The latest discoveries in Western literary theory have not stopped with the continual overhauls of feminism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and cultural theory. In the late twentieth century, the Western theories of “cultural ecology” and “ecological criticism” have gradually spread across the globe and have become a new literary methodological theory that transcend conventional disciplinary boundaries. Of course, in terms of its theoretical inheritance, one could say that cultural ecology and ecological criticism are not ordinary literary studies on man and the environment but a newly expanding theoretical field within cultural studies. This is mainly manifested in several important dimensions: As modern Western literary theory has entered a “period of slow theoretical production,” Western literary criticism is no longer flowing in an endless stream of new ideas and is, instead, placing a renewed emphasis on the dual identity of the “world” as both nature and society, revealing the imitative value of nature in literature; since literary criticism remains indeterminate by still focusing on a continual search for a new aesthetic and cultural basis in new histories, understanding political ideologies, and determining the relationship between race and gender, they have redefined the theory of the self.

The Emergence of Cultural Ecology and Its Practical Relevance

Environmentalism and globalization are two major movements that are closely linked. The first is responding a global crisis that has seen the worsening of the natural environment; the second is reacting to a crisis in the ecology of the human spirit because of being infected by a modern consumerism. These two crises originated in modernity.

The Severing of Modern Culture and the Symptoms of Consumerism

So-called modernity has only been around for only 500 years. Before that, the West was in the Dark Ages. After the Dark Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation shook the feudal and theocratic foundations of European regimes
and opened the path to capitalism as well as the scientific revolution. Since the eighteenth century, the invention of the steam engine allowed the West to begin modernizing quickly. In the nineteenth century, thermodynamics, electromagnetism, and the theory of evolution reduced Asia to timelessly unchanged “stagnant empires,” and the modern West became the central power in human discourse. The invention of the photograph allowed artists to pale in comparison to the realistic depiction of objects; the invention of the steam engine and automobile forever changed people’s perception of space; the refrigerator and electric light radically changed people’s lives and sense of aesthetics; the emergence of movies transformed the ways in which humanity felt and sensed the world. In the twentieth century, the airplane was invented, communications satellites were launched into orbit, the television was born, the computer appeared in every home, and man landed on the moon. These things have granted the West hegemony in science, technology, the military, and the economy. Modernity and technological innovation are integrally linked to the colonization of humanity, which has allowed the West in a short 200 years to gain hegemony over the world.

The expansion of modernity has led every country in the East to ride a wave of “wholesale Westernization,” which has proven over a hundred years that modernity was not a gospel of the East and, instead, was the beginning of the homogenization and alienation of humanity. The problems faced by humanity—not to mention the threat of a nuclear holocaust, the depletion of resources, environmental pollution, tsunamis, and a meteor striking the earth—tell us one single fact: the expansion of modernity will ultimately lead to the destruction of humanity. While modernity promises people a beautiful life, it also brings a plethora of ecological disasters—environmental crisis, social ecological crisis, spiritual ecological crisis, cultural ecological crisis—which have led to the destruction of our forests, erosion of our soil, contamination of our water, the disappearance of species, the forfeiture of our spirituality, the deterioration of our moral values, and the unhinging of our mental stability, forming an ecological apocalypse that threatens the existence of humanity. Because of the unbalanced spiritual ecology of consumerism and cultural hegemony, some philosophers have called for a spiritual return to a sense of life rooted in the native soil that has greater culturally ecological significance.

Today, besides the current environmental crisis, across the globe humanity has produced over nine million robots and nearly 50,000 machines with artificial intelligence. Based on current technology, it is possible to produce about 40 million more within the next ten years or so. It is entirely possible that, in the next half a century, this intelligence that we have implanted into machines could become a global “army of machines,” and, if we were to lose