



Response to Gunderson and Folke. 2009. “Lumpy Information”

## **Culture Against Society—Again and Again**

*Wayne B. Tyson*

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Seeing that Gunderson and Folke (2009) have taken the first steps out onto the limb of speculation about our collective future, I will venture perhaps even further in the hope that the *Ecology and Society* branch is sufficiently resilient to resonate rather than repulse a rather brash argument about the roots of the fix we are in.

Gunderson and Folke (2009) write convincingly in their summary of the present state of ecology and society, but some of their points deserve special attention.

When they speak of “pathologic activities,” it may be useful, even critical to our depth of understanding, to recognize that culture itself is demonstrably a societal pathology.

In the beginning, *Homo sapiens* was a social animal. That is, cooperation was its primary key to survival. Early humans were highly adaptive, i.e., they were able to be resilient in the face of changes in their environment, such as being able and willing to eat almost anything, dead or alive. However, culture and its codifications undercut cooperation in favor of hierarchies that increasingly added up to kingdoms based on primogeniture in place of shifting dominance according to merit.

As to what we should now do about the consequences of the “progress” of the last 10 millennia or so, may I suggest that our “adaptive capacity” is inherent in the social, i.e., cooperative, nature of society but is suppressed by a controlling/competitive culture? Might it not follow that moving toward a more social rather than a more cultural form of organization is an alternative worth trying?

*Responses to this article can be read online at:*  
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/resp1/responses/>

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### **LITERATURE CITED**

**Gunderson, L., and C. Folke.** 2009. Lumpy information. *Ecology and Society* 14(1): 51. [online] URL:  
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss1/art51/>.