

## **ONE SCHOLASTIC APPROACH: DOES PROGRESS REQUIRE THE CONQUEST OF NATURE?**

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This paper will present an analysis of Marxist perspectives on economic ecology. Of course, there are many different approaches to the field. The aim here is not to diminish other standpoints, however, it is advocated that the work of Karl Marx have become increasingly applicable within contemporary society. Marxist perspectives focus explicitly on change, which characterises well economies and societies of the globalizing era. Furthermore, Marxism does not just help to raise threatening issues, it enables to offer possible solutions. This paper goes back to the early work of Marx, and argues that concepts such as irreparable rift and social metabolism provide important tools for not only examining, but potentially, addressing environmental problems.

Today, we are facing a planetary environmental emergency regarding climate change, global freshwater use, loss of biodiversity, ocean acidification, ozone depletion, chemical pollution, etc. From this starting point it is argued that this catastrophe has its roots in the capitalist economic system. The expansion of the capitalist system is the cause of social exclusion, poverty, war and environmental degradation. This is happening through globalisation and imperialism, with the support of both repressive states and transnational structures.

It is becoming imperative that action is taken to curtail these problems. Questions must now be answered, such as: is it possible to create a new "nature/climate capitalism"; so the "bad" would be turned to "good", by using the same methods within the same technology framework?

In the Marxist view, capitalism is a passing historic system. Conflict, embedded in capitalist economy, will eventually and inevitably lead to social change. Human society is based on creative interaction between work and human-natural environment. What distinguishes people from animals is the skill to adapt with different natural environments by creating their own social environment. People plan their activities and organise themselves into groups which create culture, wherein they capture their experiences. A person actively shapes the world in which he lives, while at the same time, the world shapes them in return.

One of Marx's ecological contributions lays in the theory of metabolic rift. Building on the work of Justus von Liebig, Marx argued that in shipping food and fibre hundreds and thousands of miles to the new urban centers of industrial production, where population was increasingly concentrated, capital ended up robbing the soil of its nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which instead of being returned to the earth created pollution in the cities. This was named "Raubbau" or the robbery system.

This robbery system took the form of "an irreparable rift" within capitalist society in the metabolism between humanity and the earth—"a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself"—requiring its "systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production." Marx suggested that in the industrialization of agriculture, the true nature of "capitalist production" was revealed, which can only develop by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.

The pressing environmental issues facing all populated areas constitute a practical reason to take ecological Marxism seriously. There is a price to pay for fast technological development and for overall products of globalization. The latest rapid and sustained growth has led to unparalleled environmental problems. Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into a natural environment that causes instability, disorder, harm and discomfort to the ecosystem. Ecological Marxism's emphasis on ecological crisis provides a way to solve environmental problems.

This paper will elaborate on the following idea: let's propose creating an ecological civilization with an aim towards harmonious relationship between citizens and nature. The primary goal should be to form an energy- and resource-efficient and environment-friendly structure of industries, patterns of growth and modes of consumption. In principle, this is consistent with the ecological civilization and should be regarded as an important political reason to accept the concepts of ecological Marxism.

Ideas such as criticizing capitalism, caring for the poor, defending justice, and pursuing the common good, characterize Marxism. Besides preserving nature, today is claimed to protect ecological rights of individuals, families, communities, and nations, and defend ecological equality and ecological justice. Struggle for the previous supports Marx's arguments. In addition, Marx's ideology supports contemporary goals. Let me conclude with a thought, which Professor John Bellamy Foster uses to begin his millennium book: Progress does not require the conquest of nature.

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