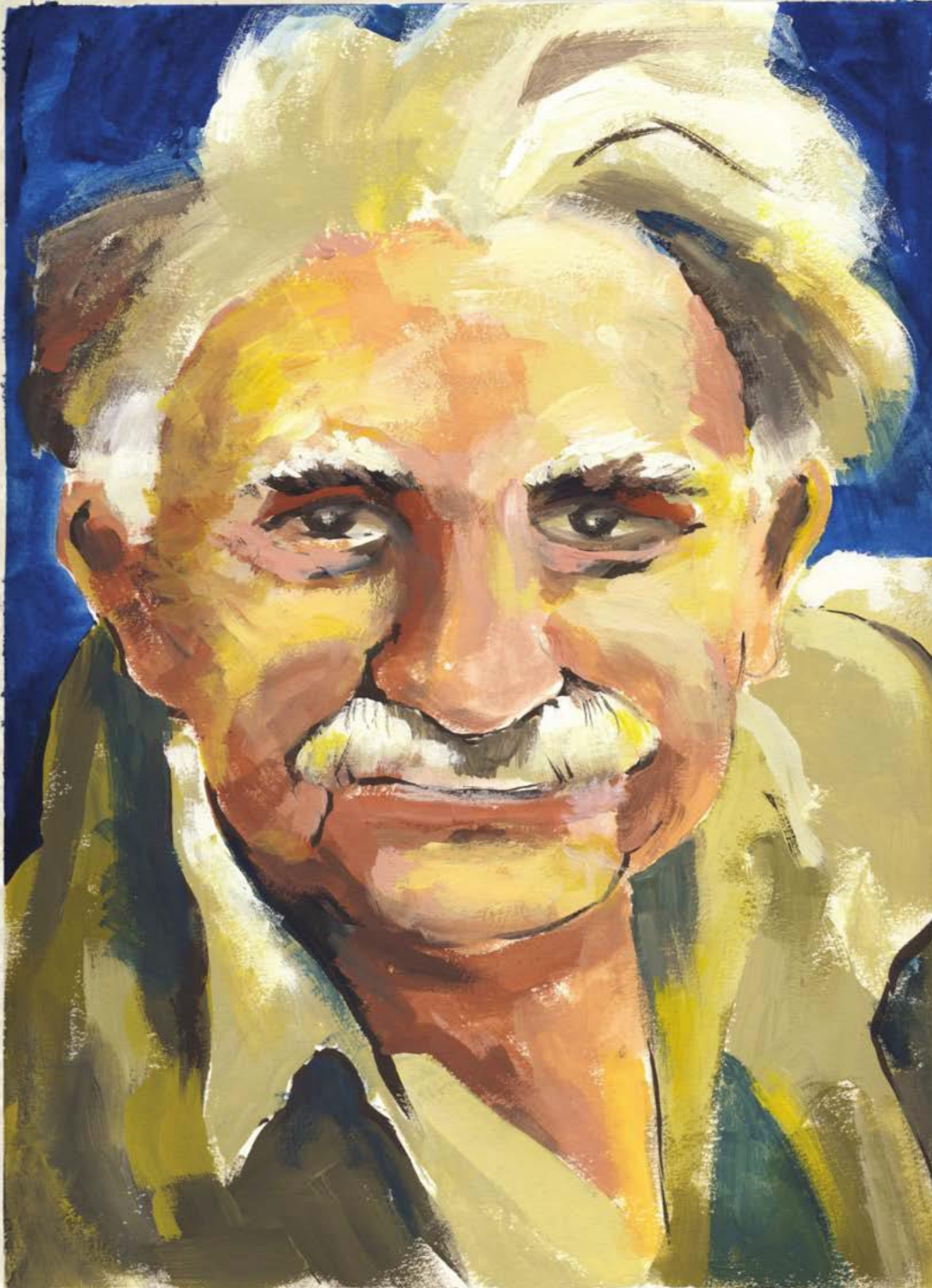


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ENLIGHTENMENT and **ECOLOGY**

The Legacy of Murray Bookchin in the 21st Century



Yavor Tarinski, ed.

ENLIGHTENMENT and ECOLOGY

“The American political philosopher and activist Murray Bookchin, who died ... aged 85, was a theorist of the anti-globalisation movement before its time, an ecological visionary, an advocate of direct action and a polemicist. ‘Capitalism is a social cancer,’ he argued. ‘It is the disease of society’. The author of more than 20 books, Bookchin ... [made] a clear distinction between ecology, which wanted to transform society, and environmentalism, which wants to ameliorate the worst aspects of capitalist economy.”

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ENLIGHTENMENT and ECOLOGY

The Legacy of Murray Bookchin in the 21st Century

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Montréal / Chicago / London

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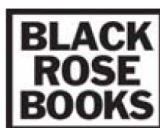
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Murray Bookchin and Contemporary Greek Social Movements: The Influence of Social Ecology on Democratic Political Discourse

Alexandros Schismenos

Terms that are related to individuals like Marxist, or Hegelian, or Bakuninist, or Kropotkinist, are completely outside my intellectual and emotional horizon. I'm a follower of no one; I'm a Bookchinite, and nobody has a right to claim that but me. When I die, Bookchinism comes to an end, and all the allusions to it both among Marxists and anarchists.

— MURRAY BOOKCHIN, 1981

IT CAN BE ARGUED that there is no objective measurement of the influence of an individual's thought upon collective social movements, especially in the case of direct democratic social movements for human emancipation from authority. This is certainly the case with Murray Bookchin, a revolutionary thinker who renounced Marxism to re-imagine anarchism and renounced anarchism to form his own political proposition of communalism and democratic confederalism.

While it is impossible to measure the influence of Bookchin's thought and action on the current social-historical global timescape, it is also impossible to ignore it, visible as it is in the revolutionary democratic institution of Kurdish Rojava, and within contemporary ecological and social movements. When I embarked on an inquiry into the importance of Bookchin for Greek social movements, I understood that it was a task never to be completed. The libertarian, anarchist editor Michalis Protopsaltis used to say, "It's not the naked truth coming out of the well, it is just my opinion."

Subsequently, this article is not intended to be conclusive, but rather indicative. It can be considered as a brief historical and philosophical outline of a history still in the making.

It will be helpful to begin by delimiting the historical and social framework of this narrative, which will be concerned with modern Greek history in general and the history of democratic social movements beyond Marxism in particular. The first section of this essay is an outline of this history. Then some of the main philosophical and political questions that arise will be considered. The second section, will address three overlapping, converging, but also schematically distinct

political traditions: namely anarchism, ecology, and democracy which provide different focal points for Greek social movements within a common political horizon: the emancipation of humanity from authority and the liberation of nature from exploitation. Particular instances of Bookchin's involvement with Greek radical democratic political discourse will be considered, and the third section briefly addresses Bookchin's participation in the international committee of the Greek-edited journals *Society and Nature*, (*Κοινωνία και Φύση*), and *Democracy and Nature* (*Δημοκρατία και Φύση*), his resignation, and his disagreement with Castoriadis, who is also an important figure for modern Greek social movements. The fourth and final section, will discuss the correspondence of Bookchin and the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, which resulted in the political turn of the Kurdish movement toward the implementation of democratic confederalism in Rojava. This section will focus on contemporary Greek movements and the influence of Bookchin's ideas on present political praxis.

The word "democratic" is here used with the exclusive meaning of direct democracy, which defines a political institution of society without State authority, without mechanisms of political repression, and capitalist exploitation. As Bookchin described it, democracy is:

The idea of a people that exercises a great deal of federalist or confederalist control, the ideal of a grassroots type of democracy, the idea of the freedom of the individual which is not to get lost in the mazes of anarcho-egotism à la Stirner, or for that matter right-wing libertarianism.¹

This idea has inspired social movements in Greece since the late 1970s and the explosion of a colorful, heterogeneous, and radical counterculture with anarchist tendencies after the fall of the seven-year military dictatorship, the Junta of the Colonels (1967–1974). During this dark period of military fascism in Greece which followed decades of right-wing nationalist governments established with the help of the US after the communist defeat in the Civil War of 1946–1949, new underground ideas and revolutionary trends made their appearance among young people and university students. The echo of 1968, the participation of Greek students in the French May of 1968, and the existence of a wide anti-Junta sentiment in Europe, had started to penetrate the iron curtain of censorship, as did the voice of the tortured from the jails and the exiled from the desolate islands. Anarchism, which had vanished from the Greek political landscape after the rise of the Communist Party in 1918 (founded by the name SEKE, later KKE) re-emerged alongside forbidden music like rock and forbidden social practices like freedom of speech, freedom of sexuality, and freedom of art.

Greece: The Re-Emergence of Anarchism and Democratic Politics

The first anarchist ideas and collectivities in Greece emerged in the late nineteenth century in the port city of Patras, where the first political collective self-defined as anarchist was founded under the name Anarchist Association of Patras, *Αναρχικός Όμιλος Πατρών*. The Greek State responded with repression and violence, and by 1897, the year the Greek Kingdom met humiliating defeat in a war against the Ottoman Empire, most of its members were imprisoned. However, Greek anarchist collectives were spreading across Greece, as the country was expanding and social injustice flourished alongside poverty and oppression. Anarchism was overshadowed by Leninism after 1917, and during the Second World War, the Stalinist KKE faction of Greek resistance to German occupation eliminated all Trotskyist and anarchist groups.

On November 17, 1973, Polytechnio, the Polytechnic University in the center of Athens was occupied by students protesting against the military Junta. The occupation ended when tanks invaded the building. The outlawed KKE had condemned the occupation. Among the rebelling students, a new generation of anarchists emerged, one of which wrote on the wall of the occupied building “ΚΑΤΩ Η ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑ,” or “DOWN WITH AUTHORITY.” Doctor of political philosophy and participant in the events Giorgos N. Oikonomou has described Polytechnio as the first direct democratic uprising in Modern Greek history.

This social-historical phenomenon, the reappearance of anarchist and direct democratic ideas beneath the conservative surface of Greek society is better described by the words of Protopsaltis, who was part of that movement:

A powerful and imaginative libertarian movement, beyond the Left, an independent course of action with zero roots in Greek society, with a complete lack of not only historical experience but also life experience, since the older anarchists did not exceed 23–25 years old. They rely on instinct and voluntarism, believe in their spontaneity, and improvise while opening the way. The two factors that favor them are, first, the echo of the subversive and creative spirit of the 1960s, which swept the planet, socially and culturally, while having in Greece as its ally the favorite wind of Metapolitefsi. And secondly, the magical interaction between Stinas and Castoriadis, Stinas being a symbol of people’s struggles for emancipation, and Castoriadis being a symbol of human thinking, have come together as action and theory come together in historical praxis in a reciprocal interaction. And it is their influence that has shaped, in the years of the Junta, the first groups and gatherings, the first cells for the dissemination of antiauthoritarian ideas.

Bookchin's name and writings first appear in Greece within this social-historical context, as one of the radical thinkers of the 1960s that Greek revolutionary youth engaged with in order to escape the Marxist-Leninist bondage imposed on the Left by the hegemony of KKE. This quest for a revolutionary theoretical and practical experimentation beyond Marxism was led by two figures: first, there was Agis Stinas, the pseudonym of Spyros Priftis (1900–1987), a Trotskyist and one of the most important revolutionaries of the Greek workers' movement; second, there was Cornelius Castoriadis, who had since the mid-1960s criticized Marx from a revolutionary perspective inspired first by workers' councils socialism and then by direct democracy. It was thanks to these two revolutionaries that the Greek public came in contact with the ideas of Murray Bookchin. Bookchin, who had criticized Marxism and moved on to anarchism provided the theoretical tools for a powerful critique of Marxist materialism and a synthesis of ecology, anarchism, and democracy. In 1981, he had reached the same conclusion that Greek anarchists had learned by bitter experience: "Marx's theory of historical materialism [...] is virtually a debris of despotism."

In the first years of Metapolitefsi (the transition from military dictatorship to a parliamentary oligarchy), anarchist publishers published Greek translations of Bookchin's work. This included Christos Konstantinidis (*Χρήστος Κωνσταντινίδης*) of *Diethnis Vivliothiki* (*Διεθνής Βιβλιοθήκη*) who published *Listen, Marxist!* in 1975, or Georgios Garbis (*Γιώργος Γαρμπής*) of *Eleftheros Typos* (*Ελεύθερος Τύπος*) who published *The Limits of the City* in 1979, *Ecology in Revolutionary Thought* in 1980, and *Marxism as Bourgeois Ideology* in 1987, etc. Articles by and on Bookchin appeared in anarchist magazines like *O Kokkoras pou lalei sto skotadi* (*Ο Κόκκορας που λαλεί στο σκοτάδι*), *Anarchos* (*Άναρχος*), *Ta anthi tou kakou* (*Τα άνθη του κακού*), *Eleftheriaki Kinisi* (*Ελευθεριακή Κίνηση*), *Eftoria* (*Ευτοπία*), and *ContAct*, to name a few.

Bookchin's influence helped libertarians and antiauthoritarians move toward ecology, which in Greece had not inspired social movements like it had in Western Europe and the US. During the 1980s, anarchist trends in Greece were more inspired by the workers' movement, and Italian *Autonomia*. In the 1990s, more individualistic, nihilistic, and anticonsumerist trends of anarchism appeared via the US, the cultural influence of which dominated the new mass media. Since most of these trends, associated with a late blooming of punk-rock music in Greece, originated in the US, Murray Bookchin's critique of their original form proved a powerful antidote to the desocialization of the movement. Bookchin's confrontation with deep ecology, as well as with State Green and NGO Ecology provided Greek democratic discourse with the analyses needed to plant the seeds that would result in the emergence of direct democratic social ecological movements in Greece during the first decades of the twenty-first century.

Bookchin even became personally involved in this discourse, participating in the international advisory board of *Society and Nature* and *Democracy and Nature* journals.

Anarchism, Ecology, and Democracy: Distinct and Interconnected Fields of Political Theory

There are three distinct, but overlapping and interconnected, fields of political thought which correspond to three interconnected areas of social and political struggle. Bookchin's influence has been important to all three, but most important is his attempt to integrate their focal points within the horizon of direct democracy and social ecology.

Anarchists in Greece were deeply impressed by the small brochure *Listen Marxist!*, which seemed to correspond to Marx's critique by Castoriadis. Bookchin expressed the sentiment of many when he proclaimed that:

The problem is not that Marxism is a "method" which must be reapplied to "new situations" or that "neo-Marxism" has to be developed to overcome the limitations of "classical Marxism." The attempt to rescue the Marxism pedigree by emphasizing the method over the system or by adding "neo" to a sacred word is sheer mystification if all the practical conclusions of the system flatly contradict these efforts."²

Castoriadis, from the other side of the Atlantic, had also condemned the attempts to rescue Marxism by reducing it to a method: "[...] method cannot be separated from content in this way, especially not when it is a question of historical and social theory. Method, in the philosophical sense, is simply the operating set of categories."³

The newly formed anarchist-libertarian movement read works by both thinkers, and these works were used against communist orthodoxy, which continued to be hegemonic until the collapse of the USSR. Bookchin presented a new anarchist thinking that was not contemplative but practical, that took on the central question of authority and power and proposed an alternative social institution.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that antiauthoritarian movements in Greece discovered ecology by reading Bookchin and Castoriadis. When, in 1987, clashes erupted at the mountainous village of Mesochora between police forces and local residents who were protesting the construction of the highest dam in Europe for the diversion of the second longest river in Greece, Acheloos, the members of the Anarchist Union, (*Ένωση Αναρχικών*), failed to appreciate the importance of the struggle.

Individual anarchists, influenced by readings of Bookchin, participated in the first ecological groups that resulted mostly in the formation of the *Ecologoi-Enallaktikoi* (Οικολόγοι-Εναλλακτικοί) political party which participated in the November 1989 Parliamentary Elections, electing one representative. Slowly, elements of the Greek political party system started moving toward a “green” state policy agenda, which did not seem to be of much interest to their electorate, certainly not so much as that of the green parties emerging in Western Europe.

Social ecology provided an alternative to the machinations of State policies and representative politics. Murray Bookchin touched on deeper issues, connecting the ecological crisis to capitalist domination, social injustice and the dominant capitalist worldview of mastery over nature: a worldview that promotes the exploitation of nature, originating from a system based on the exploitation of humanity. Bookchin’s synthesis evoked a different perspective and a different ethical set of values:

I believe that there has to be an ideal and I favour an ethical anarchism which can be cohered into an ideal. I believe that it’s terribly important to have a movement that is spiritual, not in the supernatural sense, but in the sense of German Geist, spirit, which combines the idea of mind together with feeling, together with intuition. I’m sorry that some self-styled anarchists have picked up on the word spirit and have turned me into a theological ecologist, a notion which I think is crude beyond all belief. There has to be a body of values. I would prefer to call them ecological because my image of ecology goes beyond nature and extends into society as a whole—not to be confused in any way with sociobiology, which I think is an extremely regressive, reactionary tendency.⁴

Bookchin raised some difficult questions for the anarchist movement at the time. In Greece, the punk, Nietzschean, and Foucaultian trends promoted a similar “self-styled” anarcho-individualism which, however, formed a large part of the heterogeneous counter-culture. It seemed difficult to accept the need for a core of values. The word “ethical” seemed scandalous to some, who had experienced anarchism as a form of self-rebellion against a society with highly conservative “ethics” continually imposed by the State, the Church, and the family. In these times of political immaturity and the retreat into individualism or State-funded party “socialism,” the social-historical reality itself posed those same questions that Bookchin had iterated.

On the other hand, anarchists oriented toward society found it difficult to escape from the myth of the proletariat. Having confronted Marxism, their analysis

of traditional political narratives was still focused on the proletariat as the messianic class of world-history. The scarcity of available translated works blended thinkers such as Benjamin, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Stirner with Castoriadis and Bookchin, along with the re-discovery of historical revolutionary figures like Nechayev, Durruti, Bakunin, and Kropotkin.

The question of the ethical and political content of anarchism was raised by Bookchin and has remained unresolved. Nevertheless, Bookchin's attempt to answer it helped him move toward the issue of democracy and the project of democratic federalism, criticizing anarchism from a revolutionary and practical standpoint, as he had previously done with Marxism. In 1981, before his breach with anarchism, he had tried to define his own view as eco-anarchism and anarcho-communalism:

We have to clarify the meaning of the word. We have to give it a rich content. And that content has to stand apart from a critique of other ideologies, because the way you sharpen a knife is, frankly, on a grindstone. And the grindstone for me is Marxism. I've developed my anarchism, my critique of Marxism, which has been the most advanced bourgeois ideology I know of, into a community of ideas and ultimately a common sense of responsibilities and commitments. I don't think anarchism consists of sitting down and saying let's form a collective. I don't think it consists of saying we're all anarchists: you're an anarcho-syndicalist; you're an anarcho-communist; you're an anarcho-individualist. I believe that anarchists should agree to disagree but not to fight with each other. We don't have to go around as the Protestant reformation did, or as the socialist revolution did, and execute each other as soon as we are successful—assuming we'll ever be successful. But I believe that if we do have a commonality of beliefs we should clarify them, we should strengthen their coherence and we should also develop common projects that produce a lived community of relationships. And also, we should try to become better people, ethically speaking, reflect upon ourselves and our very limited existences and develop a sense of tolerance for each other, as well as for other anarchist groups with which we may disagree. But we're not committed to toeing a line called anarchism; there are many different anarchisms. My anarchism is frankly anarcho-communalism, and it's eco-anarchism as well. And it's not oriented toward the proletariat. I would like to see a critical mass of very gifted anarchists come together in an appropriate place in order to do highly productive work. That's it. I don't know why that can't be done except for the fact that I think that people mistrust their own ideals today. I don't think

that they don't believe in them; I think they mistrust the viability of them. They're afraid to commit themselves to their ideals.⁵

Bookchin's insistence on nature, equality, community and ethical content bridged social anarchism with the politics of direct democracy, already highlighted in the works of Castoriadis, but also in the works of the classics like Rousseau and Bakunin. The collapse of the Soviet Union after 1989 seemed to historically confirm his criticisms, both against historical materialism, since the regime that was supposed to bring forth socialism proved to be totalitarian, and against the myth of the proletariat, which had already been consumed by the expansion and saturation of the dominant capitalist ideals.

However, an ethical content and a political commonality among anarchists proved impossible, since major anarcho-individualistic trends were reinforced and supplemented by capitalist lifestyles. Bookchin's critique of lifestyle anarchists and his attempt to disassociate social anarchism from those trends was well received in Greece among anarchists that had re-engaged in politics on both a local and global scale through the anti-globalization movement.

Prague 2000, Genoa 2001, and Thessaloniki 2003 were major historical events for Greek social movements, which discovered another perspective and a broader dimension of social solidarity that transcended borders and also ideologies. The Zapatista uprising in 1994 had given new impetus to questions of community, networking, horizontal democratic institutions and global solidarity, alongside the example of a victorious movement without leaders and the attempt to build an autonomous community. The anti-globalization movement helped Greek activists question traditional forms of ideology, turn to society and start experimenting with democratic communities, collectivities and networks beyond classic anarchism. Networks of direct democratic assemblies with different references but a common project, like the Anti-Authoritarian Movement (Αντιεξουσιαστική Κίνηση—AK) were formed, based on a set of values as their common ground where a multitude of different standpoints could converge.

But the most important feature of the past decades was the emergence of grassroots social ecological movements. When the State's project of the diversion of Acheloos was brought up again in 2007, a movement from all across the country joined the struggle of the locals and managed to halt the project and continues to fight for the destruction of the damn today. In Chalkidiki, local communities came together with ecological and antiauthoritarian collectivities to fight against the gold mining project of the Canadian company Eldorado Gold. Having been confronted with fierce State oppression, the struggle continues. More recently, in Epirus and Western Greece a direct democratic ecological grassroots movement has emerged against oil and gas extractions by powerful oil trusts like Exxon-Mobile, Repsol, Total etc. These movements, converging in assemblies and forming networks of

solidarity, represent a new social ecological consciousness, a new radical imaginary oriented toward autonomy and democracy.

The influence of Bookchin is also prominent in urban ecological movements, in the cities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, and Volos, where desolation creates urban deserts, in movements for the liberation and re-creation of free public space, and more recently in movements against gentrification and construction. Urban ecological movements in Greece have discussed Bookchin's proposal of a democratic municipalism in several instances, with diverging conclusions. However, this writer's personal opinion is that while his proposed strategy is of great interest and importance, it remains on a theoretical level as regards to Greece, which is a highly centralized State, with municipal authorities directly dependent on the government and the main political parties. Although Bookchin acknowledged that his politics belonged and referred to the American tradition, his ideals far exceeded its borders:

My concern is to develop a North American type of anarchism that comes out of the American tradition, or that at least can be communicated to Americans and that takes into consideration that Americans are not any longer people of European background. Another consideration is to find out what is the real locus of libertarian activity. Is it the factory? Is it the youth? Is it the schools? Is it the community? The only conclusion I could arrive at with the death of the workers' movement as a revolutionary force—you know the imagery of the proletarian vanguard, or proletarian hegemony—has been the community.⁶

In part, his adherence to the American communal tradition, very different from the European centralized nation-state tradition, has led to a misunderstanding of the European political experience, which in this writer's opinion is implicitly manifested in his involvement with the *Society and Nature* and *Democracy and Nature* journals and his subsequent disagreement with Castoriadis. On the other hand, Bookchin's criticism reveals a deeper philosophical disagreement.

Society and Nature: The Conflict with Castoriadis

*Society and Nature*⁷ first appeared in Greek on May 1992, published by an editorial collective, which, among others, included Nikos Iliopoulos (Νίκος Ηλιόπουλος) and professor Takis Fotopoulos, Τάκης Φωτόπουλος, assisted by an international advisory board including Bookchin and Castoriadis. Seven issues were published until 1994, when the journal was renamed *Democracy and Nature* for three more issues, until publication stopped in 1997. Bookchin contributed with articles titled *Earth and the City: Libertarian Local Self-Administration* (issue 1), *Philosophical*

Naturalism, Social and Deep Ecology, Marxism and Bourgeois Sociology (issue 2), *The Importance of Confederalism* (issue 3, interview), *Nationalism and the 'National' Issue* (issue 5), and *Ecological Crisis and Capitalism* (issue 6). Finally, *Democracy and Communalism* appeared in the first issue of *Democracy and Nature*, which included an article by Castoriadis titled *Democracy as a Procedure and Democracy as Regime* and another one by Fotopoulos titled *A New Concept of Democracy*. After that, Bookchin resigned, protesting that these two articles undercut his own message and were proof that “the magazine has been overwhelmingly given over to the expression of the ideas of Castoriadis and Fotopoulos.” Nevertheless, the magazine produced two more issues before folding.

This article will not be concerned with the events that led to this conflict, but rather on the philosophical differences between Castoriadis and Bookchin, as mentioned in Bookchin’s letter. It is my opinion that it reveals a philosophical disagreement, as well as a discordance of life experience between the two thinkers, which provides a social-historical ground to their philosophical dissent. Bookchin presents his disagreement with Castoriadis in short:

To Castoriadis’ article alone, my reply could easily run longer than Takis’, critiquing his subjectivism, his replacement of historical development with an archipelago of “imaginaries,” his concept of autonomy, his evocation of workers’ control, and his embarrassing idealization of the Athenian *polis* (particularly on the issue of slavery) to a point of vitiating what we can learn from the *polis* in discussions of direct democracy.

It would require another treatise to answer Bookchin’s accusations thoroughly. To my knowledge, Castoriadis did not respond. There is one issue to be clarified, the issue of slavery and ancient Athenian democracy which, as far as we know, Castoriadis never idealized, nor ignored. He did point out that slavery was a common practice worldwide in antiquity so it could not be a constitutive element of ancient democracy, whose limitations he never failed to highlight:

Nevertheless, explicit self-institution never became for them the principle of political activity encompassing the social institution in its totality. Property was never really challenged, any more than was the status of women, not to mention slavery. Ancient democracy aimed at achieving, and it did achieve, the effective self-government of the community of free adult males, and it touched to the least extent possible the received social and economic structures. Only the philosophers (a few Sophists in the fifth century, Plato in the fourth) went any further.⁸

Yavor Tarinski chooses to emphasize the two thinkers' common ground in his article *Reflections on Castoriadis and Bookchin*:

Despite the differences and disagreements between them, Castoriadis and Bookchin shared a lot in common—especially the way they viewed direct democracy and ecology. Their contributions in these fields provided very fertile soil for further theoretical and practical advance. It is not by chance that in a period in which the questions of democracy and ecology are attracting growing attention, we listen ever more often about the two of them.

There are of course philosophical differences that lead to distinct political approaches on the issues of democratic institution and organization. One of the main philosophical differences we can locate between Castoriadis and Bookchin is their attitude toward Hegel.

Bookchin admired Hegel and recognized the roots of his own dialectical naturalism in Hegelian philosophy, without however, being Hegelian.⁹ His dialectical naturalism is not oriented toward the spirit which negates nature but toward nature, whose dialectic is a manifold of phenomena articulated as a unity of difference or diversities, a non-hierarchical unity. The dialectics of nature are used against social hierarchies, in a very successful effort to refute the stereotype of natural hierarchies while establishing the concept of organic societies:

In organic societies the differences between individuals, age groups, sexes—and between humanity and the natural manifold of living and nonliving phenomena—were seen (to use Hegel's superb phrase) as a "unity of differences" or "unity of diversity," not as hierarchies. Their outlook was distinctly ecological, and from this outlook they almost unconsciously derived a body of values that influenced their behavior toward individuals in their own communities and the world of life. As I contend in the following pages, ecology knows no "king of beasts" and no "lowly creatures" (such terms come from our own hierarchical mentality).¹⁰

Bookchin utilizes Hegelian philosophical concepts, like the dialectical principle of the negation of negation in a naturalistic framework. John Clark, in his critique of Bookchin's dialectical naturalism, accuses Bookchin of reducing Hegelian negation to "something as mundane as the process of a tree growing to maturity and producing fruit, after which the process begins again." Clark's description of Bookchin's dialectical naturalism is poor, however, one could also argue that the dialectical process of life is not mundane at all, especially compared to the original

Hegelian dialectical process of the Idea. Bookchin shares Hegel's respect for the *Geist*, the spirit, not in a theological manner, but in a similar metaphysical manner. Bookchin's ontology is an ontology of unity, that respects diversity within unity, a unity of human communities and ecosystems that is conceived as the "wholeness" of a manifold and not as a monolithic "oneness":

But social ecology provides more than a critique of the split between humanity and nature; it also poses the need to heal them. Indeed, it poses the need to radically transcend them. As EA Gutkind pointed out, "the goal of social ecology is wholeness, and not mere adding together of innumerable details collected at random and interpreted subjectively and insufficiently." The science deals with social and natural relationships in communities or "ecosystems." In conceiving them holistically, that is to say, in terms of their mutual interdependence, social ecology seeks to unravel the forms and patterns of interrelationships that give intelligibility to a community, be it natural or social. Holism, here, is the result of a conscious effort to discern how the particulars of a community are arranged, how its "geometry" (as the Greeks might have put it) makes the whole more than the sum of its parts. Hence, the "wholeness" to which Gutkind refers is not to be mistaken for a spectral "oneness" that yields cosmic dissolution in a structureless nirvana; it is a richly articulated structure with a history and internal logic of its own.¹¹

Articulated structure and internal logic are, for Bookchin, the foundations of ontological intelligibility, which give history a progressive rationality toward human emancipation. His dialectical naturalism bears the influence of both Aristotle and Hegel, without however, nature being reduced to spirit, nor spirit being reduced to nature. Despite the historical rationality of natural and social communities, Bookchin refuses to reduce human being to logic. He acknowledges poetry and imagination as constitutive elements of the human experience and asks for a holistic approach to both. "Poetry and imagination must be integrated with science and technology, for we have evolved beyond an innocence that can be nourished exclusively by myths and dreams."

The importance of imagination is central to Castoriadis and his conception of the historical self-creation of society. Castoriadis posits imagination in the origin of individual and social perception and attributes social institution to the social dimension of human imagination, the anonymous social imaginary:

History is impossible and inconceivable outside of the productive or creative imagination, outside of what we have called the radical imaginary as this is

manifested indissolubly in both historical doing and in the constitution, before any explicit rationality, of a universe of significations [...] that are neither the reflection of what is perceived, nor the mere extension and sublimation of animal tendencies, nor the strictly rational development of what is given. The social world is, in every instance, constituted and articulated as a function of such a system of significations, and these significations exist, once they have been constituted, in the mode of what we called the actual imaginary (or the imagined).¹²

For Castoriadis, history is a creation of the collective social imaginary, hence it has no internal rationality, nor inherent progressiveness. Castoriadis takes a stance against Hegelian dialectics or any dialectics of objective rationality, proclaiming that any rationalist dialectics is necessarily closed, since it “at once presupposes and ‘demonstrates’ that the whole of experience is exhaustively reducible to rational determinations.”

This idea is in itself a negation of human creativity and historically responsible, he claims, for the subjugation of the traditional revolutionary movement to Marxist dogmatism. Castoriadis’ ontology constitutes a different image of Being-as-Becoming, which is magmatic, meaning stratified or layered in distinct ontological layers, each of which has its proper categories, where the continuum and the discrete are reciprocal and whence rational structures arise temporally within a vastness of indeterminacy. History does not have a rational guiding principle, but is the result of an impetus of social imaginary to create beings that have no analogues in the natural world: namely meanings and institutions.

My opinion is that Bookchin and Castoriadis’ antithetical stance toward Hegel is the divergent point of their philosophical approaches. However, their philosophies have more points of convergence than imagined. As we saw above, Bookchin does not ignore the importance of human imagination. Castoriadis on the other hand, recognizes that there is an intelligible aspect of Being, offered to scientific measurement and rational exegesis, which however, does not cover the whole of being, nor the whole of history.

Another point of convergence is that both thinkers argue that ecology is a political matter and ask for a direct democratic resolution through a radical social transformation from below. Both stand against hierarchy, exclusions and inequality. Both have condemned capitalist growth and the dominant capitalist ideal or signification of unlimited exploitation of community and nature. And both have influenced Greek social movements toward autonomy and social ecology, toward developing new forms of organization, based on the acknowledgment of the reciprocal mutuality of the ecological and the political problem.

For Humanity's Future: Direct Democracy and Social Ecology

Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the left-wing Kurdistan's Workers' Party (PKK) was captured by Turkish secret services in Kenya on 15 February 1999, while being transferred from the local Greek embassy. The Greek public, sympathizing with the Kurdish struggle for independence blamed the Greek government and the incident was portrayed as an embarrassment.

Five years later, on April 2004, Murray Bookchin received a letter from the imprisoned politician through an intermediary. The letter revealed an unexpected political turn of the world-known Marxist leader, who confessed to Bookchin that he had "rebuilt his political strategy around the vision of a 'democratic-ecological-society.'" Öcalan rejected Marxism, renounced the nation-state model for his people and advocated in favor of a democratic confederation, similar to Bookchin's vision.

The rapid developments of the Arab Spring in 2008 and the brutal Syrian civil war that followed, presented the Kurdish people with the chance to implement that vision in the regions that they liberated from both the ISIS Islamists and Syrian government forces, mainly in Rojava.

The revolution of Rojava was received both as a surprise and an affirmation of hopes and dreams by Greek social movements. Public discourse on social ecology and practical forms of direct democracy flourished after the December 2008 nationwide riots and the 2011 worldwide Occupy movement. Educational and cultural campaigns by groups advocating social ecology, like Eftopia magazine, multiplied.

The antiauthoritarian newspaper and journal *Babylonia*, *Βαβυλωνία*, began organizing the International Antiauthoritarian B-fest in Athens from 2007–2017. During the festival, a vast array of different approaches to ecological and political issues were presented and discussed by thinkers like Howard Zinn, Naomi Klein, Jacques Rancière, Kristin Ross, Debbie Bookchin, and activists from social movements around Greece and the world, from the ZAD movement in France to the Standing Rock movement in the US. In Thessaloniki, from 2010 the Direct Democracy Fest has brought together people from Rojava to Bulgaria. In 2017, the Transnational Institute of Social Ecology (TRISE) Conference was also held there.

There is a global common ideal, a global radical imaginary, scattered and dispersed, but interlinked among communities of struggle, a set of values like equality, freedom, solidarity, and democracy that emerges alongside a different worldview of nature and society.

It is a flickering network of collectivities against neoliberalist expansion and capitalist growth, which comes about at a most decisive moment of human history. A moment where a combination of crises—ecological, social, anthropological, and global—presents humanity with an existential threat. A threat to humanity's existence, that is neither cosmic nor theological, but social and political. A threat

that feeds on political indifference, individualism, consumerism, and the most advanced mechanisms of control. However, social resistance is also a multifarious and the future is still open.

The influence of Murray Bookchin is immeasurable, since it is constantly expanding; it does not inspire any form of Bookchinism, but rather a theoretical and practical legacy that continues to live on in humanity's social struggles.

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NOTES

1. Bookchin, 1981.
2. Bookchin, 1971.
3. Castoriadis, 1987.
4. Bookchin, 1981.
5. Bookchin, 1981.
6. Bookchin, 1981.
7. All the issues of *Democracy and Nature* (originally named *Society and Nature*) be found in PDF format here: www.democracynature.org/, last visited August 17, 2019.
8. Castoriadis, 1990.
9. Bookchin, 1996.
10. Bookchin, 1982.
11. Bookchin, 1982.
12. Castoriadis, 1987.

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