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

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

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

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

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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

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

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

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

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

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

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

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

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

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

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

THE PROBLEM OF CHEMICALS IN FOOD

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

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

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

POST-SCARCITY POLITICS AND ECOLOGY AS REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

Whilst the writings of 'Lewis Herber' may well have been decisively overshadowed by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, it is the intellectual, cultural and political explosion of the 1960s which sees 'Murray Bookchin' emerge in his own right, and with his own name, to find his mature voice. Meeting civil rights and peace protesters through the 'Beat' scene in the Lower East Side in the early 1960s, Bookchin apparently spent much of the decade mixing in political and bohemian circles and criss-crossing the United States speaking at a diverse range of civil rights, anti-nuclear and proto-environmental mobilisations (Bookchin, 1991a). It would appear that he was involved in a range of diverse political groupings during this period such as CORE,[13] the Libertarian League[14] and the Anarchos group (Bookchin, 1991a). Perhaps most consequential though was his involvement with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the latter half of the 1960s, where he sought to galvanise left-libertarian forces through his own faction of SDS, the Radical Decentralist Project.[15] Three key essays written in this period clarify Bookchin's intellectual and political project, open him up to a new audience, and finally establish him as an innovative, articulate and rigorous left-libertarian social theorist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second, it is interesting to note the differences between Bookchin's style of critique during this period and other contemporaneous ecological thinkers such as Rachel Carson (see Garb, 1996). While Bookchin and Carson share similar concerns about the dispersal of chemical toxins into the environment, Carson's work is primarily concerned with how such developments disrupt the 'balance of nature' and with their impact on the ecosystem as a whole. Her writings are informed by an almost transcendental orientation to the value of 'nature' in itself. Bookchin's concerns, in contrast, are distinctly more humanist and urbanist in orientation. As Garb notes, in his fine comparison of *Silent Spring* and *Our Synthetic Environment*, not only is Bookchin much more sceptical of 'quasi mystical' orientations to nature and unreserved valorisations of 'natural states' as superior, his primary concern is with the effects of environmental degradation on human health and possible political solutions to such problems.[22]

BEYOND THE NEW LEFT

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

MAPPING THE ARC OF BOOKCHIN'S WORK

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

(i) 1964–1982: Developing the Theoretical Framework of Social Ecology

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

(ii) 1982–1990: Consolidations and Elaborations

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

(iii) 1987–2006: Revisions and Reversals

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

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

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

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

INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

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

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

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

John Ely and John Clark have offered some of the most interesting readings of the intellectual lineage of Bookchin’s thought to date. John Clark has argued that, in broad terms, social ecology comes out of ‘the tradition of social geography and ecological regionalism of Elisée Reclus, Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford, the libertarian communitarianism of Peter Kropotkin, Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber, and the tradition of dialectical philosophy of Aristotle, Hegel and Marx' (Clark, 2005). Within this tradition, the specific lineage of Bookchin's social theory is found less in anarchism (or, we might add, ecological social theory) than in critical theory, defined in the broadest sense and ranging from Hegel and Marx to the young Hegelians and the first generation of the Frankfurt School (Clark, 1986: 212; additionally see Marshall, 1992a: 603). John Ely (1994, 1996) has drawn attention to the Aristotelian features of Bookchin's normative political theory and focused on the commonalities between Bookchin and Aristotle, Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas and Ernst Bloch. Both currents would seem to offer much in the way of orientating ourselves to Bookchin's mature work. It is the debt to Marx and critical theory that we will focus on in the next chapter as we turn to consider Bookchin's historical social theory.

Part Two

The Legacy of Domination

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

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

2

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARXISM AND 'BOURGEOIS SOCIOLOGY'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAPPING THE CONTOURS OF 'ADVANCED' CAPITALISM

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

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

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

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

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

DEVELOPING A CRITIQUE OF 'ADVANCED' CAPITALISM

The critique deployed in Bookchin's sixties anthology, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, brings to bear post-industrial insights upon the classic Marxist claim that critique should be located in the tension between the forces and relations of production. All the essays collected in this text hang on 'the tension between what-is and what could-be' (*PSA*: 14). Bookchin argues that revolutions in production generated by 'automation' and 'cybernation', coupled with new developments in ecological technologies, have brought the US, and other parts of the First World, to the threshold of a 'post-scarcity society'. This term refers to societies that have, at least in principle, 'opened the prospect of material abundance for all to enjoy – a sufficiency in the means of life without the need for grinding day to day toil' (*PSA*: 12). A selective combining of such new technologies of abundance with institutional, political, economic and cultural change could open up the possibility of a qualitatively different kind of society. However, deformed social relations, in the fashion of lingering forms of hierarchy and domination, prevent the recognition of this potential.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If advanced capitalism is replacing cities, towns and countryside, classic traditions of urbanism and civic engagement, with vast urban belts and social homogenisation, then a fourth critique central to Bookchin's urban writings involves focusing attention on the tension between the city as it was, as it is and as it could be. Affirming Horkheimer's assertion that 'The city dweller is the individual par excellence' (*TES*: 135), the central theme of *Crisis in Our Cities*, *The Limits of the City* and *From Urbanization to Cities* reminds us of the rich civic, social, democratic and ecological possibilities of city life, and contrasts these possibilities with our current phase of 'urbanisation without cities'. For Bookchin, our emerging urban world not only generates massive social and ecological disruptions but also gives rise to sprawling built environments which lack internal structure, definition or civic uniqueness (*TES*: 146). Post-war capitalism has speeded up a process rooted in the industrial revolution of using the factory 'with its flat floor, its departmentalization of space, its minute specialization of human labour and thought, and its quantitative criteria of success' as 'the model for our cities and farms'. A result of this is the undermining of 'contoured space, community diversity, roundedness of human activity, and qualitative criteria of excellence' (Bookchin, 1974: xxxii).

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

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

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

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

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

DEFINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

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

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

THE CRITIQUE OF NEO-MALTHUSIANISM

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

Conclusion

RE-ENCHANTING HUMANITY, DISENCHANTED BOOKCHIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POST-SCARCITY ECOLOGY

In certain quarters, the evoking of absolute natural ‘limits’ and declarations of states of ‘eco-scarcity’ have been treated as axiomatic, non-negotiable elements of eco-critique. Thus, Andrew Dobson has observed that the ‘foundation-stone’ of much green thinking over the last three decades has been the belief that our finite Earth places limits on our industrial growth. This finitude, and the scarcity it implies, has become ‘an article of faith for green ideologues’ (Dobson, 1990: 73). That Bookchin’s writings have never signed up to this 'article of faith' indicates a further interesting break between social ecology and conventional ecological thought. It has ensured that his position has simply been dismissed by prominent political theorists and sociologists such as John Gray (1997) and Raymond Murphy (1994). On this question though, I would like to suggest that what we can find in Bookchin's writings is simply an insistence that talk of 'limits' and 'scarcity' is not unproblematic, that such concepts need to be understood in their social, historical and ecological complexity (paying due attention to how these concepts intertwine in complex ways with hierarchy/domination), and that eco-critique needs to be scrupulous in avoiding careless applications of such concepts since they can as easily *preclude* as allow for critique of existing arrangements.

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

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

A further level of complexity to the concept of 'scarcity' in social ecology emerges from Bookchin's observation that scarcity under capitalism does not just refer to a lack of the means of life, or even to new or exotic wants which social development turns into needs. Rather, it is argued, what cruder forms of environmentalism simply ignore is that certain forms of 'scarcity' are not simply a product of structural economic factors but are additionally generated through a 'socially contradictory hypostatisation of need' (*EofF*: 68). Arguing that capitalism leads not only to production for the sake of production but also to consumption for the sake of consumption – that 'grow or die' has its counterpart in 'buy or die' – a situation is seen as emerging where:

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

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

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

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

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

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION AND ITS CRITICS

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

First, in formulating his argument in an 'emphatic' fashion, Bookchin quickly rules 'out of court' the possibility that a new 'green' environmental regime could emerge whose primary purpose is to facilitate the rise of 'green' accumulation (see Sandler, 1994). Yet, as Blair Sandler has observed, a problem that surfaces with emphatic versions of the 'grow or die' thesis that capitalism necessarily commodifies, internalises and destroys its 'conditions of production', is that it can discount too quickly the notion that an environmental regime could be constructed at the level of the firm and beyond that would offer capitalist enterprises opportunities to *reduce* ecological degradation as well as increase profit (see Sandler, 1994: 39–40).

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

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

Ecological modernisers such as Mol (1996; 2003), Paehlke (2003) and Dryzek, Downes, Hunold, Schlosberg and Hernes (2003), have all drawn from a diverse set of case studies and an extensive empirical literature on environmental policy making over the last decade to argue that international diplomacy and/or domestic policy changes at certain times and in certain places – in the international arena and in certain OECD nations over the last two decades – have led to some important environmental improvements in the affluent world. Arthur Mol has argued that there are now grounds for believing that 'actual institutional transformations aimed at the preservation of the *sustenance base* are now taking place in industrial societies; *transformations which can no longer be interpreted as mere window dressing, as they were seen in the 1970s*' (Mol, 1996: 303). Focusing in particular on developments in Northern Europe, the US and Japan, ecological modernisers chronicle transformations in the environmental policies of all these countries from the 1980s onwards. Following this, Eco-modernisers have argued that we can see important shifts occurring in environmental policy in all these nations in the 1980s and 1990s, as simple 'end of pipe' resolutions to environmental difficulties are increasingly replaced by 'more advanced environmental technologies that not only redirect production processes and products into more environmentally sound ones' (Mol, 1996: 307) but also trigger ecological restructuring in key industries. Mol has provided a detailed account of such changes in the Dutch chemical industry in the 1980s and has gone on to identify examples of affluent 'core' societies responding to key environmental issues, from air and water pollution to deforestation and soil erosion. Thus, Japan's remarkably quick response to its notorious air pollution problems in the 1970s, the comprehensive nature of Dutch environmental policy, recent legislative developments in Germany and the European Union's environmental programmes, particularly the Fourth Environmental Action Programme, are all cited as paradigmatic examples of how well thought-out legislation in liberal democratic regimes can respond to environmental problems with relative ease (Mol, 2003).

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

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

Most notably, critics of the sociology of ecological modernisation have argued that there are problems with the spatial/temporal scale of ecological modernisation, with the units of analysis used in ecological modernising studies to demonstrate environmental improvements, and with the way in which we can attribute causality to environmental improvements (Harvey, 1996; White, 2002; York and Rosa, 2003). Specifically, while there might be much breathless talk of the benefits of dematerialisation in the business press, evidence of such developments remains partial and contested. It is increasingly evident that pro-environmental policy shifts in the OECD do not necessarily generate lower emissions (Fisher and Freudenburg, 2004). More broadly, empirical studies suggest that optimistic literatures (either of the contrarian or eco-modernising variety), have paid insufficient attention to distributional issues related to environmental change. Beyond the claims of environmental justice scholars that environmental improvements within the OECD can take place whilst environmental 'bads' still disproportionately impact on poor communities or people of colour (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, eds. 2003), studies increasingly indicate that environmental gains in the OECD more broadly have been achieved through a degree of displacement of such problems across, time, space and other media. There is growing evidence (see Jorgenson 2003; 2004; Jorgenson and Rice, 2005; Roberts et al., 2003; York and Rosa, 2003) to suggest that 'the more affluent nations can reduce their impacts on their environment within their borders through the importing of resources and the exporting of wastes' (Jorgenson and Rice, 2005: 61). Andrew Jorgenson and James Rice suggest that this 'uneven ecological exchange' is a key feature of the structural dynamics of international trade.

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

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

Once again, the debates between eco-modernisers and world systems theorists hardly discredit Bookchin's work. Both currents are essentially negotiating around the validity of his central thesis. Yet, once again, if we read these literatures together, they seem to suggest the need for generalised crisis theories to attend to the more spatial complexities of the modern environmental debate.

CLIMATE CHANGE, GREEN GOVERNMENTALITY AND NATURE AS AN ACCUMULATION STRATEGY

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

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

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

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

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

In contrast to Bookchin's hope that the 'grow or die' dynamics of capitalism would generate clear dividing lines in the environmental debate, all we see are messy complexities and multiple ways in which social domination becomes embedded in what Smith refers to as 'the production of nature'. Moreover, we increasingly find ourselves in a world where diverse projects are negotiating different relations with capital, the state, civil society and the broader ecosystem. We see 'environmentalisms of the poor' informed by environmental justice discourses increasingly rubbing up against coercive conservation projects and 'environmentalisms of the rich'. We find grassroots alternative ecological practices from below, sometimes running alongside, sometimes running against, forms of international green diplomacy placing their faith in international treaties. Advocates of government-directed attempts to kick-start a 'Green Industrial Revolution' (in essence advocates of green social democracy; see Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999) exist alongside both defenders of 'business-as-usual' grey capitalism and modes of green neo-liberalism involved in the production of nature all the way down. How this will resolve itself is difficult to say. Perhaps the lesson to be learned from this discussion of the capital/ecology relationship, though, is that a progressive socio-ecological critique needs to develop rather more imaginative modes of engaging with the rise of green capitalism than relying on macro crisis narratives as the 'delivery mechan-1.30574 TwirG

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

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

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

Yet, it is Hegel who is of central importance to Bookchin. Bookchin rejects Hegel's absolute idealism, his teleological culmination of the subjective and objective in a God-like absolute, and the specific analysis of his logical categories (see PofSE: 14). Nevertheless, he argues that dialectical reasoning provides the basis for a decisive criticism of 'conventional reasoning'[1] and a profoundly liberatory and ethical account of causality. In contrast to 'conventional reasoning', with its focus on the fixity of things, Bookchin argues dialectical reasoning offers a much broader, more 'organic' understanding of rationality. Conceptualising reality as profoundly historical and acknowledging its developmental nature, Bookchin argues that dialectical reason not only looks at how phenomena are organised at a particular moment, but also considers what they are structured to become. It considers the potentialities in phenomena and the manner in which these might be actualised into a greater whole. For Bookchin, such a form of reasoning not only furnishes an extraordinary degree of coherence, it also possesses a complementary means of understanding an ecology rooted in evolutionary development. Shorn of Hegel's quasi-mystical idealism and the mechanistic and scientistic leanings of Engels, Bookchin suggests that 'dialectic may be rendered naturalistic and ecological' (PofSE: 15).

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

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

HUMANITY AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Bookchin suggests, then, drawing together the Western organismic tradition with the biology of self-organisation to argue that it is reasonable to infer that reason exists in nature, as the pre-Socratics once believed, but that this can be understood in eminently modern scientific terms, as the self-organising attributes of substance. The 'latent subjectivity' in the inorganic and organic levels of reality reveals an inherent striving towards consciousness and, in humanity, this subjectivity reveals itself as self-consciousness. Robyn Eckersley (1989: 102–3), in a careful reading of Bookchin's work, has observed that in some senses we are presented with a view of subjectivity residing in nature which ‘stands midway’ between Bergson’s vitalism, as constituted by a specific force, an élan vital, and Aristotle’s view of nature as ‘self moving’ and exhibiting ‘nisus’, or striving for a goal. However, as she notes, Bookchin’s position is nevertheless distinct from Aristotle’s by being open-ended and evolutionary – as opposed to being cyclical and deterministic. Nature is marked by a general directionality – as opposed to any unswerving and predetermined telos (Eckersley 1989: 102–3). Questions remain as to how such a resolutely naturalistic approach can avoid accusations of reductionism – and how this ontology can inform our ethics.

FIRST NATURE, SECOND NATURE AND FREE NATURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

•NATURE• AS THE GROUNDS OR MATRIX FOR ETHICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIAL ECOLOGY, SCIENTIFIC ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

Is this attempt to reclaim 'nature' for emancipatory ends convincing? What can we make of this call for critical social theory to embrace something like a neo-vitalist ontology? Are we merely falling back on pre-scientific archaisms? Whilst Bookchin's dialectical naturalism is critical of certain 'high Enlightenment' attitudes to nature, and his work makes a positive assessment of the orientation of certain pre-Socratic and organicist currents in The Philosophy of Social Ecology he nonetheless distances his own project from pre-modernist positions. Indeed, rejecting any suggestion that dialectical naturalism entails a revival of 'pre-scientific' archaisms, he stresses that his own position is supported by 'an extensive literature' which is 'derived mainly from the scientific community itself' (EofF: 11). It would seem reasonable to begin an evaluation of dialectical naturalism by considering the extent to which it can meet Bookchin's own criteria.

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

Aspects of what has come to be known as 'the new ecology' or 'non-equilibrium ecology' are, then, at variance with Bookchin's reading of ecology found in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, it also has to be noted that other features of what is sometimes referred to as the 'new paradigm' in ecology actually converge with Bookchin's recommendations for a 'social ecology' elaborated in his later work such as The Philosophy of Social Ecology. Much of the 'new ecology' is motivated by a rejection of the static, ahistorical ecosystems ecology pioneered by Eugene Odum. This is a variation of ecology of which Bookchin has always been critical. A similar hostility to Cartesian mechanistic forms of thinking and a questioning of empiricist ontologies is also common to social ecology and the 'new ecology'. Furthermore, both currents seek to encourage a more interdisciplinary ecology and to avoid isolating ecosystems in their pristine states by factoring historical and social factors in to the analysis. The move in Bookchin's later work towards a more dynamic view of nature, with the focus increasingly on change, natural spontaneity and diversity, could also be seen as bringing these currents closer together.[3]

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

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

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

•NON HIERARCHICAL• AND •MUTUALISTIC• NATURE?

If Bookchin’s ontology can draw partial support from other sources, further questions loom. Notably, to what degree, and in what form, can an ontology of the biosphere or even the cosmos prove ethically instructive? How can attempts to 'know nature in the large' with a view to developing a naturalistic ethics avoid the classic dilemmas of reductionism that have bedevilled the 'lessons from nature' school of ethical thought from Plato to Hayek (Worster, 1994; Eckersley, 1989)?

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

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

The development of Bookchin's argument here reveals his great debt once again to Kropotkin, whose emphasis on mutual aid has come to play an increasingly important role in evolutionary theory (see Gould, 1989; Robbins, 2004). As such, Bookchin's desire to refocus our attention on mutual relations in nature can draw on some weighty support, with the qualification that most neo-Kropotkinians merely want to suggest that Kropotkin's mutualism supplements rather than supplants the Malthusian-Darwinian view of nature as ‘red in tooth and claw’ (see Albrecht, 1998; Rudy and Light, 1998). Perhaps the more pressing issue that still stands for Bookchin’s ethical theory is to what extent metaphors from the natural sciences can be drawn on to substantiate ethical issues in the social world (Eckersley, 1989; Benton, 1994; Kirkman, 1997).

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

One need not invoke a rigid positivistic separation between ‘facts’ and ‘values’, or ascribe to the ‘naturalistic fallacy’, to recognise a problem here. Bookchin’s claim that we should treat specific characteristics of nature as offering ethical insight into how human beings should organise their social and political arrangements because human societies are, in certain senses, continuous with the natural world, as Eckersley (1989), Hughes (1989), Marshall (1992a) and Fotopoulos (1997) have all argued, is at variance with the careful attempt made elsewhere by Bookchin to avoid naturalistic reductionism, and seems to be in tension with his broader aim of offering normative justification for a project that places radical democracy, citizenship and the polis at its centre. Part of the tension here lies in whether it is credible for a politics which aspires to support participatory and libertarian outcomes to seek to ground itself on a meta-ethical ontology which effectively suggests that to act ethically is ultimately to act in accordance with the directionality of the natural world. Or, might an ethical act be more credibly understood as an action freely chosen after reflection, rational deliberation and intersubjective communication? At root, Bookchin would seem to advocate the former position here and this would seem to bring dialectical naturalism rather dangerously closer to natural law theory or eco-theology than Bookchin allows.[5]

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

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

Part of the problem with this clarification though is that it conflates a number of different ways in which nature could plausibly be seen as the ‘grounds’ for ethics. For example, the notion that the emergent properties that human beings have developed – such as cognitive abilities and psychological facilities that allow for ethical reasoning – are premised on an earlier evolutionary history would seem reasonably uncontroversial. Our human ability to function as moral agents clearly has its origins in our evolution.[6] ‘Nature’ could also be seen as a ‘ground’ or ‘matrix’ for ethics in the sense that it is plausible to argue that no ethical theory can now proceed by ignoring or abstracting from the natural conditions of its existence and reproduction. The problem arises though, when Bookchin conflates these ‘weak’ senses of ‘nature’ being the grounds for ethics with another much more contentious one – that specific values, norms and political imperatives are ‘implicit’ in the natural world.

METAPHORS AND NATURE

There is no doubt that Bookchin’s ethical theory is brave and fascinating, yet what seems to be ultimately missing from this aspect of his writings is a consistent engagement with the relationship between the material, the symbolic, the ideological and the historical, and a concurrently consistent recognition of the sheer ambiguity and complexity surrounding the idea and reality of nature (Williams, 1980; Haraway, 1991; Marshall, 1992a; Soper, 1995). There is a clear

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

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

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

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

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

To begin to answer such a question, perhaps a progressive socio-ecological politics needs to champion not a specific ecological ethics that is compatible with democracy but a democratic ethic that opens up debate about the production of nature (Haraway, 1991; Sandilands, 1995; Dryzek, 2000). Perhaps we need less prescriptive modes of ethical engagement than procedural modes which, as Seyla Benhabib (1992; 2002) argues, allow for deliberation rather than fixity, are contextually sensitive rather than situationally indifferent, and foster a broader ‘enlarged mentality’ rather than a parochial perspective (Benhabib, 1992: 10). Following this, as Donna Haraway has observed (1991; 2000), perhaps we additionally need ethical orientations that can capture the ‘processual relatedness’ of ‘nature-cultures’ (Haraway, 2000: 92), that guard against anthropomorphism, that force us to confront the semiotic-material complexities of the world, and that allow us to explore breached boundaries and potential affinities. Such an ethical orientation according to Haraway is about 'the manner in which we are responsible for these worlds. But not in a simplistic "I'm for it or against it". What has to happen is that literacies have to be encouraged, as well as many kinds of agency' (Haraway, 2000: 146). In short, Haraway is arguing for an enlarged mentality but also extending Benhabib's understanding of the term, for a sense of responsibility towards nature-cultures by attending to the processes of making 'nature-cultures' and asking who benefits? (Haraway, 2000: 147).

6

Urbanisation, Cities, Utopia

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

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

•CRISIS IN OUR CITIES•

A core theme of Bookchin’s 1960s urban writings is that the United States is facing, not simply an approaching environmental crisis but an interrelated ‘urban crisis’. Crisis in Our Cities[2] – Bookchin’s first full-length engagement with urban issues – attempts to ground such a claim by providing an exhaustive empirical survey of post-war urban trends. Crisis opens with the observation that in little more than half a century, the US has gone from being a predominantly rural to an overwhelmingly urban community. Bookchin suggests that what is striking about this development is not simply the rapid growth of cities in the US, but the fact that cities of all sizes are coalescing more broadly into 'vast urban complexes'. Some urban conurbations are 'the size of entire states' (CIOC: 8). New 'megalopolitan' cities are spilling out into the countryside, merging with suburbs, villages, towns and the overflow of nearby cities to form 'huge urban belts' (CIOC: 10).

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

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

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

REIFICATION AND THE UNLIMITED CITY

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

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

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

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

•THE LIMITS OF THE CITY•

The Limits of the bourgeois city can be summed up in the fact that the more there is of urbanism, the less there is of urbanity. (*LOTC*: 3)

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

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

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

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

Bookchin begins his exploration of the urban by first exploring the limits of both critical and conventional literatures on urban planning. While it is argued that Marx potentially opens up suggestive possibilities for understanding the importance of cities – with the claim in Capital that the whole of economic history can be summed up in the 'anti-thesis between town and country' – Bookchin argues that such thoughts remain undeveloped within the Marxian tradition. Indeed, Bookchin suggests, with the notable exceptions of Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Castells (LOTC: 8–9), much Marxian urban analysis has ended up reducing urban issues to questions of 'who owns what' in the modern city and 'who exploits whom' (LOTC: 5).

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

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

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

THE HUMANIST CONCEPT OF THE CITY IN HISTORY

Why then is the city important? Why have cities occupied such a central place in the human story? Whilst it is recognised in The Limits of the City that cities are historical products of human–natural interaction and reflect, in part, the social relations therein (LOTC: 30), Bookchin argues that the city is more than simply an arena or space for class conflict – as historical materialists would have us believe. The city is more than an epiphenomenon of the division of labour and commerce (LOTC.6). Rather, and drawing inspiration from the writings of Karl Polanyi, Max Weber and Lewis Mumford, Bookchin argues that the city needs to be additionally understood in cultural terms as the rise of a unique 'implosion' of human energy. Cities 'collect those energizing forces of social life that country life tends to dissipate over wide expanses of land and scattered populations' (LOTC: 1). As such, the city is not simply a nexus of market relations. Cities are also characterised by other essential urban traits, notably attempts to formulate creative human communities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, a third theme that emerges in The Limits of the City is that, at their best, urban communities generate a social space where the stranger can become transformed into the citizen. Bookchin argues that the city at its best gives rise to a world ‘in its own right’. This is most crucially a world that goes beyond the familial and the tribal to establish a ‘unique political universe’. It is the manner in which the city, at its finest, can nurture human beings as citizens; as active agents in a political community, which is the critical emancipatory gain of urbanism. It is this theme – which lies at the core of Bookchin’s final book-length contribution to urban studies, From Urbanization to Cities (1987/1995) – which we will discuss further in the next chapter.

THE CITY AS A HUMAN E COMMUNITY: ENVISAGING ECOTOPIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second, Bookchin's futuristic vision of a new urban future is centrally underpinned by the 'liberatory' possibilities of a reclaimed, democratised and ecologised technology. Bookchin argues in writings dating back to the 1960s that decentralisation cannot be seen as a form of regression but as compatible with and augmenting many existing technological developments. For example, in Our Synthetic Environment, it is argued that technological innovations may have actually made the need for huge concentrations of people in a few urban areas less important as the expansion of mass communications and transportation have ensured that 'the obstacles created by space and time are essentially gone' (OSE: 241). Concerning the viability of industrial decentralisation, it is suggested in 'Towards a Liberatory Technology' (1965) that new developments in miniaturisation, computing and engineering have ensured that small-scale alternatives to many of the giant facilities that dominated industry societies are now increasingly viable. It is the smoky steel town

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

7

Citizens, Politics, Democracy

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

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

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

Deepening his critique of contemporary patterns of urbanisation explored in his writings of the 1960s and 1970s, From Urbanization to Cities offers a broader account of the hidden history of experiments in participatory democracy, and a further elaboration and defence of a non-determinist view of urban history. The book closes with a series of substantive and concrete proposals for recovering 'an enhanced classical vision of politics' (FUTC: 225).

THE POLIS AND THE POLITICAL

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

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

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

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

ZOON POLITIKON, PAIDEIA AND PHILIA

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

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

Bookchin informs us that the Athenians saw citizenship as a process ‘involving the social and self formation of people into active participants in the management of their communities’ (FUTC: 9). He notes that this involves character development and education, personal or social training, civic schooling or paideia for producing citizens. Aristotle lays emphasis on human solidarity or philia. Whilst this is usually translated as ‘friendship’, Bookchin suggests it is a rather more far-reaching concept: ‘philia implies an expansive degree of sociality that is a civic attribute of the polis and the political life involved in its administration’ (FUTC: 46).

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

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

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

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

THE LEGACY OF FREEDOM

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

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

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

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

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

Part Four

Endings

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

Murray Bookchin (2000).

Conclusion

RE ENCHANTING HUMANITY, DISENCHANTED BOOKCHIN

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

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

Diagnosing the times as now marked by a ‘sweeping failure of nerve’, evident in the politics of both the left and the right, Re-enchanting Humanity argues that we face a cultural malaise. At the surface level, this malaise is identified by the proliferation of numerous ‘intellectual fads’ and ‘regressions’ informed by a near cartoonish understanding of the Enlightenment and a complacent disregard for its achievements. Bookchin argues that this moment is centrally grounded in a ‘waning belief in our species’ creative abilities’ (RH: 1).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BREAKS, TRANSITIONS, EXCOMMUNICATIONS

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

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

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

In terms of Bookchin’s normative project, again we confront multiple complexities. One of the most striking features of engaging with this aspect of Bookchin’s work is how prescient much of his thinking is. Bookchin’s writings of the 1960s and 1970s – in attempting to weave together the themes of a post-scarcity ecology that focuses on ‘desire’ as much as ‘need’, a liberatory technology, a new ecological urbanism and a new participatory democracy – offer a political imaginary which in many respects refashions and reworks some of the most inspiring themes that have run throughout the progressive traditions of political thought over the last two hundred years. Yet, I have also suggested that, as given concrete form, Bookchin’s hyper-rationalistic and perfectionist tendencies ensure that his project becomes much less compelling. Bookchin’s deployment of the enduring libertarian insights of the dangers of political and economic centralism is valuable. And yet, until his final ‘liberal-constitutional’ turn, it is left unclear how social and ecological justice could be made compatible with the type of radical decentralisation he ultimately defends. We can find no extended examination in his work of the modern liberal democratic state as a point of enablement and constraint. The extent to which a world of post-scarcity abundance can be maintained by abandoning all market forms and radically simplifying the division of labour in favour of embracing a ‘moral economy’ is assumed rather than established. Finally, to the degree that Bookchin’s politics are premised on revolutionary romanticism and the aspiration of Hegelian Marxism to the restoration of totality as a harmonious community (Jay, 1988), we are left with a troublingly mono-logical politics and a particular framing of the normative goal of critical theory which seems to have decisively lost its appeal or relevance for the secularly minded. In a world where it has become commonsense on the left to observe that the politics of the total too often seems to turn into the very thing that it sought to oppose (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Amin and Thrift, 2002), such a framing of politics no longer seems attractive or relevant.

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

LEGACIES, LESSONS AND TRACES

Perhaps the first legacy of Bookchin’s work which does deserve more attention is Bookchin as one of the forefathers of political ecology. I have argued throughout this book that perhaps the most impressive aspect of Bookchin’s social ecology is that it stands as one of the first attempts in the post-war period to formulate a thoroughly social and historical understanding of social-ecological relations which both avoids Malthusian myths and is firmly grounded in a sense of the connections between diverse forms of social domination and socio-ecological relations. To be sure, recent developments in the literature on political ecology have suggested that the development of this project needs to capture in more de-totalising and plural ways the dynamic production of social natures and nature-cultures across space and time (see Castree, 1995; Braun and Castree, 1998; Katz, 1998; Smith, 1998; Latour, 1993; 2004a; Haraway, 1991; 2000; Gandy, 2002; Forsyth, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2004; Robbins, 2004). Beyond the rise of green capitalism, it would seem apparent that such approaches will need additionally to capture how, between first and second nature, we seem to be experiencing the rise of a 'third' nature, a technologically saturated and mediated nature populated, for good and bad, by diverse 'cyborgs', 'hybrids' and impure nature-cultures. Finally, while such approaches converge with Bookchin in emphasising (if more cautiously) the overwhelming force in current times that 'capitalist ordering' (Braun, 2006) imposes on such nature-cultures, and the environmental injustices and dangers that frequently result from this, rather more attention has been given of late in political ecology to modes of engagement which examine the (semiotic and material) power relations that become embedded in these processes. Yet, if we see Bookchin as one of the first post-war social theorists to come close to formulating such a political ecology, it has to be recognised that this is no modest achievement. Rather than involve ourselves in artificial claims for Bookchin's originality, perhaps it is more honest simply to argue that his work is best viewed as the most developed representative of what we might identify as a 'social ecological tradition' within the broader traditions of political ecology; a tradition that ranges from Kropotkin, Reclus and Geddes to Ebenezer Howard, and Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright and E.A. Gutkind. Notwithstanding all the limitations of this social ecological tradition (see Gandy, 2002), contemporary currents in political ecology could learn from its insights.

For example, for all the conceptual sophistication of contemporary discussions of 'social nature', it is striking how little current forms of political ecology have to say at the reconstructive level. While the core concern of political ecology is to open up discussion about 'the democratic production of nature' (Smith, 1998; Braun and Castree, 1998, Swyngedouw, 1996; 2004; Gandy, 2002), what this might mean in concrete practice is for the most part unclear. It could be observed that advocating a radicalisation of democracy at such a high level of philosophical abstraction does not get us very far if there is not even the glimmer of an attempt to think through or outline the institutional, ethical, infrastructural, technological and political economic basis for what a progressive metabolism of society and nature might look. Without attending to what we might substantively argue for, desire or even dream about within the horizon of a new radical ecological democracy, and without any attempt to formulate some kind of 'discursive designs' (Dryzek, 2000), 'the parliament of things' (Latour, 1993, 2004b) is in danger of descending into a form of fantasy politics. Contemporary political ecologists could do well to heed Bookchin's injunction that 'The serious thinker must look beyond the real to speculate on what should be rather than validate what is' (RH: 258).

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

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

A final legacy of social ecology that I would suggest could productively be engaged with is Bookchin as the open-ended utopian ecological urbanist. Whilst Bookchin the 'eschatological radical' dominates our image of social ecology, in Chapter 6 we came across a more Aristotelian Bookchin, a Bookchin closer to Mumford's reconstructive visions than to Marx, and essentially preoccupied with the question 'what might constitute the optimal built environment to ensure the flourishing and humans and other diverse ecologies?' Again, whilst acknowledging that at many moments Bookchin has a distinct tendency to present his radically democratic urban solution in absolutist and perfectionist forms, I also suggested that we can unearth pragmatic and civic societarian moments in his urban thought, from Crisis in Our Cities to Towards an Ecological Society. The latter text in particular is interesting for the extent to which it is more influenced by concerns with ‘prefiguring’ and facilitating self-organising tendencies in the here and now – reminiscent of the political thought of Martin Buber (1958) and Colin Ward (1973) – than is the static abstract utopian rationalism of later works. There are moments in this collection of essays where one can glimpse the contours of a much more dynamic, open-ended and innovative urban social ecology than the fixities that emerge with Bookchin’s writings on libertarian municipalism in the 1980s and 1990s. The image of an urban social ecology that can be found in Towards an Ecological Society grants a central place to the creative role that urban neighbourhood movements and active citizens could play in developing cultural and political projects across multiple scales. There is an attempt to envisage new modes of community development, cultural creativity, experiments in developing bottom-up eco-technologies, community gardening, new cultures of self-management and a diverse range of new participatory institutions. What is present in Bookchin’s urban writings here is less a politics of ‘the rupture’ than of democratic experimentation and social, cultural and ecological regeneration based on exploring and championing the radical potential of urban dwellers to expand the realm of self-management and ecological rationality through diverse social, ecological and cultural practices in the here and now. It is a politics that seeks not simply to recover the public sphere but to infuse the urban with utopian dialogue ‘as public event’ (EofF: 334).

Utopian dialogue as ‘public event’, community development to ‘generate schools for democratic citizenship’, new modes of urban eco-technological innovation that move us beyond austerity-orientated environmentalism to give rise to new post-scarcity modes of metabolising society and nature – it is striking how Bookchin’s writings from Crisis in Our Cities to Towards and Ecological Society and The Ecology of Freedom burst with ideas for developing a pragmatic, open-ended utopianism. What most characterises Bookchin’s social ecology at this point is the attempt to develop a complex multi-tiered politics of the built and natural environment, a politics of community re-engagement, a politics of technology, and a politics of pleasure. We might say that hovering around some of Bookchin’s best work is the image of an experimental ‘Dionysian Republicanism’[6] celebrating the potentialities of both human and natural agencies, and premised on the belief that we might collectively and democratically fashion dynamic and diverse future social ecologies. Perhaps this is the social ecology that is most worth preserving.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

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

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

2. For an extended discussion of Bookchin's break with Anarchism, see Biehl (2007). I discuss this matter further in the conclusion.
3. I address some of these matters in Chapter 1 and in the remaining chapters.
4. I use the term 'political ecology' in an expansive fashion in this text to refer to a range of approaches to exploring socio-ecological relations that have emerged out of both development studies/geography over the last thirty years (see Peet and Watts, 1996; Forsyth, 2003; Robbins, 2004) as well the broader neo-Marxist, neo-Weberian post-structuralist and post-naturalistic currents that have emerged out of sociology and critical theory that have sought to grapple with the politics of ecology (such as the work of Bookchin in PSA, TES, EofF and RS; Enzenberger (1974); Gorz (1975), Commoner (1971), etc. Whilst there are significant differences between and within these diverse political ecologies , I would suggest that at the least all maintain a common point of departure in a critique of neo-Malthusian and market liberal approaches to the politics of ecology. All these schools are informed by a desire to marry political economy and some degree of reflection on the sociology of science with ecological analysis. All these approaches are motivated by a desire to explore the differential power relations embedded in the environmental debate. Finally, all share a normative terrain of commitment to exploring the possibilities that might exist for constructing more egalitarian, democratic, and just social ecologies.
5. Beyond his explicitly ecological writings, Bookchin's interests range from four volumes on urban theory to four volumes on the history of revolutionary movements to essays on urban planning, technological development and advocacy of popular self- management.
6. Compare for example Biehl (2008) with Clark (2008) for two entirely polarised accounts of Bookchin's work.
7. See the excellent critical engagements with Bookchin in Zimmerman, 1994; Rudy and Light, 1998 and Light and Rudy, 1996.
8. I take this term from Benhabib, 1986.

1 ENVIRONMENTS, CITIES AND POST SCARCITY WORLDS

1. Bookchin has reflected on his childhood and early years in a variety of places, notably Jacoby (1987); Heider (1994); Biehl (1997); Bookchin (2000), but most extensively in AMFL. Additionally, see 'A Short Biography of Murray Bookchin' by Janet Biehl, available at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/bookchin/bio1.html.
2. The Social Revolutionaries have been described by Janet Biehl as a quasi-anarchist populist movement (Biehl 1997: 2).
3. The Confederation of Industrial Organisation was established by the American Federation of Labor to organise workers outside craft unions.

4. The complex relationship between Bookchin and the Marxist tradition is explored later on in this chapter, and discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3 and in the Conclusion.
5. The essay 'The Great Utopia' in *Contemporary Issues* Vol. 1, No. 5, 1950 (no author given, but written by Josef Weber) is interesting in giving some indication of the theoretical orientation of the journal. With its libertarian Marxist currents, rejection of 'worker-ism', anarchistic suspicion of bureaucracy and the state, and its remarkable passage on ecological degradation (p. 7), the article has strong resonances with Bookchin's later work. Indeed, Bookchin's first collection of essays is dedicated to Weber, whom he acknowledges as formulating 'the outlines of the utopian project developed in this book' and refers to his influence: 'for me he was a living link with all that is vital and libertarian in the great intellectual tradition of German socialism in the pre-Leninist era' (PSA:32). Similar general themes can be discerned from the editorial in the first issue (see *Contemporary Issues* Vol. 1, No.1: 1–2). For an analysis of Josef Weber's thinking and a consideration of its relationship to Bookchin see van de Linden (2001). Biehl (2008) has contested van der Linden's emphasis on the impact of Weber on Bookchin's thought, drawing largely from interviews with Bookchin in his later years about the *Contemporary Issues* group.
6. Bookchin's writings in *Contemporary Issues* use 'Russia' 'Stalin's Russia' and the Soviet Union/USSR interchangeably.
7. Bookchin provided a follow up to this article in 1955 (see Herber, 1955).
8. Specifically, 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' draws from the 'Hearings Before the House Select Committee to Investigate the Use of Chemicals in Food Products', conducted by the 81st Congress between 14 September and 15 December 1950.
9. In the US, 'The Problem of Chemicals in Food' generated a mild wave of interest in the correspondence pages of Contemporary Issues. Outside the US, it provoked more of a stir as it led to questions being asked in the House of Lords about the state of food management in the UK (see OSE, Introduction). In Germany, the article generated more interest still and in collaboration with Gotz Ohly, Bookchin expanded this article into a book, which was published in West Germany in 1955 as *Lebens-Gefährliche Lebensmittel*.
10. Bookchin (1974: xiv) refers to Dubos as 'the grand old man of social ecology'.
11. For an interesting re-evaluation of the relative merits of Carson's writings in contrast to Bookchin's see Garb's fine essay in Macauley, ed. 1996.
12. Odder still, is that *Crisis in Our Cities* comes with a stamp of approval from the Johnson Administration, being prefaced with a warm foreword by Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior, who generously suggests that 'Herber' 'deserves accolades for this courageous contribution to public understanding' (CIOC: ix).
13. The Congress of Racial Equality was a Northern based civil rights group which organised the 'Freedom Rides' where blacks and whites travelled

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

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

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

of a communityÕs wisdom, the elderly Ômay have been more disposed to enhance their statusÕ (RS 53). Elsewhere, we are told:

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

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

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

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