

ENERGIES BEYOND THE STATE

Anarchist Political Ecology and
the Liberation of Nature



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Rising above the Thinking behind Climate Change

World Ecology and Worker's Control

Ben Debney

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them.

– Albert Einstein

In even attempting to enter discussion around global warming, we are immediately confronted with multiple contending arguments and perspectives. At the baseline, we can generally agree that global warming exists, presenting the actual existential threat to human civilization that terrorism is alleged to as an article of moral panic (Debney 2017a). From there, we are confronted with multiple challenges – first, to identify the root causes and, second, to find solutions that, in addressing the root causes of global warming, reflect the truism articulated by Albert Einstein that ‘we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them’.¹ To do otherwise would be to reproduce the destructive dynamics we oppose through inadequate assessments of the root causes and the ineffective responses that derive from them, but which some find preferable perhaps due to their complicity with them. As a matter of characterization, trying to solve global warming with the thinking that created it is the best way to guarantee that the problem worsens, ever diminishing our chances of avoiding worst-case scenarios.

It is evident from many contemporary analyses of global warming that traces of the thinking that created it are apparent, both in terms of failing to address its root causes adequately, and in terms of failing to propose minimally adequate responses. First, liberal treatments of climate change markedly fail to distinguish between

nature in the abstract and historical nature, between historical facts and a priori assumptions of liberal idealism. Second, where socialist treatments of climate change manage to transcend this shortcoming rather than reproducing it in the name of socialism, many still propose counter-strategies reflecting similar failures to distinguish between historical fact and the ideological baggage associated with Leninism, the 'authoritarian' end of the collectivist spectrum on the political compass.² While the thinking that produced the problem of climate change is mostly avoided, the thinking that produces the failure of the radical left to overcome capitalism is not.

Parallel to these conditions, we find in libertarian socialism ideas and principles that do manage a critique of the historical and social forces that give rise to the climate crisis, and which are at the same moment relatively free of the historical baggage that reproduces the thinking responsible for global warming insofar as they avoid the authoritarian prejudices and alienated social relations that perpetuate capitalism through the state. At the same time, the 'movement' broadly associated with libertarian socialism is by no means immune from problems, not least of which is the tendency to revert to alienated roles of permanent protest within radical ghettos of ideological purity, cut off from the community and the working class, where doctrinaire correctness takes precedence over having any social influence or capacity to positively influence our surroundings. Falling back onto individualistic solutions for collective problems, libertarian socialist theory and practice tend to suffer, failing then to link its basic theoretical concepts to contemporary realities, and in so doing, failing also to point the way out of the chaos, injustice and insanity of global corporatism.

Indeed, of all the possible criticisms of anarchism, one of the more prescient, arguably, is that it tends to be defined more by its opposition to coercive hierarchy rather than a positive vision of a baseline sane and just society, this choice of focus tends to reinforce the abovementioned alienated roles of permanent protest and ghettos of ideological purity. Unable to strategize beyond their ghettos and alienated roles, this criticism suggests that anarchists help to entrench and perpetuate the status quo by giving it the appearance of openness and plurality, while the far-right makes hay of the failure of the left to address the awesome destructiveness of global corporate supremacism among working-class communities. In addition to needlessly ceding ground to reactionary opportunists, it also suggests that our failure to fight for positive visions of alternate futures, positive visions that anyone concerned with a constructive outcome to present crises can use to take the initiative, means that we perpetually react to events instead of making them.

If Einstein's maxim follows, then it also follows that every problem, adequately grasped, contains the seeds of its own solution; to transcend the thinking that created the problem is to come to terms with the paradigm that produced that thinking in turn, and thus to be empowered in choosing different ways of thinking, being and acting, and so in both taking the initiative and bringing the fight to the powers that control and bore us. With a view to expediting this process, this chapter will examine responses to the climate crisis in the context of this truism of Einstein's, focusing on the extent to which it speaks to the tendency to perpetuate climate crisis

through quick fixes that treat symptoms rather than causes in defense of privilege from change.

To that end, this chapter takes up the arguments made by World Ecologist Jason W. Moore, which examines the thinking underlying the social relations responsible for global warming by way of a critique of the 'society vs. nature' binary as an enabling ideological pretext, taking both as the basis for his alternative concept of the *oikeios* – a 'way of naming the creative, historical and dialectical relation in, between and also always within, human and extra human natures' (Moore 2015, 35; 2016; 2017). The *oikeios* is, in other words, the proverbial 'Web of Life'. As this chapter will argue, the concept of the *oikeios* provides an opportunity to expand on revolutionary praxis given its commonalities with traditional libertarian socialist notions of workers' self-management of production, providing an anchor upon which to meaningfully and effectively address the issue of overcoming the tendency to reproduce the thinking associated with the climate crisis in responding to it at the same moment.

THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND ITS THINKING

To date the more forward-thinking climate crisis analysis along the liberal spectrum has tended to reflect the insights of atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen, who, in assessing the environmental changes associated with global warming, argues cogently that such changes are so profound as to constitute a new geological epoch. This he proposes to call the Anthropocene, or the epoch of man (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000). Crutzen locates the beginnings of the Anthropocene to around the time of the Industrial Revolution, while others, like eco-socialist John Bellamy Foster, trace its origins even later, to the initial period of nuclear weapons testing in the 1940s and 1950s (Angus 2016, 9). Considering the 'many other major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales', Crutzen wrote,

it seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term 'anthropocene' for the current geological epoch. The impacts of current human activities will continue over long periods. According to a study by Berger and Loutre, because of the anthropogenic emissions of CO₂, climate may depart significantly from natural behaviour over the next 50,000 years. To assign a more specific date to the onset of the 'anthropocene' seems somewhat arbitrary, but we propose the latter part of the 18th century . . . during the past two centuries, the global effects of human activities have become clearly noticeable. This is the period when data retrieved from glacial ice cores show the beginning of a growth in the atmospheric concentrations of several 'greenhouse gases', in particular CO₂ and CH₄. Such a starting date also coincides with James Watt's invention of the steam engine in 1784. About at that time, biotic assemblages in most lakes began to show large changes. (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000)

The great value of Crutzen's insights is reflected in the scientific evidence indicating overwhelmingly that the environmental changes associated with global warming are

profound and continuing (IPCC 2008). Nevertheless, a critical problem arises with the Anthropocene concept insofar as it attributes to humans per se, or nature in the abstract, what is a product of the prevailing mode of production, or historical nature (Cox 2015; Debney 2017b).

In positing human society and industry per se against nature, the Anthropocene idea inadvertently falls in with a binary logic that presupposes a split between society and nature where none is demonstrated (Moore 2015). In the beginning there was nature, says this binary, then human societies came along with their coal, gas and oil, and made a big old mess. This binary thinking identifiable in the root causes of the climate crisis itself – in terms, not least, of the Othering of those who got in the way of early capital formation (Said 1979; Davie et al. 1993; Deckard 2009; Williams 2012; Runehov et al. 2013). Its presence in critical commentary on the climate crisis is exactly what we mean when we talk about Einstein's truism about not being able to solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them, especially where this leads to reinforcing the basic assumptions driving the problem and reproducing the conditions that allow it to fester.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

In contrast to the a priori myth of abstract nature in which the destruction of the natural environment is identified with the rise of human societies sans further elaboration, what we find historically is a process of primitive capital formation that developed over the course of centuries and snowballed into the capitalist production cycle, a phenomenon referred to as 'primitive accumulation' (Marx 1990; Perelman 2000; Federici 2005). 'Primitive accumulation', wrote Marx, 'plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology', insofar as it was 'the historical process that separated the producer from the means of production' (Marx 1990, 873). Moore argues that the lines of primitive capital appropriation took the form of 'Cheap Natures' – free lunches for capitalism, in essence, in the form of cheap raw materials (extracted from third world countries), cheap labour (slaves owned and rented), cheap energy (the remains of dinosaurs converted by natural processes into a source of fuel for free) and cheap food (staples like bread and rice) (Moore 2015; 2016; 2017).

Where the Anthropocene approach suggests, as a tenet of nature understood in the abstract, that the Industrial Revolution was the beginning of a process that lead to the climate crisis, historical nature, on the other hand, understands the Industrial Revolution as the end of one – the end of the process of establishing and entrenching the social relations that would eventually create favourable conditions for the climate crisis in turn (Wallerstein 1986). Understood in this sense, we can understand the Industrial Revolution as the consequence of this process of primitive capital accumulation, gaining enough momentum to run under its own power; this historical context provides the basis for the integral consciousness of the *oikeios*. Marx described

the opening of lines of free lunches for capital in the form of Cheap Natures to this end in the following terms:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre. . . . These methods depend in part on brute force, e.g., the colonial system. But, they all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power. (Marx 1990; 915–916)

The development of primitive accumulation as the original sin of the global capitalist economy traces back at least as far as the fourteenth-century Europe, when a series of environmental and social catastrophes provided leverage opportunities for a powerful alliance of ecclesiastical and other privileged interests. European society was already in crisis at that time as the demands of supporting an idle manorial elite put ever-greater stress on production; goods that might have gone to supporting an expanding populace were diverted instead to maintaining an unproductive and generally parasitical ruling class in the lifestyle to which they had become accustomed. These crisis conditions were exacerbated by the fact that peasants under feudalism were unable to raise productivity by innovating in the tools of production, having not the means to do so. Surpluses were expropriated anyway, an additional disincentive for the peasantry to produce any more than they needed for their own consumption (McNally 1990; Mielants 2008).

The first of these environmental and social catastrophes was a climate event known as the ‘Little Ice Age’, which gave rise to mass flooding throughout Europe that became known in turn, not entirely unsurprisingly, as the Great Flood (1314–1317). The flooding of the productive land resulted in widespread crop failure throughout Northern Europe; the inability of peasant farmers to dry the grain that could be harvested, resulting in turn in the exhaustion of the available stores. Crop failure and store exhaustion produced mass impoverishment, famine and the destructive effects of an inadequate diet on the physical resilience and immune system of the mass of the population – tinderbox conditions for a pandemic, which arrived with seeming inevitability in the form of the Black Death (1346–1353) (Cantor 2001, 9–10; Aberth 2013). As the Black Death killed sinner and believer alike, the European peasantry abandoned belief in a Divine Plan en masse in favour of class struggle and a contest over the future direction of the European economy (Hilton 1990; Aston & Philpin 1987; Wallerstein 2011).

The death of a third to a half of all of Europe had created a labour shortage which shifted the balance of power from landowner to labourer and enabled the steady

breakdown of feudal bonds in the process, while the implications of what we might call the Epicurian Paradox provided incentives to revolt.

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?

Amid these class antagonisms, the Catholic hierarchy and other landed interests moved to defend their very earthly power against heterodoxy, apostasy and rebellion, born of loss of faith in God's Plan as the basic explanation for all life (and of church authority in interpreting it). Stripped of its enabling pretext, the class hierarchy that had tolerated the degeneration of environmental changes into famine and pandemic had become exposed (Hilton 2003; Cohn 2011). Thus in the name of defending their collective class interests, it had become necessary to construct a counter-narrative, a conspiracy theory alleging that the environmental disasters behind the Black Death were the work of witches, brides of satan, who poisoned the wells, destroyed crops and rendered men impotent. On this basis, they instigated the European Witch Hunts (approx. 1450–1750), spreading the witch conspiracy theory to shift the blame for the misery of the European peasantry under the feudal class structure onto its most vulnerable victims – poor peasant women who approximated the stereotype of the haggard old crone – and wage class war against dissent, heterodoxy and apostasy with a theocratic terror.

In revealing how the European Witch Hunts provided an enabling pretext for the terrorizing of the European peasantry – namely, liberating Europe from the malevolent influence of the witch – Federici also demonstrates how the Witch Hunts enabled crisis leveraging in the form of social engineering. Besides demonstrating to the peasantry what happened to those who failed to obey the theocratic class power, the Witch Terror expedited the reconstruction of the European class hierarchy by imposing patriarchal familial relations on peasant women, forcing them through overt threats to life and limb into the subordinate roles prepared for them within a resurgent regime of class rule – that is to say, as broodmares for capital. This, as it turns out, was a key form of primitive accumulation, and an essential facet of consolidating the foundations of the nascent capitalist economy (Federici 2005). The notable difference here was that the exploitation of cheap labour in the context of gender relations was carried out by means of appropriation rather than accumulation, dwarfing the value stolen through the exploitation of wage labour (Moore 2017a).

As it was developed by the dominant classes of the period between the end of the Late Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era, the process of primitive accumulation took a variety of forms, including but not necessarily limited to the following, all of which involved either exploitation or appropriation:

1. Colonization of the feudal commons via enclosures, an act that forced the peasantry off the land, first into agrarian wage labour and then into the cities

- to become wage slaves in industrial plants. (Marx 1990; Vol. I, Ch. 27; Boyle 2003; Perelman 2000; Thompson 1963; 1975)
2. Colonization of militarily conquered and resource-rich imperial possessions overseas for the exploitation of 'Cheap Natures' in the form of free land and the free labour of enslaved human resources. (Taussig 2010; Mies 2014; Moore 2015)
 3. Colonization of the female body as a means of breeding factory fodder for exploitation in industry via the wage system and war fodder for the military acquisition of colonial possessions; the subjugation of women in general to a patriarchal social order in the name of raising an army of brood mares for capital and the state. (Federici 2005)
 4. Colonization of individual subjectivity in the form of binary-laden ideological suppositions, that in replacing the individual personality structure with pre-made thoughts and ideas constituted in stereotypes and producing what social psychologists refer to as automaticity of behaviour, produced what we might regard as a form of Cheap Biopower. (Debord 1973; Bargh et al. 1996, 230; Blair & Banaji 1996, 1142; Moore 2015; Cisney & Morar 2015)

In all four examples, we find that binary logic accompanied the extension of primitive capitalist accumulation to all parts of the society until it reached a critical mass at the Industrial Revolution. The society versus nature binary enabled the dehumanization, subjugation and exploitation of workers – women workers in particular (whether paid a wage or not) and especially when not paid a wage as in the 'broodmare for capital' role; Moore rightly points out this constitutes a form of appropriation that dwarfs wage exploitation (Moore 2015). It enabled the same towards the Oriental Other, as a building block of colonialism, and has ultimately enabled the objectification of oppressed peoples and classes, flora and fauna, and ultimately the planet itself, and their reduction to things valued only in terms of their exploitability for profit (Crenshaw 1991).

As the historical example of the European Witch Hunts reveals, the very brutal terror needed to break down female resistance to capitalist patriarchy, as one front in a general class war geared towards successful primitive accumulation, required binary-ridden pretexts as an institutional imperative. At the core of the witchcraft conspiracy theory was the belief that the sexuality of women was deviant enough to render them susceptible to seduction by satan ('nature'), a problem that needed to be corrected with the intervention of the righteous in the form of the witch trials ('society'). As an expression of the archetypal battle between good and evil, this takes on the society versus nature binary took full advantage of the cultural priming effects of the religious narrative around the battle between God and Satan for the souls of humanity.

If at the core of the theocratic terror of the European Witch Hunts was the binary logic dividing the world into believers versus heretics, such binaries were also key facets of the other fronts of the class war over the future socioeconomic

development of the European society, all of which profoundly undermined the unifying *oikeios* in the name of the 'divide and conquer' strategy so vital to the maintenance of class-based hierarchies. Colonialism and slavery required the enabling binary of civilization versus barbarians, heathens and savages, cowboys and Indians, one that sought to explain away enclosures, colonial land theft and patriarchal terror as a moral failing on the part of the victims on the one hand, and as a service being done to them by their usurpers in bringing them the benefits of Christian civilization on the other (Said 1979; Davies et al. 1993). In the case of the enclosures, the binary logic of propertarianism lionized usurpers of the Commons as Lords, while maligning the dispossessed as criminals, beggars and thieves. In what Polanyi described as 'a revolution of the rich against the poor' and a 'uniform catastrophe', the victims were cast as somehow lacking in respect for the rights of others – the patent projection characteristic of this mentality an indication of the tenor of ideological rationalizations of private property to come (Boyle 2003).

In enabling this blame-shifting then, the society versus nature binary played a crucial role in expediting the rise of capitalist modalities to global dominance prior to the industrial revolution, predicated on the destruction of natural unity represented by the *oikeios*, at which point the primitive forms of accumulation and appropriation snowballed into private accumulation, industrial capitalism and imperialism. This development raised the privatization of benefits and socialization of costs to an organizing principle of society as such, as it did the propensity to, in turn, to reduce nature to an infinite resource and infinite garbage dump (Moore 2016). Carried over into the organizing principle of capitalist production, this reductionist belief in the possibility and desirability of endless growth as the basis of primitive accumulation also played a crucial role in expediting the conditions under which the climate crisis could develop.

The origin of the climate crisis in the origin of capitalist modalities suggests that responses to the former that also neglects to address or turn a blind eye to the latter are bound to fail in that they fail to meet Einstein's principle, as noted earlier, that meaningful responses to problems rise above the thinking that created them, restoring the natural unity of the *oikeios* in the process. The historical role of primitive accumulation in kick-starting capitalism, within which benefits are privatized, and costs are socialized while the cult of endless growth is prioritized above the capacity of the planet to sustain life, is well enough established. Liberal environmentalism, as expressed in the Anthropocene concept, fails to take account of this and the binary logic that facilitated land theft, genocide, large-scale terror, enslavement and numerous other crimes against humanity. As such liberal environmentalism cannot help but fail to articulate an ultimately meaningful response, since it has neglected to adequately conceptualize the parameters of the problem.

TOWARDS A RESPONSE

Acknowledging climate change without transcending the thinking that gave rise to it, as we have seen, appears to amount to offering answers to questions no one is asking; if this is true of the Anthropocene idea, it is most certainly true of market-based

approaches to climate change, which in Germany have already given rise to ‘neoliberals on bikes’, as one of the co-founders of the Greens now describes them (Cyrus 2011).

Other tendencies manage nevertheless to reproduce binary thinking in the name of the solution. As David McNally observes, the emergence ‘out of the centuries-old competitive activities of merchants and manufacturers in rational pursuit of their individual economic self-interest’ was the basis of the liberal view of the origins of capitalism.

The rise of capitalism is thus explained in terms of the rise to prominence of the most productive, rational and progressive social groups – merchants and manufacturers. Not surprisingly, classical political economy came to be seen as an intellectual reflection of the ascendancy of merchants and manufacturers and as a theoretical justification of their interests and activities. (McNally 1990, xi)

Paradoxically enough, this also appeared to be the interpretation of Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, who waxed lyrical about the glorious doings of incipient capitalism.

The means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange . . . the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder. (Marx & Engels 2002)

They were burst asunder with the aid of three centuries of state terror, as were the alternative paths of cooperative development springing up around parts of Europe where feudal bonds had ceased to have influence, mirroring as they did the Russian *Obschina* or *Mir* that in turn predated serfdom. Furthermore, according to this interpretation the bourgeoisie as the most progressive class did all the work, though as we know thanks to Marx and Engels’ own later study, the work was done by chattel slavery, or under the waged variant, which in allowing the emerging capitalist class to free up capital costs associated with owning and maintaining the labour supply, which meant that slaves were no longer owned, but rented.

Mere facts such as these notwithstanding, the feeling that they had discovered underlying laws of historical development compelled Marx and Engels to invoke a binary between ‘scientific’ socialism and ‘utopian’ socialism, the difference according to Engels being that the ‘scientific’ variety was not

an accidental discovery of this or that ingenious brain, but the necessary outcome of the struggle between two historically developed classes – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Its task was no longer to manufacture a system of society as perfect as possible, but to examine the historical-economic succession of events from which these classes and their antagonism had of necessity sprung, and to discover in the economic conditions thus created the means of ending the conflict. (Engels 1892)

According to this view, placing revolutionary theory and practice in historical context then meant coming to terms with this 'historical-economic succession of events' – one that nevertheless neglected to account for historical events producing capitalism, in fact, the European Witch Hunts being the prime example. If all history hitherto had been a history of class struggles, the outcome of the decline of feudalism had hardly been preordained, as historical materialism seemed to imply ('so many fetters burst asunder' etc.). The fact that this was implied indicated historical materialism was being deployed, not as a tool of disinterested understanding, but as a legitimizing ideological pretext for the capture of state power.

The cognitive dissonance within Leninism goes some way towards accounting for the fact that the tendency of the powerful to conflate criticism with attacks and 'existentialist threats'.³ Similarly, it has also been the propensity of Stalin to conflate criticism with attacks on his rule from apologists for capitalist reaction. In *The Results of the First Five-Year Plan* (1933), Stalin utilized the False Dilemma ('those who are not for me are against me', or 'there is no difference between being criticized and being attacked') to neutralize dissent, alleging that

we must bear in mind that the growth of the power of the Soviet state will increase the resistance of the last remnants of the dying classes. It is precisely because they are dying, and living their last days that they will pass from one form of attack to another, to sharper forms of attack, appealing to the backward strata of the population, and mobilizing them against the Soviet power. There is no foul lie or slander that these 'have-beens' would not use against the Soviet power and around which they would not try to mobilize the backward elements. This may give ground for the revival of the activities of the defeated groups of the old counter-revolutionary parties: the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, the bourgeois nationalists in the centre and in the outlying regions; it may give grounds also for the revival of the activities of the fragments of counter-revolutionary opposition elements from among the Trotskyites and the Right deviationists. Of course, there is nothing terrible in this. But we must bear all this in mind if we want to put an end to these elements quickly and without great loss. (Stalin 1976)

Characteristic in this passage is the binary between 'the power of the Soviet state' and 'the last remnants of the dying classes', assuming a self-serving association of state power and the revolution, versus critics of the state power and reaction – one that would come to full fruition in the Stalinist Purges. Leon Trotsky adopted the same working assumption in alleging of critical tendencies within the early Bolshevik Revolution, including the Kronstadt sailors, that

the Workers Opposition have come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers' right to elect representatives above the Party. As if the Party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy. (Mandel 1995, 83)

It was not Trotsky who had been corrupted by the exercise of absolute power; it was the fault of the Russian working class for asserting workers' democracy (*Aufheben*)

2011, 6–46). Prior to this outburst, Trotsky had referred to them as the ‘cream of the revolution’ when their revolutionary tendencies served his purposes, before massacring them when their cream-like qualities became too much of an obstacle to his own ambitions.

Ironically enough, his own invocation of the False Dilemma involving legitimate revolutionaries and proponents of an existentialist threat to the revolution would be used against Trotsky when he became the leader of the Left Opposition to Stalin after 1924. This successful application of historical materialism, based on the kind of scientific understanding of socialism beyond the dilettantish revisionism of the utopian, was previously articulated by Lenin, who alleged that

state capitalism, which is one of the principal aspects of the New Economic Policy, is, under Soviet power, a form of capitalism that is deliberately permitted and restricted by the working class. Our state capitalism differs essentially from the state capitalism in countries that have bourgeois governments in that the state with us is represented not by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat, who has succeeded in winning the full confidence of the peasantry. (Lenin 1922)

As Trotsky had already argued, citing the historical materialist conception of history, however, the Party was entitled to assert its dictatorship in opposition to the ‘passing moods of the workers’ democracy’, even if doing so required the imposition of binaries that fatally undermined the *oikeios*. Understood in these terms, the New Economic Policy (NEP) could be accounted for ‘in terms of the rise to prominence of the most productive, rational and progressive social groups – merchants and manufacturers’.

The difference in this case was the claim that words spoke louder than actions, and thus the justice of the NEP was a matter of what the Leninists introducing it claimed to believe, rather than what they did. Once again, conflating the exercise of state power with the mass of the people also meant conflating doubting of their judgement with attacks on the revolution. This fact raises the issue of the role of these underlying assumptions in helping to promote the coming climate crisis by promoting state capitalism, though some might perhaps protest that Soviet industrialization through the proletarian state also produced proletarian global warming since it, too, was a product of the Soviet power.

Applied to climate politics, the propensity of orthodox Marxists to conflate doubt in their judgement with attacks on social justice and the climate gives rise to outbursts such as that of John Bellamy Foster. In Foster’s review by Jason W. Moore, which he happened not to like, he wrote, ‘So I would not refer at all to “Moore’s Marxism,” except ironically,’ adding that, ‘the framework he has developed is anti-ecosocialist and anti-ecological’.

I can only conclude that he has joined the long line of scholars who have set out to update or deepen Marxism in various ways, but have ended up by abandoning Marxism’s revolutionary essence and adapting to capitalist ideologies. . . . No doubt Moore’s work has attracted and will attract some notable scholars. But in terms of ecological

Marxism it is necessary to draw a line. Moore, I am sorry to say, has moved to the other side, and now stands opposed to the ecosocialist movement and socialism (even radicalism) as a whole. (Climate & Capitalism 2016)

Foster's superior airs notwithstanding, the irony of suggesting that someone who expresses a point of view that he happens not to like or agree with is given over to idealism and counter-revolutionary impulses is hard to miss. A further paradox is evident in the claim of 'Marxism's revolutionary essence', given the issues with Leninism referred to earlier, and Foster's association of ideas he likes with 'Marxism's revolutionary essence', along with ideas he doesn't like with active hostility to radicalism, socialism, and ecology. Foster's willing conflation of expressions of doubt in his judgement and attacks on his person is indicative of the same tendency in the Bolsheviks, as is their habit of identifying their own interests with those interests of the revolution, and of associating any threat to the one with a threat to the other. Such facts invite the conclusion that Foster, like his forebears, embodies the idealism, utopianism, and revisionism he attributes to his enemies, useful tools apparently in perpetrating cowardly and vicious attacks designed to compensate for a comparative lack of ideas and ideological coherence. Furthermore, it perpetuates the binary logic that undermines the *oikeios*, perpetrating the thinking that gave rise to global warming in the name of combating it. The same appears only truer of the binary logic evident at the origins of the climate crisis in historical nature; the insights that reveal the limitations of Crutzen's Anthropocene idea and Neoliberals on Bikes thus also reveal those of Leninism and its ecological offshoots. The limitations for each are similar –they each fail to transcend the thinking that created the problem and, in so doing, reproduce in practice what they purport theoretically to oppose.⁴ Even the motto of Climate & Capitalism, the website on which Foster's attacks appear, is 'eco-socialism or barbarism: there is no third way' – 'if you doubt the judgment of an eco-socialist', in other words, 'the barbarians win'.

FOR WORKERS' CONTROL

As we have seen, the European economy spawned capitalism on the ruins of feudalism as the privileged classes successfully fought to reassert their class dominance in the face of attempts by the productive classes to control the conditions of their own lives. This problem is one that the Bolsheviks also faced in their campaign to assert theirs in the name of socialist revolution. In calling attention to the contended nature of the European economy at the end of the feudal era, Federici inadvertently exposes Leninist apologetics for state capitalism by revealing the pseudo-scientific, deterministic foundation of historical materialism. That the Catholic hierarchy did take the reconstruction of class power seriously enough to wage 300 years of theocratic wars in the name of suppressing threats to it highlights the concerted and protracted social engineering behind the imposition of capitalist social relations – a campaign that was anything but spontaneous.

In their ignorance, willing or otherwise, of the actual basis for the development of capitalist social relations, the Bolsheviks became subject to the capitalist modalities that give rise to them in the form of the binary thinking that creates the possibility of objectification and exploitation – a fact that goes some way towards accounting for Lenin's tawdry apologetics for state capitalism. Insofar as liberal and authoritarian socialist responses to the climate crisis share the problem of reproducing the capitalist modalities that give rise to them in the form of the binary thinking that creates the possibility of objectification and exploitation, they also share the problem of a basic inconsistency between means and outcomes. The ultimate expression of this inconsistency is the exercise of state power, which follows its own logic regardless of who possesses it. As James Madison argued, 'The primary function of government is to protect the minority of the opulent from the majority'; to this, we might add, the secondary function of government is to ensure that those who are now in power stay in power. Bolsheviks and Neoliberals on Bikes alike heartily agree on the necessity of the state; as the history of these loyal opponents demonstrates, both produce outcomes consistent with the values they apply, not the ones they profess.

The impetus to produce outcomes consistent with values professed as well as those applied, on the other hand, has produced the spectrum of strategies and approaches from the libertarian socialist corner of the political compass – one inclusive of schools as varied as anarcho-communism, platformism, municipalism, anarcho-syndicalism, autonomism, council communism, and libertarian Marxism (Biehl & Bookchin 1998; Pannekeek 2003; Rocker 2004; Solidarity Federation 2012; Mattick 2017). The strategic and moral imperative to maintain a harmony between means and outcomes (and thus also words and actions) dovetails with the argument that environmentally sustainable production stands the greatest chance of succeeding when carried out under direct community control for the public, rather than under private control for private gain; it anticipates that that production will be carried out rationally by virtue of being under the self-management of those who perform it, who is having to live with the consequences of their choices on that count will thus be compelled to bear responsibility for them.

As one of the more theoretically and strategically robust schools of libertarian socialism, anarcho-syndicalism looks to maintain a harmony between means and outcomes by proposing to shift workers' struggle from the political sphere, where it is weakest, to the point of production, where it is strongest. Revolutionary industrial unions and confederations of industrial federations, coordinated using mandated recallable delegates, would serve as a 'practical school of socialism'. Here, day-to-day struggles to defend rights and advance interests would act as a form of 'revolutionary gymnastics', in preparation for the day when the opportunity arose to take control of the means of production and establish workers' control, such as in the case of a revolutionary general strike. As Rudolf Rocker argued,

Only in the realm of the economy are the workers able to display their full spirit, for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure, and guarantees the existence of society at all . . . Education for socialism does not mean for them

trivial campaign propaganda and so-called 'politics of the day', but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems and, by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their role of reshapers of economic life, and give to them the moral assurance required for the performance of their task. (Rocker 2004, 58)

Before many of them were destroyed by the Stalinists fulfilling the historical destiny of scientific socialism, these ideas gave rise to the agrarian and industrial collectives created during the Spanish Revolution, which commenced on 19 July 1936. The attempted coup by the eventual victor in the civil war, Francisco Franco, created a political and social vacuum filled by the creative organizational spontaneity of Spanish workers, who collectivized industries throughout the Republican areas and began running them without managers for need rather than profit. In Catalan metalworking firms, for example, and as one CNT-FAI bulletin announced,

As a result of the events of July, two new forms of administration have surfaced. One, involving worker management without any restrictions whatsoever, by means of take-over. The other represents a greatly attenuated bourgeois mode of administration through monitoring activity carried out by workers' factory committees. (Mintz 2013, 66)

In Barcelona, to take another, transportation services were collectivized. Administration and timetabling were rationalized, wages were standardized, hours were reduced to provide additional employment for those out of work, and pensions were arranged for retirees (Mintz 2013, 68–69). In the countryside of Catalonia, the Levante and Aragon, some 3 million peasants on the land collectivized agricultural production, a fact for which scientific socialism is yet to account (Leval 1975; Ness & Azzellini 2011). Whether in industry or on the land, the new mode of production adopted forms consistent with the outcomes desired, allowing for further progress towards full collectivization where it had not yet already been achieved, while providing industrially democratic mechanisms for all involved to exercise a meaningful measure of control over the conditions of their own work, and to have input into how and for what purpose production was carried out.

The structure of the new economy was simple. Each factory organized a new administration manned by its own technical and administrative workers. Factories in the same industry in each locality organized themselves into a Local Federation of their particular industry. The total of all the Local Federations organized themselves into the Local Economic Council in which all the centres of production and services were represented: coordination, exchange, sanitation and health, culture, transportation, etc. Both the local federations of each industry and the Local Economic Councils were organized regionally and nationally into parallel National Federations of Industry and National Economic Federations. (Dolgoff 1974, 66)

Ness and Azzellini (2011) rightly locate the collectivizations carried out during the Spanish Revolution as one of a series of achievements realized throughout the

twentieth century. Citing alongside this achievement, among others, Ness and Azzellini (2011) include the industrial democracy of the factory committees in the early days of the Russian Revolution, before the consolidation of the Bolshevik state, the Italian factory occupations of 1920, and the forms of workers' self-management established in the former Yugoslavia. By providing for the individual freedom of the worker and their ability to control the conditions of their own work, such episodes provided for the emancipation of the workers from the oppression of class privilege in practice, as well as in rhetoric. Insofar as they did this,⁵ they might be considered responses to such problems that, in terms of their economic achievements at least, successfully transcended the thinking that created them.

CONCLUSION

In failing to examine the historical origins of capitalism, as we have seen, liberal responses to climate change neglect to account for the corporate supremacist nature of neoliberal ideology, as well as the forces and tendencies that have given rise to it historically, and the assumption that the world is an infinite resource and infinite garbage can as a characteristic feature (as opposed to something that can be reformed away). In so doing, they cede history to those responsible for the problem – limiting any possibility of using history to surmount it.

Similarly, scientific socialism, neglecting to account for the alliance of privileged forces that brought global capitalism into being and the climate crisis along with it at the end of the Feudal era, has also failed to overcome the Faustian Bargain involved in resorting to binary logic as crisis leveraging. In the case of early capitalists, as we saw, this meant demonizing those they sought to exploit and usurp in pursuit of primitive accumulation, and anyone who got in their way. In this respect, the Bolshevik witch-hunting of their opponents via the bloody repression of the Kronstadt Rebellion and the Great Purges reveals that while they might have believed they could have their cake and eat it too, in the end, the Faustian Bargain they made with the state exacted their soul as its price.

At issue here ultimately was the fact that, as Eugene Debs pointed out, those who lead the workers into a revolution can lead them back out again. Not only is the emancipation of the working class from the oppression of serving-class privilege desirable, democratizing the economy and bringing it under the direct and collective control of producers is critical from the point of view of making the economy sustainable, if we consider that that difference between an economy driven by profit and one driven by need is the difference between an economy where those who are responsible have to live with the consequences of their choices the one we have at the moment, where they do not (Klein 2016). The capacity of purportedly liberal states for witch-hunting fared no better (Feldman 2011). As the archetype for later Show Trials and Purges, whether in Moscow or Hollywood, the European Witch Hunts also constitute a precedent; in addition to revealing much about the actually existing operating principles of the state as an institution of class privilege, the ubiquity of

their binary logic reflects the consistency of purpose in undermining knowledge and understanding of natural unity embodied in the *oikeios* concept.

It is in the resurgent *oikeios*, however, that the climate crisis can now be understood as a facet of the general crisis of civilization, interlinked with economic crisis (wealth distribution), social crisis (austerity) and political crisis (corporate capture). The problem of overcoming the thinking that gives rise to the crisis of civilization becomes a matter of transcending the binary thinking of autocratic, hierarchical idealism and reasserting the intersectional logic of the *oikeios*. At this late hour of late capitalism, the possibility of reestablishing mass workers' organizations, including revolutionary unions that can proactively declare a revolutionary general strike and take control of the means of production, seems remote; we might better rely on a strategy of 'reconstruction', of catching society as the dominant institutions teeter and keel over and resuming production on the basis of workers control – as has been done in a number of notable cases already (Magnani 2003; Klein & Lewis 2004). In this sense, 'reconstruction' has a literal meaning of reconstructing the physical fabric of society but also a metaphorical sense of reconstruction of the intellect out of the rot and decay of neoliberal ideology.

Either way, if the desire to avoid reproducing the thinking that created the problem of climate change factors into our thinking at all, then establishing and maintaining a harmony between means and outcomes must be paramount. Workers' control, as the crucial basis for sustainable production, must be reflected in the values we apply in fighting for it, not just in those we profess. The imperative to take seriously the issues surrounding the role of binary thinking in the creation of the problem, and its incorporation into responses that reproduce what they claim to oppose, was expressed originally and best in the motto of the First International that 'the emancipation of the working class shall be carried out by the workers themselves' – this is to say, by the workers directly, not by those claiming to speak in their name. This distinction is no longer simply a question of justice, or even of protecting the movement from opportunists and usurpers; it is now also one of survival.

NOTES

1. This chapter contends that the constructive achievements in workers' self-management of production realized during the Spanish Revolution and Civil War (1936–1939) constitute a prime example.

2. The Political Compass rightly places political philosophies on two axes ('libertarian vs. authoritarian' and 'collectivist vs. individualist'). For more see politicalcompass.org.

3. Which is also a feature of Witch Hunts.

4. One can only wonder at the contortions of logic that would have been necessary had the Russian Revolution taken place 100 years later than it did.

5. As well as pointing at the same moment towards a potential way out of the problems created by an economic logic devoted to infinite growth based on the privatization of benefits and socialization of costs.

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