

## PREFACE

# UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

KEVIN TUCKER

**F**or millions of years, humans have lived as anarchists. That is as autonomous individuals without the existence of coercive power, work, and institutions: without mediation. The “state of nature” may more appropriately be called the natural anti-state. It was never paradise (the walled gardens) or utopia (the perfect place of the imagination), it just was. But it’s not simply a historical thing either. The Linear thought of Reason would have us believe so, being led by the prophets of Production (Moses, Smith, Marx, etc.). Anarchy is in our bones. It’s the way we act; it’s the way that millions of years of evolution have shaped us. As Paul Shepard puts it, we are beings of the paleolith: gatherer-hunters, primitives, beings of this earth.

But something happened. This is no great mystery and no matter how devoted we are to the gods of Progress and Production, we all know things aren’t going too great. We’ve been led astray. To try and confront what that means, we must first understand what we are. The life of nomadic gatherer-hunters is intrinsically different from the spiritually dead world of modernity: the current face of the global, technological civilization. Gatherer-hunters themselves are no different though. There are no born primitives or born civilized, but people born of different time and place and a large portion of us who had the misfortune of being born in the latter category.

Nomadic gatherer hunter societies typify egalitarianism. They are, as they must be by their nature, flexible and organic. Being nomadic means being adaptive: that is the key to anarchy. When there are droughts, societies can move to more hospitable regions. Boundaries, where they exist at all, are defined by the center rather than arbitrary lines or markers. Who is at one site at any particular time is fluid and there are no strangers. Egos are intentionally deflated so that no skill becomes more valued than others. Population is kept in check by the nature of mobility and what Richard B. Lee calls the “contraceptive on the hip.”

But most importantly, everyone is capable of fully sustaining themselves. So when people do group together, they are doing so on

their own terms. If people get angry or frustrated with others, they are free to leave and the impact of being shunned is harshly felt. There are no real specialists and no possessions that cannot be made or exchanged easily. *There is no mediation between life and means of living.*

The nomadic gatherer-hunters live in an entirely sacred world. Their spirituality reaches as far as all of their relations. They know the animals and plants that surround them and not only ones of immediate importance. They speak with what we would call “inanimate objects”, but they can speak the same language. They know how to see beyond themselves and are not limited to the human languages that we hold so dearly. Their existence is grounded in place, they wander freely, but they are always home, welcome and fearless.

It's easy to criticize any theory that looks at “original sins” or points fingers towards any particular event. In many ways I agree, but I think the picture is really more complex. At no point was there a conscious decision to be civilized or a point when people stopped listening to the earth. Instead there are certain things that have happened and have had serious implications for the way we deal with each other and the earth around us.

I don't think that the first people to domesticate plants and animals knew what they did would turn the world they loved into something to eventually fear. Or that growing the fear of wildness would eventually mean destroying everything outside the barriers of the gardens to ensure that they did not creep in. It's really doubtful that the first people to settle in one area thought they were taking steps toward a life of warfare. Or that having more children would mean a constant and increasing state of growth. It's doubtful that the first people to become largely dependent upon stored foods would realize that this would mean the creation of coercive power and break the egalitarianism that a group of autonomous people had.

Of course, none of us will ever know for sure what was being thought or why these things were being done. There's no shortage of theories about the origins of domestication, sedentism or surplus-orientation, but for all practical purposes those theories are really irrelevant. Why steps were taken in the first place does not change the fact that those steps have carried a number of implications. When each of those steps was taken, something significant did happen and a trail of unintended consequences connects those events with where we are now.

But this is not a sign that governments or power is merely some benign force. Politicians and profiteers know that they are destroying the planet and poisoning all life, they just see money as more important. Their choices are hardly “unintended” compared to the person who unthinkingly plugs into an electrical outlet or pours gasoline into a car. Powermongers will act in their own interest, but their power relies on our complacency with the terms they have poured us in.

This doesn't mean that every person involved is necessarily aware or that they should be damned; that doesn't get us very far. But what is obvious is that our situation is getting increasingly worse. With the growing dependency on fossil fuels, we are stealing from the future in a way never known before. We are standing in a rather familiar position: like the Cahokia, Chacoan, Maya, Aztec, Mesopotamian, and Roman civilizations before us, we aren't seeing the symptoms of collapse that define our times. We aren't thinking about anything but what is good for us here and now. We aren't thinking outside of our conditioning. *We aren't thinking outside of civilization.*

But we don't even know it. We aren't even given the ability to read the times, because it is contrary to the Rational path of Reason laid out before us.

But things have changed and are changing. Whether we recognize it or not: *something will happen.* We have the ability to look back and try and awaken the part of ourselves that has been buried by domestication: the civilizing process. We can see that there is something about the nomadic gatherer-hunter existence that just worked. We can see that this was broken down by sedentism, domestication, surplus, and those breakdowns would solidify further with horticulture, the creation of states, agriculture and even more so with industrialism and technological modernity.

Something about these steps took away our autonomy. They made us dependent. Supposedly we were freed from the barbarism of self-determination toward the new Freedom of work and a world of stuff. We sold egalitarianism for plastic.

Our current situation is a grim one but we are not hopeless. We have before us the legacy of unintended consequences that slowly took us from egalitarianism to totalitarianism. The question we have to ask is what have we lost. What part of our being has been sold off in the process? We can look beyond the myths of Reason, of divine, Linear time, and Progress, and awaken ourselves in the process.

Civilization is a huge target. Overcoming domestication is a massive undertaking, but our souls and lives are at stake. But the future and the past are closer than we think. The blood and spirit of anarchy flows through our veins. We don't need to look 'before civilization'; we just need to listen to ourselves and the world around us. We have the benefit of seeing what steps have taken us down the wrong path, and with that we can start taking steps toward anarchy.

And in this process, the process of *becoming human*, the abstractions between our fate and the fate of the world will wither. There will be no question of when it is the right time to strike against the concrete manifestations of civilization or to know where to strike.

When we learn to open ourselves to wildness and chaos, the organic anarchy of our beings will flow. Attacking civilization is no easy feat, but when we listen, when we embrace our anti-state of nature, we will know exactly what to do.

—Kevin Tucker  
10 May 2004