

# The Cause Analysis of Ecological Crisis in Ecological Marxism Perspective

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**Abstract:** The ecology Marxism is the latest genre of the western Marxism, and one of its theoretical focuses is the causes of the ecological crisis, which is the more in-depth section in the theory. Western Ecological Marxism point out that to control nature, alienated consumption, economic rationality, contemporary capitalist mode of production is the root cause of the ecological crisis. In-depth study of these ideas has inspired great significance for our deep understanding of the causes of contemporary ecological problems and trying out the plight of the ecological crisis.

**Keywords:** Ecological Marxism; Ecological Crisis; Cause Analysis

## 1. Introduction

Ecological Marxism as a branch of Western Marxism genre, was produced in the West Green Movement in the 1970s, during systematic period of time in the late 80s early 70s, it reached maturity in the early 1990s. After World War II, with the rise of the new technological revolution and capitalist relations of production of self-adjustment, the development of capitalist economic appears a second golden age. People's capacity of the nature utilization and the scale of the use grow rapidly. Because there is an inherent capitalist production unplanned sex, in pursuit of their own maximization profit under the premise of global natural resources predatory development, resulting in a large number of non-renewable natural resource depletion, ecological balance severely damaged, producing unprecedented "ecological crisis". When people had suffered a lot due to the consequences of their actions, people had to reflect their past. Thus, they sprouted in order to protect the ecological environment for the subject Marxist thought. It inherited the Western Marxist critique of the capitalist system, the spirit from the ecological crisis and the resulting ecological revolution and Marxism to find the combination of points and try to find a road leading to the reality of eco-socialism. It is the Western New Social Movement and the product of the combination of socialist thought, reflecting the ecological Marxist capitalism under contemporary ecological crisis facing the problems of Marxism made a new interpretation.

The most important prerequisite to solve the ecological crisis lies in accurately reveal the causes of the ecological

crisis. In Western Ecological Marxism Perspective, ecological crisis causes contains several aspects.

## 2. The Control of Natural's World Outlook and Ecological Crisis

Royce keenly aware "Control naturally influential contemporary ideology" <sup>[1]</sup>, in his masterpiece book "natural control", he pointed out that the concept is rooted in the natural control of Christian doctrine. Christianity preached world created by God, so God has been given the right to rule the world. And mankind as a messenger of God on earth, the natural world has the right to rule. Everything on earth, including natural is part of human domination. Renaissance highlight human values, which further strengthens human control concept to nature, Bacon's "knowledge is power" eventually laid the connotation of the concept of modern control nature. With the concept of people to control nature, human beings look from where the forces of nature worship away and began to focus on control of natural discovery tools and instruments. Because controlling nature through scientific and technological progress must be achieved, which leads to the "control nature" concept and modern science has increasingly closely linked, human society is through the establishment of science and technology on the basis of the industrial system, constantly transforming nature, so as to open the way for their own development.

In the course of human control of natural ecological problems have become increasingly prominent in the capitalist system to solve environmental problems is to guide the technical direction of the positive development: the production of energy efficient cars gas mileage lower unit, replacing fossil fuels with solar energy and recycling of resources. But in fact, this is the capitalist world-recognized technical methods to solve environmental

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problems actually encourage such a view: as long as technical improvements to improve energy efficiency and the use of more benign production process, then serious environmental pollution project constraints should be lifted. However, the fact is not so. According to "Jevons Paradox", to improve efficiency in the use of natural resources, such as coal, can only increase rather than reduce the demand for such resources. This is because the efficiency improvement will lead to production scale. His paradox raised by technological progress and technological innovation will not help to solve the ecological crisis, but will only make capital plunder and exploitation of natural resources further escalation, for two reasons: (1) under the conditions of capitalism, the root causes of the ecological crisis does not lie in technology and its application, but rather the capitalist mode of production endless pursuit of wealth. (2) under the conditions of capitalism, the root causes of the ecological crisis mainly lies in the injustices of social system and the capitalist mode of production operation mechanism, so only by changing the existing capitalist system and social relations, can we really solve the ecological crisis. Technology itself does not help us to get rid of environmental dilemma, and this situation with the economic expansion and growing.

### 3. Consumption Alienation Patterns and Ecological Crisis

"Alienation" was begun from German classical philosophy, and it means that the subject and object are separated from each other, leading to the principal object of external forces antagonistic relationship. Marx's "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" in the creation of the theory of alienated labor reveals that under capitalism labor is alienated labor. Marx's Alienated Labor Theory was got the inheritance and developed by Marcuse, Fromm and so on of the Frankfurt School. And similarly, ecological Marxism is constructed the theory of alienation consumption on the basis of Frankfurt School ideology, thus revealing that the ecological crisis of capitalism has had a positive impact.

Consumption Alienation is a system of social alienation in the new economy under the conditions of a performance. For the consumer, it would lie in giving a sense happier and more satisfying life. And in today's capitalist society, consumption is being manipulated, as people become more and more consumer appetite, which are becoming increasingly interesting uniform standards, therefore, easy to influence and predict. Capitalists successfully exploited people's psychological and inappropriate concepts, through advertising, competition and public opinion to guide the consumer. So consumption is alienated, it has been manipulated by the capitalists, and the real needs of people lost contact, and becomes rulers implement new forms of social control. Alienation consumption and political needs of capitalist society are closely linked. Capitalism by providing a high standard

of living material consumption continue to produce and meet the people of the "false needs", eliminating those arising because of lack of material needs of the existing regime protests paralyzed the working class consciousness and political revolution criticism consciousness, the development of people with the existing system of "integration" new and more effective means of control, succeeded in making originally belonging to the political needs into one's own instincts needs.

Marcuse pointed out that the alienation of contemporary developed capitalist society became seriously and widespread. In the ideology of consumerism, people desire to consume rather than basic survival needs as a consumer point of departure, the human body in consumer activity status and rational spirit is lost, and human nature alienates to consumer goods. First, consumer alienation sacrifices comprehensive human spiritual life. This should be a happy man needs of various fully meet, but in the economic structure of modern capitalist society, people regard wealth and consumption as their standard of happiness and regard money as the measure of the value of all things. Almost no emotion between people, but the relationship between people and things is a complete reversal. "They greedily consume it all in, devouring all the world became filled with a huge appetite for our goods... we are always looking forward, always hope, always disappointed."<sup>[2]</sup> Secondly, consumer alienation is unlimited growth of the capitalist economy closely linked, inevitably produce ecological problems. As economic growth has been constrained ecosystems, people are constantly expanding false needs and capital necessary to unlimited expansion and the limited capacity of the earth's resources and ecosystems sharp contradictions occur, and carry out over-exploitation of natural causes after all, to environmental degradation and reprisals against human nature. Marcuse pointed out that people were faced with a distressing aspect of the advanced industrial civilization: its "irrational rational characteristics" is irrational to threaten human survival and development of the society, but seems reasonable in everything social phenomena. In order to maintain this "unreasonable reasonable", we must maintain the productivity and efficiency of capitalism and continue to increase and expand consumer alienation of those comfortable face with a waste of resources to meet human needs, which is bound to exacerbate the environment destruction, causing ecological crisis.

### 4. The Economic Rational Criticism and Ecological Crisis

Forz point out that capitalist "economic rationality" was the deepest roots caused by ecological crisis. Ecological issue is not just the environment, but also a profound crisis of human existence, and its deep roots in the capitalist economic rationality and ecological rationality are mutually contradictory. Thus, the capitalist "economic

rationality" ecological crisis is the deepest root of the problem. Only in-depth understanding of the root causes of environmental problems can eventually find a solution to the fundamental way.

First, Gorz discussed the formed process "economic rationality" in detail: from "Enough" to "better". Gorz believed that pre-industrial society, or pre-capitalist society, traditional societies, people in the labor and production follow "Enough is enough on the line" principle, free to determine the extent of their needs and work level. In that era, "adequate" category is not an economic category, but rather a cultural and ontological category. But the emergence of a capitalist society, the situation is quite different, people no longer for themselves but for the consumer market for production, so people need to learn computing and accounting, economic rationality will come to play. Gorz point that economic rationality begun from calculation and accounting. Thus, the production exceeded the traditional social "enough on the line" principle, began to advocate "more is better" principle. Thus the success is no longer a thing or a personal evaluation "quality of life" issues, but mainly to see how much money and accumulate wealth. Quantitative methods established assured standards and hierarchical scale, the criteria and standards were the efficiency, and it was used to measure a person's level and performance. So the economic rationality principle is the "calculation and accounting" principle, the efficiency principle, the better principle.

Secondly, the capitalist economic rationality and ecological rationality are mutually contradictory. Gorz in his "Critique of the economy" in the capitalist made a profound analysis of economic rationality. He said: "productive economic rules and ecological resource protection rules quite distinct. Ecological rationality designed in such a best way to meet (people's) material needs: providing a minimum, the greatest value in and most durable things as much as possible and spending a small amount of labor, capital, and resources will be able to produce these things."<sup>[3]</sup> Economic rationality is pursuit for the most number of economically productive, aims to sell with the best efficiency of the production the most out of a lot of things to get the most lucrative and all of these are based on some of the greatest amount of consumption and demand basis. Only through the greatest amount of consumption and demand, is it possible to get value-added capital returns. Gorz clearly describes two rational distinction here: economic rationality promote consumption and demand maximizing, stimulate overproduction and over-consumption, in order to be profitable, to achieve the purpose of capital growth, leading to resource wanton excessive development and ecological destruction. While trying to minimize the use of ecological rationality of labor, capital and resources, efforts to produce durable, high use value of things, in order to meet the needs of people in moderation. And hidden in these two diametrically opposed reason behind are two com-

pletely opposite motives, that the profit motive and ecological protection motivation. In the capitalist profit motive domination, the implementation of ecological rationality is incredible, because this will inevitably hamper economic growth.

## **5. The Capitalist Mode of Production and Ecological Crisis**

How can we construct a theory of capitalism so that it can help us to think clearly capitalist global environmental damage caused by the problem then? O'Connor revealed the inevitable link between capitalism and ecological crisis and even the global environmental degradation from the following three aspects.

### **5.1. Capital Accumulation is the Direct Cause to the Ecological Crisis.**

Capital nature is constantly in pursuit of profit, in order to meet which, we must continue to expand capital accumulation. "Capitalism is based on the accumulation of growing productivity or decreasing the reproduction of the working class on the basis of the cost of out".<sup>[4]</sup> Capital accumulation and economic growth will bring the scale of investment continues to expand, while the scale of investment is larger, the development of natural resources and the consumption of natural resources are greater, damaging the greater the extent of environmental pollution will greater. It is the accumulation of capital insurmountable internal contradictions. O'Connor believes that capital accumulation is the leading direct cause of the ecological crisis, or that capital accumulation is caused by the "standard" ecological deterioration.

### **5.2. Capitalist Basic Contradiction is the Root Cause to the Ecological Crisis.**

In O'Connor opinion, in today's capitalist society there is a twofold contradictions and double crisis determining the ecological crisis of capitalist society. The first contradiction is between capitalist productive forces and production relations, contradiction between the socialization of production and the private ownership of the means of production, and this contradiction will lead to the economic crisis of overproduction. Sustainability of capitalism depends on the accumulation and profit. Expansion means both profit is the purpose of expansion. O'Connor pointed out that the overproduction of capital requirements will bring enormous economic pressure levels, which would force the individual efforts of its cost of capital plus more than technology, and to rebuild profits. This means that more of the cost of capital will transfer to the environment, land and society, causing ecological problems. Second contradiction foot refers to the mode of production and its capitalist contradiction between production conditions. Capitalism is the constant pursuit of profit self-aggrandizement system, but nature is not self-expansion, the development of rhythm and cycles of

nature is fundamentally different from the rhythms and cycles of capital operation, whereby the inevitable outcome is the destruction of the natural environment and the consequent rising cost of capital and the elements leading to insufficient production of economic crisis. O'Connor further reveals the economic crisis and the ecological crisis influence each other, interacting relationship. Economic crisis will lead to the ecological crisis, "Generally speaking, the economic crisis is associated with excessive competition, efficiency and cost reduction fascination (for example, the exploitation rate enhancement) linked, thus, is also associated with the workers' economic and physical squeezing enhancement, increasing the degree of externalization of costs as well as the resulting level of environmental degradation linked to the intensification of the economic crisis and cost reductions while also stimulating those in the previously banned hazardous for the environment technology Easter at the same time".<sup>[4]</sup> Ecological crisis may also lead to the eco-

nomical crisis," The ecological problems caused by ecological crisis and the shortage of raw materials caused by the 'normalization' of market forces, high rent, the cost paid for the traffic congestion and increased energy costs will bring the risk of damage on profits ".<sup>[4]</sup> Because of the economic crisis and the ecological crisis are intertwined, while capital in solving these two crises will only lead to more serious crisis, so capitalism cannot achieve ecological sustainability.

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