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and their boundaries is only one example. At the same time both need to avoid romanticizing their goals – a trap that is easy to fall into, thanks to deep ecology and various New Age 'philosophies.' Gaia, no matter how objectively verifiable, is not a goddess; Nature is not a cathedral, not a substitute for the life-destroying churches and temples most of us have abandoned. Moreover, we need to keep in mind that we have the leisure and resources to pursue our goals only because of the vast expansion in the past two centuries of the same Earth-consuming economy that we are determined to dismantle. We need to take care as we unravel the boundaries.

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explicit statements about its boundaries. Gene Marshall: "My local bioregion is a collection of communities within some meaningful boundaries determined by the factors of basic land topography, watersheds, flora and fauna habitats, altitudes, rainfalls, temperatures, and other such factors."[27] Kirkpatrick Sale does a little better: a bioregion is "a place defined by its life forms, its topography and its biota, rather than by human dictates, a region governed by nature, not legislation."[28] Tyler Volk does better still, though he is writing about ecosystems, not bioregions: ecosystems don't have 'boundaries'; "rather, like the omnidistributive cohesiveness of a cloud or rock, all food webs and nutrient cycles themselves serve as the barrier — a bulwark dispersed among all parts and therefore quite casual."[29] Thomas Berry attempts to leave boundaries out of the equation: "The Earth presents itself to us not as a uniform global reality but as a complex of highly differentiated regions caught up in the comprehensive unity of the planet itself."[30] Of course, bioregionalists are for the most part not anarchists – they do not expect to go beyond the point of matching political boundaries to ecological boundaries. Still, the bioregional project moves in an anarchist direction. In almost every case, bioregions are smaller than nation-states; political power is devolved away from the center and is invested in the local community.

Anarchism and bioregionalism can learn a great deal from one another, and both will profit from better definitions of key concepts that they share. The nature of geopolitical entities

[27] Gene Marshall, "Step One: Mapping the Biosphere," in Doug Aberley, ed., *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment*, (Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society, 1993), 55.

[28] Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Book, 1985), 7.

[29] Tyler Volk, *Metapatterns: Across Space, Time, and Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 58.

[30] Thomas Berry, *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, Calif.: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 168.

that when we attempt to draw boundaries, we can reasonably start with climate, terrain, the natural ranges of plants and animals, and the like; but "the final [sic] boundaries of a bioregion are best described by the people who have lived within it, through human recognition of the realities of living-in-place."[26] Inevitably, any such approach means devolution, the breaking-up of large states into smaller ones – a trend that started in the West with the Versailles treaty, and continues today – Montenegro and southern Sudan being the most recent examples.

For our anarchist purposes, the bioregional approach probably makes the most sense, at least for starters. It also has the advantage of being consonant with general systems theory, as Reclus noticed even before that discipline was invented. Certainly bioregional thinkers have given more thought to the question than most of us. Bioregionalism starts, but does not end, with the indistinct boundaries of watersheds, differences in soil and climate, and coastlines. Watersheds are now fairly well defined by government environmental agencies (which in itself should make us suspicious), but at a micro level they vary with rainfall and the time of year, and above all with the uses to which human beings put the water. To transform them into political boundaries, as some bioregionalists would do, is merely to replace one arbitrary line with another. Genuine bioregionalism is not about defining boundaries, but rather about defining groups of people who have basic needs and interests in common. So we are talking about culture as constrained by environment, a dynamic interplay of conditions that defies any attempt at static boundaries or even at static definitions. Most bioregionalists seem unable to talk about what a bioregion is without making some rather

[26] Doug Aberley, "Interpreting Bioregionalism: a story from many voices," in Michael McGinnis, ed., *Bioregionalism* (London: Routledge, 1999), 23.

> *"To rule forever....it is necessary only to create, among the people one would rule, what we call ...Bad History. Nothing will produce Bad History more directly nor brutally, than drawing a Line, in particular a Right Line, the very Shape of Contempt, through the midst of a People, — to create thus a Distinction betwixt 'em, — 'tis the first stroke, — All else will follow as if predestin'd, unto War and Devastation."*
>
> Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (1997)

As anarchists we must disapprove on principle the idea of political boundaries: after all, they define the State in a very concrete fashion, and the State is not a phenomenon of which we are enamored. The concept is however not just limited to nation-states. Boundaries can be very circumscribed, or they can encompass vast regions; the rules governing them can apply to personal space or to empires, and everything between. Achille Varzi points out that if we recognize any boundary, or even part of it, as artificial, then we must accept that whatever it contains is a conceptual construction, something without objective existence. If anarchists do not reject artificial constructs *in toto*, we must at least reject those that are imposed by authority, and any that are alleged to be immutable.

As with most commonsense ideas, the philosophers have taken 'boundary' and parlayed it into something maddeningly inscrutable. Still, we need to look first at some of the philosophical definitions. The ancient Greek mathematicians were the first to take notice of the problem. Euclid described a boundary as "that which is an extremity of anything." Aristotle was a bit more specific: a boundary marks "the first thing outside of which no part [of the thing] is to be found, and the first thing inside of which every part [of the thing] is to be found." Unfortunately this does not help much unless we can agree on what a "thing" is. The Greeks established the logical foundation of

western thought: the intrinsic dichotomy of subject and object, and this approach has crippled us ever since. Boundaries are a matter of concern throughout the *Metaphysics* – the world is full of all sorts of phenomena that can be identified and named, but are they all 'bounded' in the same way? Does a flame have the same sort of boundary as a rock? What does it mean to say that one entity is 'separate' from another? What happens to the boundary when two objects touch one another? Do boundaries have dimension or extension? and so on.

The medieval scholastics, drawing on Aristotle, further confused the issue. Gregory of Rimini, who worked in Paris in the mid-fourteenth century, sensibly defined lines or boundaries as "things divisible only in one dimension." Leonardo da Vinci wondered whether a boundary is part of the thing it bounds, or just an imaginary construct for the observer's convenience: what divides the atmosphere from the water? It is necessary that there should be a common boundary which is neither air nor water but is without substance, because a body interposed between two bodies prevents their contact, and this does not happen in water with air… Therefore a surface is the common boundary of two bodies which are not continuous, and does not form part of either one or the other, for if the surface formed part of it, it would have divisible bulk, whereas, however, it is not divisible and nothingness divides these bodies the one from the other.

Descartes also concluded that the boundary is not part of the thing bounded. By the nineteenth century, at the hands of philosophers like Brentano and Frege, the debate had again receded into the more obscure realms of mathematics. In the twentieth, the linguists got hold of it, as did the British common-sense or ordinary-language school. Quantum physics, however, has since introduced a new problem: when subatomic particles flash in and out of existence in nanoseconds, and the atoms composed of them are mostly empty space, where exactly can any boundary or surface be located?

evidence can be found all over the world: the Nazca lines, the careful alignment of the Pyramids, the ley lines (if they exist) of Britain, the astronomical configurations of Ohio's Mound-builder structures, Australian songlines, and so on. In most cases we do not understand the philosophy behind these patterns, though intelligent guesses can be made (as well as many unintelligent and downright crackpot guesses). Whether they have any connection with scientifically attested phenomena like telluric currents or the Earth's magnetic field is an open question. On the other hand, we do know a great deal about some of these geomantic systems.

Feng shui (literally, "wind – water") has been trivialized into a strategy for the arrangement of beds, tables and various consumerist clutter into patterns that can supposedly improve mental and physical health for the owners of said impedimenta. Its real history is more interesting. Six thousand years ago in China, important buildings, streets and tombs were aligned according to the stars, sun and moon. Over time handbooks, simple instruments, and eventually magnetic compasses were developed to aid in *feng shui* planning. The idea behind the system is that dizzyingly complex energy (*qi*, 氣) patterns run across the earth's surface, and that human health and fortune can be enhanced if houses, towns and the like can be situated in consonance with those patterns instead of at odds with them. The same idea underlies acupuncture and *tai chi*. Whether *feng shui* is scientifically valid or superstitious nonsense is beside the point here: we are talking about boundaries, and the ways in which people have decided how or whether to draw them. *Feng shui* was conceived as a method of living in harmony with the planet's natural contours – its watercourses, ecosystems, mountain ranges – and it certainly makes more sense than the imposition of grid patterns on lumpy, meandering reality.

All ecological and anarchist philosophies recognize that artificial boundaries are an obstacle to sustainable and democratic societies. Bioregional writer Doug Aberley suggests

means 'in all major relations,' that is, when taking our place in the global ecosphere into account.[24] General systems theory helps to clarify this approach with its description of 'life' as a complex of autopoietic systems constantly interchanging matter and energy with each other. Moreover, science has now demonstrated that even such a broad definition does not suffice for 'life': "Nature lays down no boundaries between life and nonlife. What we choose to call living is our own affair."[25]

As is well known, the philosophies of Næss and the deep ecologists overlap considerably with Eastern religions, in particular Zen Buddhism and Taoism (which indeed overlap with each other). Do non-Western peoples perceive a seamless universe without energy or matter, change or permanence, indeed without any notion of or at all? Our first reaction is to say, no, of course not: in spite of their nondualistic philosophies the Zen Buddhists and the Amerind shamans know the difference between thoughts and things. But do they really? We can ask them, of course; but this act of observation changes the results of the experiment. And in any case the modern world is so thoroughly saturated with Western civilization that no one on the planet can be entirely free of its dualistic influence. How would the Caribs have explained the mind/body problem before Columbus 'discovered' them? We have no way of knowing, even in theory.

Most cultures through most of history have used some sort of geomancy to determine the placement of human-made structures. Usually, if not always, the goal is to take advantage of naturally-occurring boundaries or imperceptible forces in order to protect or maximize the efficiency of those forces, and/or not to cross boundaries that ought not to be crossed. The

[24] Arne Næss, "An Ecological Approach to Being in the World," *The Fourth Keith Roby Memorial Lecture in Community Science*, Murdoch University (Australia), 1986.

[25] David Darling, *Zen Physics: The Science of Death, The Logic of Reincarnation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 12.

We are back where we started, with the boundary as a purely mental construct, existing in our own minds as a convenient way of organizing the world we perceive around us given the limitations of our senses and our instruments. Can there be any objective or ontologically 'real' boundaries?[1]

Rumination on this topic is not limited to western philosophy. The *Visuddhi Magga* (a Theravada Buddhist text) reminds us that merely to name a thing is to assign it boundaries:

A name is imposed on what is thought to be a thing or a state and this divides it from other things and other states. But when you pursue what lies behind the name, you find a greater and greater subtlety that has no divisions. Atoms of dust are not really atoms of dust but are merely called that. In the same way, a world is not a world but is merely called that.

This article is concerned mainly with boundaries that nearly everyone admits are artificial – geopolitical boundaries – which, like the governments they serve, tend to exert a centripetal force on their social and economic contents, pulling everyone and everything towards the center, where power is concentrated. The more exact the boundary, the more easily the power is calibrated. Ecosystems, in contrast, are centrifugal. The contents are pushed out towards the protean and porous boundary, which in consequence opens and closes, shifts and oscillates to accommodate the needs of the system.

Though all cultures recognize political boundaries in some form or another, it was in western civilization that the concept first took on such a dichotomized, dualistic character. This was not always the case: the Romans were on the way towards the precise rectilinear boundary before they were disrupted by the

[1] The quotations and references in these first paragraphs are borrowed from a superb article by Achille Varzi in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, plato.stanford.edu/entries/boundary/. The quotations are from Euclid's *Elements*, Book I, Definitions 1–3, 5–6, 13; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1022a; and Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebooks*, Edward Maccurdy, ed. (London: Jonathan Cape,1938), 75–76.

so-called Dark Ages, but they never got there. In the Domesday survey (1086) England's landscape was described by a wide variety of terms, such as *oxgang*: the amount of land a plow pulled by one ox can cultivate in a day. No one was much disturbed by questions that would drive the modern surveyor insane: what kind of plow, how strong is the ox, what kind of soil, how long is the day, what's the weather? Throughout the Middle Ages national boundaries were fluid, depending on the fortunes of war, dynastic marriages, temporary truces and agreements. That all began to change during the late Renaissance, due to a number of factors ranging from printed maps to nostalgia for Roman clarity and exactitude. It is an unfortunate legacy of colonialism that the stark and absolute national boundary pioneered in Europe, and taken to mathematic precision in North America, has now been imposed on the whole planet. We have not yet seen every centimeter of every border surveyed down to a one-dimensional geometric line, but it is not for lack of trying on the part of governments. They understand that precision is power. As matter of course anarchists are opposed to such boundaries on principle, as the 'containers' of the State, but many of us may not realize what we're up against.

A good place to start is etymology. This author is a believer in linguistic relativity, the modern expression of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that the language we think in affects (to greater or lesser degree) the way we perceive the world. Much of language is really subconscious, and whether or not there is (as Chomsky argues) an underlying common ground for all languages, the genealogy of individual words can provide some insight into connections that may not be apparent to conscious thought.

The English word "boundary" is from medieval Latin *bodina*, evidently a Gaulish word whose etymology is uncertain. Very likely it comes, like bind, ribbon, bundle, and bandage, from the Indo-European root bhendh, *whose fundamental sense is "bind, tie up, fasten, restrain." When we look at synonyms we*

Huston's point is that the shrinking of social space in recent centuries (progression from travel on horseback to jet planes, for instance) is experienced in very different ways by different social classes, contributing to the sort of social atomization that a centralized nation-state requires of its subjects.[22] While explorations in this direction have considered boundaries only indirectly, they reinforce the evolving interpenetration of anarchism and ecology.

How then should anarchists respond to boundaries and territories, in practice and in theory? Anarchism hopes for a world in which neither exists, at least in their political form. But the boundary of the individual is prior and more fundamental, and that is where we have to start. Radical philosophies have long been interested describing what it means to be an individual. As John Clark has written, "… there has been a tendency in recent holistic anarchist thought to explicitly use the term 'individual' to refer to that degraded self fabricated over the long history of social domination, and finally perfected in modern capitalist, statist, technobureaucratic society."[23] Various alternatives have been offered, notably Arne Næss' "Self-realization," with a capital S. Drawing on sources as varied as Spinoza, William James, Gandhi and Erich Fromm – and at the same time noting that western philosophy has never been able to come up with a universally acceptable definition of the 'self' – Næss suggests that "the 'everything hangs together' maxim of ecology applies to the self and its relation to other living beings, ecosystems, the ecosphere, and the Earth with its long history." He adds, "Human nature is such that with sufficient allsided maturity we cannot avoid 'identifying' ourself with all living beings, beautiful or ugly, big or small, sentient or not." By "allsided" he

[22] Shaun Huston, "Kropotkin and Spatial Social Theory: Unfolding an Anarchist Contribution," *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (October 1997), 109–130.

[23] John Clark, "The Tao of Anarchy," *Fifth Estate*, Summer 1998.

dissolution of artificial boundaries of all sorts. As John Clark demonstrates, his philosophy of social ecology is entirely consonant with bioregionalism, though Bookchin wrote very little on the subject. "There are two fundamental social ecological principles that essentially define a bioregional perspective," Clark writes. "One is the recognition of the dialectic of nature and culture, in which the larger natural world is seen as an active co-participant in the creative activities of human beings. The other is the principle of unity-in-diversity, in which the unique, determinate particularity of each part is seen as making an essential contribution to the unfolding of the developing whole."[21] Of course Bookchin was always vehemently opposed to deep ecology, which does not disagree with these principles but takes them further into the realm of a radical reformulation of human culture and society. His main concern was that the sort of world the deep ecologists wanted would dislodge human beings from the center of human society. Though he understood better than anyone the need for anarchism to be ecological, Bookchin was more interested in the overhaul of the city, its integration with the countryside, and late in life even preferred to call himself a 'municipal libertarian' rather than an anarchist. Still, all of his work consistently implies a rejection of all artificial and/or permanent boundaries as restraints on the freedom of the individual and the natural evolution of society.

A few anarchist thinkers have also explored the implications of spatial logic and spatial social theory for anarchist philosophy. Shaun Huston applies Anthony Giddens' time-space distanciation and David Harvey's time-space compression models to the work of Kropotkin and Reclus, concluding that the control of social spaces by the ruling class aids the centralization of power and the fracturing of group solidarity.

[21] John Clark, "Municipal Dreams : A Social Ecological Critique of Bookchin's Politics" (4), at raforum.info

find connotations of separating, restraining, injuring. "Border" comes from bherdh, meaning "cut." The word "fence," related to "defend," comes from gwhen*, whose original meaning was "strike" or "hurt"; it is also ancestral to "gun." On the other hand, "limit" is from Latin* limes*, "threshold," which may be a borrowing from Etruscan. But "threshold" itself is from IE ter-*, meaning "overcome, break through" (through, trans-). The Romans originally used *limes* (plural *limites*) to denote the boundaries between fields. "Frontier" comes from Latin *frons*, "front" or "forehead," also evidently not an Indo-European root. Greek used a number of different terms, mostly based on *ὅρος*, "mountain" (early Greek city-states were often hemmed in by mountains); the Indo-European root is probably er/*or*, "arise, raise, run, set in motion." It is interesting to note (though not with absolute certainty) that the 'violent' or active words are Indo-European, while the 'peaceful' ones are not – the 'frontier' invites one to cross it; the 'boundary' does not. The Indo-European languages (they used to be called 'Aryan,' before the Nazis ruined that word) are the tongues of necrophiliac, world-destroying western civilization.

The Territorial 'Instinct'

Territoriality,[2] as usually defined by ethologists, appears to be a characteristic of many animal species, though by no means all. It has little or nothing to do with taxon – some insects are territorial, some not; the same for birds, mammals, reptiles, and so on. The same is true for primates. Probably it has evolved as a response to the availability of food. Insect-eating birds are usually not territorial, since insects are almost everywhere, and not evenly distributed, stationary or concentrated in certain

[2] Indo-European **ters*, dry, as in 'dry land.' The asterisk conventionally used with IE roots indicates that they are hypothetical reconstructions; IE was never a written language.

places. Raptors usually are territorial, since they must defend a relatively large area in which food (such as rodents) is harder to find, and scarce enough that other raptors can be competition. Territories are usually but not always defended against members of one's own species. They can be 'marked' in all sorts of ways, most commonly among mammals by the deposit of scent, among birds by aggressive displays or threats that rarely become actual violence.

For human beings, and probably for a few other species, the most fundamental boundary is the ego, the sense of "I." All cultures have engendered philosophies that seek to eliminate the ego, or at least to demonstrate its ultimate unreality. It's an interesting question, though beyond our scope here, as to why these philosophies have had far more success in Asia (Zen Buddhism, for example) than in the West (medieval Christian mysticism) or why the idea is more or less irrelevant in still other cultures (sub-Saharan Africa, for instance). Probably it has a lot to do with language, which in the West tends to chop reality up into small discrete bits and isolate them into categories. Among modern radical ideologies, deep ecology has most concerned itself with this question, suggesting that we cannot hope to save the planet unless we literally identify ourselves with it.

Still, it is difficult to define any living organism without assigning some sort of boundary to it, however arbitrary. A layer of dead cells, if we are talking about anything larger than microscopic size; or at least, in Tyler Volk's words, ""Life at the smallest scales boasts a cornucopia of protective edges."[3]

Moving out just beyond the boundaries of the ego, we next encounter what is usually called "personal space," the zone surrounding our bodies into which other people should not intrude. Personal space has been the subject of many sociological and psychological studies in recent decades, and we probably

[3] Tyler Volk, *Metapatterns: Across Space, Time, and Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 51.

policing has to be developed in order to subject some classes to the domination of others.[19]

He goes on to point out that medieval guilds, and corresponding organizations in other cultures, "extend beyond the boundaries of the hamlet; they extend far and wide into the desert and to foreign cities;" but that some of these groups inevitably seek to dominate the others, and so the sovereign state evolves. (Kropotkin never denies that human beings can be competitive as well as cooperative.) For a time the kings and princes tolerated these free communes, because it was profitable to do so. At times the cities had to fight for their independence, sometimes hiring one feudal lord to use his troops against another.

In the commune, the struggle was for the conquest and defence of the liberty of the individual, for the federative principle for the right to unite and to act; whereas the States' wars had as their objective the destruction of these liberties, the submission of the individual, the annihilation of the free contract, and the uniting of men in a universal slavery to king, judge and priest — to the State.[20]

The Westphalian system had to incorporate and subjugate these cities within the state; and Kropotkin does not fail to note that state control of education has been telling us ever since that the subjugation was natural and necessary, a forward step in the evolution of human society.

As we all know, Kropotkin has been the most important of the 'classical' anarchists to today's ecologically-infused anarchist movement, thanks largely to Murray Bookchin. This greatest of all twentieth-century anarchist thinkers has little or nothing to say about boundaries as such, but his call to dismantle all forms of hierarchy and domination assumes the

[19] Peter Kropotkin, "The State: Its Historic Role," London: Freedom Press, 1946, originally published 1897, Section I.

[20] ibid., Section V.

connected to other individuals only through allegiance to the sovereign authority. Voluntary associations are tolerated only so long as they support the state's mission, or at least do not conflict with it – as Bodin put it, there must be no *imperium in imperio*. This centralizing project is bound to fail eventually because society precedes individuality: human nature is social and cooperative, and the competitiveness forced on us by the state is unnatural. It is no coincidence, according to Kropotkin, that symbiotic human society reached its zenith in the autonomous medieval city, just before the imposition of the Westphalian order. The medieval city was unconcerned with boundaries; it thrived on the exchange of goods and services across dynamic networks. More often than not, the city was walled: this naturally meant very obvious boundaries; but the walls were intended to keep the enemies of freedom out, not to imprison the inhabitants. The latter thought of their town as a *commune* – it was common property – Latin *communis*, a word best translated as "share together." The IE root is **mei-*" which generates a family of words referring to exchanges: permeate, transmute, mutual, municipal, remunerate; but also *amoeba* (a creature with no fixed boundaries) and *madness* (a state in which the usual social boundaries are transgressed). *In The State: Its Historic Role*, Kropotkin is at pains to distinguish 'the state' from society and from government (the italics are in the original):

The State idea … not only includes the existence of a power situated above society, but also of a *territorial concentration* as well as the concentration *in the hands of a few of many functions in the life of societies*. It implies some new relationships between members of society which did not exist before the formation of the State. A whole mechanism of legislation and of

understand it fairly well now. We are concerned here only with the human species, but it must be recognized that territoriality is a product of evolution, and so is hard-wired to a limited extent. Its size and whether it is switched on or off depends on the environment. It is hard-wired (perhaps in the amygdala) only in the sense that everyone has it; but its 'size' and more important, the way we view it, varies immensely from one culture to another and somewhat less so among individuals in the same culture. It is well documented that Americans, for instance, require more personal space than Europeans, who require more than Asians, and so on – the difference has to do with the average density of population in the homes and towns of those regions. It also changes over time, as documented by Ariès and Duby in their multivolume *History of Private Life*.[4] And of course it varies depending on who the other individual is – we will switch it off altogether for the right sexual partner, but expand its boundaries for someone we do not like. Everyone develops subconscious strategies for dealing with situations in which our space is invaded, but we can't do anything about it, as on a crowded subway – avoiding eye contact, for example.

The expansion of personal space into personal real estate probably dates back to our pre-human ancestors, who hunted in packs that evolved over time into bands and tribes. Humans lived quite comfortably, in small numbers, for hundreds of millennia, as foragers and hunters. The mythology of nearly every culture looks back with nostalgia on that tranquil Eden.[5] As chimpanzees still do, the tribe had a shared mental picture of a vague territory in which they gathered and hunted, and which now and then had to be defended against other groups of humans. But the territory moved with the group, and had no boundaries in our sense of the word. As Freya Mathews points

[4] Ariès, Philippe and Georges Duby, eds., A History of Private Life (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 5 vol.

[5] Colin Tudge, *The Time before History: 5 Million Years of Human Impact* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 264ff.

out, so-called 'primitive' people like Australian aborigines and African San (Bushmen) look at the world as a tangle of lines, carrying them off in various directions towards game, or water, or sacred places. Pastoral and, later, agricultural people saw the world as a circular territory, radiating out from where they happen to live.[6]

Since most studies of human territoriality have come from sociologists and biologists, we have been taught to understand that it is an instinct linked to aggression and shared with other animals, and is socially or environmentally constructed only in a peripheral way. Robert Sack's *Human Territoriality*, published in 1986, is a minority opinion, but probably closer to the truth. In humans it is not always expressed as aggression, and it serves purposes that would be meaningless to other creatures. "Territoriality in humans is best understood," he writes, "as a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area; and, as a strategy, territoriality can be turned on and off."[7] Sacks is a geographer, and concerned with the ways in which people manage land, physical territory. He demonstrates clearly that a group's sense of territory can be altered sharply by contact with very different groups (the Chippewa and the Europeans are his prime example), or by stresses within the group, as well as by climate change, economic issues, and even religion – one reason that the bishops of Rome became the all-powerful Popes, he says, was their physical possession of the tomb of St Peter.[8]

It is impossible to conceive of any human relationship that does not have a spatial component (or indeed, of anything at all that does not have a spatial component). Indeed there is a relatively new field, spatial logic, that seeks to understand how

[6] Freya Mathews, "The Soul of Things," *Terra Nova*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Fall 1996), 59.

[7] Robert Sack, Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1–2.

[8] ibid., 93.

inexorable evolution of the planet. Both understood that Darwin's revolutionary theory had been hijacked by the (for want of a better word) Establishment. Yes, Reclus wrote, might does make right: but

When the miserable and disinherited of the earth shall unite in their own interest, trade with trade, nation with nation, race with race; when they shall fully awake to their sufferings and their purpose, doubt not that an occasion will assuredly present itself for the employment of their might in the service of right; and powerful as may be the Master of those days, he will be weak before the starving masses leagued against him. To the great evolution now taking place will succeed the long expected, the great revolution.[18]

The absurdity of Europe's political boundaries was a favorite target of Reclus. He looked at geography as both synchronic and diachronic: the relationships between people, and between peoples and their environments, change constantly across space and time. Precise boundaries are thus outdated almost as soon as they are drawn. Reclus describes human society in terms that foreshadow modern systems theory: social equilibrium is dynamic, maintained by the reciprocity between society's needs and individual initiative. Society is an 'open system' (in the theory's terminology), and open systems exchange matter and energy with their environment and with other systems – hence their boundaries are arbitrary, assigned by the observer for convenience of description. Geography for Reclus meant human geography, and human society meant evolution towards revolution.

Reclus was inevitably friendly with Peter Kropotkin: they shared the same political and scientific interests. The state, Kropotkin suggested, seeks to dissolve or override all forms of social organization so that each isolated individual is

[18] Élisée Reclus, *Evolution and Revolution*, London: W. Reeves (1891), Seventh Edition.

ished, or better yet, vandalized. Globalization fueled by capitalism has made corporations more powerful than sovereign states, and Marxism has always (at least in theory) opposed the Westphalian system. Marx argued that since the main purpose of the nation-state is to protect the interests of the ruling class, the abolition of classes would render the state superfluous.

The rise of Green political parties and of devolutionary projects in Europe has accelerated the changing perception of states and boundaries. Joschka Fischer, the German Green politician, has called for the dismantling of sovereign institutions as Europe gropes toward a post-Westphalian order. Though Fischer turned his back on the Greens' anarchist roots long ago, the fact that he reached the pinnacle of German politics as foreign minister (1998–2005) is perhaps an early sign of a tectonic shift.

And that brings us back to anarchism: always opposed to the nation-state on principle, it has never really examined the nature of the boundaries that contain the nation-state, nor formulated a coherent response to the concept.

Towards an anarchist theory of boundaries

The 'classical' anarchists – Bakunin, Godwin, Malatesta and the like – were not much concerned with the intimate link between anarchism and geography. Peter Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus were the great exceptions, and are now rightly regarded as the forerunners of an ecologically informed postmodern anarchism.[17] Both men sought to put anarchism on a scientific basis, and both recognized – a radical notion at the time! – that human society is not separate from, but intimately bound up with, the lives of all other species, and with the slow but

[17] Graham Purchase has explored this first stage of eco-anarchism in *Anarchism and Ecology* (Montréal: Black Rose, 1997).

and why a given set of entities relate to one another to form a structure that persists through time. So far, spatial logic is of interest only to theoretical mathematicians and structuralist philosophers, but some applications are envisioned for cybernetics and linguistics. Historians have begun to use the term when looking at such fluctuating entities as trade networks and the effect of increasing or decreasing urban densities on everyday life. Indeed, it has been persuasively argued that history without some form of spatial logic is little more than "heaps of fragments."[9]

Boundaries and the evolution of the nation-state

Historians usually agree that the nation-state as we define it is no more than three or four centuries old. The Treaty of Westphalia (actually a collection of related treaties), signed at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, is often identified as the 'birth certificate' of the modern state. It spelled out the meaning of sovereignty as an exclusive power over lands and peoples within boundaries recognized and respected by other sovereigns. The key word is *exclusive*: other powers were not to have any jurisdiction or authority within those boundaries. This usually meant the papacy, but the treaties extended the idea to all external powers. The sovereignty of all states was to be considered equal, regardless of size; all were to refrain from intervention in other states; and each state was to determine its own laws and form of government.[10] These principles are

[9] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The cultural logic of late capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 25.

[10] This interpretation has been questioned by some revisionist historians, who point out that the word 'sovereignty' does not occur in the treaties, and that the Holy Roman Empire still retained some judicial sovereignty over its constituent states.

clearly explained, and defended, by Harvard philosopher John Rawls in *The Law of Peoples* (1999).[11] Rawls is solidly within the classical liberal tradition, building on John Stuart Mill and standard definitions of human rights and justice. Thomas Hobbes, writing about the same time as Westphalia (though in a different context, that of the English civil war) helped to crystallize the modern state with his widely accepted definition of sovereignty, although he was somewhat dismayed to note that

kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another, that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns, upon the frontiers of their kingdoms, and continual spies upon their neighbours: which is a posture of war.[12]

The new technologies growing out of the Scientific Revolution of the late seventeenth century were instrumental in congealing the modern state. The printing press already existed, but after Westphalia it provided the propaganda and educational materials needed to persuade people – whose allegiance heretofore had been to their rulers, not their countries – of the advantages of state sovereignty. Later, advances in communications and transportation made it easier to control the people and resources contained by the borders.[13]

The question of national allegiance may seem like a side issue here, but in fact it is crucial: allegiance in the modern, Western sense of the word demands that we are loyal or obedient to an authority which is very definitely contained within precise boundaries. If, say, I am living in the fourteenth century and have sworn allegiance to the king of England, it matters very

[11] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[12] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard Classics, 1909–1914), , XIII:12.

[13] Martin van Creveld, quoted in *The Brussels Journal* in May 2006, at www.brusselsjournal.com/node/1101

preserve for all time unchanged the distribution of power and territory made in accordance with the views and exigencies of the Allies in this present juncture of affairs. It would necessarily be futile. It would be what was attempted by the Peace of Westphalia at the close of the Thirty Years' War, at the Congress of Vienna at the close of the Napoleonic Wars, by the Congress of Berlin in 1878. It would not only be futile; it would be mischievous. Change and growth are the law of life, and no generation can impose its will in regard to the growth of nations and the distribution of power upon succeeding generations.[16]

He went on to give examples of the unsettled condition of ethnic nationalities in Europe, and suggested a time limit on the guarantee. Though the idea was ignored by the diplomats, and though a specific time limit would simply have re-cast the problem in a different mold, it does indicate that at least some politicians were taking what might now be called a post-Westphalian view of boundaries.

In recent decades some philosophers and politicians on the left have begun to look at the Westphalian system as obsolete, or at least threadbare. It was obvious from the beginning that the principle of sovereignty fostered rivalry and enmity among states, rather than harmony and mutual respect. Wars continued unabated, and interventions have even increased – since World War II, often without any legal sanction or declaration of war. The United Nations – which, admittedly, has done some good in the world – accords one vote to each member state. It represents governments, not people, a flaw that will no doubt prove fatal eventually. In Europe, signatories to the Schengen agreement have made borders irrelevant. You can still see them on the map, but in the real world they are marked only by abandoned customs booths, and those are gradually being demol-

[16] Letter from Hon. Elihu Root to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, March 29, 1919, in Senate Document 41, 66th Congress, 1st session (1919).

the two had been in contention since the Treaty of Verdun in 814 and was hopelessly interwoven with people who had French surnames but spoke German, and vice-versa. The Austro-Hungarian monarchy was a huge collection of ethnic minorities, unwillingly amalgamated over the centuries by judicious Habsburg marriages and the snapping up of bits and pieces of the Ottoman empire as it disintegrated. Russia held its numerous minorities in check only by a forcible policy of Russification – a policy continued by the Soviets, and which spectacularly backfired in 1990. Poland, a proud nation with a long history, did not exist any more when the war began, having been divided up by its neighbors in 1795. And so on. Woodrow Wilson and his team at Versailles did their best to draw the boundaries of the new states along ethnic lines, but later admitted failure, citing the extremely complicated nature of the task, through time as well as across geographic space. They also made some horrendous mistakes that just compounded the problem, such as the creation of Yugoslavia. Subsequent agreements have tried, with varying success, to patch these mistakes. Take for example the 1995 Bosnian accord, which created an odd mongrel state: the 'national' boundary, which dates back to the Austrian annexation in 1878, was preserved. But within it we now have semi-autonomous and unstable Serb and Croat enclaves, when it would have made more sense to splice those enclaves into Serbia and Croatia.

The Versailles treaty was hotly contested in the US Senate, and in the end rejected, though for reasons that had nothing to do with boundaries. Elihu Root, a former secretary of state and now a senator, spotted a critical issue: would the new League of Nations ossify the borders it was creating? Root objected to the proposed Article X, which obligated members "to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the league." Such a commitment, he suggested, would

little what "England" is, or whether its boundaries change over time. The Westphalian revolution required that the sovereign to whom I owe allegiance be equated with the State; indeed, "England" was sometimes used poetically in the centuries just before and after Westphalia as a metonymy for "the monarch." The philosophers, with the exception of Josiah Royce, have largely ignored this question of loyalty or allegiance. It would be acceptable to an anarchist to define loyalty as "the identification of one's own interest with that of a group,"[14] but the modern nation-state requires us to be loyal to an abstraction, a personification of the human group as a concrete entity with defined geographic boundaries. If we are loyal to an abstraction, what that really means is that we are loyal and obedient to the dictates of whatever person or group governs that abstraction, in the mistaken belief (mistaken, but insisted upon by those governors) that these rulers *are* the abstraction in question. As anarchists we can certainly be loyal to other people, to groups, to society as a whole, without surrendering our autonomy to them. But we certainly do surrender that autonomy to an abstraction like the State (or the Church, or the Army, or even the local sports team) when we accept the notion that it is more than the sum of its parts. And what could be more servile than to concede an abstraction's right to draw boundary lines across the planet, separating us arbitrarily from other human beings?

The United States pioneered the idea of the straight-line geometric border, based on surveying techniques that (bizarrely, if you think about it) use magnetism and the position of stars rather than the actual lay of the land or ethnic considerations. The habit was formed even before the Revolution, when the proprietors of Maryland and Pennsylvania hired the astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon to discover the

[14] Herbert Aaron Bloch, *The Concept of Our Changing Loyalties* (New York, 1944), 36.

exact boundary between their colonies. The Land Ordinance of 1785 spelled out a method for surveying the Northwest Territory, "pay[ing] the utmost attention to the variation of the magnetic needle," starting at what is now the state line between Ohio and Pennsylvania:

The first line, running north and south as aforesaid, shall begin on the river Ohio, at a point that shall be found to be due north from the western termination of a line, which has been run as the southern boundary of the state of Pennsylvania [that is, the Mason-Dixon line]; and the first line, running east and west, shall begin at the same point, and shall extend throughout the whole territory.

The Ordinance goes on to define what came to be known as the township-and-range system, eventually extending all the way to the Pacific, laying down a precise grid all across the United States, ignoring the natural terrain and, more to the point, the claims of the people who already lived there. Even today's Indian reservations are defined by straight geometric lines.

Europe was not slow to pick up on the idea. Baron Haussmann's destruction of medieval Paris neighborhoods to create today's beautiful rectilinear boulevards is well known. Mark Twain, on his first visit, quickly figured out the reason:

But they will build no more barricades, they will break no more soldiers' heads with paving-stones. Louis Napoleon has taken care of all that. He is annihilating the crooked streets and building in their stead noble boulevards as straight as an arrow — avenues which a cannon ball could traverse from end to end without meeting an obstruction more irresistible than the flesh and bones of men — boulevards whose stately edifices will never afford refuges and plotting places for starving, discontented revolution breeders. Five of these great thoroughfares radiate from one ample centre — a centre which is exceedingly well adapted to the accommodation of heavy artillery. The mobs used to riot there, but they must seek another rallying-place in future.[15]

When the European imperial powers decided to clarify their competing African claims at Berlin in 1884, a similar template was imposed on that continent. New and exact boundaries were drawn, entirely ignoring ethnic and geographic realities, and most of those boundaries persist today: one of the most fundamental causes of Africa's sorrows. Needless to say, there were no Africans at the Berlin congress. One example will suffice: Nigeria, a highly artificial construct whose very name is not even African, one of the most corrupt nations on Earth. Some 250 ethnic groups, many of them hostile to one another, were thrown together in 1914 into a single polity kept more or less orderly only by British military might. Nigeria has three very large nationalities (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba), each of which could probably thrive as independent states; indeed the Igbo tried just that in 1967, resulting in the genocidal Biafran war. Another half-dozen groups are more populous than many European countries. But the international community as well as the African Union itself is committed, almost unthinkingly, to the maintenance of borders established long ago by non-Africans who most certainly did not have indigenous interests at heart. The rationale is that any change now would only generate rival claims and violence. Possibly true; but is the current status any better?

The first World War presents us with a paradigmatic border puzzler. Its causes were of course multiple, but at the core of the European balance of power envisioned by Metternich was the perpetuation of boundaries that made sense politically or dynastically but emphatically not ethnically. The German empire had been cobbled together out of many small states that often had little in common other than language, but it provided a counterbalance to France; the border between

[15] Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, XVI.