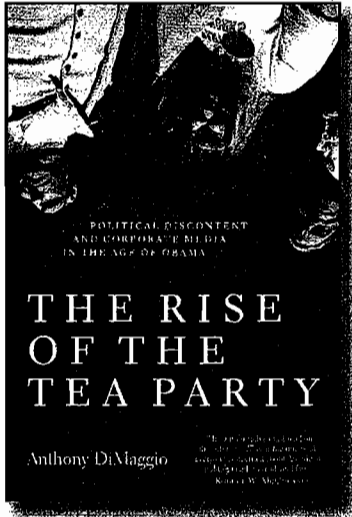


THE RISE OF THE TEA PARTY

*Political Discontent and Corporate Media
in the Age of Obama*

by ANTHONY DiMAGGIO



“This acute and highly informed analysis of the Tea Party phenomenon brings to light the reality that lies behind excited media portrayals, crucially distinguishing the ‘movement’ itself from the far larger and more significant popular sectors that are misled into believing that it responds to their authentic grievances, which are unaddressed in the mainstream political system. It is a dangerous mix, as history reveals. This lucid and careful study could hardly be more timely.”

—NOAM CHOMSKY

“The authoritative must-read on the subject. . . pulls back the curtain to show the Tea Party for what it is: a PR front

group for billionaires and corporations. This is the one book everyone concerned about American politics needs to read, and fast.”

—ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

“Expertly documented. . . a work of understanding social movements that will permanently contribute to the literature inside social movement studies. Most importantly it offers a new interpretation of the Tea Party as a media mediated top-down phenomenon highly compatible with a neo-liberal agenda.”

—PETER PHILLIPS, professor of sociology, Sonoma State University

TO ORDER CALL:

\$18.95 / Paper / 978-1-58367-247-1 / 287pp.

800.670.9499

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS

146 WEST 29TH STREET, SUITE 6W, NYC 10001

www.monthlyreview.org / MRzine.org

The Wisconsin Uprising by ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY

MONTHLY REVIEW

VOL. 63
NO. 9

FEBRUARY
2012

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

A Special Focus on China

Ecological Civilization, Indigenous Culture, & Rural Reconstruction in China

WEN TIEJUN, LAU KINCHI, CHENG CUNWANG, HE HUILI, & QIU JIANGSHENG

Ecological Marxism in China

ZHIHE WANG

Global Stagnation & China

JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER & ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY

Review

First, They Came for the Sex Offenders:

JUDITH LEVINE on *Sex Panic and the Punitive State* by Roger N. Lancaster

Monthly Review online <http://monthlyreview.org>

MR <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org>



MONTHLY REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2012

VOL. 63 NO. 9

Ecological Marxism in China

ZHIHE WANG

Chinese interest in ecological Marxism has grown increasingly in the past twenty years. Amazingly, it has even become, to some extent, an important part of contemporary Marxism in China. But why has it been so well received? This paper will offer some reasons for this and also point out the challenges now facing ecological Marxism in China.

The Appearance of Ecological Marxism in China

In Chinese the term “ecological Marxism” is translated as 生态学马克思主义, 生态马克思主义, or 生态学的马克思主义. Wang Jin was the first person in China to use this term, in his 1986 article “Ecological Marxism and Ecological Socialism.” He regarded ecological Marxism and ecological socialism as two different social movements and predicted that the two “will be integrated as one.”¹ Twenty years have passed since then, and many important writings by Western Marxist scholars on Ecological Marxism have been translated into Chinese. These include Ben Agger, *Western Marxism: An Introduction*; James O’Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism*; William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*; and John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology and Ecology Against Capitalism*. By 2010 there were nine books and 598 articles on ecological Marxism that were published in China in Mandarin (see Table 1). There have also been seventy-five master’s theses (see Table 2) and fifteen dissertations (see Table 3) on this subject.

Today ecological Marxism is part of the totality of Marxism in China. Ecological Marxism is regarded by some Chinese Marxists as not only “one of the most influential movements in contemporary Western Marxism”² and “a new development of Marxism,”³ but also as “a very important force among various ecological theories.”⁴ Some Marxist scholars even argue that ecological Marxism is “the most creative aspect of American Marxist Philosophy.”⁵

Ecological Marxism has also, at least to some extent, been accepted by the mainstream Marxist camp. For example, the article, “The

ZHIHE WANG (zhihe_wang@postmodernchina.org) is the director of the Center for Constructive Postmodern Studies and professor of philosophy at Harbin Institute of Technology in China; as well as the director of the Institute for Postmodern Development of China, in the United States. His most recent book, with Meijun Fan, is *Second Enlightenment* (Peking University Press, 2011).

Table 1 Academic Journal Articles on Ecological Marxism in China (Utilizing Alternative Translations of the Term), 1915-2010

	Ecological Marxism 生态学马克思主义	EcoMarxism 生态马克思主义	Marxism of Ecology 生态学的马克思主义	Total
1915-1980	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	4	0	0	4
1991-2000	40	3	2	45
2001-2010	406	132	11	549
Total	450	135	13	598

Source: “China Academic Periodicals Database.” Data was acquired by inputting the three key words as articles titles and eliminating repeated and irrelevant ones.

Table 2. M.A. Theses on Ecological Marxism (Utilizing Alternative Translations of the Term), 1980-2010

	Ecological Marxism 生态学马克思主义	EcoMarxism 生态马克思主义	Marxism of Ecology 生态学的马克思主义	Total
1980-2000	0	0	0	0
2001-2010	69	6	0	75
Total	69	6	0	75

Source: “China Excellent Master’s Theses Database”. Data was acquired by inputting the three key words as articles titles and eliminating repeated and irrelevant ones.

Ecological Implication of Marx’s Theory of Metabolism: J.B. Foster’s Interpretation of Marx’s Ecological Worldview” written by Chen Xueming, a professor at Fudan University and the president of the China Society for Contemporary Marxism Abroad Studies, was published in *China Social Sciences*, the top academic journal in China. Wang Yuchen’s *Ecological Critique and Green Utopia: A Study of Ecological Marxism* was published in 2009 by People Press, a top government-run publisher. *Xihua Digest*, a leading Digest journal, reprinted Michael Perelman’s Claremont Ecological Civilization Forum paper entitled “An Ecological Future: Marx and Wu-Wei Ecology.” In addition, *Marxism and Reality*, a top journal in Marxism studies run by the Central Bureau of Compilation and Translation, has published numerous articles on ecological Marxism. All of this demonstrates that ecological Marxism as a Western intellectual movement has been accepted within the mainstream in China.

As with many other Western intellectual movements, such as “constructive postmodernism” based on Whiteheadian philosophy (an intellectual movement which originated in the West but now has considerable influence in China), the beginning of ecological

Table 3. Doctoral Dissertations on Ecological Marxism in China (Utilizing Alternative Translations of the Term), 1980-2010

	Ecological Marxism 生态学马克思主义	EcoMarxism 生态马克思主义	Marxism of Ecology 生态学的马克思主义	Total
1980-2000	0	0	0	0
2001-2010	12	3	0	15
Total	12	3	0	15

Source: "China Ph.D Dissertations Database". Data was acquired by inputting the three key words as articles titles and eliminating repeated and irrelevant ones.

Marxism in China can be called the "period of introduction" or of the transmission of Western ideas—to be followed eventually by their critical absorption and transformation in a Chinese context. During the period of introduction, the following four theories (from among many Western ideas, schools, and representative figures of ecological Marxism) have attracted the attention of Chinese Marxists:

(1) The ecological crisis theory of William Leiss and Ben Agger, which claims that the Marxist theory of economic crisis is outdated because it not only fails to explain the continuous existence and development of capitalism, but also fails to provide a theoretical guide for the shift from capitalism to socialist society. Hence, it is necessary for Marxists to base their critique of capitalism on the new stage of ecological crisis, which has its source in "alienated consumption."

(2) James O'Connor's theory of two contradictions of capitalism. If, as traditional Marxism points out, the first contradiction in capitalism is between capitalist productive forces and production relations, O'Connor argues that the second contradiction is the one between capitalist productive forces, production relations, and production conditions. It is the two contradictions that lead to economic, as well as ecological, crisis.

(3) Joel Kovel's theory of ecological socialist revolution and construction. For Kovel, in order to solve the ecological crisis of capitalism, we must liberate use values from exchange values, liberate labor from capital, and move toward an eco-socialist society which must meet two conditions: public ownership of the means of production and freely associated producers.

(4) The theories of John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett on Marx's ecology. According to many Chinese Marxists, all three of the preceding theories acknowledge that Marxist theory can provide a guide for solving the ecological crisis of capitalism, but none of them publicly acknowledges (or for that matter denies) that Marxism, including Marx himself, provided the basis for an ecological worldview. It is Foster and Burkett

who "commenced to construct Marx's ecology, which gives ecological Marxism a much greater theoretical value in dealing with the contemporary ecological crisis."⁶ Foster finds Marx's ecology in his theory of metabolism while Burkett finds it in Marx's theory of labor value.

Not every Chinese Marxist obviously agrees with the four theories. There are different opinions about ecological Marxism in general and in relation to the four theories in particular. For example, some Chinese Marxists who come from a traditional Marxist perspective point out that, since some ecological Marxists like Ben Agger treat ecological crisis as the main crisis, they are trying to replace economic crisis with ecological crisis. They improperly exaggerate the contradiction between humankind and nature in capitalist society by replacing the basic contradiction of capitalism with the contradiction between humanity and nature.⁷

Some Chinese Marxist scholars find fault with ecological Marxism for its utopian character, arguing that ecological Marxism "has a romantic color."⁸ As Zhang Shijia wrote, "The ecological socialism ecological Marxism designs has some kind of romantic color and Utopian character, and lacks agenda."⁹ Some scholars point out the inner flaws or contradictions in ecological Marxism. One main inconsistency is that "although ecological Marxism treats the capitalistic way of production as the cause of ecological crisis, the solution it designs to the crisis is placed in the field of ideas. Namely it appeals to moral revolution. This limits ecological Marxism to ethicism."¹⁰

However, despite these criticisms, the dominant attitude in China toward ecological Marxism is positive and affirmative. Most Chinese Marxists believe that ecological Marxism makes it possible for Marxism to "diminish its dogmatism by allowing Marxism to face up to this most pressing issue."¹¹ Ecological Marxism can be viewed as helping to expand the horizon of Chinese Marxists, not only in how they see contemporary capitalism, but also in how they see socialism. For Chinese Marxists, ecological Marxism enriches traditional Marxism by revealing its ecological dimension. Some scholars argue that ecological Marxism has actually added new elements to Marxism. According to Xu Qin, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, "The positive aspect of ecological Marxism lies in that it tries to combine Marxism and the contemporary ecological theme, in doing so, it on the one hand, makes itself obtain powerful theoretical resources; on the other hand, it highlights the contemporary relevance of Marxism to the world today."¹² To Xi Jian, some of the creative points of view and theories ecological Marxism proposes have positive meaning for us;

enabling us to criticize capitalist reality, as well as enrich and develop Marxist theory, thereby “enhancing ecological harmony.”¹³

Why Has Ecological Marxism Been So Well Received in China?

There are many practical, political, and theoretical reasons to explain China’s acceptance of ecological Marxism:

(1) The pressing environmental issue facing China constitutes a practical reason to take ecological Marxism seriously. China’s achievements, especially its fast GDP growth, have amazed the world—but the price has been extremely high. This rapid and sustained growth has led to unparalleled environmental problems. Pollution is just one example: 70 percent of the rivers and lakes in China are polluted, and the drinking water in half of Chinese cities fails to meet basic standards. Ecological Marxism’s emphasis on ecological crisis provides a way for China to solve its environmental problems.

(2) The Chinese government at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed creating an ecological civilization with an aim toward the harmonious relationship between citizens and nature. The government’s primary stated goal is to form “an energy- and resource-efficient and environment-friendly structure of industries, patterns of growth and modes of consumption.”¹⁴ This is consistent in principle with the ecological civilization the government calls for and should be regarded as an important political reason for China to accept ecological Marxism. The number of articles on ecological Marxism increased sharply in China after 2007; there is little doubt, therefore, that the government’s call for ecological civilization has helped enhance the spread of ecological Marxism in China.

The government’s support for Ecological Marxism Studies is also evidenced by Kang Ruihua’s brand new book, *Critiques, Structuring and Inspiration: A Study of Foster’s Eco-Marxism Ideas*, published by China Social Sciences Press. Ruihua is a party school professor who received a national research grant on Foster’s Eco-Marxism Studies in 2005, and this book is the result of that research.

(3) Ecological Marxism shares many common characteristics with traditional Marxism, such as criticizing capitalism, caring for the poor, defending justice, and pursuing the common good. Thus it is possible for traditional Marxists to be open to ecological Marxism and still retain their allegiance to Marxist analysis. In the words of Huibin Li, a leading Marxist scholar at the Central Bureau of Compilation and Translation, “We need to protect the legally-established ecological

rights of individuals, families, communities, and nations, and defend ecological equality and ecological justice.”¹⁵ He thinks this is not only an intrinsic component of ecological Marxism, but also the ideal and goal traditional Marxists have struggled for.

Yi Junqing, Minister of Central Bureau of Compilation and Translation (a top government institution on Marxism Studies in China), believes that “Marxism will lose its vitality” if it does not address the ecological crisis in the twenty-first century.¹⁶

(4) Ecological Marxism has provided support for China’s environmental movement. Its rejection of capitalism as an anti-ecological system, and its revelation of Marx’s ecology and ecological thoughts, have provided theoretical support for the environmental movement in China. According to Hua Zhanglin and Cai Pin, “one of the greatest contributions” ecological Marxism made is to “challenge us to think about how to treat nature nicely.”¹⁷

Challenges Facing Ecological Marxism in China

Despite ecological Marxism having been well accepted, to some extent, in China, there are also serious challenges Chinese ecological Marxists must face if these ideas are successfully to take root in China. Firstly, systemic studies on the theoretical resources and basic theoretical issues of ecological Marxism must be carried out. Furthermore, it is argued that the literature on ecological Marxism in China has yet to consider “the differences among thinkers inside ecological Marxism.”¹⁸ In addition, various relationships—such as between ecological Marxism and traditional Marxism, between ecological Marxism and postmodernism, and between ecological Marxism and other green movements in the West—need further study. For example, “ecological Marxism and constructive postmodernism as two great movements in the late 20th century” have a lot in common in promoting ecological movements, but thus far only one article compares the differences and commonalities between the two movements.¹⁹ Ecological Marxism in China needs to move beyond the introductory period and deepen its theoretical studies.

Secondly, and more importantly, ecological Marxism must answer the challenge from parochial nationalism. The recent economic growth in China has corresponded with a rise in parochial nationalism. Some Chinese conceive of China as a victim of “one hundred years of shame and humiliation” at the hands of Western and other foreign powers.

Some ecological Marxists, consciously or unconsciously, share in this “victim” mindset by taking advantage of ecological Marxism’s criticism

of capitalism. For example Zeng Wenting, author of *A Study of Ecological Marxism* and an advocate for ecological Marxism in China, made the point that since “the ecological problems facing developing countries were caused by developed countries who have promoted colonial exploitation and barbarian pillage by unjust international economic order. . . it is the developed capitalist countries who should take the main blame for the ecological crisis.”²⁰ This way of thinking can encourage ecological Marxists in China to do nothing but criticize capitalism in general and developed capitalist countries in particular. In doing so, it would be easy for ecological Marxists to garner praise from parochial nationalists, but there is a danger in neglecting the serious problems in socialist China by turning ecological Marxism into a weapon, that should be only pointed at foreign capitalist countries. This points to the fact that one of the biggest paradoxes facing ecological Marxists in China is: If capitalism is the cause of the ecological crisis, why is China, as a socialist country, also fraught with environmental problems? This is a question that ecological Marxists in China cannot avoid if they want to take ecological Marxism seriously as a sound *method* of analysis.

While some Chinese Marxists place a high value on the ecological Marxist point of view that the only way out of the ecological crisis is to walk toward socialism,²¹ unfortunately they seem to have forgotten that China itself is officially a socialist country which regards Marxism as its theoretical base and guideline. In Chen Xueming’s words, “Getting rid of the ecological crisis and creating an ecological civilization needs correct theoretical guidance. Only Marxism is the guidance.”²² Thirdly, related to the point above, ecological Marxism must answer the challenges associated with the worship of development in China.

Following Deng Xiaoping’s “Development is the absolute principle,” many of today’s Chinese Marxists still persist in worshipping GDP and insist that China must place economic development, industrialization, and modernization as top priorities. They believe that China’s ecological problems can be solved only after industrialization and modernization have been realized. For them, a developing economy is not only the intrinsic requirement for China’s social development, but also the basic principle of Marxism: “The fundamental task for Socialism is to develop the productive forces.”²³

Proceeding along this train of thought, many Chinese scholars are reluctant to embrace the ecological movement in general and ecological Marxism in particular. They ask: Why China, why us? It took a hundred years for China to catch up to the modern industrialized nations

due, in part, to the aftereffects of almost a century of imperialism. At the moment in history when China is poised to reap all the rewards of a modern and economically thriving society, China is asked to embrace this green life which drastically limits the material and spiritual benefits other rich nations have enjoyed. It is not fair because you Westerners already have led a rich life. It is time for us to also enjoy such a rich life “even if it is unsustainable.”²⁴

This typical mentality of “Keeping up with the Joneses” has many followers in China today in the guise of parochial nationalism. There is some value to this view because Marxism promotes the perspective that people have the right to live a better life; nevertheless, this view lacks responsibility. It is not only irresponsible in its relations to nature, the people of countries, and future generations, but also for ourselves today. When we totally abandon the traditional lifestyle such as the diet of coarse food grains and embrace the modern lifestyle, we actually walk down a path that could lead to misery. Chinese environmentalists argue against a narrow modernizing view by pointing out that in the past thirty years, although China’s GDP has grown fast, the coal consumed is equivalent to the total of what had been consumed over the past three thousand years. “To the extent that this coal comes from China, then we have become the enemies of our great-grandsons and daughters; to the extent that these resources come from other countries, then we have become enemies of the whole world.”²⁵ Pan Yue, a leading figure in China’s ecological movement and Vice Minister for the Ministry of Environmental Protection in China, said, “If China continues to walk the old road of Western industrialization, it will be a dead end.”²⁶

The question remains: How should we deal with the support for ecological Marxism from an old-style Marxist camp, which nonetheless argues that China should follow the agenda Marx ostensibly designed for human society, meaning we should walk step by step—industrial revolution, then ecological revolution? In this view, because every society and historical stage has its own social and economic bases, we cannot avoid any stage and make any jump because this is “a natural process of History.”²⁷ We will deal with the ecological issue after we realize industrial civilization or modernization.

It is apparent that ecological Marxists in China should take these challenges seriously if they really want ecological Marxism to play an instrumental role in dealing with the ecological crisis facing China and the world as well. Chinese ecological Marxists should not, therefore, treat ecological Marxism as a foreign dogma to be worshipped but a

living method with which to analyze and solve the serious problems facing China such as the environmental problem, the Foxconn suicide tragedy,²⁸ and the gap between the rich and poor. It is only in doing so that ecological Marxism will become “Chinese Ecological Marxism.”

Fortunately, some Chinese Marxists have started to realize that China should have its own ecological Marxism. Xiao Xianjin, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences stated, “Since Capitalism is the cause for environmental problems and it cannot solve the ecological crisis, then China should not repeat the old road capitalist countries walked. We need to explore a new way with Chinese characteristics in order to carry out China’s strategy of sustainable development.”²⁹ For He Ping, “China should create its own Ecological Marxism based on its own reality. This should be the meaning and goal of our studies on Ecological Marxism.”³⁰ Liu Sihua, a leading Marxist economist also stresses, “Creating Ecological Marxist Economics is the divine mission of Chinese Marxist economists today.”³¹

This indigenization of ecological Marxism in China will take time and will require creative work as well as the courage of Chinese ecological Marxists, but it is an undertaking that offers great theoretical promise for China and the world.

Notes for this article can be found at: <http://monthlyreview.org/2012/02/01/ecological-marxism-in-china>.

MONTHLY REVIEW *Fifty Years Ago*

The government of the United States has stated clearly that their concern is to foster and preserve democracy, that the internal affairs of democratic countries are their own concern. What then happens when a people, by an admittedly genuine popular vote, opt for a socialist economic system? Will the United States respect this decision? Will she give aid and succor to preserve that democracy? Or will she withhold her aid at the very real risk of that democracy being overthrown by a dictatorial uprising based on the people’s poverty? Will the United States government give in to pressure groups that exist within all governments and so act to preserve capitalism by sacrificing the democracy it has so long championed? There are not lacking, even within this country itself, writers, thinkers, scholars, who hold that when the government of the United States uses the word “democracy” they really mean capitalism. . . . Indeed, gentlemen, it is not our concept of democracy which is now on trial, but yours.

—CHEDDI JAGAN, Premier of British Guiana, “Socialism and Democracy”
(speech to the National Press Club, Washington, October 24, 1961)
Monthly Review, February 1962

The Wisconsin Uprising

ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY

This article is adopted from the Foreword to Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back, edited by Michael D. Yates and published by Monthly Review Press—The Editors

The essays in *Wisconsin Uprising* are outstanding. The accounts of the events in Madison in the winter and early spring of 2011 are the best I have seen in writing, with context, detail, and analysis I have seen nowhere else. Better yet, the connections of the Wisconsin revolt to the existential questions facing the labor movement are handled with a clarity, intelligence, perspective, and urgency that is exactly appropriate to the task. This book is a fundamental historical document in its own right and will stand the test of time. The authors include some of the most accomplished writers on the left, as well as a number of emerging young writers.

There are several related points I wish to add to the arguments and observations made in this book. First, as one who was there much of the time and who participated as one of the throng, not as a leader, there was most definitely something special happening, and everyone present knew it. For much of my adult life the actual prospects for social change seemed slender, and political work was too often distasteful, with petty bickering and mindless egotism playing an outsized role—hence the common description of left-wing politics as a “circular firing squad.” I was there in the 1970s when being political went from being in a community of friends, of comrades sharing values and experiences, to being pointless drudgery, a form of penance. No wonder so many people jumped ship.

The Wisconsin protests reaffirmed what many Americans had forgotten or never knew: that when people come together in solidarity directed toward social justice they are capable of great sacrifice and unrivaled joy. When there is a sense of solidarity, of hope, of dynamism, everything changes. The feeling this engenders, this bonding, is like breathing fresh

ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY (rwmcches@uiuc.edu), Gutgsell Endowed Professor of Communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is author of *The Political Economy of Media* and *The Problem of the Media*, both published by Monthly Review Press. He thanks John Nichols for talking about all things Wisconsin, and John Bellamy Foster for reading and commenting on this Foreword.