

REJOINDER

Immodest Comments on the House Organ, *CNS 22 (3)*, September 2011

*Giorgio Nebbia**

In my immodest opinion, the discussion about ecosocialism and socialist ecology seems to me somewhat of a nominalistic sophism. The key concept in both—as in capitalism-nature-socialism—is *ecology*, namely the corpus of the “laws” that govern life in nature: the laws of nutrition of living beings (including humans) from the use of natural resources (both living and “inanimate”); the metabolism of living producers, consumers and decomposers (humans being consumers and only partially decomposers); waste generation; the assimilation of (only partly in the case of humans) wastes by the environment; and the cycles of nature-living beings-nature.

The ecological characteristics of human populations can be analyzed in ways similar to those of other species’ population dynamics and interspecific interactions (prey-predator relations, parasitism, competition, symbiosis/mutualism, and commensalism. Ecology explains the unifying, “organic,” as Mumford called it, character of the relations between living organisms and their physical environment, which are closed in the case of non-human beings and inevitably open in the case of humans. How do the capitalist or socialist systems favor or discourage each of these behaviors in human societies? Capitalist society functions by way of predation by the rich on the poor, by parasitism, by competition. A socialist society would (could?) be based on mutualism/symbiosis and cooperation. Most of all, one must consider the limited dimension of the Earth, the limits to the carrying capacity of our planet. All of this is already described in every popular book on ecology for first-year biology students and narrated most clearly in Barry Commoner’s 1971 classic, *The Closing Circle*.

A journal of ecosocialism or socialist ecology or capitalism-nature-socialism—name it as you will—a journal unique in its kind, would, always in my opinion, stimulate people to identify human behaviors that are to be considered capitalistic or socialistic, according to such “laws” of ecology. Soil erosion, the decrease in soil fertility, overfishing, urban congestion, pollution, and the violation of the carrying capacity of the planet are the consequences exactly and only of capitalist laws, and these can be attenuated or avoided by planning and other *political* instruments in a socialist society. Which socialist society it should be warrants more discussion. I humbly point out that the Italian edition of *CNS/ Ecologia politica*, available mostly online, has offered many examples of how to read politics in light of ecology.

* nebbia@quipo.it