



Abdullah Öcalan

# ECOLOGY

– *The Rebellion of the Environment*



Academy of  
Democratic  
Modernity



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Abdullah Öcalan

**Ecology: The Rebellion of the Environment**

Published 2024

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ADM Edition

[www.ocalanbooks.com](http://www.ocalanbooks.com)

Compilation and editing:

Academy of Democratic Modernity

<http://democraticmodernity.com>

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## Preface

As the Academy of Democratic Modernity (ADM), we strive to spread the ideas and rich experience of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and its paradigm of Democratic Modernity. Our publication activities are intended to start discussions with activists, academics and various anti-systemic and social movements in order to move forward in our search for a radical alternative to capitalist modernity and to realise a free life. We endeavour to disseminate and discuss Abdullah Öcalan's ideas and concepts in different languages, including by producing brochures on specific themes that are important in his writings.

Alongside radical democracy and women's liberation, ecology is also a central pillar in the paradigm of democratic modernity. Öcalan speaks of daily S.O.S. signals from ecology, which make it clear that the current social problems have reached a crisis-like and chaotic scale: "Cities proliferating like a cancer, polluted air, a perforated ozone layer, rap-

idly accelerating extinction of plant and animal species, destruction of the forests, pollution and contamination of the waters, mounting piles of garbage, and unnatural population growth have driven the environment into chaos and rebellion.” For Öcalan, the ecological crisis cannot be detached from social conditions. The roots of the ecological crisis, which is intensifying parallel to the capitalist systemic crisis, should be sought at the beginning of civilisation. This is because the development of alienation between people within society as a result of domination also brings with it alienation from nature. Based on this assumption, he analyses the development of the state and power, the establishment of patriarchy, and the emergence of the first cities and classes, all within the context of the change in the relationship between humans and nature. While the human being can be understood as “nature becoming aware of itself” and thus basically the most developed part of nature, this reality is contrasted today by the idea in which humans and nature are opposed to each other, even hostile, and nature is seen only as a resource.

Through this, Öcalan develops a broad understanding of ecology. On the one hand, ecology, as “a science that analyses the relationship between society and its environment, will play a leading role when it comes to overcoming the contradiction between society and nature together with all other sciences. Environmental awareness, which has already developed in some places, will take a revolutionary leap forward through ecology understood in this way.” On the other hand, an ecological society also requires a moral change: “Ecology means friendship with nature and belief in natural religion. In this respect, ecology stands for an awakened consciousness and a renewed integration into natural organic society. (...) A social consciousness devoid of ecological consciousness will inevitably be corrupted and fall apart, as was the case with real socialism. Ecological consciousness is a fundamental ideological consciousness. It’s a bridge between philosophy and morality.”

Contrary to discourses inherent in the system, such as those of “Green Capitalism” or the “Green New Deal”, a social system that is not in harmony with nature cannot claim to be rational and moral, according to Öcalan. He sees a dialectical relationship between the chaotic state of

the capitalist social system and the catastrophic destruction of the environment. The hope of saving the environment under the capitalist system is an illusion and the fundamental contradiction with nature can only be overcome by turning away from the capitalist system. Öcalan therefore explains that the ecological question will be fundamentally resolved to the extent that the system is pushed back and a socialist social system develops, because: “Ecological society is essentially socialist society”.

For Öcalan, criticism of the existing system and theoretical analyses are not enough. He also develops alternatives and perspectives for democratic and anti-systemic forces. Since the ecological question cannot be solved by environmental movements alone, he sees it as a central task of activists to expand the many existing organisations in every respect and make them an integral part of democratic society: “This also includes building solidarity with the feminist and freedom-oriented women’s movement. Intensifying and organizing environmental consciousness is one of the most important activities of democratization. Just as we once organized intense class and national consciousness, we must now initiate impassioned campaigns to create a democratic and environmental consciousness. (...) As ecology and feminism continue to develop, all of the disparate balances within the patriarchal statist system will be further disrupted. A truly unified struggle for democracy and socialism will only be possible when women’s freedom and the environment’s liberation are targeted. Only the struggle for this sort of new and integrated social system can provide one of the most meaningful forms for coming out of the present chaos.”

Against the backdrop of the ever-advancing climate catastrophe and the necessary discussion about a proper strategy for ecological movements worldwide, Öcalan’s ideas summarised in this brochure take on a special significance. While aggressive capitalism is confronting the environment in many parts of the world - such as the targeted ecocide in Kurdistan or neo-extractivism in Latin America - Öcalan’s proposals and the visible attempt to implement them in Kurdistan may be the right recipe for a world plagued by environmental destruction. He calls on everyone to build an ecological society and defend humanity.





# 1

## Introduction

The relationship between society and nature is an area that social science is increasingly focusing on. Even though it is obvious that the environment has an influence on society, this fact has only recently become a topic of scientific research and philosophy. This interest was triggered by the recognition of the catastrophic extent to which the social system affects the environment. When we search for the source of this problem, we encounter the dominant social system, which is dangerously at odds with nature. It is becoming increasingly scientifically clear that alienation from the natural environment is the source of thousands of years of conflict within society; the more conflicts and wars within society have arisen, the more society's contradiction with nature has increased. Today's watchword is the subordination and enslavement of nature and the ruthless appropriation and exploitation of its resources.

We have to understand that the alienation from other humans that develops within society due to domination brings with it alienation from nature, and the two become intertwined. Society itself is, in its essence, an ecological phenomenon. By ecology, we mean the physical and biological nature on which the formation of society is based. The relationship between the physical and the biological formation of planet earth is further illuminated with each passing day. This is one of the areas where science has been most successful.

Humans can always re-regulate the internal order of society, because social reality is a human creation, but the same is not true of the environment. If important environmental links are broken as a result of the actions of some groups organized around the profit and capital monopoly operating above the society from which it emerged, evolutionary disasters in a chain-like reaction might expose the environment and society to mass destruction.

Let's remember that the environmental links are the result of millions of years of evolution. The general destruction of the last five thousand years, the last two hundred in particular, has broken thousands of these evolutionary links in record time. We are witnessing the beginning of a chain reaction that threatens a final breakdown. No one has any idea how to stop it. The atmospheric pollution created by carbon dioxide and

other gases will take hundreds, even thousands, of years to clean up. We are probably not yet fully aware of the devastation this has caused on the plant and animal world. It is, however, clear that, like the atmosphere, both of these worlds are steadily emitting SOS signals. The pollution of the seas and rivers, as well as desertification, hover at the edge of disaster.

Nonetheless, everything indicates that the end of the world will not occur as a result of the disruption of the natural balance but at the hands of some groups organized in networks. Of course, nature will inevitably respond, because it is alive and has an intelligence of its own and a limit to what it will endure. It will resist when the time and place are right, and when we arrive at that time and place, it will show us no mercy. We will all be held responsible for betraying the skills and values bestowed upon us. Is this not what the end of the world will look like? Without the intention to add anything to the already existing disaster scenarios; but, according to our abilities, each of us must do and say what is necessary as responsible members of society. This is our responsibility and our moral and political duty, the very reason for our existence.



2

## **On Methodology**

The science of capitalist modernity, with its positivist structure, was quite self-confident. It assumed major factual discoveries were everything. It regarded absolute truth to be a superficial knowledge of facts. It was sure that we had entered the age of infinite development. How are we to interpret its inability to see the environmental disaster under its nose? How are we to understand the fact that it was unable to address and remedy the social disasters of the last four hundred years, which exceed in sum all previous historical disasters, including, most notably, war? Let's put aside the prevention of war, which is power that has infiltrated into all the nooks and crannies of society. How do we explain the fact that science has been unable to correctly evaluate this as the case? It is clear that science, especially during the era when the dominant monopolies were at the peak of their hegemony, did not, as expected, answer these questions, because it came under the most intense ideological siege and structurally conformed in the way that best served the system. Science, whose structure, purpose, and manner are announced and organized to legitimize the system, has proven to be even less effective than religion. However, it is also clear that if science is not ideological it cannot exist. It is essential that we recognize the knowledge and science that are the ideology of a certain society and class and hence determine our positions accordingly. If ecology, as one of the newer sciences, positions itself correctly within this framework it can provide the ideal capacity for resolving not only the environmental problem but also those of social nature.

## **2.1 Basic Methods to Interpret Nature**

The first method to obtain and interpret knowledge, encountered in the depths of history, is the mythological approach. Nature is seen as animate, abundant with spirits. In the light of recent scientific insights, the mythological approach may seem less naive than once was thought. In my opinion, lifeless and static methodological approaches are far less meaningful than mythology. The mythological approach is environmentally oriented, free of notions of fatalism and determinism and conducive to living life in freedom. Its fundamental approach to life is

one of harmony with nature. Life in consonance with the environment – the forces of nature – was, thus, the basic principle kept in mind while a belief system and morality were being developed. This life principle was so deeply rooted in the minds of all human beings that it occupied a privileged place in their religious and moral traditions.

The religious perception, occupies the second longest period in the history of humanity<sup>1</sup>. The dogmatic religious perception holds that the aim of life and the path to the truth can only be found if one acts in accordance with the Word of God, transcending nature and society. One of the most unfavorable aspects of the dogmatic method is that, instead of a living, evolving conception of nature, it brought about the concept of a passive nature, a nature unable to act except under the external command of the Almighty. This concept, in turn, led to the natural acceptance of a similar mentality in the social arena. The dogmatic religious method reached its peak in the Middle Ages, especially in terms of its transcendent subjectiveness. On the other side, the positive aspect of the religious method is its improvement of society's morals. Without morality, neither socialization nor government is possible. Undoubtedly, morality is a metaphysical perception but this does not annul it or lessen its importance. Humanity without morals either will cause the end of its own species or the end of an inhabitable environment. In fact, it is the considerable decay of morality in the post-religious era that has brought the environment to the brink of disaster.

Philosophy, within its time, paved the way for a blossoming of knowledge and understanding. This is the era when the seeds of all the different philosophical branches were sown: idealism, materialism, and dialectics. Before Socrates, natural philosophy was the priority; with Socrates, social philosophy became more influential. The growth of the social question as a result of suppression and exploitation played a role in this development. (With "social question" the establishment of the city-trade-state-administrational chain of events is meant.) Furthermore,

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<sup>1</sup> There are different ways to categorize the history of human societies using different criteria. If, for example, we focus on the fundamental mode of thinking, then mythological, metaphysical, and positivist scientific ages is an important classification.

the city as a material civilization more or less forced this philosophical thought: The city itself means a break with organic society; thus, a mentality removed from nature will easily be shaped in the city. The city civilization is established on the basis of betrayal of the environment and is the root of all abstract, vulgar metaphysic and materialistic thought. Therefore, although philosophy is on the one hand a breakthrough in thinking, on the other hand it creates alienation from the environment. The sages who spread philosophy and knowledge were the intellectuals of their era - just like the 18th century European intellectuals.

The Renaissance developed its revolution in mentality on the basis of the vitality, creativity, and sacredness of nature. It was based on the assumption that everything that is can be found in nature. In the arts, the beauty of nature was much better depicted than had previously been the case, and its scientific approach expanded the limits of nature. With the human being as the basis, the task of science and the arts was to recognize and display the full reality of that human being. The modern age is the result of this shift in mentality.

Contrary to the common view, capitalist society was not the natural result of this process but has actually functioned as a distortion and played a regressive role. Western Europe emerged with the Renaissance when the way for a new era was paved through the Reformation and Enlightenment. The subjectiveness of the human being and the objectiveness of the world became the two fundamental factors in life. Hence, the dogmatic method based on the Word of God – along with morality – lost its supremacy. The underlying urge now is capitalistic exploitation, which is necessary to make profits. The terrible exploitation humanity and nature would encounter in this process demanded a radical change in society's perception. The need for profits is thus the underlying reason for the spread of the new scientific method.

This concept of scientific method has played an important role in capitalism becoming a world system. In this new approach (pioneered by Roger and Francis Bacon, and Descartes) a careful distinction is made between subject and object. While subject is the most legitimate factor of analytical thought, object is the physical element open to contempla-



tion. There is not a single value that “analytical thought” will not tamper with in the name of objectivity. Not only human labor but animate and inanimate nature as a whole can be taken possession of and put through any examination or investigation in order to gain the right to its exploitation and domination.

The history of knowledge underwent a transformation related to the history of civilization and could not escape its share of the system’s general crisis. Although intended as a tool for solving problems, science has become the key source of problems. When we look closer at ways of approaching the question of natures, we find that they are profoundly influenced by the subject-object distinction. It should be emphasized that these are not sound distinctions, or at least should only be made conditionally.

## **2.2 The Diversity of Social Nature**

A good grasp of different natures – in other words, the question of first, second, and third natures – is necessary. All nature, excluding human society, is distinguished as first nature. Human society, as second nature, no doubt represents a very important stage of natural development and has certain particularities. Rather than as a separate nature, it makes more sense to see it as a different stage of nature. The most important distinguishing characteristic of social nature is the extent of its intellectual capacity, flexibility, and ability to construct itself. First nature no doubt also has intellectual capacity, flexibility, and the ability to construct itself, but compared to the functioning of the social nature, it is very slow, rigid, and arduous.

Third nature, as a concept, refers to a state of restored harmony between first and second nature at a higher level. Achieving a synthesis of social nature with first nature at a higher level requires a revolutionary theoretical paradigm and a radical practical revolution. In particular, surpassing the capitalist world system, or capitalist modernity – the current stage of the central civilization system – would be a decisive achievement. To this end, albeit minimally, we must develop constructs of democratic civilization, take successful steps in developing the ecological and feminist characteristics of society, creating a functional art of democratic politics,

and building a democratic civil society. Third nature is not a promise of a new paradise or utopia; it is the renewed participation of human beings – whose consciousness of the natures has increased – in a grand harmony, while protecting their difference. This is not just a longing, an intention, but rather, the art of good and beautiful living that has a contemporary practical meaning.

Being wholly part of the natural environment does not only have economic or social content. Trying to understand nature is also an indispensable philosophical passion. Actually, it is a mutual passion. While nature proved its great curiosity and creative power by taking form as the human, by understanding nature humans become aware of themselves – it is thought-provoking that the Sumerians understood freedom (amargi) to mean return to the mother, i.e., to nature. There is a relationship of one that is in love and one that is loved between nature and humans – this is a great love adventure.

Ecology cannot simply be reduced to economy. It is a mentality in its own right, the return to a lost conception of animate and sacred nature. Living a life in the absence of an awareness of nature that is animated, that talks to us, that comes into being with us, that calls us into being, instead of seeing a nature that is inanimate and has lost its sacredness. A tainted land that is as black as death amounts to a life that has largely eroded. Environmental consciousness means more than addressing water and air pollution; it means being completely at one with nature, turning back from a nature divided into plots to a nature that is a whole. This would be to arrive at a democratic and socialist society. The interconnection is, in fact, this profound.

**3**

**Destruction of Nature During  
the Age of Capitalism**

The world of natural society<sup>2</sup> of, first, the women, and, with it, that of the youth and children, was destroyed and replaced by a hierarchy built on force and lies (mythology). This became the dominant form of the new society, but, simultaneously, there was another, second, deep-rooted counterrevolution: the process of alienation from nature, the process that began its destruction.

One of the most fundamental social contradictions to date is the fact that ecological society is continuously pushed back by the expansion and deepening of state society. The more the internal contradictions of a society develop, the greater its contradiction with its external environment becomes.

Domination of humans is accompanied by the domination of nature. Of course, a system that has no mercy on human beings will not hesitate to do all kinds of damage to nature. In any case, dominance and conquest have firm places within ruling-class morality. Ruling over nature is regarded as a right and honorable behavior as is ruling over humans. Natural society's animist approach to nature and the sacredness attributed to it are ignored. It is conquered as if it were enemy territory. As long as these concepts dominate the mentality of statist society, the way is paved for ongoing environmental disasters, which have already taken on colossal dimensions.

Analytical intelligence, which frequently moves away from the voice of conscience and nature, increasingly develops its contradiction to the environment in its artificial world. Exterminating animals and plants in all sorts of uncontrolled ways and pollution of the land, water, and air are normalized, as if this were the most basic right of human society. The natural environment is blunted as a dead, hopeless, and transient habitat. Once a boundless source of hope, nature is now seen as no more than a dried-up, uncomprehending, and crude agglomeration of matter. Even

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<sup>2</sup> By the term "natural society", I mean an order of human communities that began with the dissociation of the human species from the primates and existed for a long time until the emergence of hierarchical society. these communities are usually called "clans." [...] The particular significance of the clan lies in the fact that it is the first and fundamental form of human existence. This was a form of society that was free of privilege, class, and hierarchy and that knew no exploitation. We can define natural society as the spontaneous state of ecological society.

though this understanding of nature was demolished by the Renaissance, in the capitalist system the exploitation and abuse of society is supplemented by the exploitation and abuse of nature. Capitalism wants to complete the conquest of all of humanity with the conquest of nature. It sees it as both a right and an accomplishment to exploit nature at its whim.

Social nature did not cause similar disasters over the course of its approximately three million years of existence. Society and the environmental system nurtured one another. The ecological crises that erupted during the short history of civilization are the result of its destructive profit-oriented essence. Not only capitalist profit but all of the extreme accumulation of value has gone hand in hand with the destruction of both natures in all civilization phases. The structures of capitalist modernity based on unlimited monopolist profit took on such proportions that the equilibrium between society and the environment could not endure.

The methods developed to exploit human beings were combined with the exploitation of nature. Domination of humans coalesced with the domination of nature, launching the most intense attack of all time against nature. Capitalism grasped the exploitation of nature as its revolutionary role, without wasting a moment considering the sacredness, vitality, or equilibrium of nature. Capitalism totally discarded the perception of nature's sacredness, which had been present in all previous mentalities, even if in a distorted form. This system arrogated to itself the right to do what it likes with the nature, without fear or anxiety.

As a result, the social crisis merged with the environmental crisis. Just as the system's essence carried the social crisis to the chaos interval, now the environmental disasters are leading to SOS signals warning of dangers to life itself. Cities proliferating like a cancer, polluted air, a perforated ozone layer, rapidly accelerating extinction of plant and animal species, destruction of the forests, pollution and contamination of the waters, mounting piles of garbage, and unnatural population growth have driven the environment into chaos and rebellion. No calculation has been made as to how many cities, people, factories, and vehicles or how much synthetic material and polluted air and water our planet can tolerate; instead there is a reckless pursuit of maximum profit. The

strategic role of industrialism, with fossil-fuel based industrialization and modernism as the main factors, were thus decisive. Environmental disasters turn into social disasters and social disasters then exacerbate the environmental disasters in a reciprocating chain reaction.

One of the main problems caused by the civilization system is the destruction of the critical equilibrium of society and the environment. The constant destruction and burning down of villages and towns, the murder of millions of people, and the subjugation of the vast majority of the society under a system of exploitation cannot be described as the natural necessity of the system of social nature and can only be regarded as an anomaly. The five-thousand-year history of civilization is also the history of the development and growth of this anomaly. The eruption of ecological disasters during the age of capitalism – seen as the most advanced age of civilization – is irrefutable proof of this anomaly.

The initial construction period of civilized societies<sup>3</sup> reveals in nearly all of them a significant material culture. Thus, this society, which has established itself in cities and has organized itself as classed-state, presents its grand accumulation as material culture. In reality, its grandeur signifies a distorted mentality, a harmful metaphysical framework, alienation from nature, subjugation of nature, and the pretense that it possesses a creativity that can entirely be separated from nature. This entails the distortion of ideological culture<sup>4</sup> and relegating it to a position of secondary importance.

The existence of civilized society necessarily means a break with the environment. It is immaterial how we define the environment and ecology (whether we describe it in broad terms as “the unity of nature and society” or, in the most scientific terms, as “the integration of nature and society”), but a healthy environment and ecology needs a society that transcends the fundamental elements that constitute civilization: class, city, and state.

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<sup>3</sup> We can define civilized society as the society ruled by an organization called the state, which is based on urbanization and class division.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Ideological culture’ refers to the function, meaning, and mentality of the institutions and structures, whereas ‘material culture’ refers to the visual aspects of the function and meaning of these institutions.

I am not pleading for a vulgar elimination. The new society can only be achieved if material and ideological cultures are balanced and consistent. The synthesis of society's internally balanced and harmonious material and ideological culture with that of nature will result in free nature (or, as Murray Bookchin puts it in 'The Ecology of Freedom', "third nature"). This will also serve as a means to overcome the contradiction of civilized society's imbalance between nature and society.

### **3.1 The Destructive Dimension of Industrialism**

Industrialism, as a monopolistic ideology and tool, is one of society's fundamental problems. It should be deeply questioned, and the danger it gives rise to is sufficient reason to do so. If this monster continues to grow and gets out of control, it will make any examination and possible safe-guards "too little, too late." If we are to prevent society from ceasing to be itself and becoming a virtual society, now is the time to take this monster from the hands of monopolies, first to make it harmless, and then to make it a friend of society. As we struggle against industrialism, there is a need to distinguish between monopoly's ideological approach to industrial technology and the way it is currently used and a form of industrial technology that is in harmony with the general interests of society. This is the most important aspect of any scientific work done and of any ideological struggle.

Contrary to popular belief, industrialism has an ideological, militaristic, and class-based character, with science and technology as the material form of its ideology. In fact, it represents the most dangerous dimensions of existing science and technology. The industrial monster did not appear entirely of its own volition. Let's remember that when the English bourgeoisie embarked on its historical imperialist project on the island, on continental Europe, and around the world, it was this class that organized most quickly to make the most comprehensive possible use of industrialism. Later industrialism became a common weapon of the bourgeoisie in every country. This is evident given that bourgeois domination around the world materialized at the point where industrial development – part of the triad of finance, trade, and indus-

try – marked the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Also, by declaring non-capitalist society reactionary and entering a strategic alliance with the industrial bourgeoisie, the real socialist movement unconsciously but completely contradicted its own goals, leading to a more tragic outcome than that experienced by any other movement that has objectively fallen into betrayal.

Clearly the problem of industrialism is both part of the ecological problem and its essential source. Although the concept of ecology encompasses environmental science, it is essentially a scientific analysis of the tight relationship between social development and its environment. Because, like industrialism, the ecological problems were not created by society but are the latest feat of the monopolies of the civilization - a comprehensive problem that encompasses history and is now number one on the agenda of the world - and society. Perhaps no other problem has been either as severe or as important for revealing the true face of profit and capital systems (organized networks) and putting them on the humanity's agenda as the ecological problem.

This may be better understood if we look at the disintegration of a society which has no value, that has not yet been commodified. The mental acceptance of the society's commodification is to abandon being human. And this is beyond barbarity. Beneath the societal harm sits the interest rate, of which trade is the basis and of which, in turn, the commodity is the basis. There is a strong causal link between trade and ecological disaster. When the economy stopped being social tissue it marked the beginning of a fundamental break with nature.

The result of the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath is that the natural environment, the indispensable source of society's life, blew a fuse. As it turns out, it is not nature that is unreasonable but the system. But this realization arrived too late. The environment is sending out a nonstop SOS signal. It is literally crying out that it is unable to bear the current social system. In this respect too, the crisis of the system seems to have entered an interval of chaos. But unless the meaning and structure of ecological society is understood in the discussion about ecology, there will be no way out of this chaos.



The Industrial Revolution, which was as important as the agricultural revolution, has carried on with ups and downs, experiencing a qualitative leap in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, based on thousands of years of accumulation.

It is impossible to guess where, when, and how it will stop or be stopped. This revolution has a characteristic akin to analytical reason; it is, in fact, the product of this reason. And it is under the absolute domination of capital. There is no doubt, however, capital itself is not the creator of most industrial tools. However, capital has focused on turning them into profitable tools and taken possession of those it considers essential. The problem is not with industry itself but with the way it is used. Industry is like the nuclear option. When it is used by the monopolies it can be an unparalleled threat to life, portending both ecological disaster and war. Indeed, its use for making profit has become increasingly evident, accelerating environmental destruction. There is consensus that the current state of the environment not only threatens society but all life on earth.

I must emphatically stress that holding industry solely responsible for this would be an aberration. On its own, industry is neutral. An industry in harmony with society's existence can play a decisive role in developing the world into a third nature, not only for humans but for all lifeforms, but when industry is controlled by capital and is profit-driven, it can make the world hell for all of humanity except a handful of monopolists.

Furthermore the drive for profit and capital do not allow for industry to unite with the soil and agriculture and link them together by a friendly and symbiotic relationship but instead piles up enormous contradictions and creates hostility between them. The class, ethnic, national, and ideological contradictions within society may lead to conflict and war, but they are not impossible to resolve. They are constructed by the human hand and they can be dismantled by the human hand. However, humans cannot keep the conflict between industry, and the soil and agriculture under control, because industry is the tool of capital. The soil and agriculture arose ecologically over millions of years. If they degenerate they cannot be reconstructed by the human hand. Just as manufac-

turing soil is impossible, agricultural products or other living beings, including plants, are not likely to be created by humans at this point.

Indeed, industrialism shot agriculture in the heart. Agriculture, a necessity if human society is to exist, faces rampant destruction at the hands of industry. This sacred activity, which has nurtured humanity for the past fifteen thousand years, was left adrift, and preparations are now being made to turn it over to industrial domination. Humanity will, and has even begun to, experience its worst counterrevolution in the agricultural area. The soil and agriculture are not just any mode of production or relationship; they are inseparable existential aspects of society that cannot to be tampered with. Human society is primarily built on the basis of the soil and agriculture. Detaching it from this space and production would be a huge blow to its existence.

Land, air, sea, and space traffic have already reached disastrous levels. Industry constantly consumes fossil fuels, poisoning the environment and undermining the climate. The payoff for these disasters is a mere two hundred years of profit accumulation. Is this accumulation worth all the destruction, which is far greater than the sum of the destruction rendered in all of history's wars, with the loss of lives greater than the sum of total of lives previously lost to human violence, natural disasters, and all other causes?

Additionally, we are seeing the cancerous growth of the cities. This growth is one of the best examples of a social development that, from a sociological point of view, has nothing to do with the city as such. It is a process whereby the cities simultaneously turn into villages and proliferate beyond what is intended, thereby ceasing to even be cities. The chaos is even more intense in the cities, where society has been completely transformed into a commodity. There is no value left that cannot be bought or sold. Sacredness, history, culture, nature everything is being turned into a commodity. This reality is the development of social cancer. The actual disaster is the fact that the relationship between the society and nature, which is an ecological phenomenon, is becoming divided by a deep gulf. If this gulf isn't closed immediately, today's society will go the way of the dinosaurs of yore.

## 4

# **Democratic Modernity as an Alternative System to Capitalism**

As is already clear from this short description, the relationship between the chaos experienced by the capitalist social system and the environmental disaster is dialectical. Fundamental contradictions with nature can only be overcome by breaking with the system. This issue cannot be resolved by environmental movements alone, due to the nature of the contradiction.

The rationality or morality of a social system that does not integrate us into nature cannot be defended. This is why the system that most put humans in contradiction with the natural environment has been transcended rationally and morally. The foremost conclusion to be drawn is that the human species cannot live in an arbitrary way but can only sustain itself if it adheres to the requirements of this evolutionary chain. Science now shows us that the integral essence of evolution in nature is based on the mutual dependence of the species to a far greater degree than we previously assumed. As this mutual dependence is undermined, great ruptures will occur in the evolutionary links.

The basic programmatic position in the economic realm should include the transition from an economy based on commodification and profits to an economy rooted in use value and sharing. This is the political economy of socialism, and the economic principles of the program must be based on this economic policy. Once this economic policy is implemented, unemployment, poverty in the midst of abundance, hunger alongside overproduction, and environmental destruction for profit will cease to be fate.

#### **4.1 Eco-Industry and Eco-communities**

The economy finds its true meaning in democratic modernity. It denotes a meaningful, systematic structure that produces both use value as basic needs of the ground floor (most important characteristic: the satisfaction of basic needs) and exchange value (ratio for exchange of goods) as a real market economy. In democratic modernity, economy ceases to be an area of speculation for profit. Instead, how and with what methods basic needs can be most effectively satisfied without leading to class division or damaging the environment is clarified. The economy regains its true meaning as an area of social action. It acquires meaning as a

fundamental form of activity that is both the basis for and consequence of moral and political society. The basis of the economic and industrial dimension of democratic modernity is ecological.

Industry has two determinants: the ecological and the satisfaction of basic needs and must not act outside of these parameters. This will allow for the emergence of eco-industry. An industry that is not ecological is also not economic. An industry that has lost its connection to ecology is nothing but a mechanized monster that constantly consumes and destroys its environment. As a result, eco-industry must be a fundamental principle to which all economic activities adhere. Only then can economic activity find its real meaning, making it possible to eliminate unemployment, over- and under-production, more and less developed countries and regions, the rural-urban contrast, the gap between the classes, and the social basis for economic depressions and wars.

Instead of a relationship where the city and the village, and agriculture, crafts, and industry nurtured one another, a relationship where they tended to eliminate each other came into being. This is yet another serious consequence of the law of maximum profit. While agrarian-village society has been brought to the brink of destruction, the city and industry began a period of cancerous growth.

Not only would the system of democratic modernity not allow industrialism and urbanization to swallow the village and agriculture, it would also give rise to a city and industry that are viable. The mechanism for this can be found in the totality of the fundamental dimensions of democratic modernity. In their economic activities, all communities would treat the ecological and industrial elements holistically and in connection with the moral and political dimensions, which are all inseparably linked. Nothing would be left to the ripping claws of individualism and monopolism. Eco-economy and eco-industry would be taken into consideration in all social activity. Projects designed on this basis to repair the environment and revitalize agriculture, as well as to transform the village into a living area with an extremely healthy environment, would have the potential to eliminate all unemployment and poverty.

Eco-industry is one of the most fundamental dimensions of this rev-

olution. Therefore, the only way out of this contradiction is to build a functioning economy of eco-communities. Thousands of eco-communities could, depending on circumstances, organize themselves into an economic unit. Agricultural land, no longer unified, having been broken up into family plots, needs to be reorganized in keeping with the principle of eco-industry – this is a problem that has long been calling for a solution. The formation of eco-communities in agriculture is one of the most fundamental economic principles of democratic modernity.

In this context, agricultural production in the manner of farms, a remnant of serfdom and slavery, has also come to an end. Eco-communities formed by creating agricultural units on an ecological scale are also the basis of village modernity. The village, at least the modern village, could regain its existence as an eco-community in the form of economic units on an ecologically sound scale. Similar eco-communities could also be formed in the cities. In urban planning, an ecologically oriented economy will be part of the whole.

It may sound as if we are talking about a socialist planned economy, but the model we are talking about is different from and has nothing to do with centralized planning, a command economy, or the barbaric, profit-oriented, and non-economic so-called economic enterprises. This model is a structure within which the local moral and political society<sup>5</sup> makes its decisions and determines its actions. There is always, of course, a need for coordination that encompasses national, regional, and even international conditions. This necessity does not, however, remove the discretion to make decisions and take action from the local community.

## **4.2 The Return to Social Ecology**

The problem of social ecology begins with civilization. In a way, natural society is an ecological society. The power that curtails society from within also curtails any meaningful bond with nature. Without the cur-

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<sup>5</sup> Moral and political society is the fundamental aspect of human society that must be continuously sought. It develops in harmony with the democratic civilization system. A functioning moral and political fabric and organs is the most decisive dynamic not only for freeing society but to keep it free. We could refer to morality as the institutionalized and traditional state of freedom, politics, and democracy.

tailment from within, no extraordinary ecological problems would have arisen. The aberration is the loss of meaningfulness in civilized society, a meaningfulness that is normally inherent in all natural processes. The new situation is similar that of a baby that has been weaned. The enchantment of emotional intelligence is gradually wiped away.

At one time, I thought that the moment for village relationships had come and gone. Today, I have no doubt that the ideal life for humanity can only be sustained in the villages that are in harmony with the ecology – not in the city structures of modernity. The only way that cities can become fit for human dwelling is to transform them into ecological villages. I reject the insult, from the perspective of modernity, of being “backward” because progressiveness and backwardness are just ideological judgments. I not only think that modernity is backward, but I also believe that a profound analysis of capitalist modernity’s mentality (which I view as an enemy of humanity) will lead us back to the fundamentals of humanity. When we rid ourselves of modernity’s hellish shackles, namely profiteering, industrialism and the nation-state, we will be able to live a meaningful life again. The city – that has opened its doors to the life of profit, the capture of the human being in an iron cage and the industrial monsters that are the murderers of life – is an even more meaningless copy of the old “Babylon with seventy two languages.” I have no doubt that the liberation of humanity lies in the collapse of the cancerous structure of this kind of urbanism. And I do believe that I was able to make the grand return to freedom.

The defining feature of this phase is the beginning of a break from state-oriented life in general and from modern capitalist life in particular. I am not, however, reverting to “wildlife.” I won’t be going back to the times of ten thousand years ago. Nonetheless, it is certain that some of the fundamental values of humanity are secreted away in those very years. The real liberation and freedom of human beings is not possible unless the humanity that marked that period, which was cut short by tyranny, is integrated with the present level of science and technology.

The rupture with civilization and state-oriented life is not a regression. On the contrary, an end to the deadly rupture from nature and

surrendering the overblown power-rooted personality based on blood and lies could offer us the opportunity to recover our health at the most fundamental level. This is about turning away from a diseased society toward a healthy society and about the departure from an absurdly urbanized society - which is in a way cancerous, completely alienated from nature, and a suffocating weight upon ecological society. It is also about turning away from a thoroughly authoritarian and totalitarian statist society toward a communal, democratic, free, and egalitarian society. Ending and eliminating the links in a chain that led from hunter culture and the slaughter of animals to civilization's massacre of human beings, bringing an end to capitalism, which leads to the destruction of nature could push the door open the tiniest bit for the development of a new humanity. A moral and political personality that cultivates friendship with animals and is at peace with nature is based on a balance of power with women, is peaceful, free, and equal, and provides a life full of love, putting an end to the power of science and technology being the plaything of rulers and wars.



**5**

**Revolutionary Understanding  
of Ecology**

Ecology stands for an awakened consciousness and a renewed integration into natural organic society. The practical problems of an ecological way of life are already on the agenda. One of the tasks facing us is to deepen the already existing organizations that are working to stop natural environmental disasters in all respects and make them an integral part of democratic society, as well as to build solidarity with the feminist and freedom-oriented women's movement. Intensifying and organizing environmental consciousness is one of the most important activities of democratization. Just as we once organized intense class and national consciousness, we must now initiate impassioned campaigns to create a democratic and environmental consciousness.

With the development of environmental science, consciousness develops, and as consciousness develops so does the movement. It is the area where the civil society movement is broadest. It also attracts both real socialists and anarchists. It is the movement where the opposition to the system is most felt. Because it affects the whole community, participation has attained a transnational and cross-class character. Here too the impact of liberal ideological hegemony on the movement can be clearly seen. As with all social issues, liberalism ignores the structural core of the problem in the ecological area and tries to shift the responsibility onto technology, fossil fuels, and consumer society. But all these are side effects that are the product of the system (or lack thereof) of modernity.

Therefore, the ecological movement urgently needs ideological clarity. It needs to shift its organization and activism out of narrow city alleys and into the whole of society, in particular into the agrarian-village communities in the rural areas. Ecology is the fundamental guide to action for the rural areas, agrarian-village communities, all nomads, the unemployed, and women. An ecological movement is one of the indispensable components of the new society we hope to build.

We can also see that there is a major contradiction between the level of science and technology and the living standard of the overwhelming majority of people. This situation is the result of the interests of a minority who hold complete discretionary power over science and technology. It is essential that we recognize the knowledge and science that

are the ideology of a certain society and class and hence determine our positions accordingly. If ecology positions itself correctly within this framework it can provide the ideal capacity for resolving not only the environmental problem but also those of social nature. In a democratic and freedom-oriented social system, science and technology would play an ecologically positive role. Ecology is itself a science. It investigates society's relationship with the environment. Even though it is new, it will play a leading role, increasingly intertwined with all other sciences, in overcoming the society-nature conflict. The limited development of environmental consciousness will make a revolutionary leap with such an understanding of ecology.

There has to be an adequate and optimal connection between a political organization and its practice and the democratically, communally, and ecologically oriented society. In the face of this period of chaos, there is a need to concretely embody these general approaches. Groups that claim to struggle against industrialism as humanists (philanthropists) independent of social and class issues cannot be expected to produce anything relevant. These groups cannot avoid coming into conflict with their own goals and ultimately rendering a service to industrialism as a monopoly.

An ecological society requires a moral transformation. The anti-morality of capitalism can only be overcome by an ecological approach. The relationship between morality and conscience demands an empathetic and sympathetic spirituality. This, however, is only meaningful if equipped with a sound ecological approach.

A social consciousness devoid of ecological consciousness will inevitably be corrupted and fall apart, as was the case with real socialism. Ecological consciousness is a fundamental ideological consciousness. It's a bridge between philosophy and morality. The policy that will rescue us from the contemporary crisis must be ecological if it is to lead to a favorable social system. As with women's freedom, the patriarchal statist understanding of power plays a fundamental role in the long-standing neglect of unresolved ecological problems and an error-ridden life. As ecology and feminism continue to develop, all of the

disparate balances within the patriarchal statist system will be further disrupted. A truly unified struggle for democracy and socialism will only be possible when women's freedom and the environment's liberation are targeted. Only the struggle for this sort of new and integrated social system can provide one of the most meaningful forms for coming out of the present chaos.

To conclude, ecological society is essentially socialist society. All the talk about ecological equilibrium and ecological society only begins to make sense with the transition from the society that is alienated from nature and the environment and permeated by power since the onset of civilization to a socialist society. The liberation of the environment under the capitalist system is an illusion. This system destroys ecological equilibrium to an unprecedented extent. The environmental question will be radically solved to the degree that the current system becomes ineffective and a socialist society system develops. This does not mean that nothing can be done for the environment right now. On the contrary, this emphasizes the necessity to wage the struggle for the environment intertwined with the struggle for a general social transformation in order to more actively advance the environmental struggle.

**This brochure is compiled from “Beyond State, Power and Violence” and “Manifesto for a Democratic Civilisation”, volumes I and III.**

## **On the Author**

Abdullah Öcalan, born in 1949, studied political sciences in Ankara. He actively led the Kurdish liberation struggle as the head of the PKK from its foundation in 1978 until his abduction on 15 February 1999. He is regarded as a leading strategist and one of the most important political representatives of the Kurdish people.

Under conditions of isolation on İmralı Island Prison, off the coast of Turkey, Öcalan has written more than ten books, which have revolutionised Kurdish politics. Several times he initiated unilateral cease-fires of the guerilla and presented constructive proposals for a political solution to the Kurdish issue. The so-called “peace process” started in 2009 when the Turkish state responded to Öcalan’s call to resolve the Kurdish issue politically. This process broke down in April 2015, when the Turkish state unilaterally terminated the talks and returned to a policy of annihilation and denial.

Since 27 July 2011, Öcalan has been held again in almost total isolation at Imrali Island Prison. Since 5 April 2015, the whole prison has been completely cut off from the rest of the outside world.

## **About the Academy of Democratic Modernity**

As the Academy of Democratic Modernity, we strive to spread the ideas and rich experience of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and its paradigm of Democratic Modernity. Our publication activities are intended to start discussions with activists, academics and various anti-systemic and social movements in order to move forward in our search for a radical alternative to capitalist modernity and to realise a free life. Through our educational work, we want to create a new understanding of democratic politics, social enlightenment and a new political-moral consciousness. Some dimensions of social issues we address are sociology of freedom, weaving together lines of resistance, democratic autonomy, women's liberation, youth autonomy, social ecology, communal economy and art & culture. Through the development of platforms and networks, we want to contribute to the strengthening of the international exchange of experiences and interweave existing struggles, in line with the proposal of World Democratic Confederationalism. To overcome capitalist modernity, concrete local and global institutional alternatives are needed. If we succeed in expanding democratic politics in everyday life - through alliances, councils, communes, cooperatives, academies - the huge political potential of society will unfold and be used to solve social problems. In this sense, we see our activities as a contribution to the unfolding of Democratic Modernity and Democratic Socialism.

Let us work together to bring our visions and utopias to life. Another world is not only possible - given the world situation, it is sorely needed. Let's start building our future together in the present, waiting would be madness.

More information in other languages can be found here:

<https://democraticmodernity.com>



## **Publications by Abdullah Öcalan**

### **Books**

*Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question* (1999)

*Prison Writings I: The Roots of Civilisation* (2007)

*Prison Writings II: The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century* (2011)

*Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations* (2012)

*Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume I)* (2015)

*Capitalism: The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume II)* (2017)

*Sociology of Freedom (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume III)* (2020)

*Beyond State, Power and Violence* (2023)

### **Upcoming and Untranslated**

*Ortadoğu'da Uygarlık Krizi ve Demokratik Uygarlık Çözümü (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume IV)* (Turkish 2010)

*Kürt Sorunu ve Demokratik Ulus Çözümü (Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume V)* (Turkish 2012)

### **Brochures**

*War and Peace in Kurdistan* (2008)

*Democratic Confederalism* (2011)

*Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution* (2013)

*Democratic Nation* (2016)

*The Resistance of Culture* (2023)

### **More information and translations in other languages:**

[www.ocalan-books.com](http://www.ocalan-books.com)

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“Ecology stands for an awakened consciousness and a renewed integration into natural organic society. The practical problems of an ecological way of life are already on the agenda. One of the tasks facing us is to deepen the already existing organizations that are working to stop natural environmental disasters in all respects and make them an integral part of democratic society, as well as to build solidarity with the feminist and freedom-oriented women’s movement. Intensifying and organizing environmental consciousness is one of the most important activities of democratization.

Just as we once organized intense class and national consciousness, we must now initiate impassioned campaigns to create a democratic and environmental consciousness.”

*Abdullah Öcalan*