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THE HILLS HAVE EYES: AN APPROACH TOWARDS ECO-MARXISM POLICIES AND LAND ETHICS

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Abstract: The world continues to grapple with economic challenges as ancient as human civilization itself. Recent scholarship increasingly explores ecological crises through socio-economic perspectives, particularly within Marxist frameworks. Yet, one crucial dimension often remains overlooked—the notion of predestination that subtly shapes human interpretations of environmental devastation. From certain Christian viewpoints, ecological destruction is sometimes misunderstood as a divinely predetermined consequence of the original sin of Adam and Eve. Such a misreading, grounded in fatalism, risks portraying ecological degradation as inevitable rather than as the moral and material outcome of human action. This study extends the discourse by integrating the concept of predestination into eco-Marxist critiques of self-interest—the very force driving humanity's destructive pursuit of profit at the expense of ecological balance. In this context, the idiom "The Hills Have Eyes" is reinterpreted as an ecological metaphor, suggesting that nature itself bears witness to human excesses and responds through environmental retribution. Hence the author argues for a synthesis of eco-Marxist theory with land ethics and sustainable policy frameworks, urging a shift from human-centered exploitation toward ecological responsibility and collective stewardship.

Keywords: Degradation of Environment, Eco-Marxism, Economy, Ethics, Predestination, Ecological Well-being.

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1. Introduction

The pursuit of economic prosperity has long defined human civilization, yet rarely has this pursuit been as ecologically destructive as it is today. In the twenty-first century, industrialization and consumerism continue to pollute the air and water, destroy forests, and poison ecosystems. The irony is stark: what we call "progress" increasingly undermines the very environment that sustains life. Pollution from factories, toxic waste flowing into rivers and oceans, and deforestation—all are symptoms of a deeper ailment rooted in human self-interest and the relentless quest for material comfort. As Eliotte observes, Karl Marx (1818–1883) was among the earliest thinkers to foresee the destructive trajectory of economic injustice. His critique of capitalism extended beyond class conflict to encompass the moral and ecological implications of exploitation (173). For Marx, economic systems built on greed and self-interest alienated not only workers but also humanity from nature itself. As Pettman (205) notes, Marx's goal was not merely to abolish class divisions but to liberate humanity from an economy that privileges profit over planetary well-being. Through this view, Marx's socio-critical theory becomes profoundly ecological, envisioning a just world where freedom is inseparable from environmental balance (Weston, 58).

Contemporary eco-Marxism continues this vision by confronting the environmental consequences of capitalism and the inequality it perpetuates. Yet, before delving into theoretical debates, one must first acknowledge the gravity of the ecological crisis itself. The Earth, after centuries of exploitation, now "bleeds and groans" for healing. Land, air and water have been commodified and consumed, leaving behind a planet that pleads for restoration through ethical and sustainable practices. Deforestation, one of the most visible wounds, has ravaged ecosystems and destroyed countless species. Trees—once revered as sacred symbols of life—are now sacrificed for profit and convenience. Ancient traditions across the world remind us of a more harmonious relationship with nature. In Chinese philosophy, trees symbolize longevity, sacredness and good

fortune (Wang, 28). Similarly, in Indian culture, trees are deeply connected to spiritual and social life. In Dharhara village of Bihar, for instance, it is customary to plant ten trees whenever a girl is born—a gesture that nurtures both the environment and the dignity of life (Kumar, 527). Such practices reveal how ecological stewardship can coexist with social progress, demonstrating that development need not come at the cost of nature.

Western ecological thought has also long recognized the vital role of trees and natural ecosystems in human flourishing. Richard Coles (2014) asserts that trees contribute not only to environmental health but also to the psychological and social well-being of urban life. Their value, he notes, grows with age—a natural metaphor for wisdom and continuity (463). Similarly, in Jewish thought, the Tree of Life represents the divine connection that binds all creation. According to M. A. Peters (2020), the 'Tree of Life,' nurtured by the angels Gabriel and Laila in Bahá'í Faith tradition, symbolizes fertility, immortality and the unity of all living beings (271). The Tree of Wisdom links heaven and earth, reminding humanity of its vocation to live fruitfully and in harmony with God's will, as reflected in Psalm 1. Artistic and aesthetic traditions also echo this reverence. The Chinese scholar Jing Wang (2021) observes that eleventh-century shanshui paintings often depict pine trees and waterfalls as metaphors for sound, movement and resilience. Through such art, trees become voices of nature and living witnesses to human creativity (170–171). Listening to nature thus becomes an ethical act: to hear the groaning of the world and respond with compassion rather than conquest.

Against this background, the current ecological crisis demands a twofold reflection. First, it calls for an eco-Marxist critique of human greed and self-interest, which have pushed the natural world to the brink. Second, it invites a philosophical re-examination of predestination—a theological notion often misinterpreted in ways that diminish human responsibility. Some Christian interpretations of the fall of Adam and Eve have wrongly framed ecological degradation as a divinely predetermined punishment for original sin. Such fatalism

absolves humanity of accountability, allowing ecological harm to be viewed as inevitable. By contrast, an eco-Marxist reading rejects this view. It insists that human freedom, not fate, drives both destruction and the potential for restoration. The idiomatic expression "The Hills Have Eyes" serves here as a powerful ecological metaphor. It suggests that nature itself observes human actions—the hills, forests, and rivers silently witnessing the exploitation they endure. Humanity's self-centered drive for profit blinds it to the truth that nature, too, has agency. When pushed beyond its limits, the Earth responds—not through divine wrath, but through natural consequences. Tsunamis, earthquakes, and floods are not cosmic punishments but manifestations of ecological imbalance brought about by human arrogance and indifference.

2. Anthropocentric Selfishness and Its Destructiveness on the Ecology of this Planet

The dominant scientific and policy responses to ecological challenges are often anthropocentric. Research shows that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people bear the brunt of climate change, which makes these developments especially concerning (Leese, 2). Factory emissions, overpopulation and deforestation for infrastructure have severely damaged ecosystems. Humanity's pursuit of luxury has produced enormous and horrific consequences for the planet. One may argue that the twenty-first century faces environmental challenges more severe than the material destruction of World Wars I and II. Why might the ecological effects of modern industrialization exceed the devastation of twentieth-century wars? Global warming and climate change are persistent, systemic harms rather than episodic wartime damages, and popular culture — including Hollywood films — often frames these changes as apocalyptic (Bang, 72). Some interpret such phenomena as signs of the end times, a view that can slide into fatalism and inaction.

Historically, twentieth-century events — the Holocaust, nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and large-scale

warfare — caused profound human and ecological harm. Nuclear bombs devastated cities, killed hundreds of thousands, and harmed nonhuman life and landscapes (Okamoto, 242; Mori and Ishikawa, 192). Contemporary conflicts (for example, the Gaza–Israel war) continue to produce similar humanitarian and ecological consequences. Tait Keller (2018) argues that industrial wastelands and conflict zones create environmental harms comparable to wartime destruction, blurring the line between military and civilian suffering and disproportionately affecting the poor and disenfranchised (5).

The Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (twentieth century) helped elevate environmental concerns to a global scale (Jianping et al., 283). The twenty-first century built on that awareness, yet the logic of infinite accumulation persists. Today's industrial economy produces ecological disasters (tsunamis, floods, typhoons, earthquakes) and widespread public-health problems, including child malnutrition and vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue — all exacerbated by environmental mismanagement. Is this predestination or divine sign? Or is it the predictable outcome of anthropocentric exploitation? The proverb "as you sow, so shall you reap" aptly captures how anthropocentric selfishness has altered the planet — visible in disturbed climates, degraded lands and the legacies of war and industrial pollution.

3. Predestination and Moral Laxity Vs Ecological Bleeding

Literary and artistic traditions memorialize trees and natural speech, offering perspectives that modernity often forgets. As factories replace forests and roads expand for growing populations, cultural imaginations lose their connection to nature. Alongside this cultural loss, some religious and fatalist interpretations minimize human agency in ecological change, claiming that climate is divinely determined and beyond human influence (Simone et al., 8). Whether framed as religious determinism or fatalism, such views risk absolving people of responsibility for environmental harm. Religious traditions are not monolithic. Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist teachings

emphasize harmony with nature (Wang, 25; Hartman, 322). Many Muslim and Christian scholars likewise reject deterministic readings that excuse ecological negligence; for example, Nawal H. Ammar (2003) critiques predestinarian attitudes that negate human responsibility (285). Still, strands of Christian thought have historically promoted interpretations that can be read as fatalistic about the natural world.

To understand how fatalism entered Christian ecological thinking, we must recall doctrinal debates on original sin, free will and predestination. Augustine and Pelagius (fourth–fifth centuries) debated whether human beings inherit a corrupted nature or can attain goodness through free will alone. Pelagius emphasized human moral capacity; Augustine stressed the necessity of divine grace. Later, John Calvin developed a robust doctrine of predestination, arguing that God elects some to salvation and others to condemnation — a view that, critics claim, can encourage moral laxity (McGrath, 367–368; Pelikan, 229). Jacobus Arminius opposed Calvin by arguing for a universal atonement (Thiselton, 250). Some theologians have argued that strict predestinarian doctrines may foster moral complacency; others have warned that they can produce undue rigorism (Guenter Lewy, 1996). Contemporary scholars such as M. B. Pranger (2002) revisit Calvin and Augustine to reinterpret predestination in ways that do not excuse ethical negligence (291). Augustine himself described predestination as a mysterious doctrine intertwined with divine justice and human responsibility (Mozley, 132–134). Crucially for ecology, Augustine's emphasis on moral choice undercuts fatalism: humans remain accountable for their actions.

I have brought the predestination debate in this context not to settle theological disputes but to challenge fatalistic interpretations that hinder ecological engagement. Many evangelical and mainstream theologians now call for moral involvement in environmental stewardship. Alister McGrath (2016), for instance, calls on Christians to rethink their doctrinal frameworks in ways that actively foster environmental ethics and a deeper commitment to the care of creation (155). Biblical

passages about the end-times theology (2 Corinthians 5; 1 Thessalonians 4; 2 Peter 3; Revelation) regularly pair expectation of judgment with exhortations to faithful stewardship (Genesis 2:15). That is to say, eschatological belief should not be read as permission for neglect but as a motive for responsible guardianship.

4. Eco-Marxism and Global Well-Being

Eco-Marxism interprets ecological degradation as rooted in capitalist imperatives of endless accumulation. Marx critiqued the unlimited accumulation of wealth, arguing that it produces inequality and alienation while undermining social and ecological sustainability (Marx, 578). In contemporary terms, profit-maximizing practices, from industrial pollution to privatization of water, illustrate how market logic degrades common goods. Eco-Marxism therefore calls for reducing excessive consumption and reorienting production toward ecological justice (Barry, 166). The problem is not consumption *per se* but the structure that encourages infinite accumulation. Factory owners extract profit while externalizing environmental costs, polluting water and soil in the pursuit of private gain. In doing so, they infringe upon the universal right to clean water and other common environmental assets.

Aldo Leopold's land-ethics complements eco-Marxist concerns. Leopold argued that healthy human–land relationships rest on mutual appreciation and ethical responsibility: "land is a community" and must be loved and respected (Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, viii; 161–169). Leopold's call to treat land as a moral community implies policies that favour collective stewardship over private plunder — for example, converting degraded industrial land back to agricultural use or public green space and providing support for labourers whose livelihoods are transformed. Practical measures aligned with eco-Marxist and Leopoldian ethics include: protecting and democratizing access to natural resources, rehabilitating industrial lands through reforestation and sustainable agriculture, shifting subsidies and incentives toward regenerative practices and ensuring workers'

livelihoods during green transitions through public programs.

Irrigation inefficiencies also illustrate the ethical stakes: crops lose roughly half their water to transpiration and evaporation, indicating structural waste in agrarian systems (Cominelli et al., 671–672). Addressing such inefficiencies demands both technological and political solutions that redistribute resources and prioritize ecological sustainability over profit. Eco-Marxism thus provides a theoretical lens and a political program to halt ecological bleeding: it identifies systemic drivers of degradation and proposes collective, justice-oriented alternatives to market dogma.

5. Conclusion

The twenty-first century confronts us with ecological challenges that not only continue the damages inherited from the twentieth century but, in many cases, surpass them. Industrialization, militarized destruction, and the logic of infinite accumulation have combined to produce systemic environmental crises. Environmental safety and economic life are deeply interlinked; failing to address ecological degradation undermines human survival and social justice. This study has argued for two linked interventions. First, eco-Marxist analysis exposes how capitalism's drive for accumulation generates ecological harm and social inequality. Second, a critical theological clarification rejecting fatalistic readings of predestination which restores moral responsibility for environmental stewardship. "The Hills Have Eyes" is a metaphorical call: nature observes and responds to human excesses, not through divine caprice, but through ecological consequences that we can understand and, crucially, change. Further research should examine how predestinarian beliefs concretely influence environmental attitudes and policies across communities, and how eco-Marxist land-ethics can be operationalized in specific policy contexts. Ultimately, combining ecological theory, ethical reflection, and just policy offers a path from anthropocentric exploitation toward collective stewardship and ecological resilience.

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