

## Human Nature and Evolution in Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology

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### Abstract

Over the years, human agency being one of the cardinal points of concern in research is best studied through its activities, hence the imperative of human nature. This concern extends to the interconnectedness among human, nature and society hence the imperative of Social Ecology. According to Murray Bookchin, social ecology is a nature philosophy and social theory that is concerned with the emergence of social nature (second nature) from biological nature (first nature) and the possibility of a free nature asserting that all ecological problems are rooted in deep-seated social problems. The relevance of this work centers on the fact that the universe is interconnected and the damage to nature is invariably damage to the universe. However, little effort has been directed towards the complementarity of entities in the universe. For neither competition nor superiority but complementarity will aid in restoring considerable equilibrium in the universe. Using analytic, historical, descriptive and evaluative methods, this work posits that one of the most effective way of achieving an ecological society is by upholding diligently, the principle of complementarity in the relationship among human, nature and society. This can be demonstrable in the fact that man as a rational and vocal agent has the responsibility of not just innovation but also nature's protection. As such, the more the awareness of preference of complementarity, the easier it is to achieve an ecological society and with the possible establishment of an ecological society-rational society, ecological studies must have gained a bonus.

**Keywords:** *Social Ecology, Murray Bookchin, Complementarity, Ecological Society, Evolution, Human Agency.*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the focal points of Philosophy includes but not restricted to the nature of human beings as they exist in the universe. Over the years, philosophers have made immense contributions to this effect. In an attempt to analyze the nature of the human being, most philosophers analyze human being in relation to the kind of expressions and manifestations observable within and over a period of time. In the ancient epoch of philosophy, the nature of human person was predominantly seen from the point of view of rationality, political and social inclination. During the medieval era, the religious and the defensive inclinations of human beings were made more manifest and demonstrable in diverse efforts to protect religious institutions that were facing lots of confrontations. In the modern epoch, an advanced nature of rationality in man was demonstrated in free thinking that accompanied renaissance and enlightenment and to the thinkers of the time, the world itself is inherently rational (Bookchin, 1995). The period of renaissance ushered in platforms that promoted the emergence of science and technology. Much more in the contemporary period was the demonstration of the secular and humanistic inclinations or nature of human being. These aspects of nature of human beings

are dependent on the fundamental nature of human beings as biological entities. With considerable but endless efforts made about the nature of human beings, research interests also expanded and extended to accommodate humans' status and relationship with other constituents of the universe. Simply put, the place of man in relation to nature and society. This underscores the idea of not just ecology but social ecology. According to Murray Bookchin (1996), social ecology is a social theory and that aspect of nature philosophy that handles the task of evoking, elaborating and giving an ethical content to the natural core of society and humanity. This means that in the era of ecological breakdown, for any society to be categorized as a rational society, it must be an ecological society. With these in mind, the basis for Bookchin's social ecology is that our basic ecological problems stem from social problems (Bookchin, 1990). Put simply, our ecological crises and vicissitudes are mostly if not completely as a result of diverse uncontrolled social activities. Sequel to this understanding is that social activities are done by human beings that live in the society and these activities considerably generate ecological problems. To this extent, social ecology seeks to unravel the forms and patterns of interrelationships that give intelligibility to a community, be it natural or social as it focuses not just on the critique of the split between human and nature but the need to heal the split (Bookchin, 1991). For it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment (Bookchin, 1970).

For Bookchin, dealing with social ecology requires dialectical reason. This is because dialectical reason acknowledges the developmental nature of reality that includes not just the present but the past and the future. The relevance of this study centers on the fact that due to human's activities, the established society is faced with a breakdown not only of its values and institutions, but also of its natural environment. and if the problematic is unmoderated, humans will not only destroy the environment but humanity as well (Bookchin, 1982). Therefore, this study advances the position that if the principle of complementarity is effectively adhered to, the impact of human activities on nature through social tools will be positively moderated. There are various approaches to social ecology from inter-disciplinary perspective like political economy, sociology, environmental sciences, biological sciences, philosophy among others, which underscores its global relevance. Notwithstanding the diversity, the aim of social ecology revolves around the societal relations to nature, environmental management by man and how analytical guidelines can be used in combinations with these factors to gain broader understanding of human-environment transaction up to global scale. This is with the aim of strengthening social justice and democracy (Lejano & Stokols, 2024).

The research adopted a qualitative design with analysis of data using historical, descriptive and evaluative methods. The historical method will be used to trace the development of the understanding of human nature over the years. The descriptive method will be used to describe Bookchin's concept of human nature and evolution while the evaluative method will be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the work.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have contributed to the debate on human nature. For instance, in the *Republic*, Plato (2000), through one of his dialogues espouses two aspects of human nature determined by the disposition of the soul. The first is the rational element with which we refrain even from our desires as a result of rational calculation. The other is the irrational/desiring element that brings about intrapersonal and interpersonal emotions and passions. According to

Plato (2000), the soul of human contains the rational part, the appetitive part and the spirited part just like we have three social classes: the rulers, auxiliary and artisans.

Human nature is rooted in the nature of the soul. In this way, rational element rules and takes thought for the entire soul while the spirited become subordinate to the former and then the two with the required teaching and education will exercise control over the desiring element. The superiority of the rational part aligns with Bookchin's utmost regard for ecological society which he believes is rooted in rationality in some way. On the other hand, in *The Politics*, Aristotle (1962), describes human nature from the point of view of the end/purpose. For him, human nature is that which moves towards that which it feels is good. He argues that man is a political animal that must belong to a state unless the person is either subhuman, superhuman, too good or too bad. He argues for the uniqueness of human due to the power of speech that gives human the capacity to communicate feelings of perceptions more appropriately than other animals. Hence, human nature involves the ability to indicate what is harmful, just, unjust and useful. This ability is the background to the formation of household and a state. The communicative tendency resonates with Bookchin's position that human beings as communicative beings are expected to protect nature that is incapable of communication.

On a more positive note, in *Mencius*, Mencius (1893) posits that human nature is good because human beings do not have a mind that accommodates the sufferings of others. They feel compassion, raise alarm, feel pity and distress as the situation demands neither because of avoiding bad reputation, creating connections nor any sort of gain but because it is an act of humanness. By implication, the opposite which is badness is a contradiction to human nature. In furtherance of this claim, he maintains that in as much as force can rechannel/redirect human to act in contradistinction to their nature, it does not mean that their nature has gone extinct. For just like water can be redirected, it does not negate the fact that it is in the nature of water to flow downward. This goes further to imply that human nature being good for Mencius is that one's natural tendencies enables one to do good. So, when one does that which is not good, it is not the fault of one's native capacities but because of inability to fully develop these capacities. So, what overwhelms the mind at a time determines the output in behaviour just like abundance is for goodness while adversities and violence exist especially among the young people. This simply means that with humanness, maturity is everything for the finest of grains are the finest of seeds.

On the contrary, in the essay, "That the nature is Evil", the Chinese philosopher, Hsün K'wang (1970) proposes that the nature of human is evil and the good which it shows is factitious for it involves love of gain which breeds ground for contentions and robberies. It also involves replacing self-denial and yielding to others with envy, and dislike breeding violence, while injuries displaces self-devotedness and faith. But then, with the influence of teachers and laws which is a matter of necessity, there will be guidance of propriety and righteousness. This will open up the disposition for self-denial, yielding to others as well as an observance of the well-ordered regulations of conduct until there is an establishment of the state of good governance. This is the meaning of the line "that the good which it shows is factitious".

Under the moral government through teachers and law with propriety and righteousness as their tools, evil in human nature is corrected by taming and changing the feelings that are identifiable with the evil nature and direct it aright in accordance with reason. When these efforts make successful impact, the man becomes a superior man /person but if otherwise, the person becomes a mean person. So, goodness in man is by learning. However, switching

between meanness and superiority by person is a possibility but not a compulsion. This means that a superior person can be a mean person but cannot be made to be so and vice-versa.

But in *Aquinas Reader: Selections from the writings of Aquinas*, Aquinas (1972) explains human nature through its mode of participation in the being tending towards the perfect and self-subsisting being which is God. Hence, human nature is a nature that participates in being in God which is the highest being-hence the name: human being. By implication, just like other creatures, no created substance is its own being. Each thing participates in that which it becomes, like 'being' and 'good' respectively. In line with this, there is no created thing that shares the quality of God in absolute terms but in participatory terms. This position is at parallel with Bookchin's understanding of human nature which is more humanistic and secular than theological and spiritual. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes (1651) argues that the nature of humans was characterized by equality in both mind and body. Even though there can be variations in the degree of manifestation, yet in summation, the difference is not considerable. His position exemplifies equality than strength. This opens up the avenue for enmity when more than one person desire similar things but incapable of accessing them. In line with this, three things cause quarrel in man. They are: competition leading to invasion for gain, diffidence for safety and glory for reputation using suitable techniques. Due to this, it is war of every man against every man which does not constitute in battle or fighting alone but in the tract of time that the will for battle was made known. This time of war is a time where every man is an enemy to one another, no security except personal individual strength and discretional invention. By implication, no industry due to uncertainty, no civilization in general coupled with constant fear and anger of violent death. Then the life of man becomes solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short.

The solution to these possible outcomes of inter-personal relationship is the establishment of civil society founded on natural laws and eventual political society founded on commonwealth, social contract and sovereignty. Though he upheld human being as uniquely capable of reason, he preferred right reason. Contributions in *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, David Hume (1954) presents human nature as one characterized by natural liberty, results in anticipation, a possibility of war against all. Despite the fact that human nature is characterized by natural liberty, it does not stall the need for an establishment of a government. According to him, the natural liberty allowed each man to live in peace and harmony with others because, human nature is structured in such a way that it cannot by any means subsist without the association of individuals. This association in turn could not be possible, if there is no genuine regard for laws of equity and justice because natural liberty comes with disorder, confusion, the war of all against all, hence the need for government.

In *Discourse on the origins and Foundations of Inequality among men*, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1984) attempts to establish that by nature, humans/men were equal but have instituted inequality among themselves. Yet, he believes that the combination (equality and inequality) contributed to the maintenance of public order. By implication, equality is natural to men and inequality is synthetic and artificial but their utilization sustains public order on the one hand. On the other hand, in *Social Contract*, he emphasizes that men though were born free but always in chain. This is demonstrable in his analysis of likening the state to a family. In a family, before the age of reason, children are left at the care of their parents. But once, one attains the age of reason, remaining as a family member becomes a matter of choice maintained through convention. Apart from the above, individuals who has attained the age of reason becomes the judge of how best to look after themselves and become their own master. This

simply means that human beings are all born free to make personal choices but only alienates their freedom for the sake of utility (Rousseau, 1994). Furthermore, in *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke (2017) is of the position that human nature is characterized by freedom to order their actions, dispose of their possession and persons within the bounds of laws of nature. It is also characterized by equality in faculties, accessibility to advantages of nature except in a situation where one by a clear appointment by the Lord and Master is given an undoubted right and dominion as well as sovereignty. This equality implies mutual love by all persons but this freedom does not imply license to destroy oneself or his/her possession. In fact, this nature of liberty excludes harm to oneself and others. More so, human nature is characterized by freedom and liberty guided by law of nature. It is also characterized by desire for relationship, avoidance of solitude, hence the quest for communion and fellowship with others. This communion is the background/foundation for people uniting themselves in political society. This is another positive description of human nature which allows persons to make use of reason. The role of this reason is to identify their challenges as regards their nature and explore solutions, of which one is the establishment of political society. The understanding of human nature from Hume to Locke is one tending towards socio-political establishment while that of Bookchin is both biological and socially evolving.

While in “An Examination of the nature of man”, Han Wan-Kang (1970) explains human nature from explaining her meaning of nature and feeling. For her, nature begins from the date of life while feeling starts from contact with external things. According to Han, there are three grades of nature with five characteristics as well as three grades of feeling with seven characteristics. The three grades of nature and feeling are the Superior, the Middle, and the Inferior. The Superior is only good. The Middle is capable of being led either to rise to Superior or descend to Inferior while the Inferior is only evil. But while the five characteristics of nature are: Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, Sincerity and Knowledge with each manifesting differently among the three grades of human nature, the seven characteristics of feeling are: Joy, Anger, Sorrow, Fear, Love, Hatred and Desire with each manifesting differently in human actions among the three grades. Unlike Mencius and Hsün, Han is of the position that human nature is a mixture of good and evil depending on the grade one is in at a time with attendant expressible feelings. This approach gives a psychological expression of human nature. However, it is observable that the scholars in their diverse approach gave a social description of human nature. This means that they described their various perceptions of human nature from the point of view of more of inter-relationship than intra-relationship whether positively or negatively.

### **Human Nature in Murray Bookchin’s Social Ecology**

Murray Bookchin, a Russian Jewish -American was born on January 14, 1921 to the family of Mr. Nathan and Mrs. Rose Bookchin. As a first and only child, he became the favourite of his Revolutionist maternal grandmother, Zeitel Carlat who migrated with her two children, Rose and the brother Dan to the New York from Russia. Despite the fact that Murray was an American citizen by birth, he was raised as neither American nor Jewish but as a little Russian Boy. He was taught Russian language, Russian songs and even clothed in Russian dresses (Biehl, 2015). As an unfortunate child with bad parents but with a bright inquiring mind, his grandmother helped in raising him and he was taught by her grandmother, different brands of Russian historical revolutions. Later in life, he became a part of a group of Russian-related Activism and American Activism for Labour unions as well. He died of heart failure at his home in Burlington as a Socialist with integrity on July 30, 2006 (Biehl, 2025).

According to Murray Bookchin (1996), conventional reason is the kind of reason that encompasses the analytical and instrumental reason. For him, conventional reason has the following attributes among others: Firstly, it rests on the principle of identity which asserts that any given phenomenon can only be itself and nothing else at least at that given time. This simply means that this reason is concerned with the analysis of a phenomenon as precisely defined and whose truth depends on their internal consistency and practicality. It goes further to treat differences not as related but as independent variables, for instance, sand and soil are two different entities even when it seems that sand must have turned to soil.

Secondly, conventional reason does not accommodate or address the process of change. For instance, a mammal is a creature that is quite different from every being non-mammalian. The same applies to its view of human being in relation to life-cycle. For conventional reason, a human being is an infant who becomes a child, a youth and finally an adult. This is in relation to identity and not about the processes that are involved from developing from an infant to a child and youth as well as eventual adult. Its concern is with identity description and organization and not a systematic exploration of processes of becoming and potentiality of developing from one phase to another. Thirdly, conventional reason sees history as a layered series of separate phenomena, a mere succession of strata, each independent of the ones that precedes and succeeds it. Even if these strata are cemented together by phases, they are seen as independent components that should be explored independently of one another.

### **His Interpretation of Dialectical Reason**

Murray Bookchin (1996), acknowledges that dialectical reason is traceable to Heraclitus, then Plato and others with their understanding of being as ever unfolding Becoming. A situation where identity in the midst of change and change within the identity has posed perplexing questions till today. This can be reconstructed in this manner: that dialectical reason is the kind of rationality underlying the developmental processes expressible and manifest in the principle of change and identity. From the foregoing, dialectical reason acknowledges the developmental nature of reality by arguing that at different times but for same thing, 'A equals not only A but also not-A'. For instance, if one intends to analyze, examine and describe the human life-cycle in a dialectical manner, this can be a serving prototype. The examiner will see an infant as a self-maintaining human identity while simultaneously developing into a child, from a child to an adolescent to youth and eventually an adult. This underscores the fact that dialectical reason is not just concerned about how an entity is momentarily organized but how it goes beyond the moment to develop beyond what it is while still retaining its identity. The same disposition is given to the issue of history either by historians, evolutionists and Marxists. Any writing that follows the dialectic pattern will always present the life event as a developmental phenomenon that does not just fall from the sky but that which acknowledges the role of substructure for efficiency.

Though its nature is not devoid of flaws, a refined dialectic reason, for Bookchin, can be akin to a naturalistic way of thinking. This means that dialectical reason that is free from idealism and materialism is most likely suitable for ecological studies and more so, social ecology. This is because, ecology takes note of evolution, progression and interconnectedness. Put succinctly, dialectical reason or what he referred to as dialectical causality, dialectical contradiction or dialectical naturalism sees a phenomenon that is still in potency as a thing under tension, unsettled, unstable, incomplete, not actualized and not imperfect. By implication, dialectical reason believes in dynamism whereby, a phenomenon in potency is one in the journey of wholeness, fullness and richness of differentiation and subjectivity.

Dialectical reason among others is cumulative because the precedent does not replace the antecedent in terms of progress and development but is absorbed into and developed beyond the precedent into a fuller, more differentiated and more adequate form allowing for continuity. Bookchin (1996) prefers dialectical reason over other forms of reason because: it does not only examine change but factors in development. It projects the position that all actualities and potentialities-in-the making and such activity reoccurs. Due to its nature of continuity in process, it is not only compatible with the natural world but also with the social world.

More so, as a form of reasoning, it is not just compatible with nature but uniquely organic since it allows for growth. It operates within a development which involves the degree of form of a phenomenon to its organization, the tensions and contradictions as well as self-maintenance and self-development. In essence, it supports growth not by mere accretion but by a truly immanent process of organic self-formation in a graded and differentiated direction. As such, dialectical reasoning is a logic of process. Therefore, dialectical reasoning among others can be classified as dialectical naturalism because it is not only distinguishing dialectics from its materialistic and idealistic interpretations but shows how it enriches our interpretation of nature and humanities' place in the natural world. So to this extent, dialectical naturalism is compatible with social ecology (Rudy, 2025). This is because the basic concerns of social ecology are: the meaning of nature, humanity's place in nature including the evolution as well as the relationship of society to the natural world (Hummel et al, 2017).

### **Conceptualizing Social Ecology**

The social ecology of Bookchin as a social theory is concerned with the challenge that nature faces as a result of human's mismanagement. According to Bookchin (1996), social ecology is an aspect of social theory that is saddled with the responsibility of evoking, elaborating and giving an ethical content to the natural core of society and humanity. It is interested in the meaning of nature as to whether it is that which is around us like trees, animals, rocks and the likes or that which humanity is coating with petroleum, destroying or something else. It is concerned with examining whether human beings are part of nature, in charge of nature or different from nature. Social ecology for Bookchin is emphatic on the need to confront the complex and challenging question of the relationship of society to nature. This is because that will usher in the background towards developing an ethical direction compatible with solving our environmental problems. This underscores the relevance of dialectical reason because, it creates a good background for the central message of social ecology which stipulates that 'our basic ecological problems stem from social problems'. With dialectical reason, the reflection on social ecology will be enriched with clarity to help foster a succinct direction towards finding solution for socio-ecological challenges.

Furthermore, social ecology is based on the conviction that almost all of our present ecological problems originate from deep-seated social problems. This implies that ecological problems cannot be understood, how much more solved, in the absence of a careful understanding of our existing society and the irrationalities that dominate it (Bookchin, 1993). The aim of social ecology is to develop and implement a change within the social ecological framework towards tackling the challenge posed by ecological degradation by capitalism, the irrational nature of the modern city, the emergence of hierarchy, domination in human society and the presence of anarchy in the realm of politics among others (Price, 2012). Deducing from the above, social ecology according to Bookchin, explores the roots of the cultural in the natural and attempts to ascertain the gradations of biological development that metamorphoses the natural into the social. It also tries to explore the imperative differences that distinguish the

social from the natural and to ascertain the gradations of social development (Weisz et al, 2023). This is with the hope of achieving a new humanistic ecological society.

Therefore, social ecology is the investigation into the complexities identifiable in the society and ecology (Lejano & Stokols, 2024). This investigation will be effective in the

ability to establish an association between society and ecology, in the understanding that the social is, potentially at least, a fulfillment of the latent dimension of freedom in nature, and that the ecological is a major organizing principle of social development. In short, social ecology advances the guidelines for an ecological society. The great divorce between nature and society—or between the “biological” and the “cultural”—is overcome by shared developmental concepts such as greater diversity in evolution; the wider and more complete participation of all components in a whole and the ever more fecund potentialities that expand the horizon of freedom and self-reflexivity (Bookchin, 1996).

From the foregoing, one can deduce convincingly that social ecology is concerned with developing a naturalistic kind of ethics that will be compatible with the complexities identifiable both in the state and nature as well as the activities and evolution of humans to different ‘natures’.

### **Types of ‘Natures’ in Murray Bookchin’s Social Ecology**

In his effort to elucidate the impact of human activities on nature, Murray Bookchin identified three kinds of nature. They are the first and second nature and the free nature.

#### **The First Nature**

This can also be referred to as the **biotic nature or biological nature**. At a glance, one may see nature as the landscape we see from behind the windows, a vista from a lofty mountain peak and the likes. But for Bookchin (1996), it is a cumulative evolution of ever-differentiating and increasingly complex life-forms with a vibrant and interactive inorganic world. It can as well be categorized as a relative unconscious natural development. Furthermore, it is first nature because, it is at this level that we can talk about the existence of fossils believed to be the evolutionary foundation of both mammals, primates, human life and even other life-forms. It is also regarded as the first nature because of its exhibition of a high degree of orderly continuity in the actualization of potentialities that allow for more complex and self-aware or subjective life-forms. This first nature is a nature that is predisposed to exploitation even though it was not meant to be exploited. It is a nature that is not self-reflexive but is filled with evolutionary potentialities to achieve mind and truth. This simply underscores the fact that in the first nature, there is an existence of evolutionary continuum alongside a certain degree of unreflexivity.

According to Bookchin (1996), first nature is a nature that accommodates all life-forms at their untampered disposition. Here, both the organic and inorganic in their unaltered nature are included. However, it is also a nature that will eventually evolve to become a second nature due to certain activities that may indulge them.

#### **3.6.2 The Second Nature**

According to Bookchin (1996), this second nature is the evolutionary outcome of the first nature. It includes the cultural, social and political nature that has almost absorbed the first nature. This resultant outcome that ascribes it a version of nature does not imply that this

version or phase is conscious of its evolution. It is a phase that happens to be because the first nature has been altered and intervened on. By implication, this nature is synonymous with the society and human internal nature both of which are undergoing evolution for better or for worse. It is a phase of nature that accommodates monstrous attributes like hierarchy, class, the state, private property and a competitive market economy that promotes economic rivalry and obliges rivals to grow at the expense of each other or perish. Just like the first nature that was altered, the second nature is also in pain and suffering which can only be diminished with the enthronement of free nature- an ecological society. However, the second nature is the bearer of moral responsibilities because it is the phase that experiences all activities that has moral inclinations attached therewith. This simply entails that it is at the level of second nature that all activities that evolved first nature are remarkably identified. So, in this social evolution of nature, second nature has a moral burden and is also another phase that can be improved on to achieve an ecological society or a free nature.

For Bookchin (1996), while first nature is the nature that experiences biological evolution, second nature is the nature of social evolution. Permit to say, that the first nature is both in continuity and discontinuity with the second nature. This is because we still experience the attributes of the first nature at least in part as well as the expressions of the second nature.

### **Human Nature and Evolution**

It is quite expedient to clarify that the kind of evolution of interest is the social evolution on the one hand. On the other hand, projecting human nature as an element with a role in social evolution is simply using a part for a whole. By implication, in this work, the role of human nature exemplifies the role of human beings in the evolution because human beings as agents are the possessors of human nature. It is also not the 'beingness' of humans that perform activities but the nature of human beings which are expressible and demonstrable in human actions. It is undeniable that apart from biological evolution which allows for organisms evolving over the years as a result of certain factors and circumstances, social evolution is solely orchestrated by the activities of human beings. Placing the two side by side, one can observe that human nature plays a role in this evolution through the following ways:

At the phase of first nature, there is a higher degree of orderly continuity in the actualization of potentialities that allow for self-awareness and more complex subjective life-forms. This continuity ushers in certain degree of meaning and rationality in its results. This is because, life-forms that can conceptualize, communicate, understand with each other in symbolic terms begins to observe. These attributes are best expressed among the human specie through thoughts and language and as such are the most elevated specie among life-forms. For Bookchin (1996), these attributes manifest in a highly systematic understanding of the environment in the form of Philosophy, Science, Ethics, Aesthetics and finally the capacity to alter itself and the environment through knowledge and technology. It is this capacity that places human beyond the realm of subjectivity that exists in the first nature. Unfortunately, this unique subjective life-form was mistakenly interpreted by the Ecologists to present human specie as though they are superior to nature and not part of it and so can command and exploit nature to serve their needs. According to Bookchin (1996), the human specie has the capacity to alter the first nature as a result of natural evolution and not because of any Deity or cosmic Spirit. Put simply, human specie experienced natural evolution which granted them certain unique capacity to manipulate nature. It is this capacity bestowed on them that has in turn engineered them to consciously intervene on and act upon first nature to usher in second nature that includes both cultural, social and political nature. As a matter of fact, every part of the

world that is yet accessible to humans has been affected by the activities of human specie. To a great extent, the state of the universe, life-forms and inorganic entities are determined according to how human specie desires and determines. For instance, the wilderness is conserved because human beings chose to in order to satisfy their quest for wild-life preservation. One can also observe how the Space has been manipulated to serve the technological needs of humans. The marines and sea life are experiencing the same intrusion. The earth is not just a hub for industrialization, it is also an excavation galore and much more. This justifies the claim of Bookchin (1996) that ‘nearly all the nonhuman life-forms that exist today are, like it or not, to some degree in human custody, and whether they are preserved in their wildlife ways depends largely on human attitudes and behaviours.

Certain elements of human nature like consciousness, will, alterable institutions and the operation of economic forces and technics may be deployed to enhance the organic world or push it towards destruction. Also, attributes like hierarchy, class, the state, private property and a competitive market economy that promotes economic rivalry positively and negatively are all aftermath of human intervention in the evolutionary process. In as much as it is acceptable that only human beings can formulate and attach intrinsic worth and ethical responsibility on life-forms, it does not imply that that humans should exploit life-forms. But, it is only morally commendable that a mute nature should be protected by an aspect of it that communicates and is conscious instead of misappropriating its uniqueness at the expense of dependable nature.

According to Bookchin (1996), human beings are the determinants of the direction that social evolution goes. Oftentimes, this is a situation of an exploited nature without considering the impact on nature and even other human beings. When we dominate nature, we invariably dominate our fellow human beings too through capitalism and the likes. This is demonstrable in the anti-humanistic ideologies that reduce human beings to mere commodities thereby denaturing and degrading human beings. These anti-humanistic ideologies involve the manipulation and employment of individuals as techniques and means of both production and consumption, thereby redirecting the creative powers and authentic needs of individuals into an objectified phenomenon as well as individuals as mere devices.

In summary, Murray Bookchin’s philosophy of nature focuses on the following: that the human species is also part of nature even though it has unique attributes above other aspects of nature. Again, that beyond biological evolution, exists social evolution which is also a kind of natural evolution. This kind of evolution led to the emergence of second nature (social nature) which is an outcome of the evolutionary process on first nature (biological or biotic nature).

This evolutionary process is orchestrated by human beings due to their unique capacities of thought and creativity with which they intervene on the first nature. This intervention ushered in hierarchy, domination, class consciousness, capitalism and the likes. Eventually, these factors did not only lead to the exploitation of nature by human beings but also the exploitation of human by humans. So, the role of human nature is observable in the activities of human beings through their intervention on nature and even on fellow human beings.

### **Implications of Human Nature in Murray Bookchin’s Social Ecology**

In Murray Bookchin’s effort to analyse human nature and its relationship with social ecology, few implications can be deduced namely: the attempt to eliminate the dichotomy between human and nature. Social ecology tries to debunk the idea that humans are higher and different from nature. Through study in social ecology, one observes that Bookchin places human as an aspect and part of nature but a unique aspect of nature. In simple terms,

Bookchin's understanding of human nature tends towards the rejection of human-nature dualism (Bookchin, 1996).

Secondly, Bookchin contends that human nature does not presuppose environmental degradation, ecological crises and social inequalities. Rather these are product or outcome of social structures and hierarchies. By extension, structures of domination are inevitable structures as long as human nature and societal organisations are concerned. These structures of domination which include but not restricted to capitalism, patriarchy and hierarchy have interfered negatively in the relationship between human specie and nature leading to alienation and ecological damage. This substantiates the fact that as long as human nature and social ecology by Bookchin is concerned, we cannot underestimate the role of human consciousness. Human consciousness and social institutions shape our relationship with the natural world for there is no society that can exist without institutional structures (Bookchin, 1995). If human consciousness is dynamic and evolving, then, it is akin to social situation. Correspondingly, if the society is oppressive, human consciousness will evolve in adaptation to the existing reality and if the social condition is comfortable, human consciousness will evolve in that direction. Noting the fact that human consciousness is adaptable to situation underscores the role human consciousness plays in enthroning an ecological society. When the ideology and crusade for an ecological society with social virtues is immanent, then, the human consciousness in its way of function will align itself towards achieving the intention.

More so, Bookchin's idea of human nature in social ecology presupposes the 'social ecology' of nature. Bookchin argues that it is no longer possible to achieve an untouched environment for we cannot separate human activities from nature and humans being as part of nature is mediated by social systems and institutions in their interactions with the ecosystem. By this, it becomes justifiable and clear, the reason ecological crisis is not just about over population, resource depletion or pollution but highly determined by social relations that structure human society. So, it is only fair that the way out is to establish a new society that will be both ecologically sustainable and socially just. In extension, the way we organize society which includes system of hierarchy, coercion, exploitation shapes our understanding of human capacity. In the realm of hierarchy, there is division of class of rulers and subordinates which in turn perpetuates domination. Consciously or not, it stifles co-operation, creativity and the disposition to live in harmony with nature. So, the formidable way to achieve a co-operative and ecologically responsible human nature is by challenging hierarchical structures. This challenge will be fruitful with a new political order based on ecological principles among others to promote values of solidarity, sustainability and freedom. Of course, a society free from domination is a society that respects and nurtures the natural world (Bookchin, 1975).

Though Bookchin does not suggest elimination of technology, he is of the position that technology should be directed towards enhancing human freedom and ecological balance and not serving the interest of some capitalist elites. Technology can be a tool of evil in terms of ecological disasters and social hierarchy or a tool of progress when democratized (Bookchin, 1980). This understanding of technology as a tool of progress is quite in opposition with capitalist ideology that promotes environmental exploitation, commodification and generation of profit irrespective of the outcomes in the name of industrialization. It is at this juncture that rationality is pivotal and expedient. For Bookchin, humans are not just biological specie but socially active agents that are capable of rational thoughts and actions. This implies that it is in the capacity of human beings to focus on creating technologies that enhance both the society and the environment. This capacity for reason entails responsibility of choices and decisions.

So, human beings can overcome this ecological challenges by a compulsory reconnection with nature as part of ecosystems but neither as exploiters or conquerors.

This will usher in an optimistic expectation of the future of ecosystem. When the ecosystem begins its recovery process due to the deliberate decision by rational human beings, then the intention of social ecology have greatly and considerably been achieved.

### **Evaluation of Murray Bookchin's Concept of Human Nature**

In *Philosophy of Social Ecology*, Murray Bookchin presented a dual capacity of human nature. One is nature with capacity for domination and the other is one with capacity for co-operation. The fact that he saw human nature from both perspectives is commendable. This goes on to demonstrate that for Bookchin, human nature is not predetermined but a product of social and historical forces. Human nature can dominate as long as the society conditions it and it can as well co-operate if the society allows. The possibility of co-operation will lead to the emergence of an ecological society (free nature).

His preference of dialectical rationality/reason over other forms of reason explicates the fact that his intention to build an ecological society is a genuine one. One may ask how? Dialectical reason which underlies his social ecology is a logic of process and development. It is more than just an ordinary mental skill. It is cumulative and self-reflexive. With this kind of reason, one sees a determination to actually establish a purported free nature that is free of domination but participatory. A nature that would willfully and thoughtfully cope with conflict, contingency, waste and compulsion. His observance of lack of sensitivity towards the activities on nature underscores his kind of reason: a reason that is in continuum.

Furthermore, in as much as Bookchin presented second nature as an outcome of the intervention of human specie on the first nature, it does not mean that it is devoid of goodness. For him, second nature entails the development of unique human culture, wide variety of institutionalized human communities, effective human technics, richly symbolic languages and carefully managed sources of nutriment. The only challenge is the incompetence or insensitivity of human beings to moderate their interventions on nature.

He made a frantic effort to distinguish first and second nature and at the same time espouses the connection between the two. With this, his effort to overcome reductionism was successful but whether the distinction and merger is adequate or not is a different situation altogether. For while he was promoting the interconnectedness of life-forms and organic world, he made sure that he maintained the uniqueness of each of these forms (Eiglad, 2016).

Despite the fact that he argues for a participatory kind of evolution and human beings as part of nature, he still insists that human species by virtue of their powers of thought, communication and innovation are unique in evolution. This differs with the position of the deep ecologists which holds that human specie has the same intrinsic worth with every other life-form in the biosphere (Biehl, 1999).

On the other hand, few claims of Bookchin did not align with Eiglad (2016) who feels that the absence of human beings is an advantage to nature. For Bookchin, human beings are unique and should be viewed as vital agents in the evolution but for Eiglad borrowing the ideas of Zappfe, a world without human beings will be no tragedy. For Bookchin, second nature in an ecological society would be the actualization of first nature's potentiality to achieve mind and truth but for Eiglad, (2016) the entire human quest for meaning and truth is a gross delusion. For him, our uniqueness is a weapon against nature because through reason, we have

known too much. Eigladd (2016) posits that humans are biological misfits that are not just outgrowth of nature but a disaster to the unity of nature.

Furthermore, his perspective on human nature is idealistic and he assumed much for reason. This is because, he believed that with the unique attributes of human beings, they can establish an ecological society. He oversimplified this possibility as though the good attributes of human beings are the only things that matter in reforming a society. He failed to consider the possible interference of the complexities of human behaviour as well as social structures. When the so-called monstrous attributes that he listed come fighting back, how will they be tackled? He overlooked the role of social, cultural, historical and even political factors and forces in shaping and influencing human behaviour. His presentation of human attributes as fixed characteristics is somewhat reductionistic. The very thing that he tried to avoid. He made a commendable effort in developing a theory of social reformation that will enhance ecological experience but limiting the propellers of this change to human agency and ecological consciousness is restrictive and narrow. He failed to establish how this ecological society can be sustained and strengthened in the face of a stiff opposition. This is because there has been ecological consciousness and human agency present in nature without achieving this intention. He did not clearly elucidate the degree of consciousness and the kind of human agencies alongside other factors that are sufficient to achieve this purpose.

Finally, his categorical presentation of capitalism, hierarchy, the state, class and domination as monstrous attributes is pessimistic and one-sided. There are several gains of capitalism like healthy competition that help improve the economy and so on. Without the state, anarchy is not an option. A regulated and monitored hierarchy and class can also help in maintaining harmony in the society after all virtue lies in the middle.

## CONCLUSION

The idea of evolution is always associated with Charles Darwin and his colleagues. But, with the idea of social ecology, beyond biological evolution, there is another kind of natural evolution which is the social evolution. This evolution is spearheaded by human agency due to the unique attributes that places human species at a unique position in nature. However, this evolution has both positive and negative implications. The positive implications include creativity, innovation and invention among others while the negative implications include hierarchy, domination and class among others. In all of this, Bookchin, insists that human nature is the reason behind these interventions on nature and the same human nature embedded with ecological consciousness can develop ecological principles to create harmony in nature. A situation of each aspect of nature not seen as superior to other aspects of nature. A situation where the human species will not be seen as different from nature but a part of nature like others. A situation where each aspect of nature retains its integrity while complimenting one another and a situation where nature can be harnessed to solve the basic problems while recognizing the need to preserve the same nature.

A quick glance at this theory of Social Ecology will present it as a perfect theory. Though one may not deny the inherent advantages of this theory, however, there are also shortfalls. Any proposition that involves human factor will always be a matter of probability due to the complexity of human behaviour on the one hand. On the other hand, the society has become so complex and complicated that for a successful intervention to exist in society, it will take deliberate sustained efforts from whole lot of factors. However, a million miles' journey starts with a step. The determined effort to link ecological problems to social problems and

representing the idea of nature and its experiences in a new light is commendable. While there are supporters and opponents of this theory especially as it relates to his perception of the role human nature plays in evolution, it is left for readers and scholars to make effort in actualizing the intention behind this theory.

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