

Nature & Other Dangerous Words

Marx, Method & the Proletarian Standpoint in the Web of Life

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We've got it all wrong about capitalism, class, and the climate crisis.

Not the facts. Climate change is real, and relentless. Even if it does not spell existential doom – as the masters of mankind have us believe – the conditions of planetary life will change significantly over the next century. They're *already* changing dramatically. Sea levels will rise. Agricultural productivity has hit a wall. Outdoor workers wilt in the summer heat, and labor productivity – indoors and outdoors – is stagnating. Country-size glaciers calve. Biodiversity suffers.

We all know the facts. It's how we make sense of them that shapes our politics.

The climate crisis is real, and capitalism is the culprit. And yet, saying so hardly settles things. Slogans are easy: “system change not climate change.” Following the turn-of-the-century globalization studies craze, “critical” intellectuals convinced many of us to think the problem with capitalism is its fantasy of self-regulating markets – not class exploitation.² Here's a distinction with a difference, producing divergent political priorities premised on divergent historical interpretations. *How* we think with and through – and then act upon – “systems” is what matters. This is the Marxist point, dialectically bound to historical inquiry and a piercing critique of the “imagined concrete,” arising from the fetishes that seek to control the world-historical imagination – and with it, proletarian consciousness.³ One's world-historical assessment of the origins and development of planetary crisis determines one's political priorities in the climate crisis.

That's an interpretive and political outlook shaped by Marx and Engels' insistence on the method and praxis of the proletariat. The proletariat, they underline, can “only exist world-historically” in its “twofold character,” at once

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² K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1944) – a book that is deliberately not cited in *Capitalism in the Web of Life*; see, *inter alia*, B. Benjamin, and S. Miyamura, “Class struggle or embedded markets?” *New Political Economy* 19, no. 5 (2014): 639-661; J.W. Moore, “[Our Capitalogenic World: Climate Crises, Class Politics & the Civilizing Project](#),” *Studia Poetica* 11(2023), 97-122.

³ K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicolaus (New York: Vintage, 1973), 100.

“a natural... and social relation.”⁴ I have been obsessed with these questions of power, profit and life for the past three decades. Beginning with labor history, I’ve spent that time wrestling with capitalism’s metabolic antagonisms as constitutive of class formation, class structure, and class struggle in their manifold expressions.

Marx’s ontology is, I discovered, crucial to making sense of it all. It is a labor theory of life. Far from a labor reductionism, which would lead to formalism, monism, or some other bourgeois pathology, Marx launched historical materialism through a double critique. One was the critique of “abstract man” and “abstract nature.”⁵ That’s a theme that runs throughout the *Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology*. Crystallized in the famous “Theses on Feuerbach” Marx decries the fetish of *Man* – his capitalization – and insists on “*real*, historical man” through historically-specific “ensemble[s] of the social relations.”⁶

What are the preconditions of those ensembles? Certainly, non-dialectical forces, starting with the “natural conditions” of climate and topography.⁷ Marx’s second critique was reconstructive, pushing back against the temptations of bourgeois naturalism and environmental determinism. This alternative foregrounded the labor process as the ontological and historical pivot through which “modifications” of “the rest of nature” occur.⁸ These are dialectical antagonisms: what I’ve tried to capture in my labor-centered account of *environment-making*. The labor process is not the product of “abstract man.” Rather labor is the active moment of human evolution: “labor created man.”⁹ In sum, “abstract man” (and “abstract nature”) is the “imagined concrete”; *historical man*, in contrast, is the product of labor, a specific kind of “natural force,” through which not only landscapes, but bodies, speech, brains, and all the conditions of human sociality form. Thus the double register of Marx’s ontology and the animating premises of historical materialism: labor as at once “a natural... and social relation” *and* a relation of immediate production and intergenerational reproduction.¹⁰ In Marx and Engels’ labor theory of life, the philosophy of praxis informs the proletariat’s strategic vision as capitalism confronts a distinctive crisis complex of dialectical and non-dialectical antagonisms. A historical materialism that cannot make sense of how distinctive class societies and their dialectical antagonisms are overdetermined by solar cycles, volcanism, and all manner of geophysical events and patterns – *non-dialectical* antagonisms – is one that cannot make sense of past, present and our possible futures.

⁴ K. Marx & F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, K. Marx & F. Engels (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 19-593, here: 49, 43.

⁵ K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, K. Marx & F. Engels (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 229-348; here: 327.

⁶ K. Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in K. Marx & F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 3-5; Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 39.

⁷ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 30.

⁸ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 30.

⁹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 44; F. Engels, “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man,” in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 452-464; here: 452.

¹⁰ Marx, *The German Ideology*, 43.

Marx and Engels' labor theory of life leads one to make sense of class struggles and its manifold expressions through these shifting world-historical conditions. Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin nutshelled the methodological argument a quarter-century ago:

There is no organism without an environment, but there is no environment without an organism. There is a physical world outside of organisms and that world undergoes certain transformations that are autonomous. Volcanoes erupt, the earth precesses on its axis of rotation. But the physical world is not an environment, only the circumstances from which environments can be made... [O]rganisms remake the environment at all times and in all places. Every organism consumes resources necessary for its survival, and produces waste products that are poisonous to itself and others... A consequence of the codetermination of the organism and its environment is that they coevolve. As the species evolves in response to natural selection in its current environment, the world that it constructs around itself is actively changed... [O]rganisms are the active makers and remakers of their milieu... [A] rational political ecology demands that knowledge. One cannot make a sensible environmental politics with the slogan 'Save the Environment,' first, because 'the' environment does not exist and second because every species, not only the human species, is at every moment constructing and destroying the world it inhabits.¹¹

Capitalism in the Web of Life – and the wider world-ecology conversation in which it's embedded – is a relentless effort to make world-historical sense of capitalism through such a method.¹² Its ontology is the labor process as the active and metabolic relation that makes human sociality, and that it is refashioned and redirected under the bourgeoisie's class rule. It was first articulated by Marx and Engels in 1840s. Marx amplified those arguments throughout his life, especially in *Capital*. Their arguments refused the Green Arithmetic – adding up Man, Society and Nature – because that method, and reinforces, the real relations of primitive accumulation and capitalism managerialism. It separates in thought the historical separation of the direct producers from the means of livelihood and reproduction. The question of method is for this reason not a trivial matter. The dialectical method is fundamental to the class struggle and the philosophy of praxis on the “real ground of history.”¹³

My conceptual alternatives and frames emerged from this labor theory of life. “Labor created man” – not the other way around. Such a labor ontology

¹¹ R. Lewontin and R. Levins, “Organism and Environment,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 8, no. 2 (1997): 95-98.

¹² J.W. Moore, “How to Read *Capitalism in the Web of Life*,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 28, no. 1 (2022), 153-168.

¹³ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 53-54; J.W. Moore, “[Power, Profit & Prometheanism, Part I: Method, Ideology and the Violence of the Civilizing Project](#),” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 28, no. 2 (2022), 415-426; idem, “[Power, Profit & Prometheanism, Part II: Superexploitation in the Web of Life](#),” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 29, no. 2 (2023), 558-582.

guides us through manifold socio-ecological antagonisms and argues against the liberal pluralist conception – an environmental crisis here, a geopolitical crisis there, an accumulation crisis somewhere else, all mysteriously “converging” or “intersecting.” But capitalism’s deepening epochal crisis is not plural. It’s singular, with manifold expressions. Its underlying source? The class-metabolic contradictions set in motion by the law of value some five centuries ago. Those contradictions involve not only a warming planet but the ideological structures, the *ruling abstractions*, signified by Man, Nature and Civilization. These too are material forces in the hands of a ruling class.

Readers may have encountered my alternatives, necessarily reduced to slogan-like formulae. Of these, Cheap Nature and the Capitalocene provocation are surely at the top of the list. These are at once proposals for making sense of capitalism’s long and uneven world histories, and an attempt to break with the putrid and violent legacy of bourgeois naturalism and its environmentalisms, from Malthus onwards.

Let’s consider the Capitalocene. That’s not an argument about geology. It’s a mockery of how bourgeois science is used to narrate the history of capitalogenic climate change.¹⁴ It mocks the absurd claim that *Man* is “overwhelming the great forces of nature.”¹⁵ That phrase is wrested from one of the Anthropocene’s early programmatic statements. It also summarizes the ecosocialist consensus, which merely substitutes an *abstract capitalism* for abstract Man.

That Marx and Engels formulated historical materialism as a critique of Man and Nature is rarely recognized.¹⁶ Just as Marx ridiculed Malthus for his slavish adherence to a “natural law” of population, so the Capitalocene thesis reveals the Anthropocene as an ideological con job, a “*libel on the human race!*”¹⁷ In identifying the class-historical origins and development of capitalism as the prime mover of accelerating biospheric crises, the Capitalocene thesis excavates the world-historical movements underpinning the present conjuncture.¹⁸ No less significantly, it reveals Popular Anthropocene’s ideological work and the degree to which ecosocialist thought has been hostage of bourgeois naturalism and humanism.

The Capitalocene is therefore an invitation to unthink the ideological power of the Anthropocene and other expressions of the Environmentalism of the Rich.¹⁹ The latter’s deliberate blurring and blending of science and ideology has for centuries been fundamental to imperialism and its Cheap Nature regimes. Every time imperialist ruling classes have been threatened, there is a

¹⁴ J.W. Moore, “Confronting the Popular Anthropocene: Toward an Ecology of Hope,” *New Geographies* 9 (2017), 186-191.

¹⁵ W. Steffen, P.J. Crutzen and J.R. McNeill, “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (2007): 614-21.

¹⁶ J.W. Moore and J.P. Antonacci, “Good Science, Bad Climate, Big Lies,” in M. Ali and A. Davis, eds., *Radical Political Economics* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 291-310.

¹⁷ K. Marx, “On Proudhon (Letter to J.B. Schweizer) [1865],” in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1969), 24-30; here: 25.

¹⁸ R. Patel and J.W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2017).

¹⁹ J. Martínez-Alier, “Distributional obstacles to international environmental policy,” *Environmental values* 2, no. 2 (1993): 97-124; J.W. Moore, “Unthinking the Anthropocene: Man and Nature in the Capitalocene,” *Global Dialogue* 11, no. 3(2021), 36-37.

mighty return to Nature. This was true in Malthus's time, when the peasant and proletarian forces erupted in popular and anti-colonial revolts. It was no less true in 1968, when the Environmentalism of the Rich emerged as a mass cultural phenomenon in response to the era's revolutionary upheavals.²⁰

Today, the fragility of capitalism, revealed through its unprecedented socio-ecological contradictions, has yielded a new climate consensus amongst the West's ruling strata. Climate denialism is out. Instead, the planetary super-class now argues that a "climate emergency" demands the surrender of the popular classes to Good Science and technocratic rule... in the interests of the Point One Percent. In each instance, Nature – as ruling idea and ruling abstraction – justifies the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, even as it scrambles to move beyond capitalism while maintaining its iron grip on the levers of power.²¹

Marxism emerged through the critique of the Eternal Conflict, Man against Nature. The uppercase is deliberate. Marx and Engels understood the profound danger, and class character, of "one sided" materialism, of "abstract man" and "abstract nature" and the "abstractly material" character of scientific knowledge.²² Such one-sided conceptions invariably smuggled bourgeois ideology into intellectual life and revolutionary critique. And so it is today, with leading ecosocialists writing books like *Marx in the Anthropocene*.²³ Rather than situate the Popular Anthropocene within the history of counter-revolution since 1968, many Marxists presume the innocence of Man and Nature beyond history: the cultural logic of the Environmentalism of the Rich.²⁴

That presumption derives from the weaknesses of contemporary Marxism, conditioned by the defeat of the proletarian forces and socialist alternatives since the 1970s. Within so-called ecological Marxism, the problems are especially severe. Much of it blends a mish-mash of Marxist vocabulary with a retrofitted *Limits to Growth* perspective.²⁵ Not only have leading ecosocialists refused to interrogate the world-historical patterns and dynamics behind capitalogenic climate crisis. They've heaped scorn upon the world-ecology conversation, which is odd, because it takes flight from Marx's insight that the "proletariat... can only exist world-historically."²⁶ (Perhaps Malm especially wishes to avoid the point given his Anglocentric avoidance of the plantation

²⁰ J.W. Moore, "Waste in the Limits to Capital," *Emancipations* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1-45; idem, "Opiates of the Environmentalists? Anthropocene Illusions, Planetary Management & The Capitalocene Alternative," *Abstrakt* (November, 2021).

²¹ J.W. Moore, "On Capitalogenic Climate Crisis: Unthinking Man, Nature and the Anthropocene, and Why It Matters for Planetary Justice," *Real-World Economics Review* 105 (2023), 123-134.

²² K. Marx & F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, K. Marx & F. Engels (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 19-593, here: 42 and passim; K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, K. Marx & F. Engels (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 229-348; here: 327, 303 respectively.

²³ K. Saito, *Marx in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

²⁴ J.W. Moore, "The Fear and the Fix: Environmentalism Serves the Powerful," *The Baffler* (May 15, 2024).

²⁵ D.H. Meadows, D.L. Meadows, J. Randers, and W.W. Behrens, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Mentor, 1972); e.g. J.B. Foster, B. Clark, and R. York. *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011).

²⁶ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 49.

proletariat in the making of fossil capital!) Capitalism must be interpreted – and narrated – through its world-historical development. In their flight from world history, “ecological” Marxists remind me of Marx’s commentary on Feuerbach: “As far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist.”²⁷ In this effort, one can choose either the categories of the bourgeoisie – Man, Nature, and Civilization – or the standpoint of the proletariat in the web of life.

MAN & NATURE? BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY AND THE ETERNAL CONFLICT

Raymond Williams once called Nature the most complex word in the language.²⁸ I would say it’s also the most dangerous. And not just in English – in all the Western languages. For Marxists, language is a distinctive moment in culture and ideology.²⁹ It is not the free-floating signifier of the poststructuralists. Nor is it the epiphenomenal reflex of material forces implicated by many ecosocialists. Language and consciousness are dialectically, materially, bound to each other; they are, “from the very beginning [of the human experience] a social product” – which is to say, they are a labor process.³⁰ With the rise of class society, ideology took shape. Ideologies are languages of power. Marx, as usual, offers a delicious summary of why this matters. Language is “practical, real consciousness” rooted in social relations; in class society, language and class consciousness are bound to “ruling ideas.”³¹ All those relations unfold as, and within, webs of life.³² All are pivotal to the unfolding planetary crisis.

These are among the philosophical premises of historical materialism. Their power is found in asking the right questions. And these questions can only be resolved, as I argued a decade ago, through *praxis*. It is bourgeois theory that deludes itself in thinking that theoretical difference can be resolved through assertions of theoretical difference. Communist theory poses questions and propositions that can only be resolved – to the degree that any dialectical question can be resolved! – through praxis. The proletarian intellectual does not conjure concepts and impose them on past and present; instead, she “remains constantly on the *real* ground of history.”³³ Our questions and proposals seek to explain capitalism’s world-historical patterns and turning points, so that we may identify the decisive contradictions of the “present as history”

²⁷ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 41; J.W. Moore, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene & the Flight from World History,” *Nordia* 5, no. 2 (2022), 123-146.

²⁸ R. Williams, *Keywords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 219.

²⁹ R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

³⁰ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 44; Engels, “The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man.”

³¹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 44, 59.

³² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 30.

³³ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 53-54.

– what Lenin aptly describes as the “weak links” in capitalism’s chains of power, profit and life.³⁴

For Marxists, the philosophy of praxis in the revolutionary struggle is two-fold. First the obvious. *Praxis* implicates the development, revision and application of theoretical knowledge in light of the unfolding class struggle. Distinctively for Marxists, that *theoretical knowledge* is profoundly historical. Praxis joins the skills of the prophet, the politico, and the historian. Every predictive enterprise depends on world-historical retrodiction. Marx’s dialectics are crucial in this enterprise. Their ontological priority insists that we conceptualize any entity or process through its relations with the constitutive outside: “a being which does not have its nature outside itself is not an... objective being.”³⁵ This is how dialectics *should* help socialists to guard against what Marx calls “one-sided” formulations. And why should that be crucial? Because a one-sided formulation leads to the misrecognition of capitalism’s weak links, and thence to one-sided politics.

I wrote *Capitalism in the Web of Life* out of the conviction that Marxists, environmentalists, and “critical” intellectuals had misrecognized the unfolding epochal crisis of capitalism. Their conceptions were not necessarily wrong; they were one-sided. (This was always the nature of my beef with Foster, whose work I continued to praise across the past decade.³⁶) One-sided formulations worthy of critique are not the same as bad scholarship; much less do they imply any rejection of Marxism. More problematic, for the theoretical struggle, are those arguments that cherry-pick phrases (“monism”!), attribute arguments via ecological inference (“hybridity”!), or that otherwise make mountains out of molehills while evading the real ground of history. They owe much to the intellect worker’s view of the world: fragmented and in denial of the “totality of the historical process.”³⁷

Marx’s method orients us to how one-sided formulations refract and reflect ideological structures sustained institutional power and, in the final analysis, the evolving balance of class forces. I make no argument that the Gods have spared me from one-sided interpretations. What’s different is that I raise the problem explicitly, grounded in a class-historical reading of knowledge, and embrace Marx’s philosophy of internal relations as a counter-tendency. One-sided formulations among Marxists are not grounds for condemnation, but opportunities for synthesis. (This has been my reading of metabolic rift, fossil capital, the second contradiction, and much beyond!)³⁸ These and other major

³⁴ P.M. Sweezy, *The Present as History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1953); V.I. Lenin, “The Chain Is No Stronger than its Weakest Link,” [*Pravda*, June 9, 1917], in *Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress, 1964), 519-20.

³⁵ K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, K. Marx & F. Engels (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 229-348, here: 337.

³⁶ J.W. Moore, “Metabolic Rift or Metabolic Shift? Dialectics, Nature, and the World-Historical Method,” *Theory & Society* 46, no. 4 (2017): 285-318.

³⁷ P.A. Baran, “The Commitment of the Intellectual,” *Monthly Review* 13, no. 1 (1961): 8-18; here: 10.

³⁸ See Moore, “Metabolic Rift or Metabolic Shift?” and in relation to the fossil capital thesis, my concluding remarks in idem, “The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 594-630; and the sustained discussions in idem, “Empire, Class & The Origins Of Planetary Crisis: The Transition Debate

concepts – certainly mine included – are dialectical manifestations of ideological structures, not least the disciplines of the knowledge factory, that enforce one-sidedness, the expression in thought of capitalist alienation. As I argued a decade ago, the inevitably partial character of my proposals would be – *could only be* – illuminated on the real ground of world history. The history of ideas, ideology, and science is fundamental to those world histories; without it, the only materialism that Marxism can produce is an exceedingly vulgar one.

MARX & ENGELS' LABOR THEORY OF LIFE

Among Marxism's greatest concessions to bourgeois materialism is the claim that the history of class society – “written history,” Engels reminds us – is a derivation of Man and Nature.³⁹ It is not. *Man* and *Nature* are the greatest of the bourgeoisie's “ruling ideas.” They are the ideological software of capitalist hegemony over power, profit, and life; their invention, in the two centuries after 1492, is well-documented, widely studied – and generally ignored by Marxists.

Although we do not need Marx and Engels' authority to make the case, the founders of historical materialism took *as their point of departure* the critique of bourgeois humanism and bourgeois naturalism. Marxists easily forget the sixth thesis on Feuerbach and its elaborations in *The German Ideology*. Feuerbach's error was to conceptualize *Man* (Marx and Engels' uppercase) abstracted from the “ensemble of social relations.”⁴⁰ There is only “real, historical man” and real, historical *nature*.⁴¹ This latter is a richer, evolving historical totality, foregrounded in *Web of Life*. Historical nature is at once the condition of possibility for a given phase of class society, and the terrain upon which class struggles unfold. It includes “real, historical man” through labor, mediating dialectical and non-dialectical antagonisms with the “rest of nature.”⁴²

How easily Marxists have forgotten, even in the climate crisis, that these *ensembles* flow through labor as a “specifically harnessed natural force” – in and through “the rest of nature.”⁴³ Ensembles of labor – modes of life and production – within given “natural conditions” subsequently “modify these natural bases.”⁴⁴ This labor process of environment-making “modification,” is constitutive of modes of production; organizing work relations is a labor-mediated relation of “man and man” and “man and nature,” through which a given class society “act[s] upon external nature and change[s] it, *and in this way... simultaneously changes [its] own nature.*” Labor activates “the potentialities slumbering

in the Web of Life,” *Esboços: Histórias em Contextos Globais* 28 (2021): 740-763; and idem, “There is No Such Thing as a Technological Accident: Cheap Natures, Climate Crisis & Technological Impasse,” in *Technological Accidents*, Joke Brower and Sjoerd van Tuinen, eds. (Leiden: V2 Publishing, 2023), 10-37.

³⁹ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 219n.

⁴⁰ Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” 4.

⁴¹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 39.

⁴² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 31.

⁴³ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 612; Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 31.

⁴⁴ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 31.

within nature” – human nature as “a force of nature” no less than “external nature.”⁴⁵

The labor theory of life is fundamental to the longstanding proletarian critique of bourgeois naturalism. In the foundational statement of historical materialism, Marx and Engels warned of the seductive allure of “ruling ideas.” Across their lives, perhaps no critique of ruling ideas featured more prominently than their ruthless deconstruction and mockery of Malthus’s “natural law” arguments. They understood, as many today do not, that Malthus’s ideological emphasis was not overpopulation in itself, but the invocation of “natural law” to justify capitalism’s brutal inequality.⁴⁶

If that class war is justified through natural law, the labor theory of life is its dialectical kryptonite. Following Marx and Engels, I’ll share four major observations on the real ground of history and historical method. (Whether or not my historical interpretations are correct, flawed, or a bit of both is what we *should* be discussing – and what the ecosocialists are not.) First, the labor process is, for communists, the ontological and methodological point of entry for the historical study of human relations, which are always more than human – thereby giving *real* substance to the empty phraseology of “critical” theorists.⁴⁷ This is especially true for the history of class societies.

Second, the labor process is a metabolic contradiction. It variously expresses, internalizes and mediates the concrete dynamics of class through its “dialectical inversions.”⁴⁸ Above all this involves the mixing of dialectical and non-dialectical antagonisms in the web of life: of “natural bases” and their “subsequent modification.”⁴⁹ This means class contradictions are metabolic all the way down – without flattening the “socio-natural properties” of any specific metabolic arrangement.⁵⁰

Third, the modern proletariat can only exist world-historically. That world-historical existence unfolds through the class struggle over surplus value, whose labor processes unfold through a *doubly* “twofold relation.”⁵¹ On the one hand, this is the “production of life, both of one’s own in labour and of fresh life in procreation: this social metabolism unifies the differentiate unity of production and reproduction which every class society must create and regulate.”⁵² Simultaneously, these labor relations and processes manifest “on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relation.”

Fourth, ideologies are produced by ruling classes, and this too is metabolic and material. These ideological structures extend to the production of “abstractly material” science, necessary to sustain a geocultural binary code of Man and Nature under bourgeois rule.

⁴⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 133, 283.

⁴⁶ D. McNally, *Against the Market* (London: Verso, 1993).

⁴⁷ Inter alios, Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

⁴⁸ Marx, *Capital*, 423.

⁴⁹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 31.

⁵⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 165.

⁵¹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 43.

⁵² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 43; also Wally Secombe’s magisterial *A Millennium of Family Change* (London: Verso, 1992).

From this reading of Marx and Engels, I've drawn three major implications, together outlining a labor theory of life. First, "labor created man." By this Engels did not propose a labor reductionism. That would violate the most elementary procedures of dialectical thought. Rather the labor process is the generative moment of social metabolisms, its contradictions weaving together cooperation, conflict and consciousness. Levins and Lewontin would subsequently develop these themes in their critique of Cartesian reduction and the environment-making dialectics of gene, organism and environment.

Second, the labor process joins the dialectical activation of the "soil and the worker" as a differentiated ontological and historical unity. This is crucial if we are to avoid vulgar materialism. As Marxist geographers have long emphasized, *resources become*. And before them, Marx: the labor process activates "new potentialities slumbering in nature."⁵³ Attributing historical powers to climate, coal, or abstract nature is about as fundamental a rejection of Marx's dialectical materialism as one can get. (Use-value is a historical relation of the labor process, which activates some use-values and not others.) Such substance fetishism emerged historically through the Cartesian revolution, manufactured from the raw material of Nature. This was my disagreement with Malm's fossil capital thesis.⁵⁴ Malm throws onto the trash heap Marx's concept of circulating constant capital and hopes that no one notices. In my view, Marx's concept of circulating capital allows us forge interpretive connections between class and substance, and I concluded that fossil capital and cognates are naturalized substance fetishes. As such, they share a conceptual affinity with neo-Malthusianism. Rather than a battle of slogans, however, I showed how a recuperation of Marx's theory of the rising organic composition of capital in the light of the dialectics of fixed and circulating constant capital allows for a historical reconstruction. This alternative reveals imperialist class formation and its commodity frontiers – especially in the plantation system – as pivotal to the "rise" of fossil capital.⁵⁵

Third, the origins of capitalism and its capitalogenic crisis tendencies in the web of life are therefore located, again following Marx, through modern proletarianization in the web of life. The core of Cheap Nature as bourgeois-imperial project and world-historical process is the search for cheap and tractable labor supplies. It is a history of class formation, and politically-enforced proletarianization, beginning in earnest with the detonation of climate change, geopolitical exhaustion and thence renewed war, and economic crisis in the 1550s. Following Marx's arguments in *Capital*, I argued that worldwide proletarianization, propelled forward by the mechanisms of political accumulation, was central to understanding capitalism's origins *and* today's epochal crisis.

In the twenty-first century, natural law arguments appear in a new form but not in historical essence. Nature as "climate emergency" is now deployed in favor of a liberal technocratic program of climate austerity with a powerful justification: "there is no time." Nature and other ruling ideas (but Nature especially!), as far back as the Cartesian Revolution and Locke's ethos of

⁵³ Marx, *Capital*, 283.

⁵⁴ A. Malm, *Fossil Capital* (London: Verso, 2016).

⁵⁵ Moore, "There is no such thing as a technological accident."

Improvement, have invited intellectuals to “share the illusions” of their epoch. For Marx and Engels, this was not merely a question of getting it wrong. Malthus *was* wrong, in so many ways; but this is no exercise in academic point scoring.

Ideas and ideologies are class relations. The “means of mental production” require the formation of a stratum of “conceptive ideologists,” today represented by highly professionalized and disciplined intellect workers.⁵⁶ Ideas not only have a class basis; they are fundamental to the class struggle. In the modern era, the most powerful ideas mask the ruling class project in the name of Good Science, which delivers truths about Nature and natural law.⁵⁷ No serious Marxist approach to the history of ideas and ideology can evade this history.

In this light, the Anthropocene is not a problem because scholars arrive at different conclusions about the decisive “golden spikes.” The Anthropocene is a problem because it is a cultural complex that produces knowledge framed explicitly by the ideological demands of the imperial bourgeoisie. This is bourgeoisie’s return to Nature and the Eternal Conflict. The Anthropocene-Industrial complex produces the ideology and policy-oriented programs for the Point One Percent’s planetary management. It enables the planetary superclass and their house intellectuals to deploy Good Science in pursuit of balancing the costs of climate mitigation and adaptation of the backs and bellies of the global majority. Hence the Anthropocenists’ refusal to name the system and its commitment to the theory of “human-caused” climate change.

We’ve read and heard, time and again, that the climate crisis is anthropogenic. That’s presented as a *fact*. It’s not. *Anthropogenesis* – “made by Man” – is an interpretation. Neither humankind nor human society is responsible for the climate crisis. It is *capitalism* and its ruling classes, and the imperialist bourgeoisie above all. The climate crisis is not anthropogenic. *It’s capitalogenic*.

That does not minimize the gravity of the climate crisis in geophysical terms. Far from it! Indeed, I accept those assessments as the basis for arguing that capitalism cannot survive. The epochal transformations of the biosphere now in motion undermine capitalism’s ability to sustain itself. Climate is not everything; but it’s impossible to explain *anything* about contemporary capitalism without it. Among the fundamental expressions of climate-class antagonism is the termination of the agricultural revolution model, which first took shape in the early modern Atlantic. The long era of producing more and more food with less and less labor-time has definitively come to an end.

This and similar historical arguments have been studiously avoided by the High Priests of ecological Marxism. When first I read Foster’s initial – and totally insane – response to my book, I wondered if he had read all the way to the end?⁵⁸ (I wonder still.) There I affirm the climate crisis as wrapped up in an epochal contradiction irresolvable within capitalism.

⁵⁶ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 60.

⁵⁷ D. Harvey, “Population, resources, and the ideology of science,” *Economic Geography* 50, no. 3 (1974): 256-277

⁵⁸ J.B. Foster, “In Defense of Ecological Marxism: John Bellamy Foster Responds to a Critic,” *Climate & Capitalism* (6 June, 2016).

There are practical matters at stake. Foster endows capitalism with magical powers to withstand its socio-ecological antagonisms. No, Professor Foster, capitalism will not survive “until the last tree is cut.”⁵⁹ He tells us that climate change is an existential threat to all humanity – but not to capitalism? Doesn’t capitalism need a steady and rising supply of “trees” (and everything else), lest costs rise and profits fall? Foster and his fellow travelers have ignored what Marx would surely say about capitalism’s limits in the twenty-first century: the limit to capital is capital itself. Curiously, their arguments, prizing the gravity of the social metabolism as “metabolic rift” (a term Marx never uttered), denies the gravity of that social metabolism in limiting capital’s expanded reproduction. It is not I – but they – who minimize the epochal significance of the climate crisis as a class-historical conjuncture in the web of life. If capitalism can survive independently of whatever happens to the biosphere, just what, pray tell, is the point of “ecological” Marxism?

There is a concrete world history of these climate-class conjunctures. The Myceneans, Romans, Europe’s feudal aristocrats – all saw their civilizations unravel in the face of climate-class crises. The scale, scope and intensity of twenty-first century climate crisis dwarfs anything seen in the Holocene. Different, to be sure, but also similar: the lessons are there for taking. Great climate-class crises have often been followed by golden ages for the direct producers. To repeat: climate is not everything. But no element of class society can be explained without it. Climate is a causal moment within capitalism’s class-metabolic arrangements.⁶⁰

As a heuristic, the distinction between natural and human forcing can be important. *As a heuristic*. But five centuries of bourgeois naturalism, driven into the minds of every schoolboy and schoolgirl, dies a slow death. We are tasked with separating baby from bathwater. One can distinguish species-level processes appropriate to that high level of abstraction. However, Marxists do not explain the class struggle by invoking species-level or natural processes: “abstract nature.” We do not explain specific movements of capitalism’s antagonisms by referring to “production in general.” We do not explain history through “man in general,” nature in general, and other “chaotic conceptions.”⁶¹ Marx’s prime example is population, of course tightly joined to his critique of natural law fetishism. Of these chaotic concepts, as practical bourgeois consciousness and thence as ruling abstractions, Man, Nature, and Civilization emerged first. Marxists, in contrast, use historically-specific concepts to address historically-specific events, processes, and patterns.

Early in *Capital*, Marx recognizes that all modes of production and modes of life organize through the labor process. This is a labor-centered metabolism “independent of all forms of society.”⁶² The transhistorical abstraction enables the specification of progressively more determinate conceptions, tracing the

⁵⁹ J.W. Moore, “World Accumulation and Planetary Life, or, Why Capitalism Will Not Survive Until the Last Tree is Cut.” *IPPR Progressive Review* 24 (2017): 176-204.

⁶⁰ J. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); J.W. Moore, “Nature and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism,” *Review* 26, no. 2 (2003): 97-172; idem, “Empire, Class & The Origins of Planetary Crisis.”

⁶¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.

⁶² K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1977), 133.

character of surplus labor in successive class societies.⁶³ So too for the history of class-metabolic antagonisms grasping labor as a “specifically harnessed natural force.” Under capitalism, those specifically natural forces are transformed into the ecocidal alchemy of surplus value and the disciplines of socially-necessary labor time.

Capitalism’s class-metabolic antagonism is an alienation that unifies “the soil and the worker” through the labor process.⁶⁴ Of course it does so in one-sided fashion, a violent abstraction in thought, a ruling abstraction in practice.⁶⁵ The alienation of “the soil and the worker” is fashioned through primitive accumulation, a theory of class formation in the web of life. Society and Nature, the ruling abstractions, are ideological expressions of this primitive accumulation. This includes the expulsion of most humans from Society, pending their Salvation through Cheap – and often deadly – Work.⁶⁶ Thus bourgeois governance proceeds through the violent abstraction of Society and Nature, in which specific “scientific” rules of management and social discipline apply.

Communist praxis rejects such one-sided formulae; it unfolds through a recognition of the *singular* contradictions of capitalism. These create the possibility for proletarian unity, something disallowed by the pluralist chaos of an “environmental proletariat.”⁶⁷ To be sure, capitalism’s contradictions find countless expressions, but all flow through the class struggle in the web of life, including those “uncontrollable natural conditions” – for instance solar cycles, volcanic eruptions, laws of gravity.⁶⁸ For Marx and Engels, the alienated unity of the “soil and the worker” reveals the conditions of possibility for the communist unity of proletariat and biotariat, not as abstracted essences but as an internally differentiated and interpenetrated totality.

This dialectical position distinguishes world-ecology from anticommunist Green Thought and ecosocialist tendencies privileging the imagined concrete. Far from esoteric, the world-ecological position on this question holds that such unity is crucial to any socialist politics of reconstruction, through which cooperation rather than alienation becomes a “productive force.”⁶⁹ If the climate crisis is as serious as so many of us believe, socialists must embrace the biotariat as comrades in arms. The tasks of socialist revolutionary and reconstruction on a devastated planet require nothing less. That’s the question of the Proletarocene.⁷⁰

⁶³ Marx, *Capital*, 340-352.

⁶⁴ Marx, *Capital*, 638.

⁶⁵ D. Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

⁶⁶ Patel and Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*.

⁶⁷ J.B. Foster and B. Clark, “Socialism and ecological survival,” *Monthly Review* 74, no. 3 (2022): 1-33.

⁶⁸ K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3 (New York: Penguin, 1981), 213.

⁶⁹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 43.

⁷⁰ The Salvage Collective, *Tragedy of the Worker* (London: Verso, 2021).

THE PLANETARY PROLETARIAT: TOWARDS AN ECOSOCIALISM IN THE WEB OF LIFE

The critique of bourgeois ideology is fundamental to socialist climate politics. My line of march follows the imperative to connect historical capitalism's ideological, material-ecological, and class relations. This is not a matter of abstract theorizing. Who and what the imperial bourgeoisie designates as Nature and Civilization is fundamental to understanding capitalism's drive towards climate crisis and its capitalogenic trinity: the climate class divide, climate patriarchy, and climate apartheid. An ecosocialism that relegates geocultural domination to the status of a secondary contradiction—rather than woven into the fabric of endless accumulation and the endless conquest of the Earth—is one that accepts the economic reductionism of bourgeois thought (including vulgar Marxisms) and disarms movements for planetary justice and socialism.⁷¹

The unfolding climate crisis calls for a reimagination of the standpoint of the proletariat. For Lukács, the dialectical “point of view of totality” was not only the point of departure (the “subjective” moment) but the point of return, the “objective” moment, for Marxist investigation, interpretation, and its contribution to the struggle for planetary socialism.⁷² Among the pathbreaking contributions of ecological Marxists in recent decades has been this: the construction of totality proceeds from precisely what is fetishized under capitalism, the “socio-natural properties” and contradictions of accumulation and its patterns of class struggle.⁷³ Only a method that proceeds from the ontological priority of the class struggle as a “rich totality” of labor, human and extra-human, paid and unpaid, will suffice.⁷⁴ The question of method is a question of the class struggle in the web of life – an interpretive mode of discerning the conditions for a class unity now rejected by many ecosocialists.⁷⁵

When Marx observes that capitalism degrades the soil and the worker, he foregrounds the *necessary* conditions of capitalist development in the web of life.⁷⁶ Capitalist class formation unfolds through the *political* imposition of property relations that allow for two essential conditions of endless accumulation. One is Cheap Labor, which includes centrally the unpaid work of humans defined as Natural (for example, women). The second is Cheap Nature, which includes human work, as we have seen, but encompasses all webs of life put to work for capital. These moments – “from above” – imply and necessitate the emergence of proletarian capacities “from below.”

For Marx, the soil and the worker are distinctive moments of an “organic whole.”⁷⁷ *Proletariat* (putting humans to work for capital) and *Biotariat* (putting

⁷¹ Moore, “Power, Profit and Prometheanism,” Parts I and II.

⁷² G. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 27.

⁷³ Marx, *Capital*, 165. See P. Burkett, *Marx and Nature* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); J.B. Foster, *Marx's Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); J. O'Connor, *Natural Causes* (New York: Guilford, 1998).

⁷⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.

⁷⁵ Foster and Clark, “Socialism and ecological survival.”

⁷⁶ Marx, *Capital*, 636-38.

⁷⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.

extra-human life to work for capital) form a world-historical unity.⁷⁸ This class struggle in the web of life — the interpenetrating unity of Proletariat and Biotariat — is the dialectical countertendency to the Civilizing Project and its Promethean fantasies. These projects, fantasies, and the endless accumulation of capital produce its world-historical negation in the Planetary Proletariat.⁷⁹ Prometheanism was the original form of domination, simultaneously creating a dualist cosmology of Civilization and Savagery and cultivating the bourgeois conceit that webs of life may be infinitely controlled in the interests of Man’s improvement. This was the bourgeoisie’s alienated self-knowledge of its Promethean managerialism, which initially emerged in the great plantations and mining enterprises of the Americas.⁸⁰

Capitalism creates its biotarian gravediggers alongside the global proletarian forces. Together they co-produce limits that cannot be “fixed” through capitalist politics as usual; they active negative-value. Biotariat and proletariat are not separate entities but rather interpenetrating realities. They are distinctive socio-metabolic moments in late capitalism’s “rich totality of many determinations.”⁸¹ Notice, dear reader, my emphasis on distinction, contradiction, and interpenetration in the history of class society? Good. That’s dialectics. Now you have a ready-made bullshit detector whenever you come across the lazy, mean-spirited attacks on my arguments as *monist*.

Marx was serious when he wrote that “the *true barrier* to capitalist production is *capital itself*.”⁸² Obviously, he did not deny – but affirmed – the centrality of the “life process” in labor’s transformations of “natural conditions.” Understanding that the essence of an entity or process involves processes external to that entity or process, Marx’s method allows us to grasp capital’s limits in the web of life. These are at once internal and external; its nexus is the labor process and the mix of dialectical transformations that it sets in motion, overdetermined by non-dialectical antagonisms, Marx’s “uncontrollable natural conditions.”

This method identifies and seeks to exploit capitalism’s weak links as irreducibly socio-ecological. In so doing, it allows socialists to make sense of the web of life through Marx’s class-metabolic ontology, identifying the evolving and differentiated unities of class power and world accumulation in the web of life. If there is one lesson from the long history of climate-class conjunctures, it’s this. Dramatically unfavorable climate changes alter the balance of class power, undermine ruling class capacities, and open new political possibilities. Climate conditions have been geographically external but causally endogenous to the contradiction of class society, from the Dark Ages Cold Period to the Little Ice Age.⁸³

⁷⁸ J.W. Moore, “Das Planetare Proletariat im Planetaren Inferno,” *LjB: Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus* 7 (2021): 4-11; S. Collis, “Notes Towards a Manifesto of the Biotariat,” *Beating the Bounds* (July, 2014).

⁷⁹ Moore, “Power, Profit and Prometheanism, Parts I and II.”

⁸⁰ J. Santora, “Lex Capitalocenae: Cheap Nature and the Emergence of Legal Naturalism,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* (forthcoming, 2025); Moore, “Nature and the Transition.”

⁸¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage, 1973), 100.

⁸² Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, 358.

⁸³ Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*.

We cannot reduce history to the logic of capital or to abstract incantations of materialism. We must follow Marx in “rising from the abstract to the concrete,” not once, but relentlessly and without cease. Upon our return from the concrete to the abstract, we must rethink and reimagine anew.⁸⁴ To paraphrase Bhaskar, dialectics is the great loosener.⁸⁵ A journey that fails to grasp how a historical-geographical totality acquires new properties by generating new antagonisms betrays an undialectical method – clearly inadequate to the tasks of the planetary proletariat in the planetary inferno.⁸⁶

This leads us to a basic observation. What appears to be “external” – as in the *Limits to Growth* model – is in reality an internal relation of capital. The philosophy of external relations turns resources into objects. But the world-historical reality is very different. Marx’s method directs our focus to the internalization of unpaid work and its centrality in capital accumulation.⁸⁷ The bourgeois mantra of “externalities” mystifies the sources of unpaid work/energy that enables capital accumulation. Thus the danger of the ruling abstractions, Man and Nature. They also conceal the revolt of the biotarian fraction of the planetary proletariat – increasingly a dynamic of negative-value accumulation that I summarize as the *superweed effect*. While only valorized labor-power produces value directly, the total circuit of capital accumulation depends for its expanded reproduction on the *extra-economic* appropriation of unpaid work. The latter’s principal human sources are found in the female and feminized proletariat – a Femitariat if you will –whose revolutionary capacities derive from its situated position in the relations of exploitation and appropriation.⁸⁸ Biotariat and Femitariat must be continually renewed, which capital can only achieve through new imperialisms that create – at gunpoint – new frontiers. These Cheap Nature frontiers have historically attenuated the surplus capital problem by reducing reproduction costs and creating new, profitable investment opportunities.⁸⁹ Today, those frontiers are fewer than ever, while the surplus capital seeking investment is greater than ever. An epochal crisis looms.⁹⁰

This unpaid work is a class struggle over the working day, and therefore a battle over worldwide surplus value as a metabolic antagonism. Here’s Marx in *Capital*: “What interests [capital] is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion in a working day. It attains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, *in the same way* as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility.”⁹¹ This class struggle over the nexus of paid and unpaid work—mediated through the

⁸⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 101.

⁸⁵ R. Bhaskar, *Dialectic* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 354.

⁸⁶ B. Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Moore, “Metabolic Rift or Metabolic Shift?”

⁸⁷ Moore, “The Capitalocene, Part II.”

⁸⁸ S. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004).

⁸⁹ J.W. Moore, “World Accumulation and Planetary Life, or, Why Capitalism Will Not Survive Until the ‘Last Tree is Cut,’” *IPPR Progressive Review* 24 (2017): 176-204..

⁹⁰ J.W. Moore, “Del Gran Abaratamiento a la Gran Implosión,” *Relaciones Internacionales* 47 (2021): 11-52.

⁹¹ Marx, *Capital*, 376.

capitalist state, imperial formations, and the bourgeoisie's ruling abstractions – is at the center of the climate crisis, and the core of *Web of Life's* arguments.

The standpoint of the planetary proletariat must be battle-tested on the crucible of world history. It must be refined and reinvented through revolutionary struggle in the planetary crisis. To paraphrase the young Marx, radical ideas become material forces when mobilized by the planetary proletariat.⁹² Here, we may find a world-ecology of hope and praxis that widens the possibilities for the socialist emancipation of humans and the rest of nature. Ours is an epochal climate-class conjuncture. In it the class struggle does not merely “occur” in the web of life; it is a product and producer of the webs of life that will shape our planetary habitats for millennia. The liberation of the “soil and worker” will come together, or not at all.

Our theoretical struggle in the climate crisis must look anew at Marx's revolutionary epistemological hope: for a “natural science [that] will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be *one* science.”⁹³ Pivotal to the tasks of planetary socialism must, therefore, be the transcendence of an epistemic, but also always geocultural, rift that enables the bourgeoisie's geocultural hegemony. We must look to create the possibilities for “one science” – a necessarily *proletarian science*, to take a term strenuously, and tellingly, avoided by ecosocialists. This would, as Marx indicates, integrate the differentiated unities of human sociality in the web of life. A proletarian science would, among other tasks, inform the communist possibilities of advancing the forces of production through cooperation and knowledge freed from the prisonhouse of the Cartesian Revolution. When Marx scolded the German socialists in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, warning against a fetishism that endows labor with “supernatural creative power,” he insisted on the unity of human and extra-human labor as the “sources” of all wealth.⁹⁴ And, as if to underline the point, Marx continued: “*labour*... itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature.”⁹⁵

In this famous passage, Marx advances an *activist* materialism in the web of life. This is the standpoint of the planetary proletariat. That's no academic quibble. It's necessary to guide the strategic (and unevenly interpenetrating) unity of proletariat, femitariat, and biotariat. Lacking such a standpoint, the world left will be relatively powerless to identify the decisive contradictions of our world-historical moment. (And therefore also to identify the decisive political-strategic questions of a given transitional era.) A generative *socialist* theory sufficient to guide strategy in the age of the planetary inferno turns on its capacity to identify capitalism's decisive contradictions – its “weak links” – as irreducibly socio-ecological phenomena. This commitment to dialectical knowledge on the real ground of history, and a socialist theory of capitalism in

⁹² Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 [1843]), 137.

⁹³ Karl Marx, “Private Property and Communism [1843],” in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: *Marx and Engels 1843-44* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 293-305, quotation: 304.

⁹⁴ Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” 81; Marx, *Capital*, 638.

⁹⁵ Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” 81.

the web of life, is at the heart of the world-ecology conversation and its reimagination of planetary socialism in the twenty-first century.

This is the invitation, and incitement, on offer in the pages that follow.