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It seems we are all environmentalists now.

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It seems we are all environmentalists now. In its “2022 State of the World” issue, *The Economist* flatly declared that biodiversity “delivers essential services.”¹ Why then, do we need ecological Marxism, if the capitalists have embraced the cause of saving the planet?

The most obvious answer is that capitalism is the source of our current climate catastrophe, and seems disinclined to eradicate itself. Even the most meager attempts to address the climate crisis invite co-optation. For example, the International Chamber of Commerce was featured at the COP27 meeting, delivering its new slogan: “Make Climate Action Everyone’s Business.” But I would argue that there are more nuanced reasons that we need to turn to Marxism in order to analyze climate catastrophe and the political actions that are required in the face of it.

First, materialist analyses and ecological understanding are deeply complementary, and in fact, the climate crisis is a motivation to push our materialist practices even further. We do need to be alert to the world *as it exists*, and Marx and his followers have been apt observers of the tendency to wish away or deny what is in front of our eyes. Marxists also understand the import of collective consciousness, focusing upon the consequences of actions for ourselves and others. Marx was keen on analyzing soil, already pointing out the depletion that comes from agricultural practices that pursued profit at the expense of all else; this is termed the “metabolic rift” and has been explored by thinkers such as John Bellamy Foster and others. To see the damages wrought by capitalist modes of production, all we need to do is look more closely at the ground under our feet, and remain focused there.

Second, Marx’s discussion of alienation from our species-being provides another invaluable tool. After all, our entire social and economic world is constructed according to a logic that is counterproductive for ourselves as part of nature. The concept of alienation is one of the most powerful tools for picking apart our relentless movement towards sure extinction. How is it that we assume that a system that makes the physical survival of hundreds of millions of people more difficult every day is the best method for

¹ *The Economist* December 24, 2022. V. 445: N. 9327, 16.

distribution of resources? Or even that there is no alternative? Indeed, we live in an era of alienation from our species-being.

The pieces in this special issue of *Emancipations* provide us with compelling analyses and new tools to extend our critique and praxis at this juncture. It begins with a poem by Dean Rader, “A Meditation on Absence” to set the stage for a deep engagement with our relationship with the world today. There are four research articles, starting with Jason Moore’s “Waste in the Limits to Capital: How Capitalism Lays Waste to the Web of Life, and Why It Can’t Stop.” This article takes the long view of the climate crisis by linking imperialism, metaphysics, racism, ecology and capitalist development together in his critique. Moore’s acute analysis of political intransigence and latent possibilities makes this an excellent framing for the entire issue.

Killian Favier provides a careful reading of the concept of the domination of nature in Horkheimer and Adorno, and the work of Herbert Marcuse in “Materialism in the Anthropocene: A Critique of the 'Domination of Nature' in the Frankfurt School.” Favier argues that the structure of their understanding of nature makes their work a fundamentally unsuitable tool for understanding the climate crisis (and its redress) at this historical juncture.

Lara-Lane Plambeck takes the readers of *Emancipations* on a stroll through Northern Germany to survey the social, economic and environmental realities that are marked in the landscape. Drawing upon Benjamin’s methodology of “rag-picking”, Plambeck provides a pensive example of reading the devastation of landscapes with clarity, and even some hope. Her article, “Meeting Ghosts of the Capitalocene on Northern German Walkways” uses images and an inviting prose to bring us on her journey through her home.

Last, Eve Croeser uses a Gramscian framework to understand the nonaction resulting from the COP27 meeting. “COP27 in a Warming World Beset by Multiple Crises” underscores the need for a fundamentally different kind of political activation from all of us whose environments are ever more precarious.

Next are two commentaries. First is an installation of Ecological Marxist “Keywords” compiled by Marco Armiero. This tool is intended to be updated and amended, and we hope that this will be an ongoing and live feature on the *Emancipations* site. Margaret Palacios and Annette Balouf issue a “Research Manifesto” urging us to reject academic practices which are “extractivist” in nature and impact. Palacios and Balouf envision a radically emancipatory form of research that they term “Adjacency”. Finally, Larry Alan Busk provides an overview of the recent “degrowth” literature, explaining the nuances within it, and pointing out the limitations in these approaches.