

State of Mankind

How much do you know?

Excerpts from

How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World

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At the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British scientists Ray Lankester and Arthur Tansley developed the idea of the ecology and the ecosystem. Both were Fabian Socialists, a variation of Marxism. Lankester was a zoologist and at a relatively young age, became a friend to an aging Marx. When Marx was in his senior years, Lankester frequented Marx's house and was among the few who attended Marx's funeral. Lankester once wrote to Marx saying that he was studying *Das Kapital* "with the greatest pleasure and profit."

Tansley was the most important figure in ecology and botany during that period in England, and as the first chairman of the British Ecological Society, he was the inventor of the term "ecosystem." While attending the University of London, Tansley was deeply influenced by Lankester.

The originating links between ecological ideas and Marxism appear to emerge in this connection between Lankester, Tansley, and Marxism — though of course ecology and environmentalism are not the same thing. Ecology is about the relationship between living things and the environment, while environmentalism is concerned with ecological disasters. Ecology, however, is closely related to environmentalism because it provides the theoretical basis for defining ecological disasters. Ecological Marxism, which was derived from ecology, is a further step away from these ideas.

Ecological Marxism adds the concept of ecological crises as an augmentation to Marxian arguments about the economic crisis of capitalism. It seeks to expand the supposed conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat by adding an inherent conflict between production and the environment. This is the theory of double crisis or double conflict. In Marxist theory, the basic conflict of capitalism is between productive forces and the relations of production, which is called the primary conflict. The secondary conflict happens between the environment of production (the ecosystem) and the productive forces and relations of production together. In this theory, the primary conflict leads to economic crisis, while the secondary conflict leads to ecological crisis.

The century-long development of capitalism proved Marxism wrong after the failed prediction that capitalism would collapse due to economic crisis. On the contrary, capitalism continues to prosper. In response, the notion of ecological crises became a tool of communism as leftist scholars discovered that Marxism could be a theoretical basis for environmentalism, thus radicalizing the environmentalist movement and worldview.

From Chapter 16: The Communism Behind Environmentalism