Environmental Politics: Analyses and Alternatives
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Writing about the relative neglect of Volumes Two and Three of *Capital* within the socialist movement of her day, Rosa Luxemburg observed that Marx's critique of capital and his contribution to social science as a whole constituted one 'titanic whole' with an 'immeasurable field of application'. It propelled him far beyond the immediate needs of the class struggle (exemplified by the theory of exploitation in Volume I), and caused him to explore other aspects of capitalism in Volumes II and III, such as the reproduction schemes, competition between capitals, the distribution of surplus value, etc. – issues that seemed to transcend the most pressing practical struggles of the social movement. Yet, history and the development of the movement, Luxemburg contended, would lead to renewed appreciation of Marx's intellectual corpus: 'Only in proportion as our movement progresses and demands the solution of new practical problems, do we dip once more into the treasury of Marx's thought in order to extract therefrom and to utilize new fragments of his doctrine.'[1]

Subsequent developments seem to have borne out the truth of Luxemburg's observation. Our understanding of Marx's work has been transformed again and again, partly as a result of the publication of 'new fragments of his doctrine', partly because history and the progress of the movement has demanded 'the solution of new practical problems', leading us to 'dip once more into the treasury of Marx's thought'. Examples of this abound, and mark the terrain of Marxist studies during most of the twentieth century: in relation to alienation, the state, the labour process, and many other areas. More recently, Marx's numerous discussions of globalisation, though still not systematically analysed, have forced even bourgeois scholars to acknowledge his prescient insights. It is no doubt true, as Weber once remarked, that Marx is not a car that can be driven anywhere. But it is no less true that his explorations into the human condition and human history were so great – so 'immeasurable' in their application as Luxemburg said – that he mapped out a much larger terrain than we have yet perceived or have had reason to make use of. Marx's work was not confined simply to the critique of capital (though that was always his central object), but embraced, to the

[1] Luxemburg 1970, p. 111.

extent that he was able, the entire history of class societies, and the material preconditions of human existence as a whole. If this was doubted previously, the recent publication of Marx and Engels's *Natural-Scientific Notebooks*, following the earlier publication of his *Ethnological Notebooks*, should make this abundantly clear.

One area in which knowledge of Marx's work, and the working out of a genuine Marxist form of analysis, has been developing rapidly in recent years, is in the realm of ecology. This is no fortuitous development but the result of new practical challenges. On the one hand, it is now widely believed that we are entangled in a global ecological crisis, such that, if present trends continue, we may 'destroy the planet Earth to such an extent that life is no longer possible at our contemporary, historically achieved level of evolution'.[2] On the other hand, an environmental movement has emerged in response to this global ecological crisis that, in some of its more radical variants, offers a critique of capitalism, and actually claims to displace the socialist movement in that role. The result of all of this (coupled with the collapse of leading socialist societies and movements) has led to the rise of various forms of ecosocialist or red-green theories and alliances. The explicit goal of ecosocialist is not only to make up for the deficiencies in Marxist theory in this respect, but also to generate a new, expanded model of revolutionary transformation.

Ecosocialism's first two stages

The first stage of ecosocialist analysis developed, naturally enough, under the hegemony of green theory. The general approach has been one of grafting green theory onto Marxism, or, alternatively, grafting Marxism onto already existing green theory. The most influential thinkers, in this regard, have been André Gorz and James O'Connor, although many other significant contributions have been made. The problem with all such approaches is that they do not represent a genuine critique (a critical passing through and transcendence) of existing green theory, nor do they constitute a thoroughgoing re-exploration – once nature is brought in – of Marxist analysis from its inception on. Instead, various *ad hoc* formulae are used to bridge the relation between red and green (such as the introduction of the concepts of 'conditions of production' and 'the second contradiction of capitalism' by O'Connor). Eventually, given such an artificially contrived methodology, the Marxist element comes to be seen more

[2] Altvater 1998, p. 230.

and more as a hindrance and to be discarded. Thus, James O'Connor has proclaimed himself as a 'Polanyi-Marxist', bordering on being a 'Marxist-Polanyist'.[3] André Gorz has declared that, 'As a system socialism is dead. As a movement and organised political force, it is on its last legs ... The social forces which bore it along are disappearing ... History and the technical changes that are leading to the extinction, if not of the proletariat, then at least of the working class, have shown its philosophy of work and history to be misconceived.'[4] While Alain Lipietz, writing for O'Connor's journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, has declared recently that, Marx underestimated 'the irreducible character of ... ecological constraints' and adopted 'the Biblico-Christian ideology of the conquest of nature'. Marx, Lipietz asserts, tended to reduce 'the nature of humanity to the transformative activities of men', thereby ignoring nature's own 'ecoregulatory activities' (a criticism first raised by Ted Benton). Finally, Lipietz faults Marx for arguing that 'nature is the inorganic body of man' and ignoring that it is 'just as well that of the bee or the royal eagle'. These points are used to back up the claim that 'the intellectual scaffolding of the Marxist paradigm, along with the key solutions it suggests, must be jettisoned'. Labour no longer plays the central role, we are told, that it did in Marx's analysis. For Lipietz, Marxism as both a movement and an intellectual practice is now dead and must be replaced by political ecology, its heir apparent.[5]

But, even as this first stage of ecosocialist analysis appears to have exhausted both its vitality and its radical thrust, devolving increasingly into the very views that it at first sought to merge with on an equal basis, a second stage of ecosocialist analysis has arisen that seeks to go back to Marx and to understand the ecological context of his materialism – as a means of critically engaging with and transcending existing green theory. Its object is to provide a critique of existing green theory, with its spiritualistic, idealistic, vitalistic and moralistic emphases, while making up for the failure of the first stage of ecosocialist analysis to develop an effective response. Rather than ultimately discarding Marx, this second stage of ecosocialist analysis seeks to address the new practical issues raised for the movement, by digging more deeply into the treasury of Marx's thought in order to construct a stronger materialist critique. Work of this kind has been developing throughout the 1990s. Over the last couple of years, in particular, this has resulted in a number of

[3] O'Connor 1996a, p. 2; O'Connor 1988, pp. 12–13; O'Connor 1998.
[4] Gorz 1994, p. vii.
[5] Lipietz 2000, pp. 74–5.

qualitative leaps in our understanding of the ecological underpinnings of classical Marxist thought.[6]

Ecology and *Capital & Class*

The special issue of *Capital & Class* on the environment, appearing at this moment in time, not surprisingly displays features of both the first and second stages of ecosocialist analysis, but is closer to the second than the first. The general thrust of the issue is not one of grafting green theory onto Marx or Marx onto green theory, but the critique of the dualistic tendencies in existing ecosocialist analysis, and the development of a more radical materialist approach rooted in Marx.

It is true that the contributions to this issue – the first of its kind for *Capital & Class* – often give the impression of a much greater familiarity with Marxism than with green theory or environmental crises. Further, there is a frequent underestimation of Marx's ecological insights, and an inflation of those of certain contemporary thinkers, particularly André Gorz. Finally, there are places (notably the article by Lawrence Wilde) where Marx is viewed as an 'essentialist' in almost Aristotelian terms. Yet, despite all of this, the commitment to historical materialism (the class-based critique of capitalism) remains intact throughout this special issue. At the same time, there is no downplaying of the ecological challenges facing humankind in the twenty-first century.

Contributions to this special issue are ordered according to their broad themes: (i) philosophy, (ii) political economy, (iii) culture, and (iv) strategy. Philosophy is represented by Noel Castree, 'Marxism and the Production of Nature' and Lawrence Wilde, '"The Creatures, Too, Must Become Free": Marx and the Animal/Human Distinction'. The political economy pieces include Gerard Strange, 'Capitalism, Valorization and the Political Economy of Ecological Crisis' and Martin Spence, 'Capital Against Nature: James O'Connor's Theory of the Second Contradiction of Capitalism'. For culture, there are articles by Conrad Lodziak, 'On Explaining Consumption', and Neil Maycroft, 'Re-Valorizing Rubbish: Some Critical Reflections on "Green" Product Strategies'. Strategy is represented by David Luckin, 'Environmental Taxation and Red-Green Politics', and Jim Shorthose, 'Micro-Experiments in Alternatives'.

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[6] See Altvater 1993; Burkett 1999; Foster 1999; Foster 2000; Hughes 2000; Dickens 2000, Gimenez 2000.

Philosophical perspectives

Noel Castree opens his article with the words 'Marx's ruminations on "Nature" were notoriously sparse', adding that 'Marxists have spent more than a century mining his texts in order to piece together otherwise disparate, and often gnomic, comments and asides on capitalism and nature'. A few lines later Castree refers to 'Marx's silence on the question of nature' (p. 5). There is no doubt that this is a misconception, one derived more from unquestioning adherence to the canonical reading of Marxism than anything else. Whatever one might say about Marx's discussions of nature, they were anything but 'sparse'. Marx's doctoral thesis was on the Epicurus and the philosophy of nature; his most important article for the *Rheinische Zeitung* – a turning point in his life – was on the Prussian laws on the theft of wood. *On the Jewish Question* refers critically to the turning of animals into commodities. *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* introduces the notion of the alienation of nature (in addition to the alienation of labour), building on Feuerbachian naturalism and opposing Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*. *The Holy Family* discusses the origins of materialism and naturalism. *The German Ideology* commences with a discussion of the natural-ontological bases of the human struggle for subsistence, introduces the division of town and country as fundamental to bourgeois society; and subjects to critique the sentimental approach to nature of the 'true socialists'. *The Poverty of Philosophy* criticises Proudhon's mechanistic Prometheanism. *The Communist Manifesto* argues for the dissolution of the antagonistic division between town and country and the equitable distribution of population, in sharp opposition to the dictates of Malthusian political economy. The *Grundrisse* introduces Marx's notion of the metabolism of human production and nature, and presents Marx's most detailed critique of Malthus. *Capital*, designates nature as one of the two sources (along with labour) of wealth; defines the labour-process in terms of the metabolism between human beings and nature; explores the transformation of the human relation to nature brought on by primitive accumulation; introduces the notion of metabolic rift; discusses the conditions of sustainability; and encompasses the role of tool-making in the evolution of the human relation to nature (in response to Darwin). The *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, lambastes Lassalle for seeing labour's role in the production of wealth as supernatural, denying the role of nature. The *Notes on Adolph Wagner* explore the significance of Marx's notion of metabolism. The *Ethnological Notebooks* represent Marx's attempt to come to terms with the revolution in ethnological time, by exploring human

prehistory and the struggle over subsistence production, in the context of nature-imposed conditions.[7] For Marx, production was always about the transformation of nature, and, hence, the two terms are, in a sense, dialectically inseparable.

The problem then is not that Marx's 'ruminations on nature were ... sparse', but, rather, that the socialist movement did not yet fully perceive nature/ecology as a practical problem demanding solutions (and, indeed, backtracked in this area from the 1930s on) – so that the holistic unity of Marx's thought was lost. The recent publication of Marx and Engels's *Natural Science Notebooks* from 1877–83 should serve to remind us that Marx himself (together with Engels) was a lifetime and careful student of nature, and that this conditioned and permeated his analysis in innumerable ways.[8]

Castree also contends that 'after Engels it took over seventy years for another significant statement on Marxism and nature to appear' (p. 14). This statement is misleading in a number of respects. If the purpose is to measure the gap between the *appearance* of the Engels's *Dialectics of Nature*, which Castree had been discussing, and the next 'significant statement on Marxism and nature' it must be remembered that the *Dialectics of Nature* did not appear when it was written, in Engels's lifetime, but, rather, in 1927 (after not only Marx and Engels but also Luxemburg and Lenin had already died). The date of publication of Alfred Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, the work that Castree says appeared seventy years later, was first published in 1962 (not at the time that its English translation appeared, almost a decade later). The years between the publication of these two classic statements, then, are correctly seen as thirty-five rather than seventy.

But, even if the intention were to claim that it was not until nearly seventy years after Engels's death in 1895 that the next significant work on Marxism and nature was *written*, the statement would be wrong. Marxism saw a fairly continuous outpouring of work on ecology from the days of Marx and Engels until the late 1930s (much of it motivated by practical problems in agriculture and by the challenge of evolutionary theory). Here, we need only mention Bebel's discussion of ecological problems in *Women and Socialism* (1879, 1884); Kautsky's *The Agrarian Question* (1899); Lenin's, 'The Agrarian Question and the "Critics of Marx"' (1901); Bukharin's, *Historical Materialism* (1921), with its important chapter on 'The Equilibrium Between Nature and Society'; and Caudwell's, *Heredity*

[7] All of these aspects of Marx's analysis of nature have been examined in Foster 2000.
[8] Marx and Engels 1999.

and Development (written in 1935–6, though suppressed after Caudwell's death in 1937, and not published until the 1980s). During the 1920s, the Soviet Union had the most dynamic ecological science in the world, characterised by its historical, dialectical and co-evolutionary perspective. That decade saw the publication of V.I. Vernadsky's revolutionary work, *The Biosphere*; the development of the first rational scientific explanation for the origins of life in the work of the Russian scientist A.I. Oparin (simultaneously with the British Marxist scientist J.B.S. Haldane); and the discovery of the origins of agricultural crops and the mapping out of the global centres of germplasm by N.I. Vavilov.[9]

All of this is not to deny that Marxism and ecology were severed from each other for a time due to two developments: one in the West, one in the Soviet Union. In the West, the major critical Marxists of the 1920s, Lukács and Gramsci, effectively rejected any connection between the dialectic and nature. The result was essentially to cede the realm of nature/science to positivism. Nature (aside from human nature) simply disappeared from the universe of 'Western Marxism'. In the Soviet Union, in the late 1930s, in contrast, those with genuine ecological sympathies were increasingly viewed as enemies to the Stalinist régime, in part because of the struggles around 'primitive socialist accumulation'. The horrific fates of Bukharin and Vavilov in the Stalinist gulag are well known.

Yet, even though Castree's statements on the history of Marxism and ecology are in many ways misleading, his discussions of recent developments in ecosocialism are important and useful. The main thrust of his argument is that Marxist contributions to ecology have been characterised by the same dualism, between naturalistic approaches and hyper-social-constructionist approaches, that have characterised mainstream environmentalism. Although this proposition in itself is unlikely to be disputed, some of Castree's specific classifications of thinkers, in this respect, would be. Thus, he numbers Engels in *The Dialectics of Nature* as one of those thinkers who was insufficiently dialectical and tended to adopt a one-sided naturalism. (There is no developed critique of Engels in his argument, merely a bald assertion in this respect). Indeed, of all the Marxist ecological thinkers that Castree discusses, outside of geography – such diverse theorists as Altvater, Benton, Engels, Geras, Grundmann, O'Connor, Parsons, Schmidt, Soper and Timpanaro – not one escapes the criticism of dualism, of either the naturalistic or the hyper-constructionist variety. Castree's strongest criticisms are directed at Alfred Schmidt, who he sees as ultimately

[9] See the discussion in Foster 2000, pp. 236–49.

leaning toward a hyper-constructionist interpretation of Marx's ecology, which reflected the left-idealist tendencies of critical theory. His kindest words, with regard to the above-mentioned theorists, are left for Ted Benton, who he sees as a thinker who is *almost dialectical* in his approach, incorporating a healthy naturalism while never losing sight of the human construction of much of nature.[10]

However, it is only in Marxist geography, particularly the work of Neil Smith and to a lesser extent that of David Harvey, that Castree finds an actual transcendence of dualism in the nature-society relation. Here, however, the argument turns extremely abstract. Castree lauds Smith's approach to the 'production of nature', which leans heavily toward the constructionist side, seeing nature as the result of human production, without denying naturalism or realism. Castree notes that 'Smith is quite aware that Marx himself never talked of the production of nature in the sense that he means it. Indeed for this reason Smith chooses not to undertake a detailed analysis of Marx's various comments on nature' (p. 26).

This part of Castree's argument reads like special pleading. It is true that Smith's work is in no way crude, and quite dialectical in certain respects. But its strong constructionism means that nature is scarcely ever treated as an important element on its own (as realism demands), and is rather subsumed under human action, so that there is little in the way of any rich ecological, naturalistic knowledge in his work; indeed, nature seems to be subordinated to production. In some ways, this captures important aspects of modern developments, such as the real subsumption of nature and science to capital (in limited respects) within the accumulation process. But it is wholly inadequate as a developed ecological perspective. Nor does Castree give us any real reason to believe that Smith has in some way created an approach to ecology more dialectical than that of Marx, Engels, Benton or Altvater.

Matters become even more difficult when David Harvey is invoked. Harvey is so anti-naturalistic that he even goes a long way towards denying the existence of a global ecological crisis, writing in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* that 'it is crucial to understand that it is materially impossible for us to destroy the planet earth, that the worst we can do is to engage in material transformation of our environment so as to make life less rather than more comfortable for our own species-being, while recognising that

[10] Castree does, however, acknowledge the importance of Paul Burkett's recent critique of Benton, observing that 'I think there is much in common between my objections to dualistic Marxist thinking about nature and Burkett's own ongoing project to avoid the antinomies of naturalism and hyper-constructionism' (p. 33). See Burkett 1998.

what we do also does have ramifications (both positive and negative) for other living species'. To this, Altvater has replied that, 'such a stance shows the limits of a discourse which does not recognise objective, that is, discursively non-modifiable, natural limits.'[11]

Lawrence Wilde, exploring a quite different terrain, challenges the common charge (argued most insistently by Ted Benton) that Marx was 'speciesist', and thus denied consciousness and even intrinsic meaning to the lives of non-human species, promoting a strong anthropocentric perspective in this respect.[12] Wilde takes as the emblem for his piece Marx's advocacy in *On the Jewish Question* of the position of Thomas Münzer, the leader of the sixteenth-century German peasant revolt, who had claimed that birds, fishes, and animals in general were being turned into mere property, along with Marx's support for Münzer's demand that 'the creatures too must be free' (p. 37). Wilde says that, as far as he knows, there is no other evidence suggesting that Marx supported animal liberation, but that Marx's response here by itself should lead us to expect a sympathetic view of non-human animals. The fact that we have been predisposed to think otherwise, Wilde contends, is partly due to a combination of poor scholarship and polemic. Thus, he notes that, 'Benton, for example, attributes to Marx arguments referring to the "merely animal" or "merely existing" seven times within two paragraphs of *Natural Relations*, despite the fact that Marx does not use the word "mere"' (p. 43).

Marx, Wilde argues, 'intends no slight against animals when defining human uniqueness, nor is it obvious that he operates from an underestimation of animal capabilities and needs' (p. 43). In his early writings on species-being (which are in contention here), Marx contrasts human species-being to that of animal species-being, but only in order to emphasise what is qualitatively different about human beings, their greater productive capacity, tool making ability, etc. Indeed, most of Marx's argument in this area is not directed at contrasting actual animal species with the human species (to the detriment of the former), but, rather, at delineating what it is about human beings as a specific animal species that can be considered unique. For Marx, of course, this is less a matter of mind or language than the creative praxis – ie. human production, the transformation of the human relation to nature and, at the same time, of the relation to society and other human beings – that forms the basis of all historical change. To argue for the distinctiveness of human species-being (as a subcategory of animal species-being in

[11] Harvey 1996, p. 194; Altvater 1998, p. 230.
[12] Benton 1993.

general) in this respect, is, for Wilde, not to take up a 'speciesist' perspective, which could only consist of denying human connectedness to the animal world.

Wilde's argument, however, cannot go much further than this. The reason is that he attributes to Marx an 'essentialism' of an almost Aristotelian rigidity. Yet, Marx was anything but an essentialist. Indeed, he was heavily influenced from the start, as I have argued elsewhere, by Epicurean materialism with its evolutionary perspective (in contrast to Hegel who opposed materialism and evolution). It is in the Epicurean tradition that we find the strongest defence of the lack of any sharp distinction between human beings and animals (coupled with a sympathy for animal existence) in the ancient world, and indeed right up to modern times. One does not need the direct familiarity with Lucretius's *De rerum natura* that Marx had to recognise this; a reading of Montaigne's *An Apology for Raymond Sebond* would suffice, where Lucretius is quoted again and again on behalf of animals. It is significant that the greatest animal rights advocate of the nineteenth century, Henry Salt, was a socialist, a friend of Eleanor Marx and William Morris, and a translator of Lucretius.[13]

Marx, who was the foremost commentator on Epicurean philosophy in the nineteenth century, understood as well as anyone in his day the philosophical bases for rejecting the scale of nature conceptions of medieval scholasticism and the divine intervention fantasies of natural theology, which denied evolution and hence any biological connection between human beings and animals. Marx's well-known attraction to Darwin's evolutionary theory, from the moment of its appearance, was prefigured in Marx's early work, with its materialist, evolutionary roots. And it was evolutionary theory, from ancient times to Darwin which was the greatest enemy of anthropocentric views. Marx and Engels thus never made the mistake of making rigid distinctions between human beings and animals. Unfortunately, Wilde is unable to incorporate this evolutionary-based interpretation into his own otherwise helpful analysis, because he takes as the basis of Marx's views in this regard an 'essentialism' which sits ill with evolutionary conceptions.

The political economy of ecology

The articles by Gerard Strange and Martin Spence can be seen as critiques (or partial critiques) of what is referred to above as 'first

[13] See Clark and Foster 2000.

stage ecosocialism'. Both seek to subject James O'Connor's theory of the 'second contradiction' of capitalism to critique, although Strange does so by promoting the views of Gorz. In O'Connor's theory, the first contradiction of capital is a realisation (demand-side) crisis generated by the struggle between capital and labour, while the second contradiction of capital is a crisis of underproduction (on the supply side) arising from increasing costs of production due to scarcities within nature. Strange argues that O'Connor's account fails to stress the 'dialectical unity' of his two contradictions. At the same time, O'Connor's emphasis on the second contradiction of capitalism, as the representation of ecological crisis, Strange writes: 'suffers from being too narrowly focused on the question of cost imperatives. While the cost imperatives associated with competitive valorization are an important *particular* source of ecological degradation (cost externalization), a more *general* source [not sufficiently discussed by O'Connor] is the unbounded logic of commodity production itself as the means to valorization' (pp. 68–9).

Further, O'Connor's model has the effect of rigidifying the separation between the old social movement of labour (represented by the first contradiction) and the new social movements (represented by the second contradiction). O'Connor's dualistic perspective, Strange argues, thus 'privileges the new social movements as a potentially transformatory social agency. The labour movement is subordinate to the economic and internal logic of capital accumulation. By contrast, the new social movements, whose politics are located around the conditions of production and the second contradiction of capitalism, represent independent agency, agency external to and transcendent to the logic of capital' (p. 72).

Although these criticisms of O'Connor's theory are justified, the accompanying argument that Gorz's analysis is superior in these respects is not very persuasive. It is true that Gorz provided, even before O'Connor, a two-fold crisis theory (recognising a 'crisis of accumulation' and a 'crisis of reproduction' – the latter defined largely in terms of ecological scarcity) that is less rigidly dualistic. But Gorz couches his ecological argument largely in terms of the old limits to growth framework and the need for 'self-limitation'.[14] There is no developed critique of capitalist forms of wealth generation, no analysis of sustainable development, or of co-evolution. Marx himself is simply dismissed for supposedly building his case for socialism on material abundance. As for social movements, Gorz is hardly less inclined than O'Connor to say 'farewell to the working class'.

[14] Gorz 1980, pp. 20–7.

Martin Spence, building on views similar to Strange's, provides one of the most ambitious critiques of O'Connor to date. In Spence's assessment, O'Connor's theory of the second contradiction of capitalism is a fascinating but flawed 'attempt to build upon Marxist categories in order to understand the ecological crisis of our time. It is flawed, because ultimately its theoretical reach exceeds its grasp' (p. 107). Spence argues that the concept of 'conditions of production' which underpins O'Connor's analysis is taken from numerous scattered passages from Marx in which the term is used with enormous generality that lacks any of the precision (specific theoretical meaning) that O'Connor attempts to give it. It 'fails to deliver the theoretical goods' when utilised by O'Connor 'to apply to urban space and infrastructure, and to labour power' (though Spence seems to think that the concept works when applied to 'external nature'). Yet, so critical is the category 'conditions of production' to O'Connor's case, that 'if it doesn't stand up, then the whole edifice of his second contradiction theory collapses around it' (p. 85).

Even more important is Spence's criticism of the dualistic basis of O'Connor's theory – for creating 'two parallel paths' to socialism, one based on the first contradiction of capitalism and the struggle of the working class; the other based on the second contradiction and new social movements. O'Connor's whole theory, Spence contends, gives the appearance of a 'theoretical shotgun wedding' between Marxism and new social movement theory (p. 87). O'Connor does not replace the working class with new social movements. Both still operate simultaneously – but on separate paths. The result of such a dualistic analysis, however, is to make the category of social movement (such as the environmental movement), divorced from class, the functional equivalent of a *class* movement – and this, for Spence, is a major error. Thus, O'Connor's whole approach tends to lead away from an analysis of new social movements, including the environmental movement, as arising '*within* the framework of class analysis' (p. 108).

The limits of O'Connor's approach are evident – as Spence appears dimly to perceive (see p. 95) – in the way he criticises Marx. Marx described how capitalist agriculture undermines soil fertility, but he failed, O'Connor contends, to put 'two and two together' to describe this as a source of increasing environmental costs and a 'second contradiction of capitalism' in O'Connor's own sense.[15] The assumption here is that Marx, who recognised that the degradation of

[15] O'Connor, 1996b, p. 199. The common contention that Marx did not consider increasing costs derived from natural resource scarcity is refuted in Perelman 1996.

the soil was not only a threat to accumulation but also – and more importantly – a crisis of ecological sustainability, should have somehow subordinated all of this to some functionalist expression of economic crisis. But this is not, of course, how Marx's developed his analysis in any of his work. Indeed, there is a sharp contrast between his method in this area, and that of those who would like to manufacture ecological crisis out of an economic crisis theory, or an economic crisis theory out of ecological crisis. For Marx, the crisis of capitalist agriculture was a reflection of the metabolic rift between human society and nature that capitalism had introduced through its development of an antagonistic relation between town and country, and as a result of the alienation of the population from the natural conditions of existence. In other words, Marx's ecological critique of capitalist agriculture (which was tied directly to his ecological critique of the large industrial city) was rooted in historical materialism in its largest sense, and was not simply a branch of a theory of economic crisis, or a mere appendage to the base-superstructure analysis.

Culture and strategy

In order to take ecology seriously, it is necessary to take seriously issues of culture and strategy that have seldom constituted part of the philosophy and political economy of the socialist movement. Lodziak's critique of the ideology of consumerism in the third part of the special issue deals with the structural conditions that frequently govern consumption and that make absurd the usual contentions of consumer sovereignty. Moreover, the nature of the structural conditions, such as the entire urban transportation layout, which makes life without a car increasingly impossible, goes against any individualist as opposed to social solutions to these problems. By providing a critique of the ideology of consumerism, Lodziak contributes a very necessary reassessment. One weakness of his analysis, however, is that he tends to concentrate simply on the wider structural environment affecting consumer choices, while basically dismissing the earlier critical literature (such as Vance Packard) that focused on the propaganda of marketing. This, in my opinion, is a mistake. In the United States in 1992, one trillion dollars was spent on marketing (targeting, product development, sales promotion and advertising) – one out of every six dollars spent in the economy, and more than three times what was spent on education at all levels.[16] As

[16] Dawson and Foster 1998, p. 57.

important as the urban environment is in structuring our choices, we should not underestimate the scale of the commodity propaganda machine – the greatest propaganda system the world has ever seen – in delimiting those choices.

Neil Maycroft scrutinises the 'green commodity' strategies that have arisen as part of so-called 'ecological modernisation', arguing that much of this is simply a way of promoting capital accumulation with a '"green" gloss' (p. 136). In particular, he focuses on strategies that entail what he calls the 're-valorization' of rubbish. 'This involves taking discarded commodities or components of commodities and re-valorizing them by turning them into a new set of desired commodities'. Smith argues that this is usually a device through which the waste products of industry are turned into new commodities and new markets. It involves no process of self-limitation or restraint on production or accumulation that might legitimately be called 'green', as does reducing, reusing, or more standard recycling. As for the production of green products more generally, they are mainly feel-good commodities for high-income niches within the overall market; they rarely represent genuine ecological restraints on the market. Even the green promotion of services over goods is mostly all hype, and rarely entails the 'dematerialisation' that it is supposed to represent. Maycroft clearly believes that a coherent strategy of sustainable development requires much more substantial social changes that cannot be accomplished by the capitalist market.

David Luckin's treatment of environmental taxes from a red-green perspective, in Part Four of the special issue, refuses to either condone or condemn such taxes absolutely. Rather what Luckin makes clear is such taxes might be useful under some circumstances, but only if accompanied by a comprehensive strategy for social change that also takes account of such factors as regressivity, and the overall reorganisation of work and leisure along the lines suggested by Gorz. Jim Shorthose points to various micro-experiments, whereby attempts are made to construct social relations that are relatively free of commodities and monetary exchange, arguing that these experiments can help guide the creation of the alternative green-red social relations proposed by thinkers such as Marcuse, Gorz and Illich. Here, he points usefully to accomplishments in the Brazilian city of Curitiba. There is no doubt that ecosocialists need to pay more attention to the flowering of such alternatives, emanating from the grassroots of society – particularly, as in Brazil, where this occurs in a constellation made possible by the existence of a dynamic worker's movement.

Conclusion

In introducing the special issue, Bettina Lange and Gerard Strange indicated that the main weakness of the theoretical and practical discourse in the issue was that 'the potential green audience' had 'not been reached'. The analysis simply 'extends Marxist or socialist analysis into ecological matters rather than exemplifying the more even-handed dialogue between red and green which is ultimately most fruitful' (p. 2).

I argue above for a different assessment. The problem is that the special issue of *Capital & Class* still displays, to a considerable extent, the first-stage ecosocialist tendency to graft green theory on to Marxism or Marxism on green theory – as in thinkers such as Gorz, O'Connor and Lipietz – rather than a genuine critique of green theory and of historical Marxism, which would necessarily involve working through each of these traditions in order to create a more powerful ecological and social synthesis. Marxists who write about ecology all too often know little about ecology itself, or about the theoretical issues engaged by ecologists. Nor have they truly re-examined the Marxist heritage with these new practical challenges in mind – a process that would almost inevitable lead to the rediscovery of neglected aspects of Marx's materialist critique, as Rosa Luxemburg argued. Under these circumstances, it makes little sense to attempt to merge the red and green directly, or to attempt to graft one onto the other. The 'red', as it has come down to us, has been systematically estranged from all ecological content, while the 'green' is almost equally shallow when it comes to social content, and (outside of ecological science itself which still has strong materialist tendencies) leans toward spiritualistic and idealistic modes of explanation.

There is, as Marx said, no royal road to science. Genuine historical-materialist ecology can be developed only by means of a long theoretical revolution that takes ecological thought and its challenge as seriously as Marx took bourgeois political economy, while at the same time demanding of socialism that it return to its materialist foundations in a deeper, more thoroughgoing way. Marxists who seriously engage in this kind of double critique – characteristic of the second stage of ecosocialist thought represented by figures such as Altvater and Burkett – will have something to say to new generations of green activists and thinkers (along with new generations of socialists), and will more likely be listened to, since they are coming from a rock-bottom ecological as well as materialist standpoint.

The importance of this special issue of *Capital & Class* is that it points in a more radical direction, by making Marx himself the standard of critique, and by arguing that Marxist ecology has to live up to its own claims of being materialist and dialectical – 'theoretical shotgun weddings' are clearly no longer acceptable. Where it falls short is in its failure to address the deepest ecological issues – sustainability and co-evolution – and in its failure to reappraise the most fundamental ecological debates within historical Marxism, such as the dialectics of nature controversy.

Still, if the special issue of *Capital & Class* is not quite up to the most advanced work in ecosocialist analysis, it is already directing us beyond the first stage of that analysis. In other words, this is a great beginning in this area for a great journal. Clearly, much more is to be expected in the near future.

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