sup>87</sup>Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, 83–84; H.L. Mencken, *Notes on Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 89 (quoted).

<sup>88</sup>Sally Burch, “Electoral Systems,” in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 264.

<sup>89</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 314.

<sup>90</sup>Michels, *Political Parties*, 64, 98–102.

<sup>91</sup>Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 123.

<sup>92</sup>Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 425.

17. A specific, experimentally validated emotional influence vitiating democracy is group pressure to conform. It was strikingly demonstrated in a famous experiment by Solomon Asch. Each of seven to nine subjects was asked to compare a series of lines and in each case identify the two that were equal in length. For each comparison it was obvious, even extremely obvious, which lines matched — but time after time every member of the group gave the same wrong answer except the only subject who was unaware of the real purpose of the experiment. In these circumstances, *fifty-eight percent* of the test subjects changed their answer to agree with the unanimous majority. Even when subjects were each given one ally, *thirteen percent* of the subjects agreed with the group instead of the evidence of their senses.<sup>93</sup> Some of the conformists actually changed their perceptions, but most simply decided that the group must be right, no matter how strong was the evidence that it was wrong. You might say the conformists emphatically prioritized the social over the individual.
  
18. Another inherent flaw in direct democracy, remarked upon by Hegel and in part a consequence of the previous one, is the inconstancy of policy. This covers really two arguments against democracy. What the assembly does at one meeting it may undo at the next, whether because citizens have changed their minds or because a different mix of people shows up. This often happened at Athens. For example, the assembly voted to give the Mytilenians, whose revolt had been crushed, the Melian treatment: death for the men, slavery for the women and children. The judgment was reversed the next day, and so only the Mytilenians held mainly responsible — over 1,000 of them — were executed.<sup>94</sup>

It is bad enough if the composition of the assembly fluctuates randomly or because of politically extraneous factors, as the weather, for instance, influences American election outcomes by influencing voter turnout<sup>95</sup> (higher proportions of Democrats turn out in good weather). But it might well turn on deliberate mobilization by a dissatisfied faction. This, too, happened in Athens. The general Nicias, addressing the assembly in opposition to the proposed Sicilian expedition, stated: “It is with real alarm that I see this young man’s [Alcibiades’] party sitting at his side in this assembly all called in to support him, and I, on my side, call for the support of the older men among you.” A line in Aristophanes also attests to bloc voting in the assembly.<sup>96</sup> Hobbes observed that “when the votes are sufficiently close for the defeated to have hopes of winning a majority at a subsequent meeting if a few men swing round to their way of thinking, their leaders get them all together, and they hold a private discussion on how to revoke the measure that has just been passed. They resolve among themselves to attend the next meeting in large numbers and to be there first; they arrange what each should say and in what order, so that the question may be brought up again, and the decision that was made when their opponents there in strength may be reversed when they fail to show.”<sup>97</sup>

Hobbes exactly describes how Samuel Adams manipulated another assembly, the Boston town meeting, at prior private meetings of his faction at the Caucus Club: “Caucusing involved the

<sup>93</sup>Solomon E. Asch, *Social Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1952), 458, 477.

<sup>94</sup>Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern*, 52; Hegel, “On the English Reform Bill,” 235; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 212–223.

<sup>95</sup>Hardin, “Participation,” 487.

<sup>96</sup>Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 417 (quoted); Aristophanes, “Ecclesiazusai,” 256.

<sup>97</sup>Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 124.

widest prevision of problems that might arise and the narrowest choice of response to each possibility; who would speak to any issue, and what he would say; with the clubmen's general consent guaranteed, ahead of time, to both choice of speaker and what the speaker's message would be." Cousin John Adams was astonished, after many years of attending town meetings, to learn of this: "There they drink flip, I suppose, and there they choose a moderator who puts questions to the vote regularly, and selectmen, assessors, wardens, fire wards, and representatives are regularly chosen before they are chosen by the town."<sup>98</sup> Exactly the same methods of manipulation were practiced in the Athenian assembly.<sup>99</sup> Characterizing the Adams caucus as a political machine is not original to me. Direct democracy is well suited to machine politics: "The powerful town meeting named the many municipal officials, determined taxes and assessments, and adopted public service projects that were a rich source of jobs and economic largesse. For years the original Caucus and its allies in the Merchants Club had acted as the unofficial directing body of the town meeting in which Caucus stalwart Sam Adams played a key role."<sup>100</sup> This is democracy in action.

What Hobbes is talking about, as he proceeds to say, is faction, which he defines as "a sort of effort and hard work, which they use to *fashion* people."<sup>101</sup> His account complements James Madison's statement, previously quoted, that direct democracy promotes factionalism. Bookchin professes to loathe political parties, and he takes for granted their absence from the Commune. Why? An organization of organizers of votes serves a purpose (its own) in any legislature. Parties could play central roles in a direct democracy, maybe greater roles than in representative democracy.<sup>102</sup> Almost every Commune will commence operations with at least one faction: the Organization. Further factions may form by splits within the Organization or may arise outside of and opposed to it. Bookchin himself says so at one point.<sup>103</sup> But the Organization will enjoy a tremendous home court advantage. Only the naïve will simply walk into the assembly with a proposal. The more sophisticated will first approach Organization *rhetores* to secure their support and, if possible, their sponsorship, just as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century people took their problems first to the urban political machines like Tammany Hall or the Daley machine in Chicago.<sup>104</sup> The assembly will be the vanguard party's toga party.

Only regular high turnouts would minimize these arbitrary or manipulated reversals, since if most citizens attend every meeting, most of them who attend one meeting will attend another. But the Director Emeritus has repeatedly assured us of normally low turnouts. The polar possibilities are that all the same people, or all different people, attend the next meeting. If it is all the same

---

<sup>98</sup>Wills, *Inventing America*, 20 (quoted), 23 (quoting John Adams). The Bostonians recreated the smoke-filled room at the Continental Congress, where Jefferson participated: "[Samuel Adams] was constantly holding caucuses of distinguished men, among whom was Richard Henry Lee, at which the generality of the measures pursued were previously determined on, and at which the parts were assigned to the different actors who afterwards appeared in them." *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>99</sup>Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Ancient Athens*, 144–145.

<sup>100</sup>Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence and the American Revolution," in *Essays on the American Revolution*, ed. Stephen G. Kurtz & James H. Hutson (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press & New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 102.

<sup>101</sup>Sinclair, *Democracy and Participation in Ancient Athens*, 144–145.

<sup>102</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 243; Ian Budge, "Direct Democracy," in Clarke & Foweraker, eds., *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, 226.

<sup>103</sup>"Interview with Murray Bookchin," 159.

<sup>104</sup>William L. Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1963), 90–98; Thomas M. Guterbock, *Machine Politics in Transition: Party and Community in Chicago* (Chicago, IL & London: University of Chicago Press, 1990),

people, it is de facto oligarchy. If it is all different people, it is chaos, the only kind of “anarchy” consistent with direct democracy. As previously explained, the outcome will probably be closer — much closer — to oligarchy.

In conclusion, majority rule is as arbitrary as random decision, but not nearly as fair.<sup>105</sup> For a voter, the only difference between the lottery and an election is that he might win the lottery. Better pure chance than “*pure democracy*, or the immediate autocracy of the people,” as Joel Barlow described it.<sup>106</sup> A champion of Swiss direct democracy admits: “Corruption, factionalization, arbitrariness, violence, disregard for law, and an obdurate conservatism that opposed all social and economic progress were pathologies to some extent endemic to the pure democratic life form.”<sup>107</sup>

Democracy produces a particular human type, Democratic Man (and he usually *is* a man). He is easy to spot among American politicians and among the organizers of anarchist federations. He is a gregarious bully and an elitist demagogue. He talks too much. He hasn’t got a real life and doesn’t know what he’s missing. He politicizes everything except those finer things whose existence he cannot imagine. He has wheels in his head. His very psychic processes, such as perception and memory, are the distorted and distorting instruments of his will to power. Thus he might remember his childhood as peopled by obsessives like himself — halcyon days when, as Bookchin fantasizes, “everyone lived on a rich diet of public lectures and meetings.”<sup>108</sup> The principle difference between Democratic Man and a schizophrenic is that the former’s fantasies exhibit less beauty and ingenuity. He’s often a geek and always a freak. He may be a likeable fellow (there are conspicuous exceptions) if you like used-car salesmen, but he gets cross when crossed. Another kind of person may admit that his adversary, too, is honest, even that he might sometimes be right, but — writes Mencken — “such an attitude is palpably impossible to a democrat. His distinguishing mark is the fact that he always attacks his opponents, not only with all arms, but also with snorts and objurgations — that he is always filled with moral indignation — that he is incapable of imagining honor in an antagonist, and hence incapable of honor himself.”<sup>109</sup>

And yet one finds statements that anarchism is democracy, and not only from the likes of Bookchin. For this we have mainly to thank, as for too much else, the conservative anarchist publishers. Ignorant anarchists may even believe, because it’s been droned into them, that Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn are anarchists — not only that, they are said to be influential anarchists. But to his larger (if not very much larger) progressive public, Chomsky keeps his anarchism a secret — an easy secret to keep, since one would never suspect it from hearing his speeches or reading his books of the last 45 years. As an anarchist, Chomsky is a great linguist. But as George Woodcock wrote, “No conception of anarchism is further from the truth than that which regards it as an extreme form of democracy.” With all due respect to Benjamin Tucker, an anarchist is *not* “an unterrified Jeffersonian democrat.”<sup>110</sup> Careless flourishes like these make aberrations like Bookchin and Chomsky possible.

---

ch. 4; Angela Karikas, “Solving Problems in Philadelphia: An Ethnography of a Congressional District Office,” in *No Access to Law: Alternatives to the American Judicial System*, ed. Laura Nadar (New York: Academic Press, 1980): 345–377; Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 70–76.

<sup>105</sup> Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, 44–45.

<sup>106</sup> Barlow, “To His Fellow Citizens of the United States,” 1106.

<sup>107</sup> Barber, *Death of Communal Liberty*, 197.

<sup>108</sup> Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 17.

<sup>109</sup> *The Vintage Mencken*, gathered by Alistair Cooke (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 77.

<sup>110</sup> Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 33 (quoted); Benjamin R. Tucker, *Instead of a Book, by a Man too Busy to Write One* (New

Nearly all anarchists live under democratic regimes. They need not leave for the Third World to find a state to smash — and when they find one there, chances are that Noam Chomsky supports it. Are you anti-imperialist? The *Imperium* is under your feet, from sea to shining sea. The world's only superpower is a democracy. Its democracy is one source of its strength. Democracy is no threat to the status quo anywhere as it is the ideology of the status quo everywhere. As John Held says, “nearly everyone today professes to be a democrat.”<sup>111</sup> And of all these professors, anarchists are the least likely to be believed. Why should a small misunderstood movement try to lose itself in the crowd? Especially if the crowd's echoes of the hegemonic democratic ideology tend to be faint: “Has there ever been so much incessant yammer about democracy, and less real interest in it?” (John Zerzan). I still believe that devotion to democracy is a mile wide and an inch deep, “that after all these years a stifled and suffering populace is weary of the democratic lie.”<sup>112</sup>

And don't tell me that the United States, the defining democracy of modern times, is not a “real” democracy. You scoff when the free-market anarchists say that what we have isn't “real” capitalism since a few economic regulations remain in place. How much more real does capitalism have to be? How much more real does democracy have to be? If direct democracy is different, as often as not the difference is for the worse. Besides, examination of the finest specimens of direct democracy in Murray Bookchin's bestiary confirms, as I have said before, that “there is no reason to believe that there has ever *been* an urban, purely direct democracy or even a reasonable approximation of one. Every known instance has involved a considerable admixture of representative democracy which sooner or later usually subordinated direct democracy where it didn't eliminate it altogether.”<sup>113</sup> The critic was certainly right<sup>114</sup> who noticed before the Director Emeritus did that “a close analysis of the social ecology position is compatible with the democratization and decentralization of the state.”

Bookchin identifies his ideology as a form of Anarcho-Communism. The *Anarcho-* part we have seen to be bogus. The *-Communism* claim is also untenable.

The basis of Bookchin's economics is municipal ownership of the means of production:

What we would try to achieve instead [of private or state ownership] is a *municipalized* economy; one in which the citizens' assembly in each community would control economic life and, through city councils and confederations, decide on economic policy for an entire region. Confederal councils would help work out how best to coordinate the production and distribution of economic life that extends beyond the confines of a given community and, with the consent of the overall majority of the population in a confederal network, see to it that goods and are produced and distributed according to the needs of the citizens in the confederation.

Production and distribution would be administered merely as practical matters, based on an ethics of “from each according to ability, and to each according to need,”

---

York: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1893), 14 (quoted).

<sup>111</sup>Held, *Models of Democracy*, 1 (quoted); Roberts, “Creation of a Legacy,” 82.

<sup>112</sup>Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness*, 204 (quoted); Black, “Left Rites,” *Abolition of Work*, 80 (quoted).

<sup>113</sup>Black, *AAL*, 71. I said “urban” advisedly. I acknowledge the existence of village consensus democracies at some times and places. But never and nowhere a permanent urban majority-vote democracy.

<sup>114</sup>John Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 81 (quoted), 91–93.



the ethic integral to communism. The community would formulate the distribution of goods according to what is available and what individuals and families require.<sup>115</sup>

Before wading into this morass, notice what it is not. It is not political economy, “which deals with human working activity, not from the standpoint of its technical methods and instruments of labor, but from the standpoint of its social form. It deals with *production relations* which are established among people in the process of production.”<sup>116</sup> There is something said here about ownership and distribution, but nothing about social relations, production relations. To put it another way, there is nothing about work. As John Zerzan earned the ex-Director’s ire by saying, “Nowhere does he find fault with the most fundamental dimension of modern living, that of wage-labor and the commodity.”<sup>117</sup> Municipal ownership — the Victorians called it “gaslight socialism” — does no more to transform social roles in the production process than state ownership does. In his essay “Communism,” William Morris spoke of the results of gaslight socialism — among them that “industries may be worked by municipalities for the benefit of both producers and consumers” — as desirable reforms, “but without having made any progress on the *direct* road to Communism.”<sup>118</sup>

For the worker, municipal ownership is consistent with wage-labor, authoritarian management, long hours, time-discipline, and arduous toil. For the employee of the Commune, it will still be true “that the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer.”<sup>119</sup> It will still be true “that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e. does not belong to his essential being; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free physical and mental energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. Hence the worker feels himself when he is not working; when he is working he does not feel himself.”<sup>120</sup> The worker is still alienated in the process and from the product of his labor. Making alienation more concrete, Bookchin finally reveals what that business of negative vs. positive freedom is really about: “Hence, ‘freedom’ is still conceived as freedom *from* labor, not freedom *for* work.”<sup>121</sup>

Even if the promise of free distribution is kept, only consumption is communized. Communism involves the transformation of work into free, creative activity, “the transformation of consciousness and reality on every level, historical and everyday, conscious and unconscious.”<sup>122</sup> Far from realizing themselves through unalienated labor, municipal employees are merely “hands”: “Popular assemblies are the minds of a free society; the administrators of their policies are the hands.”<sup>123</sup> Bookchin wrote that! But, as noted in discussing his favorite example, the building of

---

<sup>115</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 314, 315.

<sup>116</sup>Isaac Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx’s Theory of Value*, tr. Milos Samardzija & Fredy Perlman (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1972), 31.

<sup>117</sup>Zerzan, “Murray Bookchin’s Libertarian Municipalism,” *Future Primitive and Other Essays*, 166.

<sup>118</sup>“Communism,” *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A.L. Morton (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 228, 230.

<sup>119</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in *Early Writings*, 324.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>121</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 263.

<sup>122</sup>Felix Guattari & Toni Negri, *Communists Like Us: New Spaces of Liberty, New Lines of Alliance*, tr. Michael Ryan (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), 9–11, 13 (quoted); Jean Barrot & Francois Martin, *Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1974), 44–45.

<sup>123</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 175.

a road (Chapter —), after all the policymaking, coordination, administration, etc., it still remains for somebody *else* to do the actual work.

But even the promise of free distribution according to the famous formula is foresworn immediately. “The community” would distribute goods according to what various people are deemed by others to “require,” not what they want. If the individual is not free to determine his own requirements, the arrangement is rationing, not free communism. In fact, he is worse off than under capitalism, since now he cannot by any effort of his own increase his share of the social product. If he wants more, he will have to beg for it like a Dickens urchin — “Please, sir, can I have some more?” “The distributing *board of equity*,” says Stirner, “lets me have only what the sense of equity, its *loving* care for all prescribes”: collective wealth is as much a check to the individual as the private wealth of others. Communism (so conceived), “loudly as it always attacks the ‘state,’ what it intends is itself again a state, a *status*, a condition hindering my free movement, a sovereign power over me.”<sup>124</sup> Remarkably, Marx too rejected this crude communism as not the negation but the generalization and completion of private property, a community of labor and an equality of wages paid by “the *community* as universal capitalist.”<sup>125</sup>

Actually, in addition to the community as universal capitalist, the Director Emeritus contemplates coexistence with private capitalists: “Nor does libertarian municipalism intend to eliminate private association as such [sic] — without the familial and economic aspects of life, human existence would be impossible in any society.”<sup>126</sup> To say that the economic aspects of life will remain in the hands of private associations (*i.e.*, corporations) of course completely contradicts municipal control of economic decision-making. It’s easy to see that private business would control more and more of the economy. The Commune by free distribution of necessities would be paying part of the wage bill of business, which could then outbid the Commune for employees. The upshot would be what we have now: a mixed economy of private and state capital. Municipalization would have to take place gradually “in such a way as not to infringe on the proprietary rights of small retail outlets, service establishments, artisan shops, small farms, local manufacturing enterprises, and the like”<sup>127</sup> — in other words, no municipalization of the only enterprises operating on a small enough scale for municipalization to be feasible.

I don’t deny that anarchist explications of communism also tend to be brief, infrequent and vague. I am not faulting Bookchin for not improving on them. I am faulting him for explications which, in addition to being brief and infrequent, are not vague but rather all too distinct in repudiating such principles of communism as are clear. Luigi Galleani, an anarcho-communist of unimpeachable orthodoxy, agreed that communism was about the unmediated satisfaction of needs. But he pointed out that needs were not only variable among individuals, with the satisfaction of each level of needs starting with “the urgency of purely animal, purely physiological needs,” new levels of newly possible experiences engender more complicated and extensive needs, and bring more capacities into play, in a continuing series. From these not terribly controversial psychological assumptions Galleani infers that only the individual can judge his own needs: “Since these needs vary, not only according to time and place, but also according to the temperament, disposition and development of each individual, it is clear that only he or she who experiences

---

<sup>124</sup>Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 228.

<sup>125</sup>Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” 346–347, 347 (quoted).

<sup>126</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 153.

<sup>127</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 275.

and feels them is in a position to appreciate them and to measure adequately the satisfaction they may give.”<sup>128</sup>

Thus communism is the final fulfillment of *individualism*<sup>129</sup> and the final confounding of Bookchin’s mystified straw-man ideology of abstract individualism. It turns out that after all the hand-waving about the abstract, sovereign, bourgeois, selfish, blah blah blah individual, after the fog lifts, the concrete, real individual still stands. He — each one of her — is the measure of all value, for all value is relative to him and so unique to her. The apparent contradiction between individualism and communism rests on a misunderstanding of both.<sup>130</sup> Subjectivity is also objective: the individual *really is* subjective. It is nonsense to speak of “emphatically prioritizing the social over the individual,” as Bookchin does.<sup>131</sup> You may as well speak of prioritizing the chicken over the egg. Anarchy is a “method of individualization.”<sup>132</sup> It aims to combine the greatest individual development with the greatest communal unity.<sup>133</sup>

The Director Emeritus has been downplaying and disparaging the working class since 1947. The class is bourgeoisified.<sup>134</sup> “The classical industrial proletariat” has waned in numbers, class consciousness and political consciousness.<sup>135</sup> Workers *qua* workers are not driven to attack hierarchic society.<sup>136</sup> For revolutionary purposes, the proletariat is *passé*. Transclass political movements are where the action is: “This amounts to saying that workers must see themselves as human beings, not as class beings.”<sup>137</sup> So sure is Bookchin of this that he denied any class content to the French events of 1968, although their major feature by far was the general strike and the factory occupations (see Appendix).<sup>138</sup>

Now I am well-known as a critic of productivism and workerism. I reject class-based social systems like syndicalism and council communism because they caricature class society without abolishing the social division of labor on which it rests. They don’t abolish the commodity form, they only veil it. I reject attempts to reduce the critique of civilization to obsolete, narrow class analyses in an epoch when the sources and manifestations of alienation and its rejoinder, resistance, pervade all institutions of society, not just economic institutions which are increasingly difficult to distinguish from political and ideological institutions anyway. But so long as ours is (among other things) a class society, class struggle has to be part, though not a privileged part, of revolutionary struggle. Workers who want to be free have no choice but to resist — to employ the ex-Director’s pig Latin — *qua* workers. Everyone, whatever his current relation to the mode of production (or lack thereof), has a stake in that struggle.

---

<sup>128</sup>Galleani, *End of Anarchism?* 22–23, 22 (quoted), 23 (quoted).

<sup>129</sup>“Anarchist-Communism,” 35; Jacques Camatte, *Community and Communism in Russia* (London: David Brown, 1978), 18.

<sup>130</sup>Camatte, *Community and Communism in Russia*, 36.

<sup>131</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 5, where this position is falsely attributed to Bakunin, although it is easily refuted by a cursory review of his writings. Guerin, *Anarchism*, 31–32.

<sup>132</sup>Leonard I. Krimerman & Lewis Perry, “Anarchism: The Method of Individualization,” in Krimerman & Perry, eds., *Patterns of Anarchy*, 554–564.

<sup>133</sup>Alan Ritter, *Anarchism: A Theoretical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3 (quoted) & ch. 2.

<sup>134</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 145; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 128, Bookchin, *Spanish Anarchists*, 309.

<sup>135</sup>Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” 32; Bookchin, “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” 3; Heider, *Anarchism*, 58–59, 63.

<sup>136</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 145.

<sup>137</sup>Bookchin, *To Remember Spain*, 31.

<sup>138</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 186–187; Heider, *Anarchism*, 64.

It is easy enough, looking down from the lectern, to tell workers “to see themselves as human beings, not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as ‘proletarians’; as self-affirming individuals, not as ‘masses.’” It is easy enough, looking down from the Acropolis, to tell workers to check their class interests at the door of the assembly and enter “without being burdened by their occupational status.”<sup>139</sup> As if they could unburden themselves of their class status without abolishing it! “The primacy given to economics, an emphasis uniquely characteristic of a market-economy mentality — and most evident, ironically, in socialist and syndicalist ideologies” is not a perverse mistake. It reflects a reality, the primacy of the market economy. That may not be clear to someone who’s been saying for years that only now, perhaps, do we have a fully capitalist economy.<sup>140</sup>

To explain away the historic failure of even the highest forms of Communalism, Bookchin blames exogenous factors:

We cannot interpret the decline of the Athenian *Ecclesia*, the ultimate failure of the Parisian sections, and the waning of the New England town meetings as denying the popular assembly’s feasibility for a future society. These forms of direct democracy were riddled by class conflicts and opposing social interests; they were not institutions free of hierarchy, domination, and egotism.<sup>141</sup>

In other words, democratic forms are compatible with hierarchy, domination and egotism. Thus they are not the means for overcoming hierarchy, domination and egotism. Rather, hierarchy domination and egotism are the means for overcoming direct democracy. Revolution is not about persuading people to ignore their interests, it is about the transformation and satisfaction of their interests. In a society otherwise organized on the basis of self-interest, politics will be based on self-interest, regardless of the form of government. Capitalism has flourished under classical liberalism, corporate liberalism, fascism and Marxism, under ruling ideologies of egotism and under ruling ideologies of sacrifice. It certainly flourished under what Bookchin considers direct democracy, such as the the Hanseatic League (whose whole purpose was trade) and the commercialized New England towns in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Director Emeritus has made clear that the Commune accepts the fundamental institutions of capitalism, such as wage-labor and the market, rejecting little more than the ethos of egotism. It was an historic if limited achievement when proletarian interests, when proletarian “egotism” was accorded a measure of legitimacy. Now the public philosophy will condemn proletarian selfishness. The only legitimate interest is the public interest, which — since “public” is an abstraction — refers to the state. Freedom is now “positive” — freedom to serve the state (and freedom to work). And the state, according to Bookchin, is an end in itself.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup>Bookchin, *To Remember Spain*, 31 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 315 (quoted).

<sup>140</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 136 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 19, 21–22, 277.

<sup>141</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 338.

<sup>142</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 180.

## Chapter 18. The Organization of Power

After ignoring the topic since 1971, the Director Emeritus abruptly places the organization question on the agenda:

Those who wish to overthrow this vast system will require the most careful strategic judgment, the most profound theoretical understanding, and the most dedicated and persistent organized revolutionary groups to even shake the deeply entrenched bourgeois social order. They will need nothing less than a revolutionary socialist *movement*, a well-organized and institutionalized endeavor led by knowledgeable and resolute people who will foment mass resistance and revolution, advance a coherent program, and unite their groups into a visible and identifiable confederation.<sup>1</sup>

As recently as *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (1995), Bookchin wrote nothing about revolutionary organization, not even as a virtue of “The Left That Was.” In Janet Biehl’s *Politics of Social Ecology* (1997) the revolutionary agent is “the movement,” and the only organizations for revolutionaries to work in are municipal shadow institutions. Now the Director Emeritus calls for a vanguard Organization (or Organizations) which “would consist of interlinked affinity groups that would play a leading role in democratic popular assemblies in towns, neighborhoods, and cities.”<sup>2</sup> The throwaway, “affinity groups,” is just a sop to the anarchists. Bookchin “perpetuates all the incompatibilities of a mythic ‘libertarian socialism’ that sprinkles anarchist concepts of decentralized organization with Social Democratic concepts of mass political parties” — Bookchin is talking about Andre Gorz but the words suit the ex-Director exactly.<sup>3</sup> The confederal structure is a façade: “Into all parties,” writes Michels, “there insinuates itself that indirect electoral system which in public life the democratic parties fight with all possible vigor”<sup>4</sup> (except that Bookchin’s party is consistently undemocratic in promoting indirect elections in government as well).

Bookchin’s proposed means of overthrowing hierarchy are patently hierarchical. Anarchists, he declaims, require “an organization ready and able to play a significant role in moving great masses of workers.” “A vanguard is necessary” to lead, and the masses are to follow, as always. Inevitably the more advanced and knowledgeable comrades lead the others, therefore these relations should be institutionalized, with the advanced militants forming an “organized leadership.” This eminently conservative (and neo-Platformist) idea was espoused by John Adams, who thought the “natural aristocracy” should be localized in the second chamber of the legislature. His friend Thomas Jefferson knew better: “I think that to give them power in order to prevent them from doing mischief, is arming them for it, and increasing instead of remedying the evil.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 24.

<sup>2</sup>Biehl, *Politics of Social Ecology*, ch. 13, 129 (quoted) & *passim*; Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 296.

<sup>3</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 17.

<sup>4</sup>Michels, *Political Parties*, 71.

<sup>5</sup>Jefferson to Adams, Oct. 28, 1813, in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jef-*

The Director Emeritus also believes that the Organization should be centralized as much as necessary.<sup>6</sup> Bookchin might protest that he envisions something more reciprocal and dialectical than an organized minority dominating a disorganized majority, but on his own account, dialectics is not mere reciprocity, “some things are in fact very significantly more determining than others.” The Organization is very significantly more determining than the masses — otherwise, what is the Organization for? Obviously an organized caucus of the best and the brightest makes a mockery of Bookchin’s ascription of democracy to the face-to-face urban assembly. As Michels observed with respect to popular assemblies, “while this system limits the extension of the principle of delegation, it fails to provide any guarantee against the formation of an oligarchical camerilla.”<sup>7</sup>

Bookchin has forgotten the evolutionary logic of Leninism. First an organized minority forms to lead the masses based on its advanced theory and superior knowledge. But within the Organization, a leadership for the leaders forms, again based on its even more advanced theory and even greater knowledge: “Even in those groups which want to escape the social givens,” according to Jacques Camatte, “because of unequal command of theory, the gang is even more hierarchic than the general society.”<sup>8</sup> The process may unfold until the most advanced and knowledgeable leader (or so it is prudent for the lesser leaders to regard him) rests atop the hierarchy as the only unled leader. He might be called the Chairman, or the General Secretary, the Prime Mover, the Pope, the Director Emeritus, or just the Leader. He is the only member of the Organization and — after the Revolution — the only member of society who acts without being acted on. Such a person is said to exercise power.

It used to be that when his critics associated the Director Emeritus with such Leninist notions as the vanguard, the masses, the minimal and maximal programs, dual power, the transitional program, and democratic centralism,<sup>9</sup> he exploded in righteous indignation. Now it appears that his critics knew where he was headed before he did. You can mark the reversal by noting the words he uses now that he formerly placed in contemptuous quotation marks: “leaders,” “masses,” “vanguards,” “transitional programs,” “left,” “liberate,” “mass organization,” “man,” “public sphere,” “precondition,” “radical,” even “revolutionary.”<sup>10</sup> Formerly he thought it “sinister” to speak of “the masses,” now he overuses the phrase with not a word of explanation. What Jean Baudrillard (one of the ex-Director’s least favorite people) said on this point is apposite: “The term ‘mass’ is not a concept. It is a leitmotif of political demagoguery, a soft, sticky, lumpenanalytical notion.”<sup>11</sup>

And now Bookchin, after years of equivocation, openly calls for involvement in elections, as his critics have always accused him of.<sup>12</sup> Only local elections, of course, but his halfhearted attribution of a lesser *degree* of statism to local governments is derisory. If you are arrested, over 99% of the time it will be by the local (municipal or county) police, and you will be held in the

---

*erson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 388.

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 296 (quoted), 296–294.

<sup>7</sup>Michels, *Political Parties*, 64.

<sup>8</sup>Jacques Camatte & Giani Collu, “On Organization,” in Jacques Camatte, *This World We Must Leave and Other Essays*, ed. Alex Trotter (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1995), 28 (quoted), 27 (quoted).

<sup>9</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 331, 340.

<sup>10</sup>Bookchin, “Marxism as Bourgeois Sociology,” in *Toward an Ecological Society*, 57, 58, 195, 207, 236, 251, 254, 256, 264, 272 & *passim*.

<sup>11</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities Or, The End of the Social* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 4.

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 155; Black, *AAL*, 86–87; Zerzan, *Future Primitive*, 164–166.

local jail. If you are prosecuted, over 99% of the time it will be by the local district attorney. If you are convicted of a misdemeanor, you will be incarcerated, if you are, in the local jail. On the civil side, you will be evicted by the local sheriff and divorced by the local court. If statism is a variable, local governments are the *most* statist of American governments. Which is probably why the Director Emeritus covets their power.

Existing forms of municipal government, which are representative and bureaucratic, preclude libertarian municipalism. The goal of the Organization must be to take them over and do away with them. Facilitating this, Bookchin wrote 25 years ago, is a new “multitude of various local associations, ‘alliances,’ and block committees that stress local control as well as economic justice”: “Community and action groups have invaded local politics, a terrain that was once the exclusive preserve of political parties, on a scale that has significantly altered the entire landscape of municipal policy making.”<sup>13</sup> That last bit is, of course, not true. The landscape of municipal policy making is as it was 25 years ago, and 25 years before that. The goal of community activists in those days was community councils, which are something like what Bookchin called for in Burlington.<sup>14</sup> But by 1978, this was the situation: “they have been extremely sporadic, and even at their best they seldom attain active participation from more than a small minority of the citizenry.”<sup>15</sup> Grass-roots organizations come and go. With the ongoing development of political and economic centralization, local groups are always losing any modest influence they had.

Meanwhile, the gradual decline of the New England town meeting continues. No one ever sets up new ones: they are historical survivals. Montana presents an instructive example of the popular demand for town meetings. In 1972, a new constitution in one state authorized small towns to adopt town meeting government. None did.<sup>16</sup> In New Hampshire, to promote participation — which it is supposed to fear — the legislature in 1995 provided for “referendum town meetings” by local option. There are two sessions. The first or “deliberative” session is for discussion and amendment of the warrant articles. At the second, the articles are voted on and town officials are elected. Average attendance at the first session is 2% of eligibles. 75% of attendees are from government bodies.<sup>17</sup> It is self-government — by government. I can see this happening in the Commune.

If city politics was ever the exclusive preserve of political parties (which I doubt), that time was ending by the 1870s. From the 1870s through the 1930s, middle-class and business associations were established which sought to reform boss-ridden urban governments and police forces.<sup>18</sup> If thwarted locally, they might apply to sympathetic state legislatures for legislation. This they could do for a reason the Director Emeritus dislikes but does not understand, although it is highly relevant to his political ambitions. The states, like the national government, are recognised by

---

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 255, 256.

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 270–271.

<sup>15</sup>Warren, *Community in America*, 17.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph F. Zimmerman, *Participatory Democracy: Populism Revived* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 31–32.

<sup>17</sup>Joseph F. Zimmerman, “The New Hampshire Referendum Town Meeting,” *Current Municipal Problems* 28(4) (2002): 425–437.

<sup>18</sup>A.M. Hyman, *A More Perfect Union: The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the Constitution* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 526–546; Robert M. Fogelson, *Big City Police* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), chs. 2–3; Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., *Progressivism in America* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 103–104; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

the Constitution and built in to the political structure it creates.<sup>19</sup> Municipal corporations are not mentioned, and they have no Federal constitutional status.

“The current legalistic image of the city as a ‘creature’ of the state,” Bookchin assures us, “is an expression of fear, of careful deliberation in a purposive effort to subdue popular democracy.”<sup>20</sup> The ex-Director calls the image “current” to imply, falsely, that it is something new; in fact, it was just as current in the 1870s, or 1770s, and in fact goes back to medieval England. This is wishful thinking raised to a faith, a version of idealism often signalled by the ex-Director by appending *-istic* to an otherwise meaningful adjective. There is no evidence of either the fear or the conspiracy. What thwarts the Organization is not a “legalistic image” but a *legal reality*. Municipalities derive their legal status from the states, and they exercise only enumerated powers, narrowly interpreted (the “Dillon Rule”).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, in the unlikely event that the Organization elected its activists to every possible local office, they would not be allowed to subvert the local power structure. For one thing, much of what a city does is on behalf of the state, such as enforcing its criminal law.<sup>22</sup> If, for example, its council members radically altered the police department — civil service laws would only be the first obstacle, followed by the unions — their enemies would entangle them in litigation and, failing that (not that I think it would fail), they might appeal to the state legislature for a state takeover of the force. It’s more than an abstract possibility. In 1857, the state of New York took control of the New York City police force from the Tammany Hall machine and replaced nearly all the police; local control was not restored until after the Civil War. In 1885, the same thing happened in Boston. The mayors of major New York cities were likewise state appointees in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> Bookchin’s strategy contemplates a period of “dual power” — which, 25 years ago, was already emerging! — which seems to mean a situation of formal or informal Organization dominance over the city which will “countervail” the state and national governments.<sup>24</sup> That leaves the latter, especially the state governments, plenty of opportunity, from a position of as yet undiminished strength, to hold the Commune to existing law or to restrictive new law. What is the rise of urbanism and the decline of citizenship that he’s bellyaching about if not the state’s superior power position? Besides, dual power is a Leninist, not an anarchist concept, since anarchists aim to abolish power, not duplicate it.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The Federalist*, 253–257 (No.39) (Madison); “*The Federalist on Federalism: ‘Neither a National nor a Federal Constitution, But a Composition of Both,’ As Far as Republican Principles Will Admit: Selected Essays of Martin Diamond*, ed. William A. Schrambra (Washington DC: The AEI Press, 1992), 93–107.

<sup>20</sup> Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Edward C. Banfield & James Q. Wilson, *City Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 63–64; Friedman, *History of American Law*, 530–531; Thomas M. Cooley, *A Treatise on the Constitutional Limitations Which Rest upon the Legislative Power of the States of the Federal Union* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1868), 191–193, 198–199 (this is called Dillon’s Rule after a later commentator). Cooley himself vainly argued, both as a commentator and as a judge, from the analogy of the Federal-state relationship to constitutionalize the state-locality relationship. *Ibid.*, 189–190; *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 44, 96–103, 107 (1871) (opinion of Cooley, J.); Robert C. Black, “Functional Federalism in the Jurisprudence of Thomas M. Cooley,” 14–21 (unpublished MS., 1982). It is noteworthy that although Cooley was the most influential constitutional commentator of the Gilded Age, his idea of constitutionalized local government went nowhere.

<sup>22</sup> Banfield & Wilson, *City Politics*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Jerome Mushkat, *Tammany: The Evolution of a Political Machine, 1789–1865* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 305; Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston, 1822–1885* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 217–219; Alvin Kass, *Politics in New York State, 1800–1830* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1965), 56.

<sup>24</sup> Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanism*, 256–257.

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Jarach, “Anarcho-Communism, Platformism, and Dual Power: Innovation or Travesty?” *Anarchy: A Jour-*



If the Director Emeritus really believes modern cities are a power vacuum (or, as he might say, an “airless vacuum”) for the Organization to swoosh into, he’s been spending too much time at town meetings and not enough time observing even Burlington city government or just reading the newspaper. When the long-gone grassroots organisations of the 60s and 70s went to city hall, they had to wait in line. Many other private organisations were, and are, already there: the League of Women Voters, the PTA, professional associations, chambers of commerce, churches, unions, taxpayers’ leagues, the media, service organizations, good-government groups, and many business organizations: there’s an organization equipped to lobby for every business interest in the city.<sup>26</sup> A neighborhood political association is just another interest group.<sup>27</sup> The Organization’s militants, especially if they exhibit the ex-Director’s vicarious arrogance and sense of destiny, are likely to alienate not only the officeholders but the other organisations too, some of which are potential coalition partners. There is every reason to believe that the Organization will start out weak and decline from there.

Bookchin does not explain why forms of organization which have never been necessary for revolutions before are necessary now. After all, as he has told us himself, sounding just like Robert Michels, all organizations, even revolutionary organizations, tend to render themselves autonomous, to be alienated from their original aims, and to become ends in themselves. It is no doubt true that ignoring the problem does not solve it, but institutionalizing the problem doesn’t solve it either. The case study for Michels’ conclusion that “who says organization, says oligarchy” was a nominally revolutionary socialist party with instructed delegates and all the rest of the democratic rigmarole. Combine large-scale organization with the pursuit of power, and “the revolutionary party is a state within a state” (Michels), “the party is nothing but a state in the state” (Stirner), the party is “nothing more than a state which is waiting for the opportunity to acquire power” (Bookchin).<sup>28</sup>

The author of a history of Spanish anarchists who also considers organization the only road to revolution might be expected to have discussed in some detail the organization of the Spanish anarchists, but he devoted only a few pages to the structure of the CNT, and claimed that the confederation was more democratic than its rules would suggest.<sup>29</sup> We are expected to take his word for it. In 1974 he again approved of the rather different structures of the CNT and the FAI, and he introduced the idea of institutionalizing the “influential militant.” Yet despite these duly confederal structures, the Director Emeritus reported developments such as Michels predicts. In the CNT, “charismatic individuals [‘influential militants?’] at all levels of the organization came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner.” And “the FAI increasingly became an end in itself and loyalty to the organization, particularly when it was under attack or confronted with severe difficulties, tended to mute criticism.”<sup>30</sup> In no published work has the Director Emeritus considered if there was a relationship between the organization of the CNT and FAI and their leaders accepting government ministries. The National Committee of the CNT let only selected

---

*nal of Desire Armed* No.54 (Fall/Winter 2002–2003), 41–45.

<sup>26</sup>Charles R. Adrian & Charles Pross, *Governing Urban America* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 120–136.

<sup>27</sup>Howard W. Hallman, *Neighborhoods: Their Place in Urban Life* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), 63–64.

<sup>28</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 47, quoting Josef Weber, “The Great Utopia,” *Contemporary Issues* 2(5) (1950), 12; Michels, *Political Parties*, 335 (quoted); Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 209 (quoted); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 292 (quoted).

<sup>29</sup>Bookchin, *Spanish Anarchists*, 161–162.

<sup>30</sup>Bookchin, *To Remember Spain*, 20 (quoted), 32–35, 23–24 (quoted)

leaders and “influential militants” in on its political ambitions before joining the Catalan government on September 27, claiming it was joining, not a government, but a “Regional Defense Council.”<sup>31</sup> The CNT, in ideology and in organization, was specifically designed on federal principles with all possible safeguards against usurpation of power by the leadership. Clearly Michels, not Bookchin, is the better prognosticator of the inherently undemocratic fate of a large-scale political Organization, even one that is anarchist.

To illustrate the frightful consequences of failure to unite in a well-led Organization, Bookchin cites an episode in the short-lived German Revolution of 1918–1919. The story as he tells it is this: to protest the dismissal of the leftist chief of police (!) in Berlin, “the city’s leftist organizations — the Independents Social [sic] Democrats, the *pre*-Leninist [sic] Communists around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards — distributed leaflets denouncing the move and calling for a protest rally.”

They are correctly described as potentially the greatest proletarian army the world had ever seen, and they were in a belligerent, indeed revolutionary mood. They waited expectantly in the squares and streets for their leaders — who had called the mobilization — to give them the signal to move. None was forthcoming. Throughout the entire day, while this huge proletarian army waited for tactical guidance, the indecisive leaders debated among themselves. Finally evening approached, and the masses of armed proletarians drifted home, hungry and disappointed.<sup>32</sup>

The next day, a Monday, another appeal to take to the streets was distributed among the workers, and the same numerically huge mass of armed workers reappeared, once again ready for an uprising. Their demonstration was comparable in its potential revolutionary force to the one that had assembled on the previous day — but the leaders still behaved indecisively, still debating their course of action without coming to any definitive [sic] conclusion. By nightfall, after waiting throughout the day<sup>33</sup> in a cold fog and steady rain, the crowd dispersed again, never to return.<sup>34</sup>

The moral? “Had the leaders been unified and decisive; had they given the signal to unseat the government, the workers might well have succeeded in taking over Berlin,” perhaps sparking uprisings throughout Germany. “Had today’s lifestyle anarchists been on the scene in 1919,” adds Bookchin, “I can only suppose that their position — or lack of one — would have helped to seal the doom of the German Revolution by excluding decisive organized action.”<sup>35</sup> Thank goodness they *weren’t* there, otherwise the Revolution might have failed!

If I had to ransack the history books for an *anti*-organizational cautionary tale, this just might be it. The Director Emeritus demands a political organization: the Berlin workers had three of them, working — for once — closely and harmoniously together, at least during this episode. The ex-Director demands leaders: 86 leaders met on Sunday night. The Berlin workers had so many

---

<sup>31</sup>Jose Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, n.d.), ch. 13, esp. 184–188 which however, does not, as Vernon Richards says, answer the question “Who took this decision?” Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, 63.

<sup>32</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 242.

<sup>33</sup>The fog lifted before noon. Elmer Luehr, *The New German Republic* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1929), 85. Bookchin’s fog never lifted.

<sup>34</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 243.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

leaders that they could spare some to lead the *other* side too. For today's enemies were almost literally yesterday's leaders: the Government consisted of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party to which all the workers adhered in November and many still adhered in January.

Bookchin would not be the Director Emeritus if he told a story without leaving something important out. The workers were not as sheeplike as he makes them out to be. On that first day, not everybody waited for orders: "Just as on November 9 a few courageous people suddenly took the initiative, issued instructions and assembled in armed groups and columns." They occupied the major newspaper publishers and the railway stations, with armed columns roaming the streets all night<sup>36</sup> — in other words, *they started the revolution*. The revolution would fail because the other workers relied on organizational leadership instead of themselves.

What transpired Sunday night is also interesting. The leaders of the three organizations Bookchin mentions assembled at police headquarters (!) in a state of high excitement after the day's unexpected events. The Director Emeritus blames the leadership as not "unified and decisive." But they were both. The vote "to take up the fight against the Government and carry it on until its overthrow" carried by a vote of 80–6. That resolve was implicit at best in the flyer calling the Monday mass rally, saying: "Now bigger issues are at stake." So Monday went much as Sunday had, with some additional occupations.<sup>37</sup>

Now it is not even obvious that the leadership erred. On Sunday it was caught by surprise; evidently none of the platform speakers, not even Karl Liebknecht, felt authorized to order a revolution on his own initiative. It is leaders too, not just followers, who become dependent on the Organization. And on Sunday night, the two soldiers' delegates warned that the soldiers and even the military vanguard, the sailors, could not be counted on. They proved prophetic: on Monday the leaders appealed to the troops, and the 53-man Revolutionary Committee transferred to the sailors' headquarters, but none of the armed forces would act: "What had happened? Above all it was this: the hoped-for support of the troops for this second wave of revolution had failed to materialize."<sup>38</sup> It's possible that there was no insurrection, not because the leaders were indecisive, but because they made a decision not to call one at that time without military support. But this much is certain: "Evidently nobody was ready to attempt a decisive assault on the Government buildings without being given the order — and no order came."<sup>39</sup>

*No order came.* For decades, the German working class had been organized, educated, and drilled by the pride of the Second International, the Social Democratic Party. In that time, this "numerically huge" party became hierarchic, bureaucratic, centralized and disciplined, the unwitting shadow of a hierarchic, bureaucratic, centralized and disciplined society. As early as 1895, Bertrand Russell identified these aspects of the organization. Robert Michels, whose party membership cost him what Bookchin would call an alluring academic career, wrote *Political Parties*, a sociological classic, to explain why a party whose ideology was democracy was itself an oligarchy.<sup>40</sup> I'll draw on some of its insights a little later. Its present interest is that it describes the school in which a generation of German workers learned politics. Their capacity for self-activity

---

<sup>36</sup>Sebastian Haffner, *Failure of a Revolution: Germany 1918–1919*, tr. Georg Rapp (Chicago, IL: Banner Press, 1986), 130.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 133; Eric Waldman, *The Spartacist Uprising of 1919 and the Crisis of the German Socialist Movement: A Study of the Relation of Political Theory and Party Practice* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1958), 173–176.

<sup>38</sup>Haffner, *Failure of a Revolution*, 131–133.

<sup>39</sup>Haffner, *Failure of a Revolution*, 132, 133 (quoted).

<sup>40</sup>Bertrand Russell, *German Social Democracy* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman Books, 2000); Michels, *Political Parties*.

found no organizational channels of expression, in fact, rank and file initiative was strongly discouraged. These workers were used to looking to leaders for directions. Without them, at a critical yet fleeting moment, they waited, and then they waited again, and then it was all over.

The German Revolution failed because it was more German than revolutionary. In the words of Ernst Toller, a major figure in the Bavarian Revolution, “alas, the German workmen had been too long accustomed to blind obedience; they wanted only to obey. They confused brutality with strength, bluster with leadership, suppression of freedom with discipline. They missed their accustomed atmosphere; they found their freedom chaos,” they were, in Emma Goldman’s words, “the Bis-Marxian Socialists of Germany.”<sup>41</sup> Lenin praised them for their subservience to their leaders. They failed from too much organization and not enough spontaneity. Ernst Schneider, who participated in the contemporaneous Wilhelmshaven naval mutiny, concluded that “the political parties are no better informed than the masses. This has been proved in all actual revolutionary struggles. As long as parties operate as separate groups within the mass, the mass is not revolutionary, but neither are the parties.”<sup>42</sup>

And by the way ... Bookchin doesn’t *really* believe the German Revolution failed for lack of a vanguard organization. That is — as he once wrote prior to acquiring an interest in saying the opposite — a “crude simplification.” He earlier included that revolution on the list of 20<sup>th</sup>-century revolutions which could not have won because there was then no “material basis” for a revolution for the general interest: “It is not for want of organisation that the past revolutions of radical elements ultimately failed but rather because all prior societies were organized systems of want.”<sup>43</sup> The Director Emeritus now says *that which is not*.

---

<sup>41</sup>Ernst Toller, *I Was a German: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, tr. Edward Crankshaw (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 187 (quoted); “What I Believe,” *Red Emma Speaks*, 42 (quoted).

<sup>42</sup>Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* 113–114; Icarus (Ernst Schneider), *The Wilhelmshaven Revolt: A Chapter of the Revolutionary Movement in the German Navy, 1918–1919* (Honley, Yorkshire, England: Simian, 1975), 30.

<sup>43</sup>Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 254–256, 255 (quoted), 256 (quoted).

## Chapter 19. Murray Bookchin, One-Dimensional Man

My first time around, in *Anarchy after Leftism*, I gave Bookchin's history of recent anarchism the scant attention it deserves. This time I'll screwtimize it in more detail. Basically it goes like this. At the economic base, there are periods of "apparent capitalist stabilization" or "capitalist stability," of "social peace," and then there are periods of "deep social unrest," sometimes giving rise to "revolutionary situations." When capitalism is crisis-ridden, Social Anarchism "has usually held center stage" as far as anarchism goes. When capitalism is, or seems to be, stabilized — the ambiguity is a big help to the argument — then the Lifestyle Anarchists come to the fore to flaunt their cultural and individual eccentricities. Unlike most of the ex-Director's theses, this one is testable. But he did not test it in *The Spanish Anarchists*. In fact, reading the book, it's often impossible to ascertain the economic context of anarchist activities in various periods. When an academic historian supersedes this amateurish effort it will be none too soon.

The first thing to be said about this analysis is that it reads more like a justification than a critique of Lifestyle Anarchism. It looks like a rational division of labor between what the Director Emeritus calls the two "extremes." When social revolution is a possibility, let those so disposed lead the way. When revolution is not on history's agenda, it makes sense to uphold the black flag on the cultural and individual terrains. Better Lifestyle Anarchism than no anarchism at all (although Bookchin would surely disagree). Somebody has to keep alive what the Spanish anarchists called "the idea" in a climate of social reaction.

A time of capitalist stabilization can also be a time of social unrest. The 1900s and the 1960s were periods of prosperity *and* protest (both liberal and radical). In the years before the First World War, years of capitalist triumph, anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists were as conspicuous as they would ever be in the United States and several other countries. Since Bookchin's thesis is empirically inconsistent, you can read this fact as either proving or disproving it, which is just to say that the thesis is unverifiable, unfalsifiable and meaningless. As for the 1960s, there is an unbridgeable chasm between Bookchin's recent junk Marxism and his own earlier, accurate conclusion that 60s unrest was important precisely because it was *not* the reflex of an economic crisis, but rather a qualitative crisis of everyday life. The May-June 1968 uprising in France "exploded the myth that the wealth and resources of modern industrial society can be used to absorb all revolutionary opposition."<sup>1</sup> Inexplicably, in the 1970s the same wealth and resources underwrote a period of popular quiescence and social reaction which persists to this day.

No matter which determinant of anarchist fortunes you get out of Bookchin — "capitalist stabilization" or "social unrest" — it fails as an explanation. If you go for capitalist stabilization, that explains why (as he concedes) Lifestyle Anarchism was more influential than Social Anarchism

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 249 (quoted), 249–250 & *passim*.

in the 60s, but fails to explain why Lifestyle Anarchism increased its lead over Social Anarchism through the 1970s and since, a period of recession and retrenchment briefly interrupted by the Reagan boom years. That was the decade in which emerged such Lifestyle Anarchist themes as primitivism, anti-organization, zerowork, and the critique of technology. Bookchin is even less of an economist than he is an ecologist, so it's hard to tell what he means by capitalist stabilization. It's quite a capacious concept if it encompasses the recession of the early 70s and the prosperity of the late 90s. The suspicion arises that "capitalist stabilization" is not an economic concept at all, but rather a synonym for social reaction and an antonym for social unrest. If so, the argument is a tautology.

The social unrest explanation is equally flawed. According to this theory, Social Anarchism should have dominated in the 1960s and Lifestyle Anarchism thereafter, with a resurgence of Social Anarchism in the 90s when, the Director assured us, the system is creating "mass discontent."<sup>2</sup> That's not what happened; that's not even what Bookchin says happened. Rather, for forty years, in times of protest as in times of privatism, the Lifestyle Anarchists have gained on the Social Anarchists. That is exactly what Bookchin is complaining about. The ex-Director's thesis, in either version, does not meet the tests of reason *or* experience.

Here is, hardly an analysis, but a more accurate description of the last 60 years of North American anarchist history.<sup>3</sup> In 1960, anarchism was dying and nearly dead. By then, according to George Woodcock — who once believed in it — anarchism was "a ghost that inspires neither fear among governments nor hope among peoples nor even interest among newspapermen." Moreover, "nor is there any reasonable likelihood of a renaissance of anarchism as we have known it since the foundation of the First International in 1864; history suggests that movements which fail to take the chances it offers them are never born again."<sup>4</sup> (What chances?) In 1966, two academics who set out "to take anarchism seriously" — and did — nonetheless acknowledged that "few today entertain either hope or fear that government might be abolished as easily as it was called into being."<sup>5</sup> After 40 years of decline, anarchism was a historical curiosity not far from suffering the fate of the Shakers. In 1968, the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* gloated: "There may be concerns with the kinds of problems that constitute anarchist doctrine, but there is a shortage of actual anarchists."<sup>6</sup>

In 1967, Woodcock reconsidered. There was still no "obvious" — he should have said "overt" or "avowed" — anarchist revival, but he was not the only one to detect an anarchist influence in America on the New Left and especially the counter-culture.<sup>7</sup> Paul Goodman developed the point

---

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 1.

<sup>3</sup>As in *AAL*, I prefer to confine the scope of my argument to American and Canadian anarchism, corresponding to Bookchin's subject in *SALA*. I know far more about recent anarchist history in these countries than in any others, and it would be reckless of me, not to mention chauvinistic, to project that history onto other parts of the world. But I know, as my foreign readers know, that nontraditional and post-leftist anarchisms have emerged in strength in many countries, among them France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Greece. They are present in Mexico and Quebec. They are even manifest, and in sophisticated forms, in Turkey and India. Apparently the American or Anglo-American individualist tradition which is so hateful to Bookchin is not necessary for Lifestyle Anarchism to spread.

<sup>4</sup>Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 468.

<sup>5</sup>Krimmerman & Perry, "Foreword," Krimmerman & Perry, eds., *Patterns of Anarchy*, xvi, xv. This is the best anarchist anthology in English.

<sup>6</sup>Andrew Hacker, "Anarchism," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (19 vols.; n.p.: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1968–1991), 1: 285.

<sup>7</sup>George Woodcock, "Anarchism Revisited," *Commentary* 46(2) (Aug. 1968), quoted and summarized in Michael

at the same time in “The Black Flag of Anarchism,”<sup>8</sup> which must have been the most widely read American anarchist essay in decades. This anarchism, thought Woodcock, was not the revival of the classical ideology but something new. He was right. The new anarchism developed, not out of the old versions, but out of the youth culture and what Bookchin formerly referred to as its “intuitive anarchism.”<sup>9</sup> It could do so because, as Bookchin has written, the youth culture’s tendency was anarchistic. As early as 1961, poet Karl Shapiro sensed anarchist tendencies in “the rising generation.”<sup>10</sup>

Anarchism was the best theoretical synthesis of the New Left and the counter-culture. Unfortunately, anarchism had sunk so far into obscurity that few radicals had the opportunity to make the connections to anarchism which are so obvious in retrospect. Also, Bookchin is not entirely wrong to identify an anti-theoretical tendency in the youth culture which delayed widespread awareness of its anarchist affinities. Although we speak of “the 60s,” implying a decade of dissidence and dissonance, the radical phase lasted only some five or six years. The rush of events was overwhelming, and a lot of people were, yes, going through changes. When militants felt the lack of theory, their first inclination was to turn to what was available, not what was appropriate — to Marxism, not anarchism.<sup>11</sup> That turn was a turnoff; many lost their way. The movement wasted time, unaware how little it had left.

Although it is of no historical importance, the story of Murray Bookchin’s role in and after the disastrous SDS convention of 1969 is entertaining. Although Bookchin and his *Anarchos* Group were neither students nor SDS members, by then that didn’t matter. The future Director wrote “Listen, Marxist!” for the occasion. His Group with sympathizers caucused as the Radical Decentralist Project, the “fourth faction,” allegedly 10% of the participants, although it is mysteriously absent from all other accounts of the convention. He reports that after the split between Progressive Labor and the other factions, he delivered a speech to cheers of “Right on, right on!” However, the next speaker, who argued against Bookchin’s position, received the same hearty welcome.

The nonstudent Bookchin decided to leave and found an “alternative student movement.” A follow-up meeting three months later was, however, also futile. The discussion, “nonhierarchal” and unstructured, went nowhere, he complains. The gathering needed a written statement for the alternative press, but never approved one — which was unfathomable, since “a perfectly good statement was already available for use: the *Anarchos* statement, the magazine’s policy statement,” of which he was the author. He has no idea that this is funny. “There is a certain anarchist type with an overbearing ego” — no comment — who believes group statements should

---

Lerner, “Anarchism and the American Counter-Culture,” in *Anarchism Today*, ed. David E. Apter and James Joll (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1971), 34–59 (Woodcock quoted, 34). This is the same Michael Lerner who served as a court intellectual to the Clintons, especially Hillary, who seems to do most of the couple’s deep thinking, such as it is.

<sup>8</sup>*Drawing the Line*, 203–214.

<sup>9</sup>Lerner, “Anarchism and the American Counter-Culture”; David E. Apter, “The Old Anarchism and the New — Some Comments,” in Apter & Joll, eds., *Anarchism Today*, 7–8; Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 70 (quoted).

<sup>10</sup>Karl Shapiro, “On the Revival of Anarchism,” Krimerman & Perry, eds., *The Anarchists*, 573.

<sup>11</sup>According to Bookchin, “When the rebellious 1960s bubbled up after a decade of social quiescence and numbing mediocrity, lifestyle anarchism enjoyed great popularity among the countercultural elements, while social anarchism exercised a measure of influence with some New Leftists.” Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 162. Nostalgic nonsense. No kind of anarchism enjoyed “great popularity” with anybody in the 60s.

be collectively composed.<sup>12</sup> Yes, but the group, not one overbearing egoist, decided not to adopt the future Director's perfectly good statement.

Here was the direct democracy which Bookchin celebrates except when he's involved in it. He is also highly critical of the conduct of the Clamshell Alliance, which is apparently his only other experience with face-to-face democracy.<sup>13</sup> Everywhere his aspiration to play Pericles has been thwarted, and he wonders why. In his final book, Edward Abbey memorably portrays Murray Bookchin (as "Bernie Mushkin") denouncing an Earth First! gathering:

Bernie Mushkin, old-time Marxist, sectarian revolutionary, tenured professor, academic writer, pedagogue, demagogue, ideologue, was drawn to political controversy as a moth to the flame — or a blowfly to a rotting hog. Inept and passionate, fiery-tempered and humorless, graceless but relentless, he had acquired a reputation, over the decades, among the far-out fringes of the urban-American left wing, as an intellectual blowhard. Which meant, in that element, leadership.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the explanation for Bookchin's scorn for empiricism, aside from its intrinsic validity, is that he has trouble learning from experience. Failure is always someone else's fault: "After the collapse of SDS, the *Anarchos* Group tried to create at least a nationwide network, but these efforts were destroyed by what I would later call lifestyle anarchists, who were to identify their libidinal impulses with politics."<sup>15</sup> Someone else is always to blame for his failures.

For Bookchin's enemies, their importance varies inversely with the square of the distance from him — that's why John P. Clark is so important (to Bookchin). The ex-Director's current summary of the movement(s) in 1968 comprises "SDS, the Marxists and Leninists, the anarchists, and the lifestylist Motherfuckers, as well as the decaying counterculture, the students, and the national mobilizations led by pacifists, liberals, and social democrats." One item stands out, as out of place, like an anarchist at a town meeting: "the lifestylist Motherfuckers." The reference is to *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, what the Director Emeritus calls "cultural radicals" who "believed that their main job was to 'blow' people's minds." And they were good at it, as Bookchin grudgingly admits — but if, "apart from transients, it numbered about five people at most," it hardly qualifies for listing with SDS, New Mobe, the counterculture, etc. Like Bookchin, they were based on the Lower East Side, in fact, he says, "I knew them very well." Ah! Something personalistic, perhaps? Decidedly! Bookchin was "the intellectual mentor of the Motherfuckers."<sup>16</sup> Yet they were the first trickle of what became the Lifestyle flood. Although he grumbles now that "certain anarchist tendencies played a very bad role, specifically the *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker* Group," judging from the incidents recounted, the group's "impact was remarkable." The Director Emeritus fails to mention that Motherfuckers practice was informed by theory, Situationist-influenced, some of which holds up considerably better than *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 99–105.

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 148–150.

<sup>14</sup>Abbey, *Heyduke Lives!*, 202.

<sup>15</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 109. "Destroyed"? What did they do, send out night riders? "Ignored" is more like it.

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 83–85, 97 (quoted), 89 (quoted), 83, (quoted); Marty Jezer, *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 212.

<sup>17</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 83 (quoted); *Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ben Morea and the Black Mask Group* (London: Unpopular Books & Sabotage Editions, 1993).



It is easy to dismiss Bookchin's egocentric war stories, but not so easy to explain the left's abrupt freefall starting in late 1970. I see now, as to some extent I suspected at the time, that the decline was exaggerated, and thereby accelerated, by the media. The 70s were not the times of flatline social reaction which Bookchin makes them out to be. I also appreciate now that most people cannot indefinitely sustain a revolutionary pitch of intensity in the indefinite absence of revolution itself. Even some who felt regret at the decline of activism felt some relief too. Whatever the explanation, the decade was critical for the development of contemporary North American anarchism.

Already in the 60s, the vestigial anarchist groups and projects were, relative to their size, inundated by the few young radicals who consciously identified themselves as anarchists. Intergenerational friction might ensue, as it did in the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>18</sup> In the 70s, 60s veterans and their younger counterparts of similar background and outlook increasingly identified themselves as anarchists, participating in existing projects — mostly publications — and starting new ones. Mostly they came from the campus and/or the counter-culture. In a once-famous book published in 1970, Philip Slater wrote that “there is great fascination with the concept of anarchy — with the attempt to eliminate coercion and commitment [sic] in any form from human life.”<sup>19</sup>

Thanks to a flurry of academic interest in anarchism which continued out of the 60s, anarchist histories, biographies, anthologies and classics appeared almost in abundance, starting in 1970, often from mainstream commercial publishers like Dover, Doubleday, Schocken, Norton, Dell, Random House, Beacon Press, even Praeger, and from university presses. Ramparts Press published Bookchin's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* in 1971. Important anarchist presses commenced which still publish: Black & Red in Detroit, Black Rose Books in Montreal, Left Bank Books in Seattle. One of the original underground newspapers, Detroit's *Fifth Estate*, went anarchist in 1975 and immediately became influential. Other noteworthy anarchist tabloids included *No Limits* (Madison, Wisconsin) and *Front Line* (Washington, DC). Not in 70 years had anarchist ideas been so accessible to North Americans. More and more people, myself included, appropriated some of these ideas, sometimes critically, sometimes not — and sometimes added their own.

The novelty of the 60s persisted: the youth culture connection to anarchism. Punk rock is the conspicuous example. Punks have been explicitly involved with anarchism, as ideology or affectation, for over over thirty years. Some of the earliest punk bands, such as CRASS, openly proselytized for “the idea,” and some still do. The nexus goes beyond punk music as such, or any style of music as such. Subcultures oriented to other marginal music genres (industrial, hip hop, etc.) are also connected, and music is not the only or the only important expression of youth culture. Deviations in diet, drugs, sex, religion, reading tastes, and defections from leftism or libertarianism — usually in combinations — any or all of these, with or without a sound track, are typical of those who nowadays become anarchists, mostly Lifestyle Anarchists.

Anarcho-leftism, I should add, has also gained support from the youth culture connection, mainly as represented on campus, “college boys in designer hardhats.”<sup>20</sup> The formulas of classical anarchism provide the belief structures so necessary to reduce to modest order the intellectual confusion of anarchists like Jon Bekken, Jeff Stein, Tom Wetzel and Chaz Bufe who could never

---

<sup>18</sup>Fred Thompson & Patrick Murfin, *The I.W.W.: Its First Seventy Years, 1905–1975* (Chicago, IL: Industrial Workers of the World, 1976), 205–206.

<sup>19</sup>Slater, *Pursuit of Loneliness*, 148. Slater is as ignorant of anarchism as he is hostile to it (deploring its “individualism”: have we heard this tune played by someone else?). *Ibid.*, 148–49.

<sup>20</sup>Bob Black, *Beneath the Underground* (Portland, OR: Feral House, 1994), 32.

quite cut the umbilical cord to the campus. The traditional leftists got a spillover share from the general resurgence of anarchism — but not a proportionate share. It is in that context, and in awareness of its ominous implications, that the ex-Director denounces the Lifestyle Anarchists while he still can. But it is already too late. The men who will carry him out are already at the door.

The youth/counter-culture connection has its drawbacks. Most North American anarchists are younger than most San anarchists, but not nearly as well adapted to their environment. Even if they are in — or have been in — college, their general education is inferior to what was provided in the 60s and 70s. This is one of the few points on which Bookchin and I, who have both toiled to teach them, probably concur. Song lyrics are really not the most effective vehicle for conveying political ideas, except maybe Fascist or Fundamentalist ideas. Necessarily the message is drastically oversimplified even if the ideas are expressed with all the amplitude the form permits. Some punk anarchists are as stupid as they are ignorant. For many it's just a phase they're going through, although there always seem to be more — and more of them — to take their place.

Nonetheless the point is that, since the 60s, there have always been open channels of access and attraction, however imperfect, between anarchists and young people. The channels have not been as broad or deep for decades, not since the anarchists lost influence over the classical workers' movement and then that movement withered away. Without such channels, a theory or ideology grows old and dies. I am as exasperated with much of what passes for anarchism as Bookchin is, and I said so a decade sooner,<sup>21</sup> with better reasons.<sup>22</sup> But potential anarchists have to come from somewhere, and youth/alternative culture is where they've mostly come from for some 50 years. Exceptional individuals also wander in from unexpected places, as they always have — as Bakunin and Kropotkin wandered in from the Czarist aristocracy — and these exceptionals often contribute ideas and energy out of all proportion to their numbers. But unless a lot of people who are not, or not as, extraordinary also wander in — as at certain times and in certain places they have, in large numbers — anarchism has no future except as an ancestor cult and a magnet for crackpots.

The Director Emeritus may be cycling, but anarchism isn't. The leftist varieties are stagnant or in decay. In North America an ambitious effort at anarcho-leftist organizing, the Love & Rage Federation, went through a three-way split. In Britain, Class War split in two: the final issue of their newspaper admitted their ineffectuality. NEFAC will be next. As organizationalists, these leftists stand self-condemned. Some anarcho-leftist projects may be surviving artificially on life-support. Rich anarchists, like rich people generally, tend to be conservatives. Noam Chomsky subsidizes select conservative left-wing anarchist projects. So does the triple-platinum English band Chumbawamba, the only anarchists who have ever performed on "The Tonight Show," which was the best source of anti-Unabomber jokes. AK Press, Bookchin's publisher, is one of their favorite charities, but the band offered nothing, not even sympathy, when the *Green Anarchist* defendants were tried for conspiracy. No quantity of financial formaldehyde preserves against decay forever.

---

<sup>21</sup>Black, "Anarchism and Other Impediments to Anarchy," in *Abolition of Work*, 149–151 (originally written in 1985).

<sup>22</sup>Further elaborated in Black, *Friendly Fire*, 181–193, 199–201, and Black, *Beneath the Underground*, ch. 2.

## Chapter 20. Conclusion: Whither Anarchism, Indeed?

“Now you see, sir, how your fooling grows old, and people dislike it”  
— Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*<sup>1</sup>

Whither anarchism? If that’s the question, it is one for which Bookchin has no answer. In “The Left That Was,” the appendix to *SALA*, he reiterates that the classical left is forever defunct.<sup>2</sup> Long ago he announced that “the traditional workers’ movement will never reappear.”<sup>3</sup> He does not discuss the social composition of the “millions of people today” who experience “the sense of powerlessness” which renders them “a potentially huge body of supporters” of anarchism.<sup>4</sup> Who are they? They cannot be bourgeois, for the bourgeois are by definition the enemy. They cannot be proletarians, for the proletariat, according to Bookchin, has been bought off and bourgeoisified. They cannot be the underclass, the idle poor, for these are the “lumpens” Bookchin says are actual or potential fascists.<sup>5</sup> (Whereas in 1970, he thought lumpens were the new revolutionary class: “If a ‘class-based’ analysis is needed by the Marxist pundits, it may be well to remind them that just as capitalism began with a lumpen class, from which it created the proletariat, so it may end with a lumpen class, from which it may create its executioners.”<sup>6</sup>) So who’s left for the left?

After repeatedly and tediously denouncing Lifestyle Anarchists for their personalism, individualism, narcissism, mysticism and psychologism, the Director Emeritus himself defines the yearning millions of potential anarchists in purely personalistic, psychological terms, in terms of their “sense of powerlessness.” Are they powerless, or do they just think they are? Do they need revolution or just therapy? If all they need is therapy, the system is surely capable of supplying it

---

<sup>1</sup>William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.v. 110–111.

<sup>2</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 66–86, esp. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 28.

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 1.

<sup>5</sup>“Mere opposition to the state may well unite fascistic lumpens with Stirnerite lumpens, a phenomenon that is not without its historical precedents.” Bookchin, *SALA*, 61. As the Director refers to “precedents,” in the plural, there must be at least two historical examples of this bizarre union. Regrettably, Bookchin identifies not even one, perhaps because not even one such example exists. I have searched the Marxist scriptures in vain for a definition of the lumpenproletariat. As far as I can tell, operationally, a proletarian is a lumpen who follows Marxist orders, and a lumpen is a proletarian who does not. According to Bookchin, “behavior that verges on a mystification of criminality” — how can behavior mystify anything? — “on asociality [sic], intellectual incoherence, anti-intellectualism, and disorder for its own sake, is simply lumpen.” Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 154. So “lumpen” does *not* refer to a position in the class structure, or even to a social role. It consists of *bad attitudes* and *bad behavior*. With Bookchin, Marxism has made giant strides since Marx. The traditional anarchist position regarding lumpens, whatever they are, is to welcome them: “Marx speaks disdainfully, but quite unjustly, of this *Lumpenproletariat*. For in them, and only in them, and not in the bourgeois strata of workers, are there crystallized the entire intelligence and power of the coming Social Revolution.” *Bakunin on Anarchism*, ed. Sam Dolgoff (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980), 334.

<sup>6</sup>Bookchin, “The Youth Culture,” 61.

(for a price). An awareness of powerlessness is surely as old as its reality. The slaves and peasants of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia — and Athens! — knew they were powerless, but such awareness more often results in resignation than revolution. Bookchin cannot explain why powerless people sometimes revolt but usually don't. For that matter, Bookchin can't explain anything else either.

According to the Director Emeritus, the enormities and the eccentricities of the Lifestyle Anarchists are “in no small measure” responsible for the anarchist failure to recruit and deploy “a potentially huge body of supporters” ripe for revolution.<sup>7</sup> That's an extraordinary measure of blame to heap upon an imperceptible fraction of the population with no access to the mainstream media. Absolutely no evidence supports the assertion that anything anarchists of any orientation have done or not done in recent years has repelled vast numbers of people. There is no evidence that vast numbers of Americans have yet encountered anarchism in any form. Bookchin brags of having lectured at every major university in the United States, which provided him forums on a scale no Lifestyle Anarchists have ever had access to. Here was his opportunity to convert strategically situated cadres of the youth intelligentsia to his advanced ideology. Here he could have gone far toward strangling Lifestyle Anarchism in the cradle. He must have failed. More likely he never tried. His personalistic careerism took priority. If these “are the worst times in the history of anarchism,”<sup>8</sup> how could this have happened on his watch? Is it accidental that it was only when his career was over that Bookchin assailed the Lifestyle Anarchists?

According to the Director Emeritus, thousands of decadent Lifestyle Anarchists have discouraged many millions of other Americans from embracing anarchism in the only version Bookchin approves of. What discouraged many millions of Americans from embracing anarchism in the many decades before Lifestyle Anarchism came along, he does not say. Did the defamations and machinations of Leninists like himself have anything to do with it? One suspects that anarchism's unpopularity had more to do with anarchism itself than with any of its particular versions. As Malatesta stated, the problem is not the word but the thing, because it clashes with long-established prejudices.<sup>9</sup> Bookchin's fantastic exaggeration of the influence of Lifestyle Anarchists corresponds to his fantastic exaggeration of his own influence. The Lifestyle Anarchists must possess very powerful juju in order to shout the voice of Reason as it booms forth so often and so eloquently from Murray Bookchin. The ex-Director's acquaintance with anarchist history is so slight that he's unaware that the unbridgeable chasm is nothing new. There were partly contradictory, partly complementary political and cultural currents in French anarchism in the 1890s, for instance.<sup>10</sup> The same accusations of authoritarianism and decadence were exchanged then as now. Investigation might find this to have been the usual situation of classical anarchism. Whether or not the chasm is unbridgeable, Bookchin has fallen into it.

---

<sup>7</sup>Bookchin, *SALA*, 1. The ex-Director is much given to the double-negative grammatical gambit by which he is able to say something implausible or defamatory while reserving the right to back away from its literal meaning if he has to. Thus he will say that some supposed tenet of Lifestyle Anarchism is “not unlike” a tenet of fascism — technically, he hasn't called anybody a fascist, but the emotive impact is almost as strong as if he had. George Orwell, with his keen sense for the politics of language, picked up on this one. He wrote, too optimistically it seems, that “it should also be possible to laugh the *not un-* formulation out of existence.” “Politics and the English Language,” in *Collected Essays*, 4: 138.

<sup>8</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 124.

<sup>9</sup>Malatesta, *Anarchy*, 13.

<sup>10</sup>Richard D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siecle France* (Lincoln, NE & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Alexander Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siecle*

As in *SALA*, the Director rebukes the Lifestyle Anarchists — belatedly including John P. Clark — for elitism. This dictum, again unexplained, makes no more sense than it ever did. It is not clear why collectivist elitism — vanguardism — is superior to individualist elitism. Bookchin decries “abstract individualism” but never entertains the possibility that what his enemies espouse is *concrete* individualism, what Vaneigem calls radical subjectivity. Nor does he consider the possibility that what he espouses is abstract collectivism (totalitarianism), not concrete collectivism (community). Abstract collectivism is even worse than abstract individualism (classical liberalism). Elitism implies exclusivity, but Bookchin is the one who is reading thousands of anarchists out of the movement. Lifestyle Anarchism is intolerable, so Social Anarchism is intolerant. The movement “must become infected with intolerance against all who retard its growth by subservience to spontaneity,”<sup>11</sup> as the lawyer Lenin put it.

There may be a sense in which some so-called Lifestyle Anarchists might be elitists, *i.e.*, they aspire to excellence and they want to level up. But they want *everybody* to level up — they want company — they want a world of what Vaneigem calls “masters without slaves” — not out of pity or paternalism but because they crave a community of fulfilled, enriched, masterful other individuals to relate to. John Simon, referring to the late American critic and anarchist Dwight Macdonald, admitted that Macdonald was an elitist of sorts, but “an elitist, then, who would eagerly help others join the club, who would gladly have abandoned his badge of superiority for the sake of a world full of coequal elitists.”<sup>12</sup> Only in that sense are post-left anarchists elitists.

Writing in 1989, the Director Emeritus stated: “It is tempting to return to the radicalism of the past where assured dogmas were socially inspirational and had the aura of romantic rebellion about them. Having been raised in that era of a half-century ago, I find it emotionally congenial but intellectually inadequate.”<sup>13</sup> He has since succumbed to that temptation. Intellectually, orthodoxy is now more important than adequacy, although all his old criticisms of the left still hold. According to Bookchin, “these are the worst times in the history of anarchism, worse than any I have either read about or experienced.” More generally, these are times of counterrevolution.<sup>14</sup> If this is counterrevolution, when was the revolution?

We are witness to the decay and the imminent demise of Bookchin’s deeply flawed theories. Most are almost universally ignored by anarchists, and they are already ignored by everybody else. His recent brutality and buffoonery have almost overshadowed the substantial and mainly positive influence he exerted on the revival of North American anarchism which commenced in the early 1970s. Bookchin’s ecological orientation never had any popular influence as did Rachel Carson’s, but in its time it had considerable influence on anarchists. Bookchin’s notion of liberatory technology did catch on at first with some anarchists, but ironically, by raising technology as a political issue, he may have directed their attention to the repressive power of really existing technology, and so indirectly inspired the anti-tech tendency. Hardly any anarchists ever took seriously the ex-Director’s longtime enchantment with the slave-based, imperialist, authoritarian Athenian polis, or his quixotic quest to “democratize the republic,” “radicalize our democracy,”

---

(New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup>V.I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* (New York: International Publishers, 1943), 44.

<sup>12</sup>John Simon, “Introduction” to Dwight Macdonald, *Against the American Grain: Essays on the Effects of Mass Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), vi.

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Remaking Society*, 13.

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 124.

and Hellenize the Euro-American city.<sup>15</sup> Where he sees a seamless theoretical unity, others see only an arbitrary aggregation of eccentric isolates.

It has been Bookchin's longterm strategy to redefine key words like "politics," "democracy" and "anarchism" so as to enclose the commons, expropriating public words for his personalistic political benefit. Thus he tried to make off with a term, "social anarchism," which belongs to the anarchist community. Failing in that, he repudiated the anarchists, displaying all the maturity of a little kid who won't play ball unless he gets to pitch — but the whole team knows that all he can throw is screwballs. No one begrudges him "libertarian municipalism," but it lacks flash. In *Anarchy after Leftism*, I expressed sympathy for the Director Emeritus and his followers: "They need a name that nobody else wants" — but he was perhaps right to spurn my suggestion: "How about 'Marxist'?"<sup>16</sup>

Now it appears Bookchin prepared a fallback position as long ago as 1994. He sees advantages in the word *communalism* (pilfered from Kenneth Rexroth): "What is remarkable about this (as yet) unsullied term is its extraordinary proximity to libertarian municipalism, the political dimension to social ecology that I have advanced at length [to say the least] elsewhere. In *communalism*, libertarians have an available word that they can enrich as much by experience as by theory."<sup>17</sup> It is surely a rousing word (although it might be just the italics) — but it's already taken. The right wing has eaten his lunch: "Conservatives defend a theory of the good, *communalism*, which holds that individual human flourishing is best pursued through familial and communal shaping of individual character." The "familial" part aside, so holds the Director Emeritus, who calls for citizenship training, "civic *paideia*."<sup>18</sup> As a radical Green writes, "it might well be wondered whether a decentralized, participatory democracy really does have anything to do with anarchism." After wasting everybody's time all these years, the Director Emeritus concurs: "I no longer believe that Communalism is a mere 'dimension' of anarchism, democratic or not."<sup>19</sup>

No matter how much he regrets it now, Bookchin did lend a lot of aid and comfort to what he now denounces as Lifestyle Anarchism: to the transvaluation of values, spontaneity, and the revolution of everyday life. If he hasn't seeded our fields (of dreams), he has at least manured them. Our post-leftism was fertilized by his *compost*-leftism. Bookchin is full of shit, and we turned that to practical advantage. But what to make of him in his final decay? In Plato's *Gorgias*, the sophist Callicles exclaims that philosophizing is for younger men, because old men no longer experience the life of the city — they're out of it, like Bookchin: "But whenever I see an older

---

<sup>15</sup>Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 287. All along, the philhellenism was really Marxism in marble, but nobody noticed. Marx's vision of the culmination of history "would have coincided rather curiously with the Greek city-states." Hannah Arendt, "Marx and Western Political Thought," *Social Research* 69(2) (Summer 2002), 283 (quoted); Philip J. Kain, *Schiller, Hegel, and Marx: State, Society, and the Aesthetic deal of Ancient Greece* (Kingston & Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), 152–155.

<sup>16</sup>Black, *AAL*, 139.

<sup>17</sup>Kenneth Rexroth, *Communalism: Its Origins to the Twentieth Century* (London: Owen, 1975); Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 152 (quoted).

<sup>18</sup>Bruce Alan Shain, "American Community," in *Community and Tradition: Conservative Perspectives on the American Experience*, ed. George W. Carey & Bruce Frohnen (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988) (quoted); Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*, 276. Communalism is also part of the ideology of the Radical Right. Jeffrey Kaplan & Leonard Weinberg, *The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right* (New Brunswick, NJ & London: Rutgers University Press, 1998), ch. 7, "The Communal Dream."

<sup>19</sup>Alan Carter, *A Radical Green Political Theory* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), 299 n. 92; Bookchin, "Communist Project," n. 8, unpaginated.

man still philosophizing and not released from it, this man, Socrates, surely seems to me to need a beating.”<sup>20</sup>

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, the Director Emeritus anticipated his present situation — and mine: “The fear, pain, and commonly rapid death that a wolfpack brings to a sick or old caribou are evidence not of suffering or cruelty in nature but of a mode of dying that is integrally wedded to organic renewal and ecological stability.”<sup>21</sup> First Nature always has the last word. In the words of “the incomparable Max” — Beerbohm, not Stirner — “All this sounds rather brutal. But it is a brutal thing to object to humbug, and only by brutal means can humbug be combated.”<sup>22</sup> The ex-Director’s example confirms that “the sole change of mind of which an ideologue is incapable is that of ceasing to be an ideologue.”<sup>23</sup> In annihilating Murray Bookchin the ideologue, in *appearance* my methods may seem cruel, but in *essence*, I am only doing the work of Nature — First Nature: “For at any price we must keep those who have too clear a conscience from living and dying in peace” (E.M. Cioran).<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 75–76, 76 (quoted).

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 363.

<sup>22</sup>“An Hypocrisy in Playgoing,” in *Max Beerbohm: Selected Prose*, ed. David Cecil (Boston, MA & Toronto, Canada: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 362 (the expression “the divine Max” is Shaw’s).

<sup>23</sup>Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 181.

<sup>24</sup>E.M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, tr. Richard Howard (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 37.

# Appendix: An American in Paris

## 1

When Murray Bookchin writes that there is an issue “that I find so offensive and so outrageously false that I feel obliged to examine it in some detail,”<sup>1</sup> you can count on a good show. No one takes umbrage on quite the colossal scale that he does. “Don’t sweat the small stuff” is incomprehensible counsel for the Director Emeritus. The issue he finds so offensive and so outrageously false — John P. Clark’s ridicule of an item on Bookchin’s revolutionary resume — holds promise for running his vital signs right off the Richter scale. So I, too, propose to examine it in some detail.

As the Director Emeritus explains, “On other occasions I have noted that I witnessed street struggles in Paris between the French police (the CRS) and radical protestors in mid-July 1968.” A pity he does not reference these “other occasions” so we could see if his claims there are as carefully worded as they are here. “The facts are that I flew into the French capital on July 13 — the general strike during May and June had paralyzed Air France, making earlier travel to Paris impossible.”<sup>2</sup> For this pardonable tardiness, Clark makes mock:

If we read carefully, we discover that [Bookchin’s] first-hand experience of May ’68 came, unfortunately, in the month of July. He reveals that he made a “lengthy” visit to Paris “in mid-July [sic] 1968, when street-fighting occurred throughout the capital on the evening before Bastille Day” (p. 202). Bookchin is obviously trying to convey the impression that he was in the midst of things during the historic “events” of 1968. But as one history summarizes the events after the June 23 elections, “France closes down for the summer holidays” [“Bookchin Agonistes”], p. 23).<sup>3</sup>

It would be interesting to know exactly when the Air France strike ended. Since the Air France strike ended sometime in June, as the ex-Director’s statement implies, Bookchin’s delay of 2–6 weeks before flying to Paris looks as if he were waiting to see if the coast was clear.

As the Director Emeritus recounts, while he was resting in his *pension* the afternoon of July 13, his family rushed in to report street fighting. He “quickly accompanied Bea [his wife] back to the Boulevard, but the fighting had essentially subsided.” Missed it by that much! But that night, after a block party that ended at midnight, the Director-to-be followed “a group of young men” carrying a red flag and singing the “Internationale” — perhaps it was a conditioned reflex. CRS men (riot police) ran up and down the Boulevard St.-Michel, “alternately attacking and withdrawing

---

<sup>1</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238, quoting Max Cafard [John P. Clark], “Bookchin Agonistes: How Murray Bookchin’s Attempts to ‘Re-Enchant Humanity’ Become a Pugilistic Bacchanal,” *Fifth Estate* 32(1) (Summer 1997): 20–23.



from the crowds that filled the Boulevard. Caught up among a group of Africans, who seemed to be special targets of the racist CRS men, Bea and I were attacked with special fury and had to scatter up toward the Pantheon, where we finally escaped our pursuers.”<sup>4</sup>

PeeWee’s big adventure, then, consisted of watching the police attack crowds of people, then chase him away. The streets were thronged, not with militants, but with Bastille Day celebrants. It does not sound like most of these people were engaged in political protest. Bookchin observed a riot, but it was a police riot. Exactly what insight into the May-June insurrection he might have gleaned from this episode is hard to say, since by July 12, the insurrection was over. There’s a reason why it is referred to as the May-June days, not the May-July days. Bookchin’s riot has left on history only traces like this: “There were incidents at the Avignon Festival, and in Paris around Bastille Day, but the police were very much in control of the situation.”<sup>5</sup>

The radical substance of the May-June “days” was the general strike, the workplace and campus occupations, the action committees, and popular control of the streets (excluding the police). By July 12, all these, except for some of the action committees,<sup>6</sup> were gone. In fact, that was the very day the last of the strikes — by television newsmen employed by the government broadcasting network — was ended by a lockout.<sup>7</sup> On May 25 the unions had negotiated the Grenelle agreements granting economic demands within the system. Many workers rejected the agreements at first, but soon they began returning to work.<sup>8</sup> On June 12, the government, “confident of public approval,” prohibited demonstrations and banned a dozen extremist organizations.<sup>9</sup> Students returned to school; even the Sorbonne was evacuated by the invading *flics* on June 16. Elections on June 23 reaffirmed the existing order and even rejuvenated briefly the obsolescent Gaullist regime. And finally the police retook the streets. June 11 was the “last night of the barricades.”<sup>10</sup> Most Parisians, as the quotation from Clark’s acquaintance indicates, had as usual left town for their summer holidays.

Of course there were sporadic “incidents” after June 11 such as the one Bookchin blundered into, just as there was campus protest after Kent State, but each of these events marked the end of a discrete period of struggle. No doubt Bookchin learned something about the May “days” during his visit to Paris, but he learned it as reminiscence by others, not as a living, experienced reality. Another American known only too well to Bookchin was in the thick of it. That would be Fredy Perlman.

“By no means does one have to look ‘carefully,’ as Clark puts it, at anything I wrote about my experiences on July 13; I dated them very explicitly.”<sup>11</sup> Bookchin would rather his readers not look at what he writes carefully. That only leads to such miscarriages of justice as *Beyond Bookchin*

---

<sup>4</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 239.

<sup>5</sup>Philip M. Williams with Daniel Goldey & Martin Harrison, *French Politicians and Elections, 1951–1969* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1970), 281.

<sup>6</sup>Patrick Seale & Maureen McConville, *Red Flag/Black Flag: French Revolution 1968* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1968), 123. This “instant history” by journalists is even more superficial than a book written in a few weeks has to be. The May Revolution, they confess, “was the sort of event that sets your mind reeling for months afterward as you try to make sense of it.” *Ibid.*, 11. It shows.

<sup>7</sup>John L. Hess, “De Gaulle Insists on Public Order,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1968, p. 10, col. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Philip M. Williams & Martin Harrison, *Politics and Society in De Gaulle’s Republic* (London: Longmans, 1971), 330.

<sup>9</sup>Seale & McConville, *Red Flag/Black Flag*, 225.

<sup>10</sup>Maurice Rajsfus, *Mai 1968: Sous les pavés, la répression (mai 1968–mars 1974)* (Paris: le cherche midi editeur, 1988), 34 (“cette dernière nuit des barricades”); René Vienet, *Enrages and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May ’68* (New York: Autonomedia & London: Rebel Press, 1992), 111.

<sup>11</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238.

and *Anarchy after Leftism*. However, it is not the dating of whatever Bookchin may have written about July 13 which is in question, it is the dating of what he wrote about May-June 1968, as his quotations from Clark indicate. The two short texts in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971) which deal with the May days are dated “Paris July 1968,” and the second is described as “excerpts from a letter written shortly after the May-June events.”<sup>12</sup> Even if “July 1968” qualifies as *very* explicit, when texts about events in Paris in May-June 1968 are said to have been written in Paris in July 1968, one of them “shortly after the May-June events,” the natural assumption is that the author is drawing on his own recent memories of his observations of those events as they took place.

Happily for Bookchin, he could count on this all but inevitable misunderstanding to validate his essays. “Had I been guided by less moral standards,” says he with high sanctimony, “I could have lied quite brazenly and dated my Parisian trip to, say, May 12 — and no one would have been aware of the falsehood.”<sup>13</sup> No one except all the people in New York who knew he was in town in May and June. Bookchin by 1967 had been in contact in New York with the American Situationists and the Motherfuckers, and with French Situationists in Paris.<sup>14</sup> The groups were then in close communication, but the Americans had “broken” with Bookchin the previous year “over his spirited defence of sacrificial militants and mystics.”<sup>15</sup> The Director Emeritus could not have gotten away with a lie which would have demolished his credibility with the left at a time when he was trying to influence it through his newspaper *Anarchos*.

As a general proposition, the Director Emeritus would do well not to draw attention to his high moral standards, assuming that honesty is supposed to be one of them. For example, he now claims that, in the 1960s, he “developed a form of ecological anarchism”: “The name I gave it, though, was *social ecology*.” He thus both invented and named social ecology. But in the same volume, polemicizing against Watson, he says that social ecology was “a label that had fallen into disuse by the early 1960s and that I spent many years providing with a substantive meaning.” In this version he still invented social ecology but got the name from somewhere else, making one wonder what the phrase meant before he appropriated it. Much the same thing, apparently — judging from Bookchin’s earlier quotation of E.A. Gutkind to characterize social ecology.<sup>16</sup>

Was Bookchin trading on a false image of firsthand knowledge to lend credence to his rather slight writings on May-June 1968? That is how some might construe a statement like this: “*From everything I have seen*, it is clear that the graffiti (which now form the content of several books) have captured the imagination of many thousands in Paris.”<sup>17</sup> “Seen,” not “heard.” Bookchin might have seen graffiti in July, but he could not have seen how they captured the imagination of thousands in May and June.

---

<sup>12</sup>Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 258, 270, 261 (quoted). It purports to be a reply to a previous letter which, in turn, must have been a reply to a still earlier Bookchin letter, since Bookchin begins, “You ask how the May-June revolt could have developed into a successful social revolution.” This means that letters crossed the Atlantic three times in the last 17 days of July! Truth takes flight on swift wings.

<sup>13</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 238.

<sup>14</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 86.

<sup>15</sup>“Epitaph to Bookchinism,” *Situationist International: Review of the American Section of the S.I.* (1) (June 1969) (reprint edition, Portland, OR: Extreme Press, 1993, 42), also reprinted in Black, *Withered Anarchism*, n.d. [1998], 37–38 (Appendix B).

<sup>16</sup>Bookchin, *Marxism, Anarchism*, 56 (quoted), 212 (quoted); Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 22–23, quoting Gutkind, *Community and Environment*, 9.

<sup>17</sup>Murray Bookchin, “The May-June Events in France: 1,” in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 250 [emphasis added]. What seems not to have been “clear” to him is that the graffiti he quoted, such as “Never Work!” were Situationist. In claiming influence on May-June 1968, the Situationist International stated: “Those who doubt this [influence] need

“I have more than my own memory to verify these events,” avers the Director Emeritus. He has behind him the unimpeachable authority of the *New York Times*! Yes, “not only was there street fighting in Paris on July 13, but it was featured on the front page of *The New York Times* the next morning.” Yes, “the story was prominently featured on the front page under the disconcerting [?] headline ‘De Gaulle Insists on Public Order.’ The May-June revolt was not dead, even in mid-July.” The story, like so many of Bookchin’s, improves in the telling. Just one sentence later, the story — or was it the street fighting? — has gone from “featured” to “prominently featured.”<sup>18</sup> Bookchin quotes what the *Times* correspondent “saw” (although there is no indication he was an eyewitness): “As if to underline the warning, riot policemen clashed tonight with several hundred youths carrying red and black flags and and snake-dancing through the Place de la Bastille during celebrations on the eve of Bastille Day. Several youths were slightly injured. Using teargas, the police cleared the square of thousands of intermingled celebrators and demonstrators, some of whom threw paving stones.”<sup>19</sup> Most of those in the streets, then, were celebrators, not demonstrators.

Bookchin finds the reference to De Gaulle “disconcerting” only because, in his narcissism, he assumes the newspaper story is about the part of the story that involved him. And a small part it was. The title of the story is not “French Youths Riot,” it is “De Gaulle Insists on Public Order.” Its topic is a speech De Gaulle delivered on July 13. The speech, not the disorder, is what put the story on the front page of the *New York Times*, and even then perhaps only because Sunday is a slow news day. The street fighting is mentioned, not featured. Of the 19 paragraphs of the story, *one* dealt with the demonstrators, and I have quoted it in full. But maybe I miss the point. The story is not *really* about what it’s really about, it is really about what it *essentially* is about. The story is only fortuitously, advantitiously, contingently, secondarily, serendipitously, and aleatorily about the De Gaulle speech to which its title refers and to which nearly all of its content is devoted. It is essentially about a historic *moment*, in the Hegelian sense, in the revolutionary struggle — a moment to which Murray Bookchin bears proud witness.

One of those “other occasions” on which he discussed his Paris visit is a 1993 interview, “The 1960s,” in the same volume as “Whither Anarchism?” In the course of reviewing the 60s as he remembered them, Bookchin recites, almost word for word, the account of May 1968 in “Whither Anarchism?” But he also tells a new I-was-there story. At the Renault plant, he says, the workers, led by the younger workers, went on strike on their own, forcing the Communist Party and its union (the CGT) to go along: “Faced with a fait accompli, CGT officials essentially tagged along and tried to take over the workers’ grievances in union negotiations with the employers.” The usual story. But then this: “This was the general pattern, when I came to Paris in mid-July. I visited the Renault plant, and saw signs put up by the Communist hacks that read, ‘Beware of provocateurs’ — presumably meaning students — ‘who may try to mislead you,’ or words to that effect. In every possible way they tried to keep the workers who occupied the Renault plant from talking to students.”<sup>20</sup> After four more paragraphs describing other aspects of the Paris situation as if they were contemporaneous with his visit to Renault, he concludes by saying that

---

only *read the walls* [or, the SI went on, one of those illustrated books such as Bookchin spoke of].” “The Beginning of an Era,” in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (rev. & exp. ed.; Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 308.

<sup>18</sup>Hess, “De Gaulle Insists on Public Order,” *Times*, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Hess, “De Gaulle Insists on Public Order,” *Times*, p. 1, col. 1, p. 10, col. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 94.

“eventually, *after some two months*, the Communists managed to maneuver the workers back to their jobs.”<sup>21</sup>

Without a doubt the Director Emeritus is saying that, *in mid-July*, he saw the Renault plant on strike. But as we have seen, the last strike anywhere ended the day before Bookchin arrived. The Renault plants went on strike, the first on May 15 and the rest on May 16; the police seized Renault-Flins the night of June 5–6; the Renault strikers returned to work after June 17.<sup>22</sup> Although the ex-Director says so twice, it is not true that the general strike lasted two months. Most strikes lasted from three to five weeks, which is why mid-June is the *terminus ad quem* assigned to the May-June revolt by everyone except the Director Emeritus.<sup>23</sup> The Situationist Rene Vienet mentions that by the second week of June, “the unions were able to bring about the resumption of work almost everywhere; they had already been thrown some crumbs.”<sup>24</sup>

## 2

Another American went to Paris that summer, and their disparate experiences say much about them. Fredy Perlman was in Italy when the May revolt began. He did not have the trouble taking a train that Bookchin had taking a plane. In Paris, he plunged into the activity of the Censier worker-student action committee. His first written report of events, dated May 18, recounts how in eleven days (May 2–13) the student strike catalyzed the general strike. On May 17, Sorbonne students undertook a six-mile march to the Renault auto plant, which had gone out two days before. Perlman describes how officials of the Communist-controlled UGT union were “guardedly hostile” to the demonstrators, who were allowed to exhort the workers only from outside the gates.<sup>25</sup>

In a second dispatch dated May 30, when a strike committee at the Citroen auto plant called for a strike of unlimited duration (May 28), “French and foreign workers and intellectuals” formed the Citroen Action Committee. It consisted of whatever workers and students were present at the daily meetings, with no quorum, presided over by whoever felt there were enough people present for a meeting. On May 28 the Action Committee “launched its first project: to contribute to the factory occupation by talking to workers and by giving out leaflets explaining the strike.” That morning they did so. The next morning, however, they found union functionaries reading speeches through loudspeakers who told them to go home. After previously opposing the strike, the union was now taking control over it and redefining its objectives as bread-and-butter issues within the system: “Thus the functionaries strenuously opposed the distribution of the Action Committee’s leaflets, on the ground that their distribution would ‘disrupt the unity of the

---

<sup>21</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 94–95, 95 (quoted). The ex-Director erroneously assumes that the entire French working class was organized by the CGT. In fact the unionized sector of the workforce is relatively small. In 1968 the CGT was estimated to have 1,200,000 members, the CFDT 450,000, the CGT-FO 450,000, and the CGC (technicians, engineers, etc.), 200,000. Andree Hoyles, *Imagination in Power: The Occupation of Factories in France in 1968* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman Books, 1973), 9. Compare these figures to estimates of at least ten million workers on strike in May. Less than 25% of the Renault workers belonged to any union. Solidarity, “Paris: May 1968,” in *Beneath the Paving Stones: Situationists and the Beach, May 1968* (Edinburgh, Scotland & San Francisco, CA: AK Press/Dark Star, 2001), 67.

<sup>22</sup>Vienet, *Enrages and Situationists*, 108–109, 111.

<sup>23</sup>Hoyles, *Imagination in Power*, 29.

<sup>24</sup>Vienet, *Enrages and Situationists*, 111.

<sup>25</sup>R. Gregoire & F. Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees: France May '68* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1970), 4–6.

workers' and 'create confusion.'" While this was going on, the plant's foreign workers remained outside the factory gates, watching.<sup>26</sup> The union had traditionally neglected the foreign workers, and now it was struggling to translate the speech into their languages. At this point, the officials decided there was a use for the visiting militants after all.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the visiting militants spoke foreign languages; some were foreigners themselves. At the union's urging, they talked to and leafleted the foreign workers in their own languages, inviting them to join the occupation. And "the functionaries even gave loudspeakers to some of the foreign members of the Action Committee. The result was that, after about two hours of direct communication between the foreign workers and the Action Committee members, most of the foreign workers were inside the factory, participating in its occupation."<sup>28</sup>

What Fredy does not mention is that *he* was one of the foreign militants: "Since many of the assembled workers were non-French, the outside agitators insisted that the appeal should be presented in Spanish and Serbo-Croatian as well. The union officials grudgingly agreed, and gave the microphone to Fredy who was delighted to convey the actual appeal."<sup>29</sup> Fredy spoke both Spanish and Serbo-Croatian. Except for his honesty, nothing better distinguishes Fredy from Bookchin than his modesty. The only thing less conceivable than the Director Emeritus putting his ass on the line in a public confrontation would be his refusal to brag about it if he did. Fredy also does not mention that he was later arrested for trespassing at another factory along with other militants who scaled a factory fence in an effort to talk to workers. He talked his way out of it by telling the judge that he was an American professor researching French labor unions. The Director Emeritus thinks he caught a whiff of tear gas on the night of July 13. Fredy got so sick after one demonstration that he was bedridden for two days and unconscious most of the time.<sup>30</sup> Fredy, with a congenital heart condition which would ultimately kill him, was 34.

Two Americans in Paris: one a revolutionary, the other a tourist. One was timely, the other untimely. Both went to Paris in 1968 and wrote about what happened there in May. There the similarity ends. Bookchin wrote up the *May journees* in such a way that they seemed to validate his ideology. He made it out to be a trans-class revolt against hierarchy, consumerism and subjective alienation which exposed the reformist, bureaucratic, counter-revolutionary nature of the Marxist parties.<sup>31</sup> By placing his essay — out of chronological order — at the end of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, the bureaucrat-to-be made it look like a natural succession from the earlier essays, their climax — as if the French were acting out his theories. Except for possibly the ubiquity of the graffiti, there is nothing in the text which requires, or seems to reflect, direct experience. The ex-Director could have written it based on nothing more than daily reading of the *New York Times*. Perhaps he did: that would explain how he finished it so fast.

For Fredy Perlman, May 1968 was a challenge to theory, not a vindication of his own. His account (with co-author Roger Gregoire) was written by, and for, revolutionaries, and it was written for use, "to make transparent, to ourselves and to those who are engaged in the same project, our shortcomings, our lack of foresight, our lack of action," to contrast "the limited views

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 12–16, 15 (quoted).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 15–16.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>29</sup>Lorraine Perlman, *Having Little, Being Much: A Chronicle of Fredy Perlman's Fifty Years* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1989), 47. Fredy spoke both Spanish and Serbo-Croatian.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>31</sup>Bookchin, "The May-June Events in France: 1."

we had of the events at the time we were engaged in them, with views we have gained from further action in different contexts.”<sup>32</sup> The difference in perspective makes for important differences in interpretation. Their experiences with workers in the Action Committee and at the factories made it impossible for Perlman and Gregoire to do anything but place the class struggle at the center of the meaning of events, whereas Bookchin denies it explicitly: “The scope of the strike shows that nearly all strata of French society were profoundly disaffected and that the revolution was anchored *not in a particular class* [which one might that be?] but in everyone who felt dispossessed, denied, and cheated of life.”<sup>33</sup> But all “strata” were not equally important. Although Barrot and Martin exaggerate, they are much closer to the truth than the Director Emeritus when they say that “students masked the real struggle, which took place elsewhere.”<sup>34</sup> When he says that “many people transcended the narrow limitations that had impeded their social vision,” one of his examples makes clear that class consciousness is such a limitation: “The individual workers who came to the action committees at Censier ceased to be ‘workers’ as such. They became revolutionaries.”<sup>35</sup> Fredy, who was in those Censier action committees, agrees that they became revolutionaries, but not that they ceased to be workers: “In Censier the workers liberated themselves; they did not overthrow the capitalist system. In Censier, revolution was an idea, not an action.”<sup>36</sup>

Without reviewing the specifics — “to give an accurate and exhaustive account of that period would need a far less brilliant pen than mine”<sup>37</sup> — it is instructive to compare Bookchin’s and Fredy’s analyses of why the strike failed. The occupied factories are the crux of the matter. The mere occupation, in isolation, of the factories by those who work in them creates at best a pre-revolutionary situation. Despite his ultra-modernist disdain for working-class self-identification, suddenly Bookchin has an old-fashioned leftist prescription after all for workers “as such”: go back to work! Work under new management explicitly *is* the revolution: “Had the workers begun to work the plants under workers’ management, the revolt would have advanced into a full-scale social revolution.” Then it remains only to erect the rest of the structure: federated functional and territorial groups as set forth in old councilist and syndicalist texts.<sup>38</sup> Under democratic control, it does not matter “that the old system of production and distribution is still centralized structurally and based on a national division of labor.”<sup>39</sup> Workers “as such” will remain such. Today, the Director Emeritus wants “the means of life municipally managed rather than controlled by any vested interest (such as workers).” Self-management is redefined as municipal management. Syndicalist demands are the particularistic demands of “workers” (his quotation marks), who are just one of the “vocationally oriented special interest groups” whose class interests are to be “dissolved” into the civic domain, the totalizing Commune.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Gregoire & Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Bookchin, “The May-June Events in France: 1,” 255–256 [emphasis added]. That the scope of the general strike was wider (I am not sure about *much* wider — how much wider can that be?) does not entail that different “strata” share all the same interests and objectives.

<sup>34</sup> Barrot & Martin, *Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement*, 65. Fredy published this text in 1974.

<sup>35</sup> Bookchin, “The May-June Events in France: 1,” 251–252.

<sup>36</sup> Gregoire & Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Max Beerbohm, *Works and More* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1930), 46.

<sup>38</sup> Bookchin, “The May-June Events in France: 2,” 263–265.

<sup>39</sup> Bookchin, “May-June Events in France: 2,” 266.

<sup>40</sup> Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 155; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanism*, 262–263.

For Fredy Perlman, the revolution stumbled and stalled on the threshold of socialization of the means of production. He contrasted what happened at the Sorbonne with what happened in the factories. No longer a university, the Sorbonne was the collective property of all who went there, without regard to whether they had been students or not (most had not). But the occupied factory was still a factory, the collective property of its workers, who were still workers, and it was not to be trespassed upon by outsiders, even other workers. It did not occur to the militants that they had as much right to enter and, if they liked, to use the factory as did the people formerly employed there. Misunderstanding the situation, they deferred to the workers — meaning, in practice, to their union officials — lest they “substitute” themselves for the workers, who, in their isolation, had already surrendered their power to substitutes.<sup>41</sup>

The minority of workers who occupy the factory are locked in; thus they’re kept away from the action committee militants outside, and they’re exposed to the speeches inside. The strike pickets appointed by Union and Party officials play cards and wait for the strike to end. The action committee militants who come to the factory entrances get as far as the strike pickets, who are instructed not to let the militants inside, not to let the militants talk to workers, not to take the “provocators and adventurists” seriously, and to chase them away by any means necessary in case crowds of workers collect around them.

In factories occupied in this manner, no one expresses anything, no one learns; the level of consciousness remains where it was before the strike. The workers are told by their “spokesmen” that what they want is higher wages and improved conditions, and that only the union can negotiate these gains for them. The whole strike is reduced to the problem of quantitative improvements and material gains within capitalist society. Locked into the factories by appointed strike pickets, spoken-for by union officials, told by loudspeakers and press that the militants outside are anarchistic provocators who follow an irresponsible foreign Leader, the workers become even more dependent. Chained to a context in which all their powers are alienated, the workers view their possibilities from the vantage point of powerlessness — and from this vantage point, nothing is possible and nothing is learned.<sup>42</sup>

These paragraphs could only have been written by someone who was there. “Locked in” is neither hyperbole nor metaphor. Another observer saw “heavy locks and bolts on the Renault gates.”<sup>43</sup>

Most revolutionary thinking got no further than cooperatism: “The idea that ‘the means of production belong to the working people’ was translated to mean that the workers own the factory they work in. This is an extreme vulgarization. Such an interpretation would mean that the particular activity to which the wage struggle condemned someone in capitalist society is the activity to which he will be condemned when the society is transformed.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, the revolution failed because most revolutionaries agreed with Murray Bookchin.

---

<sup>41</sup>Gregoire & Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees*, 70–73.

<sup>42</sup>Gregoire & Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees*, 66–67.

<sup>43</sup>Solidarity, “Paris: May 1968,” 85.

<sup>44</sup>Gregoire & Perlman, *Worker-Student Action Committees*, 73.

Fredy Perlman left France when Bookchin arrived there: “In July 1968, as law and order were being reimposed on French society, Fredy returned to the United States, stopping briefly in New York City to meet and exchange views with militants involved in the student strike and building occupation at Columbia University.”<sup>45</sup> Perhaps, in New York or Paris, Bookchin and Fredy passed each other in opposite directions, as they certainly went on to do politically, with Fredy soon superseding Marxism and Bookchin eventually regressing to it. Lorraine Perlman writes that Fredy’s “experiences during those intense, joyous weeks deeply reflected his views and remained a constant reference point whenever he considered possibilities for social change.”<sup>46</sup> The satiric passages in *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders* in which leftist organizers and politicians are bewildered by post-revolutionary life in which people are unself-consciously and creatively using socialized property recall what Perlman wished the Parisian workers had done when they had the chance.<sup>47</sup> Despite his unsparing criticism of his own activity, for Fredy, May ’68, flying in the face of common sense, showed that “anything is possible.”<sup>48</sup>

As for Bookchin, his visit to Paris left no discernible impression on his subsequent output, not even on “Spontaneity and Organisation” (1971), where it would appear if it appeared anywhere. When the Director Emeritus rattles off the holidays on the anarchist calendar — 1789, 1848, 1917, 1936, 1956, etc. — 1968 is not included. When he holds up Paris as an example it is Paris in 1793, 1848 or 1871.<sup>49</sup> In 1993, after reviewing events, all he had to say is that “the ’68 events in Paris generated considerable controversy in the Left, and it raised many issues that have yet to be sorted out: questions of organization, a public sphere, theory and practice, and the like. I still struggle with these questions today, but that requires a separate discussion.”<sup>50</sup> As one might say at the scene of a homicide, there are no signs of struggle. In effect, the ex-Director confirms that he learned nothing important in Paris, including the most important thing, something Fredy learned — to quote Guattari and Negri, “The Revolution Began in ’68.”<sup>51</sup>

To find out what someone finds it worthwhile to do, look at what he’s doing. For Bookchin, bashing anarchists takes priority over sorting out the many issues raised by May 1968. It is literally true that he devoted the rest of his life to discrediting really existing anarchism.

Bookchin does “sort out” one aspect of the legacy of ’68: Post-Modernism! The Director Emeritus explains: “Many French radicals,” shaken by Communist Party behavior during the upheaval, “not only did they become anti-Communists, they rejected Marxism itself ... and in some cases the entire Enlightenment tradition.” Generously, he allows that “I am only too well aware of the fact that many postmodernists have since modified these strong denials,” but the PoMos still share “certain essentials.”<sup>52</sup> And he is only too unaware of the fact that there are PoMos, such as Laclau and Mouffe, who espouse a leftist radical democracy just as he does.<sup>53</sup> Since Post-Modernism is

---

<sup>45</sup>L. Perlman, *Having Little, Being Much*, 48.

<sup>46</sup>L. Perlman, *Having Little, Being Much*, 46–47.

<sup>47</sup>Velli, *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders*, 138–179.

<sup>48</sup>Fredy Perlman, *Anything Can Happen* (London: Phoenix Press, 1992), 7–14, 7 (quoted).

<sup>49</sup>Bookchin, “Spontaneity and Organisation,” in *Towards an Ecological Society*, 251–274, esp. 254–255; Bookchin, *Rise of Urbanization*.

<sup>50</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 96.

<sup>51</sup>Guattari & Negri, *Communists Like Us*, 20 (chapter title); Vaneigem, “Preface to the First French Paperback Edition,” *Revolution of Everyday Life*, 9.

<sup>52</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 132–133.

<sup>53</sup>Peter Bellharz, “Between Bolshevism and Democracy,” in *Between Totalitarianism and Postmodernity: A Thesis Eleven Reader* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); Ernest Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*:



little more than a style and a mood, it is as compatible with leftist incoherence as with any other incoherence.

Obviously describing the same phenomenon, another source refers to the representation “that a group of young intellectuals, for the most part veterans of ’68 and former leftist militants, had discovered the works of Solzhenitzyn and concluded that Marxism leads inevitably to concentration camps.”<sup>54</sup> But sometimes the usual suspects are innocent. The intellectuals described are not Post-Modernists, they are adherents of the neo-conservative Nouvelle Philosophie group around Bernard-Henri Levy which made a media splash in the mid-70s. Aside from their common origin — Althusserian Maoism — the tendencies have nothing in common.<sup>55</sup> It’s a case of mistaken identity. Looking to a real French Post-Modernist, Michel Foucault, it turns out that some of his major works, including *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things*, antedate May 1968.<sup>56</sup> Someone else will have to sort it all out.

Fredy Perlman is probably the greatest anarchist of the last 50 years. He was in every way exemplary. I was only privileged to meet him once, at a party in Detroit in December 1978. He was warm, gregarious and unaffected. I wish I could have gotten to know him. From his writings, though, I do know that he spurned careerism, casuistry, pedantry and deceit. He walked away from academia as a place where integrity is impossible about two years before Bookchin, for whom integrity is not an issue, walked into it. Fredy gave us rigorous analysis in *The Reproduction of Daily Life*, sly satire in *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders*, and impassioned poetry in *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!* — but his gifts were always humane, angry and smart. Bookchin needed to believe that the future is not only preordained (Marx), “potentially” it is already here (Aristotle). He would only wager his life on what he considers a sure thing. For Fredy, indifferent to wishful thinking decked out as determinism or teleology, it was enough to believe that, at a place of wisdom beyond common sense, anything is possible.

---

*Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

<sup>54</sup>Peter Dews, “The Nouvelle Philosophie and Foucault,” in *Towards a Critique of Foucault*, ed. Mike Gane (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 60.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 60–62; Jappe, *Guy Debord*, 110. Levy ended up in the embrace of the Romish Church.

<sup>56</sup>Bookchin, *Anarchism, Marxism*, 134; and by Foucault (French publication dates in brackets): *Madness and Civilization*, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965) [1961]; *Mental Illness and Psychology*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) [1962]; *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussell*, tr. Charles Russ (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1986) [1963]; *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971) [1966]; and several articles, plus books revised and republished after 1968.

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



Bob Black  
Nightmares of Reason  
2010

[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)