

# An Analysis of the Critical Theory of the Ecological Crisis of Gorz's Capitalism

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**Abstract:** *As a representative figure of Western ecological socialism, Gorz's theoretical exploration process has entered the 21st century from the latter half of the 20th century. Unlike other Western ecological sociologists, Gorz began to construct the idea of ecological socialism from the perspective of existentialism. In the process of criticizing existentialism, Gorz keenly felt that the endless ecological crisis events that emerged in capitalist society were precisely due to the emergence of contradictions within capitalism. Gorz began to pay attention to the capitalist ecological crisis in reality while accumulating theoretical sources for his own ecological socialist theoretical system. As a fundamental transitional theory, this theory played a connecting role in constructing the future theoretical framework for Gorz. The main content of Gorz's criticism of the capitalist ecological crisis can be explored in detail through his critical theories on three aspects: capitalist economic rationality, science and technology, and alienated consumption.*

**Keywords:** *ecological socialism; economic rationality; ecological rationality; science and technology; alienated consumption; ecological crisis*

The idea of ecological socialism is a highly influential idea in Western Marxist thought, derived from the green folk movement spontaneously organized by the Western people's awakening of environmental awareness, and has a foundation for public practice. Gorz began to pay attention to the capitalist ecological crisis in reality while accumulating theoretical sources for his own ecological socialist theoretical system. As a fundamental transitional theory, this theory played a connecting role in constructing the future theoretical framework for Gorz. Domestic scholars' research on Gorz's ideas mainly focuses on his recent ideas, "Professor Chen Xueming believes that Gorz's criticism of contemporary capitalism from an ecological perspective is sharp and systematic, and closely combines his criticism of capitalism with his criticism of productivity and science and technology. He believes that only Gorz can directly demonstrate the necessity of establishing socialism through the criticism of the ecological crisis of capitalism." [1] Compared with China, foreign research on Gorz's ecological socialism started relatively early, the content is also relatively rich, and the issue of the socialist revolutionary subject in its theory is a hot topic of discussion in foreign academic circles. In response to the criticism of capitalism by Gorz, "Adrian Little believes that the inherent development of Gorz's theory creates possibilities for the development of new and radical socialism, challenging the power of capitalism and prioritizing individual liberation." [2] The analysis of Gorz's theory of ecological crisis criticism of capitalism helps to better understand the development context of Gorz's theory of ecological socialism. It has important theoretical significance to better understand the beneficial components of ecological socialism theory and assist in national ecological construction.

## 1. Gorz's Critique of Capitalist Economic Rationality

### 1.1 The Reasons for the Rationality of Capitalist Economy

Gorz believed that economic rationality did not arise spontaneously, and there was no economic rationality before the emergence of capitalism. The ways in which humans engage in production are mostly small-scale, with families as the unit. This type of production unit has strong autonomy and selectivity, and can set labor hours according to their own needs. So economic rationality was not applicable before capitalist society, because humans lived a self-sufficient life during that stage of development, and economic rationality is the opposite of people's concept of "self-sufficiency" in life. Economic rationality has formed a concept that people cannot simply be satisfied with self-sufficient production methods, with the pursuit of endless benefits as the starting point.

In Gorz's theoretical system, the production of goods to meet one's own needs does not belong to the concept of economic rationality. The existence of economic rationality is to eliminate existence outside oneself, and the purpose is to obtain goods. One obvious feature of economic rationality in the capitalist world is the separation of commodity producers and consumers. Producers put excess goods into the market, and consumers purchase the goods produced by commodity producers due to their own needs. In this way, consumers satisfy their own needs by purchasing. During periods of low productivity, it is very difficult for people to meet their own needs, so they do not put excess items on the market for sale. Before the emergence of capitalism and the rapid development of productivity, even if people had surplus products to sell in the market in some cases, it was difficult to form a unified price standard and management mechanism in the commodity market due to people's lack of understanding of the commodity market, coupled with limitations on production scale and unfixed production cycles. Therefore, in this situation, economic rationality is difficult to play its role. There are also some necessary factors for the emergence of economic rationality, which is that the scope of its influence must be within the public domain that is separated from the family. Before capitalist society, small-scale production was mostly based on the family, and even if there were surplus products produced, the production model based on the family was rarely invested in the social public domain due to the imperfect and imperfect market mechanisms at that time. If a product produced cannot be put into society, it indicates that it can only meet the needs of the family that produced it. It can only have an impact on a single producing family and will not have an impact on others in the public domain of society.

Before capitalist society, people's values were self-sufficiency, and the products they produced were meant to meet the needs of families or small groups. Even though excess products may be produced due to various factors, people's ideas at that time were often just to store these excess products for emergency production shortages. People have not shown excessive desire for the quantity of products. But after the development of capitalist society, people showed a pursuit of quantity. Capitalism has brought powerful productivity and also driven large-scale production models, with previously small-scale household or small workshop production models being replaced. Under the guidance of economic rationality, people's subjective thoughts are to some extent suppressed, and wealth has become a desirable commodity that many people in capitalist society would crave. At that time, the market had already formed a relatively large scale and a relatively complete price management mechanism. Therefore, people are constantly pursuing profits to obtain wealth. The accumulation of profits will bring great wealth to people, so more and more products are being invested in the consumer market, and capitalists are constantly eager for their factories to produce more goods. Guided by the concept of economic rationality, people are generally guided by quantity patterns. They believe that the output of more goods means that more goods are put into the market, and the profits obtained by each product are certain. More goods mean more profits. In capitalist society, people blindly pursue profit growth, treat more as better, and blindly pursue the expansion of production scale and quantity, disregarding the laws of market supply and demand and ecological environment protection.

Economic rationality almost emerged with the development of capitalism, as the development of capitalism provided various conditions for the emergence of economic rationality. "The essence of economic rationality is instrumental rationality, whose value pursuit is to maximize the use of resources to accumulate wealth, while ecological rationality adheres to the principle of sustainable development, and the two are fundamentally antagonistic." [3] Economic rationality affects the ideological concepts and behavioral patterns of people living in capitalist society. However, economic rationality blindly pursuing value and quantity clearly has limitations. The endless development of economic rationality can affect interpersonal communication relationships, which is particularly detrimental to the sustainable development of the ecological environment.

The capitalist world uses the pursuit of profit as a measure of value, and the generation of profit comes from the production of goods. The transformation of a product from a raw product to a commodity requires the market to provide an environment for sales. The generation of products requires the provision of various materials, and the materials required for producing products are not naturally produced. Guided by the concept of economic rationality, people constantly pursue more output of products, and more product output means more use of means of production. When people's desire to produce a quantity of products is endless, it means that more and more natural resources are being plundered by people. However, there is a supply-demand relationship in the market. When people produce too many goods, the market may not be able to sell all of them, and some unsold goods will become overstocked goods, losing their own value for use. So economic rationality leads people to excessively pursue an increase in quantity, causing serious harm to natural resources, and even causing permanent losses to some natural resources if they are not appropriately used. When capitalist countries

realize that their own resources are being depleted, they will go to other countries to search for resources, causing global resource and environmental problems, and global ecological problems will affect the sustainable development of the entire human world.

### ***1.2 The Harm of Capitalist Economic Rationality***

The purpose of capitalists' production activities is to obtain profits. The product produced can be put into the market as a commodity to earn profits. So the principle of "quantity first" is most appropriate to describe the production and operation activities carried out in the capitalist market. Capitalists inevitably need more production materials to produce more products. So under the guidance of economic rationality, more and more natural resources will be obtained without restraint. When capitalists realize that the harmonious relationship between humans and nature has been disrupted, they subconsciously engage in some environmentally friendly production activities in order to maintain the supply of production materials. However, this environmental protection activity is not truly aimed at protecting the ecological balance of nature, but rather concerns about disrupting one's production and profit chain due to the scarcity of natural materials. In the capitalist world, when the ecological balance of a region is truly disrupted, capitalist enterprises in that region will begin to introduce some environmental protection equipment. Although this remedial measure can alleviate the ecological crisis to a certain extent, fundamentally, capitalist enterprises still pursue quantitative superiority under the guidance of capitalist economic rationality. And sometimes, in order to alleviate the damage caused by the depletion of natural resources to the entire national economy to a certain extent, the legal provisions of capitalist countries explicitly stipulate that only enterprises that introduce environmental protection equipment are allowed to produce. However, many small and medium-sized enterprises are being absorbed by larger enterprises with higher levels of capital accumulation due to their inability to bear the production costs of introducing environmental protection equipment. When large enterprises with extremely high levels of capital accumulation gain more market share and fewer market competitors, capitalist monopolies are more likely to occur. When these enterprises that monopolize the market in the name of environmental protection appear, more and more profits from goods will be occupied by monopolistic enterprises. When the level of market competition decreases, capitalist entrepreneurs will produce more products more unrestrained under the guidance of economic rationality in pursuit of increasing profits.

The negative impact brought about by economic rationality is not only manifested in the pursuit of endless quantity issues, but also in the concept guided by economic rationality, which easily breeds a competitive relationship between people in capitalist society. In a society dominated by primitive productive forces, due to the low level of productivity, people often pursued the lowest level of needs, that is, meeting food and clothing. At that time, people would feel satisfied as long as they could meet their basic survival needs. In addition, people at that time rarely used advanced production tools, and their ability to obtain natural resources was very limited. Therefore, at that stage, natural resources were not greatly damaged. However, the economic rationality that emerged with the development of capitalist society has led people to pursue endless quantities while also generating endless desires. People are increasingly focusing on consumer goods that can satisfy their desires, as these consumer goods can satisfy their vanity. These goods that can satisfy one's own vanity are often not goods that people can meet their basic survival needs. The output of high-end consumer goods often requires precise and scarce natural resources, which to some extent exacerbates the depletion of natural resources. Moreover, blindly pursuing profits as a standard can exacerbate social polarization between rich and poor, making it difficult for workers to enjoy the products they produce and further concentrating wealth in the hands of capitalists. This greatly damages the fair and orderly development of social order and the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

The economic rationality in the capitalist world not only has a negative impact on the guidance of capitalist production activities and consumption views, but the existence of economic rationality has gradually penetrated into all aspects of life since the establishment of capitalism. People live in a society with a holistic nature, and in order to meet their basic survival needs, they must be associated with other individuals or groups. It can be said that people are in a state of social relations. However, the existence of economic rationality in the capitalist world has made people living in society forget that they belong to the collective and should have collective consciousness. They only believe that they belong to their own individual, so they only pursue personal interests. Even when engaging in necessary interactions with others, people often consider the value of mechanical benefits as a necessary purpose of communication. The existence of economic rationality has led to alienation in people's daily communication, treating others as tools for exchanging benefits rather than individuals

with subjective initiative living in society. The extreme interests of capitalist individuals brought about by economic rationality have also led people in the capitalist world to disregard the sustainable development of the natural world in order to satisfy their own selfish desires, thereby placing the balance of "harmonious coexistence between humans and nature" in the abyss. The countries that took the lead in utilizing the advanced productive forces of capitalism to obtain rich material returns, after disrupting their ecological balance, gradually shifted their focus on exploiting natural resources to countries with relatively backward productivity in order to reduce the pressure of environmental protection technology on production costs. This not only disrupted their own ecological balance, and expand the scope of ecological damage caused by economic rationality to a global scale.

## **2. Gorz's Criticism of the Development of Capitalist Technology**

### ***2.1 The Essence of Science and Technology under the Framework of Capitalism***

Marx holds a neutral attitude towards the development of science and technology, and many scholars share the same argument with Marx. From a dialectical perspective, on the one hand, the development of technology will bring about significant productivity progress, and on the other hand, it will also have some negative impacts on the development of society. Unlike most scholars, including Marx, Gorz's attitude towards the development of science and technology is very radical. In Gorz's ecological socialist system, economic rationality runs through the entire thread of his research content. In his theory of economic rationality research, many things are included in his understanding of economic rationality, while in contrast, he combines the development of technology with the control of economic rationality over the capitalist world. Due to Gorz's belief that the development and progress of the capitalist economy were largely influenced by economic rationality, and at that time, the technological development in the capitalist world increased the productivity of the capitalist world, which was the main factor in improving the efficiency of capitalist production. So Gorz's negative attitude towards capitalist economic rationality has derived from his negative attitude towards science and technology.

Just like during the background period of studying the theory of ecological socialism, science and technology had a great degree of social attention in capitalist society at that time, and every development of technology had a significant impact on people's daily lives. So Gorz placed science and technology in the decisive position of capitalist society, "he believed that science and technology were built on the basis of economic rationality, and not as neutral as Marx and others believed."<sup>[4]</sup> Just like Gorz's analysis of the development of economic rationality. Before capitalist society, people were limited by the social development status of that period and were unable to obtain a large amount of material means of production. Even at that time, humans would use some simple techniques to obtain natural resources. Because the lost resources are within a reasonable limit, nature can quickly cycle to replenish the lost resources. Before the establishment of the capitalist world, science and technology were only a few knowledge systems, and in the social context of that time, people tended to live a simple life of "self-sufficiency", so they did not have a great desire to obtain more resources. Moreover, at that time, technology was relatively simple and easy to understand, which was a skill that most people could master together. The concept of science and technology discussed by Gorz is different from the simple technology before the emergence of economic rationality. This concept is derived from the "science and technology" in economic rationality and is completely different from the simple technology before the emergence of economic rationality.

In a capitalist society where economic rationality thrives, guided by the values of pursuing more production and possessing more resources, every technological development inevitably becomes a tool for capitalism to strengthen its control over nature. Due to the relatively complete knowledge system formed by science and technology in the capitalist world, when capitalism generates a huge demand for certain resources, it can stimulate people in the capitalist world to compete for research related to this technology. Due to the needs of society, when this related science and technology is born, it will create stronger social productivity than before, especially in the production field that is in high demand for this item. At this point, Gorz believed that science and technology could lead the development trend of the capitalist world. On the other hand, even if there were no clear field needs in society, the development of technology could still bring progress in related fields and even many fields. People's vanity of possessing more resources would also be satisfied to some extent. Often, it is not considered whether science and technology have controlled one's own values. The emergence of this technology has brought a certain period of pleasure to human society, but people have lost themselves in this sense

of pleasure, forgetting the harm that the development of productivity has caused to natural resources, as well as their original intentions and dreams. The development of science and technology has brought greater productivity to capitalist society, and has also made people constantly strive to learn more advanced technology, thereby increasing their chances of winning more benefits. Technology holds a decisive position in the capitalist world, controlling the values and trends of people in the capitalist world, and becoming a goal of competing for benefits in a society dominated by economic rationality. Gorz has always regarded the role of science and technology as extremely important and irreplaceable. In his theory, the development of technology will seriously undermine the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, disrupt the correct communication activities between humans, and even become a weight for politicians to compete for power at the political level. The emergence of economic rationality has laid the foundation for this technology with significant negative impacts. As long as economic rationality exists, technology will continue to breed more chaos in capitalist society, seriously affecting the further development of capitalist society.

## ***2.2 The Harm of "Technical Fascism"***

In the capitalist world, the breeding of economic rationality has gradually led to the development of technology and the blind pursuit of profit growth. In Gorz's theoretical analysis, the development of technology has completely become a tool for fueling the flames of economic rationality. In capitalist society, people pursue faster economic growth and higher quantity growth, which requires science and technology to serve the goal of maximizing economic benefits for capitalism. Science and technology in capitalist society use economic interests as the standard for measuring value, so science and technology make relationships between people indifferent, and communication between people becomes conditional on the exchange of interests. The development of science and technology has seemingly improved people's material life, but from another perspective. The development of technology has caused people to lose their original dream pursuit as independent individuals in order to obtain more material wealth. People exist in pursuit of material possessions, and only by pursuing higher material wealth can their social status be improved. Moreover, the indifference of technology is not only reflected in the social interactions between humans, but also extends to the interaction between humans and nature. The purpose of technology's existence is only to serve the capitalist world. As long as it brings more material wealth to the capitalist world, regardless of whether natural resources can withstand it. The capitalist world will stand in the position of "technological fascism" and do not hesitate to allocate natural resources to the maximum extent possible to ensure sufficient supply of assets and raw materials in the capitalist world, which seriously damages the ecological balance between humans and nature.

"Gorz believed that science and technology were incorporated into the capitalist ruling system, embedded in the power relations of capitalism, obeying and serving the capitalist system." [5] The capitalist world is a large scale, constructed by multiple countries. Due to the pursuit of profit goals in the capitalist world, there will also be great competition among capitalist countries. So capitalist countries constantly compete to obtain resources from nature in order to gain an advanced position ahead of other countries. In order to occupy production raw materials and market share, many capitalist countries have set the goal of improving development progress on seeking technological breakthroughs, so advanced technology has become a competitive resource among countries in the capitalist world. Technology, as a bargaining chip for capitalist countries to gain leadership and wealth, is naturally inseparable from the existence of economic rationality. A country with advantageous technology ahead of other countries can use this advantageous resource to demand material benefits from other countries that urgently acquire this technology. Over time, material resources have become increasingly concentrated within a country, and monopolies between countries have also begun to emerge. Moreover, guided by economic rationality and the lack of satisfaction with values, more and more countries are joining the battle for advanced technology. In order to obtain more wealth and benefits for their own country, they force other countries to follow their own wishes, resulting in many extreme technological threats to human development. The most typical representative is the competition in military technology in the capitalist world, where the bureaucratic class in the bourgeois world regards technology as a political chip. Guided by this inappropriate value system, a series of political classes have emerged that exploit other classes by controlling technology. The development of capitalist technology has become a tool for capitalists and political classes to pursue material wealth and obtain political rights within the country. It not only breeds more inequality within the country, but also seriously affects the orderly competition and development between countries. In order to pursue economic rationality, many countries in the capitalist world have joined this resource plundering competition using technology as a means. Even more so, some highly dangerous scientific and

technological aspects have been brought into this competition.

At the macro level, technology in the capitalist world disrupts orderly competition within and between countries, and resources are recklessly plundered and destroyed. Moreover, by delving deeper into the micro level of individuals, we can clearly feel that individuals are also influenced by technology guided by economic rationality. Because before capitalism began to sprout, even though people had mastered technologies that were more efficient than those in the animal kingdom to obtain production materials in nature, these technologies were essentially simple handicraft activities that people could only call skills through their exploration of life. Many individuals could easily master this skill after imitating the use of other individuals. The medium of this skill is mostly tools that people use to process themselves, so it is not very helpful in improving productivity and production efficiency. The application of these skills also had a small impact on the balanced development of nature at that time. But after the emergence of capitalism, people's concept of the development of skills underwent a significant change. At this time, handicrafts began to transform into a technology, and people not only began to use this technology, but also began to explore and master the energy power provided behind this technology. The first industrial revolution of capitalism made steam the energy driving force behind this revolution, and the electric energy of the second industrial revolution began to serve as the energy driving force of the second revolution. From this time on, people can carry out specific and detailed knowledge and technology regulation in social development. The development of capitalism also correspondingly evolved different aspects of science and technology into disciplines with a complete knowledge system.

When the capitalist world first developed, those who first mastered these technologies could obtain material benefits in the name of learning technology. "Faced with the deteriorating ecological environment and the increasingly depleted energy crisis, more and more developed capitalist countries are beginning to utilize their strong economic and technological strength, attempting to use the monopolistic nature of capitalist 'hard technology', known as technological fascism, similar to the 'nuclear program', in an attempt to further plunder natural resources and achieve their goal of capital accumulation." [6] With the further development of capitalism until the 20th century after the end of World War II, the development of science and technology became more complex and sophisticated. Therefore, due to innate individual differences, the technical elite class who mastered precision technology in society became the dominant class in social production activities. In the division of labor in capitalism, there are roughly two levels of phenomena: firstly, the elite class who have mastered higher-level science and technology oppresses others who have not mastered such science and technology; Secondly, due to the improvement of overall production efficiency and the level of mechanical automation in society, the number of traditional working classes required for production in the capitalist world is decreasing. Capitalists only need to hire a small number of elites who master automation production technology to carry out production. In this way, a large number of traditional workers have become unemployed and have to rush around in capitalist society for their basic survival needs, completely attaching their survival and development to others, and losing their subjective initiative as independent individuals in social production and development. "Science and technology are constrained by the logic of capital, and capital obtains maximum profits through science and technology. The so-called neutrality of science and technology does not exist at all." [7] In the capitalist world, science and technology have already brought all aspects of the capitalist world into their own control through the value they can create productivity.

### **3. Gorz's Critique of Capitalist Alienated Consumption**

#### ***3.1 Alienated Labor, False Needs, and Alienated Consumption***

People can use their intelligence to work to obtain the natural resources they need, thus giving them the characteristic of "class". Labor, as the ability of human beings to exert their subjective initiative, should originally serve the process of obtaining the necessary material materials for their survival and realizing their own value. But in capitalist society, labor has lost its own value and become a product of alienation from itself. People cannot find their sense of existence in the labor of the capitalist world. Workers produce their own products, but these products are not for their own use. The mission of the products I produce from the moment they are produced is to be put into the consumer market to create profits for capitalists. The labor carried out by workers is not what they hope for, and they cannot obtain their sense of belonging and value from it. Moreover, workers do not feel any pleasure when carrying out such monotonous and tedious work. So in this kind of labor that neither enhances one's

own abilities nor brings any emotional joy to oneself, workers can only feel physically and mentally exhausted. In the capitalist world, workers engage in dry and uninteresting labor production activities simply to obtain wages to sustain their basic survival needs. A worker engaging in this type of labor is not a choice made by exerting their own subjective initiative, but rather a choice made under the influence of external environmental factors, without obtaining the right to use the products they produce themselves. The worker is not aware of the value he has created, and he has already become alienated from the "human essence" to which he belongs. The worker produces this type of product, but the products he produces do not belong to him. These products are owned by capitalists, so there is also varying degrees of alienation between people of different classes.

The workers produce products, but they do not have ownership of them, and these products are not used by them, so it is impossible to talk about their right to use the products, coupled with the loss of workers' sense of self-worth. Workers can be said to be in a state of scarcity in both spiritual and material dimensions. So in a long-term state of oppression, workers' long-suppressed mentality urgently needs to be alleviated, so the influence of social environmental factors will make these people in a state of oppression focus on things with high social heat. The capitalists seized the workers' products from them, but these products were of no practical value to them. When products are piled up in the hands of capitalists and cannot be put into the market, it does not bring them material benefits, so capitalists will focus on guiding the consumer market. Under the guidance of a normal market order consumption perspective, the reason for the consumer market is oriented towards the needs of the general public. However, in a normal social order, the demand for consumption will not be solely placed above the demand for a specific product. Capitalists, in order to dump their own products and guide the demand trend in the consumer society, often use some new capitalist media to spread to the public some remarks that guide the value orientation of demand.

Workers' needs in various aspects of capitalist society are not met, and they are in a state of isolation and helplessness in society. Under the influence of some social environmental factors, workers' focus is easily changed to a certain extent. So capitalists have caught the attention of a very high proportion of society's population, using the promotional role of the mass media to constantly exaggerate and boast about the value of the product itself, creating a psychological illusion among consumers that this item is what I need and its value in use, but in reality, consumers have no demand for this product at all. Guided by the rational values of the capitalist world economy, even though these consumers do not have a demand for this consumer product, they have already determined in their hearts that this product is what I need. Due to the existence of economic rationality in capitalist society, the emergence of "false needs" precisely conforms to the unreasonable values guided by economic rationality. After being misled by the illusion of 'false needs', consumers still do not feel that they are being misled by the illusion created by the social environment, to the extent that they purchase a large number of goods they do not need. This not only disrupts the good operation of consumption order, but also inevitably leads to the waste of many natural resources. Even so, in the capitalist world, due to the large proportion of workers, when these workers exist as consumers, "false needs" actually give them varying degrees of pleasure in their suppressed hearts. Economic rationality advocates an increase in quantity, and consumers place their inner satisfaction in the position of obtaining more and more consumer goods. The hearts of consumers in this state have been completely dominated by 'false needs'. The goods that one does not need actually dominate the true intentions of consumers, causing them to forget what they truly need as consumer goods. The excessive attention to material resources has already caused these addicted consumers to forget their consumption needs, and they have been completely alienated in their consumption process.

### ***3.2 Alienated Consumption and Ecological Crisis***

In capitalist society, the phenomenon of alienated consumption has a wide range of impacts. "When reflecting on the negative effects of capitalist modernization, Gorz keenly realized that developed capitalist society is a typical consumer society. In this society, consumption is increasingly far from its original value and significance, presenting unprecedented alienation characteristics. Alienated consumption has become an important representation and aggregation point of various alienation phenomena in contemporary capitalism." [8] So the negative impact of alienated consumption on capitalist society cannot be underestimated. It has brought distorted values to capitalist society, causing people to long forget their most genuine need for consumption. Especially when the working class exists as a consumer group, they are already very dissatisfied with their actual existence. Therefore, when they see a class that has less labor but more material wealth than them using more expensive consumer goods, it will invisibly have a certain degree of impact on their consumer psychology. They

believe that the cost of higher-order consumer goods represents that they are already at the same level as those who exploit them. So, under the stimulation of comparison psychology, they often use the behavior of purchasing higher-level consumer goods to cover up the unequal treatment they receive in society. However, from the essence behind these alienated consumption, workers in the capitalist world are eager for quick success and instant benefits in these consumption behaviors, because they are not clear about their true consumption needs, and the seemingly higher-order consumer goods they purchase have little practical value for themselves. The most real situation is that workers have spent a lot of money to purchase these high-end consumer goods, but they have not fully utilized them. The working class, due to the oppression of the bourgeoisie, has already obtained much less material resources compared to them. The emergence of irrational alienated consumption phenomenon has made them face financial difficulties when encountering consumer goods that they truly need, and they have to reduce their spending on consumer goods that they truly need due to their previous alienated consumption behavior.

“In terms of alienation between people, the monopoly of ‘upper class labor’ forces the relationship between people to further transform into the consumption of private services by a few to the majority, forming a ‘double-sided society’ where social classes accelerate differentiation and disintegration. Stable occupational labor has become the right of very few experienced and highly skilled composite workers, and unstable employment and unemployment have become the norm for most workers.”[9] The working class has become lost in alienated labor. They live in society, but they have lost their sense of value in seeking their goals in society. Under the influence of alienated consumption, their long suppressed emotions have not been alleviated in the right path, but instead have been exploited by the bourgeoisie, allowing them to vent their uncontrollable emotions onto the frenzied purchase of consumer goods without demand. The workers have always had this mentality, and when I receive more expensive consumer goods than my peers, I achieve self-improvement. This consumer goods are not a practical item for me, but a symbolic item that satisfies my vanity to improve my own class. Because economic rationality has always existed in capitalist society, and capitalists can only become their true material wealth after the goods they possess are turned into consumer goods and put into the market. So the question that capitalists think most about is how to dump their goods. Utilizing people's desire for diversity in the quantity of goods consumed and creating products that have different characteristics from other similar products means that capitalists often focus not on the actual updating of product functions, but on how to make the appearance of products more eye-catching. Because research and development methods that enhance the value of use often cost more than improving external packaging, in order to attract people who have blind consumption views in alienated consumption, they are more willing to use the unique appearance to attract consumers. However, the improvement of appearance will largely lead to the existence of excessive packaging behavior. Excessive packaging means that the product's value to use ratio continues to be low, which not only wastes resources but also deepens the alienation of people's consumption habits.

“Gorz adhered to Marx's theory of alienation, pointing out that the division of labor will cause workers to continuously lose control over the production process with the development of technology, and will also strengthen the hierarchical system in the production field, thereby damaging the autonomy and creativity of workers in production and exacerbating the alienation of workers labor.”[10]The inherent contradictions in capitalism also mean that there is an economic crisis phenomenon in the capitalist world. Once an economic crisis occurs in the capitalist world, capitalists inevitably face the problem of overstocking their goods. Capitalists have always enjoyed a sense of vanity in the enormous material wealth brought to them by the possession of natural resources. Once an economic crisis occurs, excessive circulation of goods in the market will prevent the products they produce from being put into the market or even if they are put into the market, their products will not be able to be sold quickly. So capitalists are unable to bear the reality of the reduction of their material resources and will focus on stimulating consumer demand again. They will use various social media tools to promote their products and add many values that do not match their actual functions. For example, some capitalists will give their products some false value meanings through excessive packaging. These so-called value implications are actually meaningless for the use value of the product. Relying on this special value connotation, even if goods appear at more expensive prices in capitalist society, their sales speed will be much faster than similar goods, which will alleviate the phenomenon of goods hoarding caused by the economic crisis of capitalism. However, for nature, the production of products has exceeded the level of human demand, so the emergence of alienated consumption can only lead to more serious ecological crises. “The infinite production and alienated consumption of capitalism are closely linked, with maximization of production as the prerequisite and consumption as the means. The growth of capitalism is based on individual high consumption, which supports infinite



growth.” [11] The market grabbing and capital accumulation of capitalist society are also led to a more lost abyss by this high production and high consumption social chaos.

#### 4. Conclusions

The phenomenon of alienated consumption can also lead to further deterioration of the capitalist production order, as capitalists gain huge material wealth by controlling people's consumption concepts and fabricating the value of consumer goods. So they will continue to follow the same path after receiving the enjoyment of material wealth for the first time, constantly updating and upgrading their products in terms of appearance and functionality to attract more consumers' attention. This consumption pattern is constantly being repeated, which can only lead consumers to go further and further on the path of alienated consumption. Economic rationality has always existed in capitalist society, and many consumers find it difficult to realize that they have lost their subjectivity and let their consumption behavior control them. Due to the long-term characteristics of alienated consumption behavior, the damage to nature is also persistent. Perhaps short-term damage can be compensated for by nature's own repair function, but long-term damage often leads to continuous waste of resources and irreparable damage. Even if capitalists invest in environmental protection facilities to improve for long-term development, but we must make it clear that they will pass on the increased production costs of investing in environmental protection functions to consumers, as they have already controlled the thoughts of alienated consumers.

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