

INCOMPATIBLE DEPLOYMENT: THE NON-CREATIVE DESTRUCTION OF THE HUMAN CONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract: *The sketch of this somehow odd environmental philosophy topic is made from the standpoint of ontology of the human. This perspective is heuristic to more than the specific material domain discussed here. Indeed, many times we feel that the analysis of the couple construction-destruction is metaphorical, sending us to a lot of rich experience of this relationship and its meanings. The thesis is that a main cause of the present global unsustainability, leading to major risks for the human civilisation, is the absurd destruction of the material domain of the artificial world. It is the result of the unsustainable frenzy of capitalist development for private profit and is pendant of the destruction of natural biodiversity and resources. The focus is on immobile constructions, they are the working model, including for the attitude towards mobile artificial objects. The significance of destruction and the hypothesis of creative destruction are decomposed with the concepts of form, telos, validity, intention, and difference between the evil and the necessary: thus, exceeding the legitimization of fatalism: “destruction as price and precedence of construction”, and “equivalence of all types of destruction”. On the contrary, criteria of (both construction and) destruction are presented. Similarly, a holistic approach, surpassing their isolated consideration. They influence the surrounding “near space” and, through local/specific areas, the global environment, on both short intervals and long terms. The logic of bioeconomy is thus their suitable treatment. It is consonant with its legal basis, a “natural contract” sparing the natural resources and equilibria and the world civilisation. Destruction of the material human constructs as an essential element of unsustainable development signals the constitutive intertwining of the immediate, the substantive condition of the human life with the ideas of transcendence and aspiration to the lasting.*

Keywords: destruction, ontology of the human, sustainability, telos, waste.

Preamble

Mankind is now confronted with a *civilisational crisis*. It consists of crises in all the domains of the human life, in knowledge and practice. Why this

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overwhelming general spread of crises and why “civilisational” since humans have always evolved through contradictory trends issued from contradictory states and actions? The answer relates the historical and structural features of civilisation. Thus, until the constitution of the capitalist system in the Western Europe, the world developed in isolated civilisations (letting here aside their eventual relations). But capitalism was a *world system* from the beginning, i.e., from its structural fabric². The pre-modern isolated civilisations underwent their own civilisational crises, that is, their exhaustion when the social relations and organisation could no longer uphold the development of civilisational goods and environment, the social control of consensus and a horizon of betterment. Capitalism passes through the same process, generating nowadays the same malignant devastating phenomena on society, nature, individuals, values and hopes, reasons-to-be. Capitalism is not only its pink vitrine, the image of equilibria and individualistic approaches of life in different “gated communities”³ and even of nature⁴, but:

- the *entire* Earth,
- the wars⁵,
- destruction of nature despite the platform of rational knowledge the humans arrived at,

² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1849, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>.

³ Which claim that, because of the human-induced transformation of nature from the beginning, the identical responsibility of all humans towards the healing of nature would follow. However, “maybe we are really in the same boat, but we are not all traveling in the same class”, Serenella Iovino, “La giustizia ambientale: *loss and damage*”, 11 nov 2022, <https://maremosso.lafeltrinelli.it/news/giustizia-ambientale-libri-serenella-iovino>.

⁴ André Gorz, « Leur écologie et la nôtre » (1974), *Le monde diplomatique*, avril 2010, p. 28, pointed already fifty years ago that capitalist is accommodating – in its fragmentary and double standard manner – to the ecological requirement of the present, but its treatment of ecology does not solve the ecological problems; thus, ecology needs a radical alternative to capitalism.

⁵ John Peter Antonacci, “Periodizing the Capitalocene as Polemocene: Militarized Ecologies of Accumulation in the Long Sixteenth Century”, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 27(2), 2021, pp. 439–467.

- reduction of humans to the quest of survival at the level of basic needs and entertainment, removing from them the possibility of social ideals which reflect the universal human values and the universalizability of social behaviours; this reduction consists of framing the humans into particularistic mindset, and egoism

- annihilation of critical thinking leading to a non-human passivity⁶, incredibly coexisting with technological enthusiasm and moral goodwill but impotent activism.

At the level of principles of thinking, capitalism induced the *fragmented*, isolated, circumscribed perspective of the local and shied away from the *sine qua non* and interrelated *holism* without which one cannot ultimately understand the local: and thus, neither its space.

Sustainability means to have in present and future all the material resources for life as a system, then not in a country but on the scale of the whole globe. The humans have induced destructive actions and results in the environment from the beginning of their development as a species; and obviously, because every action and every result generate contradictory tendencies, including the strengthening of their negative line, the course of time did but increase the destructive actions and results. But the capitalist system is not a simple chain link in the historical chain of continuity, but a quite new and discontinuous period, where even alternative societal organisations were integrated/subordinated⁷, thus deprived of their specific ways to develop. Its harmful marks on both society and human life and nature are not a simple difference of degree of disastrous influence of humans on nature, but of gist⁸. It's already clear-cut to scientists that the capitalist amplification of treatment of material and spiritual aspects of reality has created a situation of *unsustainability* for a long time from now: if this manner of treatment will continue.

⁶Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*. Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'Ecole des Hautes Études, réunies et publiées par Raymond Queneau. Paris: Gallimard, (1947), Gallimard, 1968, 1997, pp. 434, 435, 437.

⁷Zsuzsa Gille, "The Socialocene: From Capitalocene to Transnational Waste Regimes", *Antipode*, 23 September 2022, pp. 1-20.

⁸Jason W. Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*. PM Press/Kairos, 2016.

In other words, the capitalist organisation of the world did not only generate a specific “geological age” of the globe but reached the stage when the *malignant consequences surpass its cultural acquisitions*, actually, it *puts the brakes* to these acquisitions.

Therefore, it is not about the “West-rest” relations, but about *capitalism* (capitalist structural relations) and the *entire human existence in its environment*. Obviously, capitalism is a hierarchical system, socially / internally and geopolitically: the Western capitalism conducting the Western highly developed countries which lead the world capitalism is guilty, so if we reduce things to geopolitical power relations and do not explain the nature of these relations and their denouement under the capitalist regime, we do neither understand their origin and *telos*⁹ and nor do we resolve them: hence, their consequences.

The capitalist *ideology* claims that desolation of both nature and the material artificial world is only a phase, a temporary interval in the victorious capitalist type construction of the planet. The message of this ideology *ad usum vulgi* is the idea of generalisation of the capitalist way of life, i.e., of its Western vitrine. But, because of both the *waste* involved in this model and the domination/exploitation/transfer of wealth structure through the capitalist (international) relations, this generalisation is not possible, not sustainable.

The claim of a temporary interval is denied by the present state of capitalism that gathers huge accumulations of wealth at the top of society and at the same time cannot assure decent, even the basic, needs – nutrition, shelter, education, culture, self-fulfilment – of millions of human beings. This unconceivable political impotence gives to the already chippy and abstract word “crisis” the weight of some more concrete ones: *collapse*¹⁰

⁹ *Telos* – a main term coined by Aristotle – means the reason-to-be of every living or inanimate entity, including of actions.

¹⁰ Societal collapse is much more than disasters – although there are bi-univocal relations between them, (Bas van Bavel, Daniel R. Curtis, Jessica Dijkman, Maïka de Keyzer, Matthew Hannaford, Eline van Onacker, Tim Soens, *Disasters and History: The Vulnerability and Resilience of Past Societies*. Oxford University Press, 2020); it is a demise of the material structures and social institutions, values and organisation of a given society.

See also, discussing “prominent risks of societal collapse”, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2022), *Our World at Risk: Transforming Governance for a Resilient*

and *tipping point*. Indeed, the present civilisational crisis seems to drive the humans to their extinction, to the collapse of the human society; actually, it is a tipping point which only the humans can divert towards avoiding of collapse.

Instead of introduction

Environmental philosophy is based on proofs immanent to the state of nature and, obviously, to the human-nature relations. From a philosophical standpoint, these proofs are interpreted as significances whose relationship gives a picture that is a model.

A picture or design is prepared. The moment of preparation is/could be even far away from the resulting picture: actually, in this moment the paths with their specific ends could be even very different from the final result.

Here, we start from the contemplation of *ruins*. They are traces of the former life within their walls which defended the humans living there, but which never isolated them from the larger ambient that was also their home. The life in the former constructions meant a lot of other human constructs, tools, implements, furniture, kitchen dishes, books, carpets and clothes, aesthetical preoccupations and arrangements¹¹: which all are vanished now. They did not vanish because of "*inreparabile tempus*"¹²; the

Future. (Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, aka: GAR2022 d/d May 2022), available at <https://www.undrr.org/media/79595> (viewed September 2022).

Noam Chomsky, Principal speaker for the American Solar Energy Society 51st annual conference, University of New Mexico, June 21 2022, available at <https://interfaithearthkeepers.org/f/noam-chomsky-and-the-united-nations-warn-of-collapse?blogcategory=Analysis> (viewed 26 October 2023), added to the well-known aspects, "the deterioration of rational discourse".

¹¹ François Dagobert, *Eloge de l'objet, pour une philosophie de la marchandise*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1989, 198, 12: "Throughout history, philosophers have remained too exclusively focused on subjectivity, without understanding that it is on the contrary in things that the mind is best able to see. We must therefore carry out a real revolution, realizing that it is on the side of objects that the mind is found, much more than on the side of the subject".

¹² Publius Vergilius Maro, *Georgica*, Liber III, 284, <https://TheVirtualLibrary.org>, available at https://onemorelibrary.com/index.php/en/?option=com_djclassifieds&format=raw&view=download&task=download&fid=16432.

ruins witness either natural disasters or man-made ones. The ruins are signs of random natural punishments, but also of wars and cruelty. The difference is thus the *intention* of human acts: obviously, one could cause the fire unintentionally, but most of the ruins was caused by conscious intentions. Are the ruins not also witnesses of the state of human awareness?

We can contemplate isolated ruins of Romantic castles. They are surrounded by a beautiful friendly nature that seems to cover the remaining enclosure and to divert our attention: we rather float in nostalgia and fatalism, than to think about the significances of ruins.

But we see *compact and large areas of ruins*. War – occurring in the same repetitive pattern of “violence plus some contract”¹³ – is the climax of human-caused irrational destructions: they are “domicide”¹⁴ and no matter how far away from us are they, we are aware of them. This must involve first, in order to stop their cause, the questioning of their *context*. Why can’t we do this, since we know so much about the structure of matter? In front of ruins, we see not only that the artificial, human sign of civilisation has disappeared¹⁵, but also that nature as feature of the world, that is, nature as the world, of the only world that matters to us, rarefied. The quantity leads us to evaluate ruins in a different way¹⁶: we are no longer nostalgic, but

¹³ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract* (1991). Translated by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 13.

¹⁴ John Douglas Porteous, Sandra Eileen Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*. McGill-Queen's Press – MQUP, 2001; “Domicide” must be recognised as an international crime: UN expert, 28 October 2022, accessed at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/domicide-must-be-recognised-international-crime-un-expert>, viewed 29 October 2023).

¹⁵ *Before and after satellite images show destruction in Gaza*, October 25, 2023, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/25/middleeast/satellite-images-gaza-destruction/index.html> (viewed 27 October 2023).

¹⁶ See the scale as proportion, and thus as a criterion, in Cristian Suteanu, *Scale: Understanding the Environment*. Springer, 2022.

More precisely, the scale of size of electric cars and of their demand leads to the increase of the demand of critical materials necessary for batteries, and thus, for pressures on and imbalances of the environment. International Energy Agency (2023), *Global EV Outlook 2023: Catching up with climate ambitions*, pdf, p. 162.

afraid. Ruins means collapse: not imperfection and lack, but deletion. We are sorry, but does this mean that we escaped from fatalism?

Concluding remarks

We distinguish between natural and man-made destruction; we distinguish between military¹⁷ and civil destruction. The former distinction sends to *direct responsibility*, to the subject. The second sends to *direct responsibility*, too, and concretises it. The military destruction is not an accidental peak and limit case of the “normal” civil destruction but its permanent intermingled manifestation; and its aspects are a mirror of the problems of civil destruction; while the aspects of the latter have the same essence and evolution as the military destruction: because of their common logic, of *private interest and domination subjection relations*.

In the paper, we use the common understanding of nature on the path created in antiquity, as “developing from itself”, opposed to human-made intellectual and physical creations. Aristotle considered nature as a principle or cause of the movement, rest and change of living things, as their internal principle or cause¹⁸ and thus, as their fundamental encompassing feature.

However, this is not the only meaning. For Spinoza, the concept was much larger than the living – though just the pulsation of life was the feature of nature – as all *things*, as *existence* as such, and as concrete existence, *reality*: this is the reason of equivalence between God and nature. If we do not forget the difference between the internal *telos* – as cause of movement etc. of the living entities, and the external *telos* as cause of the inanimate things¹⁹, then we once more understand the human responsibility towards both the living nature and the reality of human

¹⁷ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Widespread destruction by Israeli Defence Forces of civilian infrastructure in Gaza*, 08 February 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/widespread-destruction-israeli-defence-forces-civilian-infrastructure-gaza>; Indlieb Farazi Saber, *A ‘cultural genocide’: Which of Gaza’s heritage sites have been destroyed?*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/14/a-cultural-genocide-which-of-gazas-heritage-sites-have-been-destroyed>.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, in *The Complete Works of*. The revised Oxford translation, Edited by Jonathan Barnes (1984), Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Volume One, 1991, II, I, 192b12-192b23, p. 19.

¹⁹ The sculptor makes the statue, etc. see Aristotle.

construction: because the internal *telos* of the living entity is depending on its environment.

What does a ruin mean?

When characterising a cracked piece of a device, a corrupted device, a deteriorated piece of clothing or a broken house, we think to that which remained: only “matter”, “simple matter”. The general and veiled, ambiguous concept of matter covers our removing from a spatial and temporal situatedness, from the former *individual* – that is, according to the etymology, *indivisible* – *unities*, *entities*. A ruin is a loss of the former individuality of objects, even of the former “objectivity”: that it was an indisputable stake for the human milieu, a “matter of fact”²⁰, an object. As an *object*, the former individual constituency of matter was *created* and, inherently, had a big complexity, and the more relationships with the world the object had, the more meanings it had. As a *ruin*, the former object became a “thing”, losing the former significances and being almost indiscernible, as debris, from the amorphous materiality.

This doesn’t mean that the ruin has no meaning. *Firstly*, it seems that the demolished status, somehow opposed to the intentions of constructors, removes to the subject its privileged position in the subject-object relation, finally positing the object – but transformed into a simple thing “without face”²¹ between other ones – as an independent primary source of reality. *Secondly*, the ruin brings about a new original meaning: that of its superiority towards the humans who do not anymore have the object and who have in front of them the difficult task to nevertheless transform it/its parts into objects, or to be deprived by the space the former construction provided; and who know that the eventual new object never will be the same as to the former, never will it contain the former meanings. *Thirdly*, the ruin is the negative of the former construction: while this one was independent, complete (having its *telos*), factual, stable, pre-delineated,

²⁰ Bruno Latour, “Why has critique run out of steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern”, *Critical Inquiry*, 30, Winter 2004, pp. 225-248.

²¹ This is an extrapolation of Antiphon’s name (*arrúthmiston* – without rhythm/form) for the indeterminate origin of things, see Aristotle, *Physics*, 193a10-193a11, p. 19.

“Vitruvian” (having its *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*²²), thus ordered, harmonious, integrated into the milieu²³ despite its uniqueness, the ruin as a thing is incomplete, unstable, disordered, incompatible with the ambient, an accident. Therefore, the ruin shows the importance of binary terms dialectic, hiding behind all our commentaries about the complexity of meanings. And *fourthly*, and if we may equate Antiphon’s rhythm/form with determination, respectively Antiphon’s term (without rhythm/form) with lack of determination, even though the ruin gives a new determination to the environment, it itself has no determination, is debris.

The ruin is both an *object* and a *space*. If we take into account its human origin – in most cases, even if occasioned by natural disasters – the ruin is a “conceived space” becoming a “lived” one, a lasting “perceived” one²⁴. As a *space* it is “absolute”, giving by its external perimeter / surface the whole occupied by it, “relative” to surrounding bodies and landscapes, and “relational” towards them, and important from all these standpoints²⁵: actually, the ruin gives “the text” of the landscape²⁶, the meanings issued from experiencing it; and in the deep intimacy of the human person²⁷.

As an *object*, the ruin is an entity defined by its history²⁸, namely, by the relation and process of negation of the antecedent construction: or by

²²Jesper Magnusson, *Objects vs. Things*, 2013, available at <https://philosophiesresarc.wordpress.com/2013/03/11/objects-vs-things/> (viewed 4 October 2023).

²³ Augustin Berque, *La Pensée paysagère* (2008). Bastia : Éoliennes, 2016.

²⁴ Lefebvre, Henri, *La production de l'espace*. Paris: Anthropos, 1974, p. 43.

²⁵ Letting aside Aristotle’s discussion of space, let’s remind David Harvey, “The Dialectics of Spacetime”, Bertell Ollman, Tony Smith, (eds.) *Dialectics for the New Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 90-108, p 95: “Space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances”.

²⁶ Augustin Berque, *La Pensée paysagère* ; Francesca D’Alessandris, « La pensée des lieux de Paul Ricœur à l’épreuve du paysage », *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies*, Vol 12, No 2, 2021, pp. 31-43.

²⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace*. Paris: PUF, 1957, pp. 28, 31.

²⁸ Idea developed also in a physical chemistry theory explaining the transition from non-living to living, see Abhishek Sharma, Dániel Czégel, Michael Lachmann, Christopher P. Kempes, Sara I. Walker & Leroy Cronin, “Assembly theory explains and quantifies selection and evolution”, *Nature*, 622, 12 October 2023, p. 321.

this construction negated in specific ways. The former constructed object became a thing, but this thing is only an intermediary of those whose intention was just to equate construction and destruction and to reduce the former to debris in order to more transforming the space into periodical destruction followed by constructions entirely subordinated to the end of its landowners. *The “production of space” is not made by all humans in the same way.* This is why the dominant psychology to approach the landscapes filled with constructions and ruins was to think about these contents as ordinary and even infra-ordinary²⁹. This was because of its commodification: that alienates and, including by war – a chief commodity – generates a human-nature space marked by destruction and deepening of contradictory and dreadful evolution.

Although the most intensive impression of ruin is in cities, its feature as destruction generalises in the entire human and human-governed space: “Professional pesticides were killing our countryside as well as our cities”³⁰.

Reminder

Traditionally, the human thinking and, here it is, philosophy, were subject-centred. Apart from the religious transfiguration, all the languages reveal that the world with its objects was conceived of from the standpoint of humans, as a result of the human demiurge: their meanings and constitution were created by man. The indeterminate stuff of his surroundings were *things*, in all the three meanings emphasised by

For the grasping of the *differentia specifica* of a landscape with constructions or ruins, its history means *contextualization*. See Michael Schwalbe, *Decontextualization and the Cycle of Violence*, November 3, 2023, available at <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/11/03/decontextualization-and-the-cycle-of-violence/> (accessed 4 November 2023).

²⁹ Questioned in present architectural views. See *How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?*, taken from Georges Perec, *Approaches to What? The Infra-Ordinary*, 1973, available at <https://counterintuitivetypologies.com/Peripheries-Peripherocene> (viewed 5 October 2023).

³⁰ Andy Merrifield, “Amateur urbanism”, *City*, 19 (5), 2015, pp. 753–762.

Heidegger³¹ (the narrower: all inanimate and animate entities which can be sensed and, more than to be present/present-at-hand³² – according to the metaphysical feature – to be learnable; the wider: “every affair or transaction, something that is in this or that condition, the things that happen in the world – occurrences, events” or “whatever is named”; and the widest: “something which is not nothing”³³). And, the undetermined whatever (the things) became *objects* – each of them a unique unity of properties – uncovered by the humans through naming them (as Plato said), through decomposing, inquiring and interpreting them (as the natural language suggests, and as in philosophy, see Aristotle), thus through creating them. Briefly, *the subject created the object*. Obviously, we can say with Heidegger that we can understand the things only by considering the entire history and art: but only if things and objects are synonyms, the same. Since they are not strictly, we say this only in regard of objects.

In the course of the human exploration and experience / practice, the objects were autonomised from their creators; and they were and are, indeed. The subject-object feedback was discovered and it really exists. The subject became to be understood as being no longer surrounded by a neutral, passive environment and infinite in its capacity to absorb and dissolves the human dirt object, but as an active context. Marx’s emphasis that the human existence – i.e., conditions / context – determines his social conscience had not in view to annul the creative role of the human mind and ideas, but only to draw attention on the above-mentioned feedback and the context dependence of ideas. The ideas do not form within an etherical space but in a dense prosaic world underlying the prosaic life

³¹ Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?* (1935-1936), Translated by W. B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch with an analysis by Eugene T. Gendlin. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967.

³² In *Zollikon Seminars* 2001, Heidegger insisted that in *What Is a Thing* “presence as the [metaphysical] determination of being is abandoned”, p. 182 (apud Dahstrom, Daniel. *Heidegger’s works in English*, available at <http://www.beyng.com/hb/hbheid.html#WhatIsaThing>, accessed 12 October 2023. Here, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters*, Edited by Medard Boss (1987). Translated by Franz K. Mayr and Richard R. Askay, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

³³ Martin Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, pp. 5, 6.

without which there are no ideas, and are impregnated by all that which we call *material culture* whose “presence and power”³⁴ do not negate the ideas but strengthen them.

Destruction

What does destruction mean, apart from the significances already got in the etymology that describes the first guise of an essential result of the human activity? Its root (*struo, -ere, -uxi, -uctum* – to pile up, to collect, and from here to build, to erect, and even to put order, to prepare, to cover, to fill, so to create, to compose), kept in the tree itself showing that all these actions are social effort³⁵ (*construo, -ere, -uxi, -uctum* – to pile up, to accumulate, to construct, to erect), was broken down (*destruo, -ere, -uxi, -uctum*), signalling ruin, annihilation.

However, to what degree? Aristotle’s constituents of things – *matter* and *form* – specify it: the result of destruction is a definite loss of form; and to some extent, even to a large one, even of matter. Consequently, the former *telos* of a given construction was wiped out. But, assuming the modern bricks of reality, also the *energy* deployed in the former construction was wasted. And also, the infinite wealth of *information*: because the destruction of civilisation is erasing of information.

Creation is positioning as a twofold *singularity*: as a process of creation and as its result. Thus, destruction annihilates the singularities without which the existence has no colours of reality: without singularities, the existence is grey, “without form”, if we once more take Antiphon’s formula for the primordial origin of reality.

Creative destruction

The most powerful sentiment in front of ruins is pessimism. But is this statement not an exaggeration? When all is said and done, the ruins are substituted with new constructions: new habitats with new, and perhaps (or surely) better utensils and means of life.

³⁴ Bill Brown, (2001), “Thing Theory”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, *Things*, Autumn 2001, pp. 1-22 (p. 3).

³⁵ *Conatus, -us* – effort, trial, tentative (and from them, propensity); *conamen, -inis* – elan, effort.

This reassuring belief induces us to view destruction in the ordinary pattern of fatalism *and* optimism. A destruction is, after all, “creative”³⁶: it must be initiated and must take place because otherwise there is no space for construction. But can we infer that every destruction would be creative?

Here, and continuing the etymological meanings, we distinguish between *destruction*, that is a property / significance related to the human beings, a fact made by them and underwent by them, and *disappearance/dissipation/vanishing*, that is a property related to things. And because everything has meanings only in relation with humans, the properties related to things exist as graspable by humans³⁷. This is the reason of the use of these synonyms – which, as all synonyms, never overlap perfectly – as reciprocal metaphors for the two types of properties. Nevertheless, we can distinguish between *ontology*, as analysis of the principles of being, and the *ontology of the human*, that discusses the principles of the human being. The latter contains concepts which characterise only the existence of the human being, as for instance, the perceived or not rarity, emphasised by Sartre³⁸. Like all these types of concepts, they can be explained also with the general ontological ones: destruction is annihilation of an individual entity and thus, of the balance of individual-particular-general; or (actually, and) destruction is a difference towards the former *identity* but also a new identity, of different form, with different meanings³⁹. So, does the new identity not signal that destruction would be creative?

Criteria of creativity in destruction

No matter how complex it is, a construction is a structure. Its identity, its uniqueness is the first one focuses on, constructors and beneficiaries as well. Taking over Aristotle’s model of living beings, they consider it as an *organism*, its parts and aspects being necessarily subordinated to the *telos* of the whole structure, to be functional in its integrity and safe. When these requirements / conditions are no longer met, the structure is de-structured.

³⁶ Joseph A. Schumpeter, (2003), *Capitalism, Socialism, Democracy* (1942). London & New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 81.

³⁷ See *disappearance* and its never absolutely overlapping synonyms, *extinction, dissipation, fading, melting away, disintegration, dissolution* etc.

³⁸ J.-P. Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique (précédé de Questions de méthode)*. Tome I. Théorie des ensembles pratiques. Paris: Gallimard, 1960.

³⁹ Here Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Translated by Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, is the most helpful.

Sometimes people take from it some pieces they consider useful, letting the rest to ruin. Not the course of time accomplishes this task, but the desertification of buildings, the oblivion of usefulness of *tools* and everyday objects and their harmony with us. Other times the structures are razed to the ground, the demolition leaving behind a mass of difficultly discernible rubbish. Or, the dismembering is itself an engineering, the pieces are carefully sorted and sent to be recycled.

Anyway, the cleaning of terrain from ruins is the most difficult, costly and, most of times, sad activity. The humans who do this are not robots, even though they must act as if they would be⁴⁰.

But would the feelings in front of destruction be the criterion of envisaging it? After all, the dominant thinking even in present is that of the social division of labour equated with power relations according to which the workers – here, we do think to those of cleaning the terrain and those of sanitation (but rather without the latest tools workshop), the collectors and those sorting the garbage, do we? – are necessary, inevitable and never visible, as if they would not exist, as if they would not be part of Spinoza's (and not of Hobbes's)⁴¹ *multitude*. And the cliché of fatal resignation depicts the ruin as “natural”, inevitable, inherent to the successive moments of development – thus “dialectical” and progress thrusting, as the capitalist ideology chants. It presumes that as the construction was planned, so its destruction was, consequently it is “human”. If so, the first criterion to examine the destruction of human structures is its *planned* or *unplanned* feature.

Still, what kind of planning or unplanning? If a structure is already in ruin, independently of the persons who decide to capitalize the ground by constructing something on it, the total destruction of the former construction is only a continuation of the given state, isn't it? Actually, only the *intention* to destroy a *valid* material configuration, built through the physical and intellectual effort of many people, transforms the dismantling into a planned *evil* destruction. Consequently, it is not tantamount to the *ad hoc* definitive destruction of a ruin, and nor to the one of an obsolete

⁴⁰ Is this not the position of a human acting as a destructive tool in front of his functional tasks, and his/her trauma?

⁴¹ Difference analysed in Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (2003). Translated by Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, Andrea Casson. Los Angeles, New York: Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents, 2004.

construction. The planned evil destruction has nothing to do with the inherent destruction involved in the betterment of the human construction.

But is it not “creative”? Let’s see. A new construction is erected in the place of the former, but this simple model of change is not enough; neither the substitution of the old with the new. In order to be creative, the physical disintegration must reduce as much as possible the *waste* of materials and the *damage* of the surrounding milieu, on short and especially long terms. Namely: if the waste of materials and the damage of environment are bigger than those resulted after the new construction, this one is the effect of a savage, irrational destruction, and brings (new) malignant shocks to the balance of raw materials and environment, *sine qua non* for the sustainability of the human life. Accordingly, the *state* of the object of destruction – the former man-made construction, but also different natural habitats – is another criterion for the decision to destroy, and thus for judging the destruction. The weighting of *waste*, *damage* and *state of the object*, its degree of validity / invalidity, are what signal an “efficient”⁴² destructive “action”.

Criteria of creativity in construction

But what is a *valid* structure? It fulfils the functions it was conceived for and assures good feelings to people who use it. And although any object from reality emerges but also degrades, perishes, a man-made structure that satisfies the above requirements even by *repairing* it⁴³, by *rehabilitating* it – first of all because every structure of this type needs maintenance – is valid.

But would every renovation be valid, since it is expensive? The habitual analysis compares the cost of renewing with the cost of obliteration, obviously to the latter adding the promise of future gains by capitalizing the terrain and/or the rests of materials. However, this analysis ignores the price of damage to the environment made by both the destruction of the existent structure and the new construction.

⁴² Tadeusz Kotarbiński, *Praxiology. An Introduction to the Science of Efficient Action* (1955). Translated from the Polish by Olgierd Woitasiewicz. New York: Pergamon Press, 1965.

⁴³ Ana Bazac, “Repair: A Dislocating Concept and Its Vicissitudes”, *Wisdom*, 2 (9), 2017, pp. 6-17.

Already in 1909 Jakob von Uexküll⁴⁴ drew attention on the basic importance of the ambient, the “near milieu” of living beings, more precisely of species – this perceived or felt *Umwelt* being the “receptacle” (one of Plato’s terms for space) of their individual home, *Heimat* (in fact, house) – and the architects take into account it. But are those who plan the destruction of structures taking into account the “*Umwelt*”? Logically, they should do, or rather are obliged to do this: but, as we know, many sidestep the law. Anyway, since a valid structure is always friendly towards the “*Umwelt*”, harmoniously integrated in it, a *necessary* destruction is the same. Any rejection of respecting the milieu transforms the destruction into an *irrational* devastation.

The whole and the specified actions

Yet, the *Umwelt* with its *Heimaten* is part of the general *Umgebung*/Environment. As paradoxical as it sounds⁴⁵, the dominant theory influencing the common ideology is that the individual’s eventual harmful action is not so important because it would be absorbed, dissolved in the whole environment⁴⁶, or that he/she must consume (as frugally as he/she can) as an individual. But as we see, the *mankind is a whole* directed to act in the same dominant capitalist way and thus, transforms the global environment, the water, air, land, the living beings and the human material and spiritual creations.

However, long time ago Plato’s dialectic highlighted that the whole is constituted of many parts which themselves are constituted from parts, thus the parts being wholes and the wholes being parts (*Parmenides*). Concerning our topic, the whole is the whole nature of the Earth – with all its parts /aspects – and not only the surroundings of the individual or group of individuals. Accordingly, nature is not a simple agglomeration /

⁴⁴ Jakob von Uexküll, *A Forray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans (Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen, 1934)*. Translated by Joseph D. O’Neil, Introduction by Dorion Sagan, Afterword by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. Minneapolis, London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010.

⁴⁵ The paradoxical anti-ecological dominant theory is related to – actually, it arises from – the modern doctrine of the utmost freedom of private business.

⁴⁶ Heidegger “rejects any sense of moral responsibility beyond the [local] world of immediate experience”, David Harvey, (1996), *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996, p. 314.

addition of separate habitats which can be treated in an isolated way and thus, its whole could be treated in the same manner. And because every human action is a bifurcation point, neither the “part” – the surroundings of the individual – can be seen as simply being adjusted by the environment that would annihilate the inadequate and unacceptable deeds.

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen demonstrated fifty years ago that the only manner to keep, not the abstract balance and harmony of nature, as all the benevolent and imbued with ecological spirit people say, but simply the matter and energy necessary for the future generations, is to use it in the most *anticipative* and *parsimonious* manner possible. Since the Earth is an open thermodynamic system only with respect of energy⁴⁷, and “matter, too, is subject to an irrevocable dissipation”⁴⁸, it results that the squandering of matter is *absurd* – incongruent with the real state of things – and it must stop.

But wouldn't that mean stopping progress? On the contrary. The “minimal bioeconomic program” – from which we retain “the production of all instruments of war, not only of war itself, should be prohibited completely”, “durable goods be made still more durable”, and to cure ourselves of morbid craving for extravagant gadgetry” and “fashion”⁴⁹ – would fuel the innovative spirit of people. *To have* in a different way than in the present consumerist society – not to be ascetic, but to enjoy life – entails the enrichment of human meanings and pleasures. And this means *rational economization* of all the material resources, irrespective of⁵⁰ the discovery of new chemical and biochemical compounds, and including by revisiting the relations between destruction, construction, restoration, renovation, repair. This economization is the result of the perspective of *holistic interdependence* demonstrated by science⁵¹, and surpasses the private type reckoning of the “productive” use of “*Umwelt*” by discharging the waste and pollution in the external public space and by assuming this would mean “economy”

⁴⁷ Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, “Energy and Economic Myths.” *Southern Economic Journal*, 41(3), Jan. 1975, pp. 347-381 (p. 363).

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 352.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 377.

⁵⁰ John Polimeni, Kozo Mayumi, Mario Giampietro and Blake Alcott, *The Jevons Paradox and the Myth of Resource Efficiency Improvements*. The Earthscan, 2007.

⁵¹ For example, Elena Helerea, Marius D. Calin and Cristian Musuroi, “Water Energy Nexus and Energy Transition—A Review”, *Energies*, 16, 2023, 1879.

and ecological responsibility. There is no good modernisation on the basis of wasting and polluting the global environment; and the disintegration of parts of the common space, the “local” destructions, do not remain local, as well as the improvement of local organisation and community centred practices without relating construction – that is, also, production and use – in privileged *places* to the used resources from outside: the global space remains harmed and impotent and does not stop the transformation of *other places* into ruins⁵².

The bioeconomic view of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen⁵³ is consonant with Ludwig von Bertalanffy's *General System Theory* (1968), and with Peter A. Corning's *The Synergism Hypothesis: A Theory of Progressive Evolution* (1983). The more efficient extraction of matter and energy through complexification through synergic processes is / can be equiponderated by rational, thus anticipative control of this effect: and this is also a synergic process leading to a more, in fact, the only functional state of society's existence in its environment. If man is a “self-made” being⁵⁴, his persistence as development of his unique value-making rationality is assured only by outstripping its robotic side that, letting aside the “mechanistic stimulus-response (S-R) scheme conditioning, according to the pattern of animal experiment”, was /is “both an expression of and a powerful motive force in industrialized mass society. It was the basis for behavioral engineering in commercial, economic, political, and other advertising and propaganda; the expanding economy of the ‘affluent society’ could not subsist without such manipulation”⁵⁵. As a result, the bioeconomic view involves a critique of

⁵² As the wedding hall in the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, *No Place for Joy: Israel Bombs Gaza Wedding Hall, Kills 26 People*, November 2, 2023, available at <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/no-place-for-joy-israel-bombs-gaza-wedding-hall-kills-26-people/> (accessed 3 November 2023).

⁵³ Kozo Mayumi, *The Origins of Ecological Economics: The Bioeconomics of Georgescu-Roegen*, Routledge, 2001.

⁵⁴ Peter A. Corning, *Synergistic Selection: How Cooperation Has Shaped Evolution and the Rise of Humankind*. New Jersey: World Scientific, 2018.

⁵⁵ Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*, New York: George Braziller, 1968, pp. 89, 207.

But see also C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 175 – the cheerful robot.

the system theory⁵⁶, including with the emphasis of the history and principles of this critique⁵⁷.

The price

Today we know the scientific proofs of destruction of biodiversity and natural balance – and of the conditions of life of local communities – made by private profit driven constructions⁵⁸ and / or marked by the logic of private profit.

And we know that the world community and the whole nature of the Earth are connected: by natural interdependencies and also by the human management, concretely, by the contradictory, because capitalist global management.

Accordingly, the private profit pattern of economic management – traditionally transferring the price of pollution, waste and devastation *abroad*, to former colonies and dependent “allies”, and transferring the cost of ecological treatment of materials in the whole private economic cycle to the state and communities – does not improve, but worsen the establishing of a sustainable nature-society system. The private profit culture led to the ignorance of escalating pollution and waste in the frenzy of profit driven destruction and construction made by ordinary people in quest of their survival: *according to the model of well-offs*.

When thinking logically

Philosophically, the capitalist societal order was founded on the *social contract* theory, having its ancient origin in the social organism allegory where the parts appeared to be “naturally” subordinated to the head. The social contract theory was – and is – the law of “subjective wars” for

⁵⁶ Richard Levins, “Dialectics and Systems Theory”, *Dialectics for the New Century*, Edited by Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, pp. 26-49.

⁵⁷ John Bellamy Foster, (2008), “The Dialectics of Nature and Marxist Ecology”, *Dialectics for the New Century*, Edited by Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, pp. 50-82.

⁵⁸ Kay Van Damme, Lisa Banfield, “Past and present human impacts on the biodiversity of Socotra Island (Yemen): implications for future conservation”, *Zoology in the Middle East*, Biodiversity Conservation in the Arabian Peninsula, Supplementum 3, 2011, pp. 31–88: pollution and waste, the construction of roads and highway – necessary for tourism – letting alone the destruction of traditional grazing system have devastating influence on the natural equilibria.

dominance of some political actors on other ones. “For the subjective wars, things didn't exist in themselves”⁵⁹, their destruction follows without stopping, despite eventual walls and fences cutting the unitary landscape into unsustainable fragments, but just using them to deepen the warfare⁶⁰.

The more the material components of the human environment, including those created by the human endeavour, became globally unified and damaged by the past and present century, the more the “objective war”, pendant of the subjective ones, appears as the climax of the human irrationality. This objective war is just the *war against nature, against the whole environment*. “At stake is the Earth in its totality, and humanity, collectively. Global history enters nature; global nature enters history: this is something utterly new in philosophy”⁶¹. And “If we must renew our ties with a history's foundations, that is a clear indication that we are seeing its end”⁶².

A new pact to sign with the world, the *natural contract*, is thus the law of the objective war.

However, the law is a form. It is *sine qua non*, but it is not enough. *It must be filled with contents*. Which are the worldly processes of redesigning the economic, political, social structural relations determining a real moral ecology / ecological ethics which include the destruction-construction system with all its results. The path of human development of all and in harmony with nature – actually, respecting matter, energy and information as bases of reality – is thus a transition from fetishising isolated *objects* to cherishing *practices* integrating and better specifying them.

Technically, the insertion of destruction as dereliction of land forsaken for a positive “reconstruction” by nature – always “assisted” by

⁵⁹ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, p. 10.

⁶⁰ The incredible post 1989' walls in the war relations have a warning in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book Five, (*The Melian Dialogue: 5.84-116*), available at <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/historians/thucyde/thucydides8.html>), 114.: “the Melians showing no signs of yielding, the generals at once betook themselves to hostilities, and drew a line of circumvallation round the Melians, dividing the work among the different states”): because despite the wall and the victory of Athens, this city was defeated 11 years over.

⁶¹ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, p. 3.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

an anticipative holistic view generated by a new dominant culture of *everyone's care for all and the whole world* – and called *the third landscape*⁶³ is a way worth to be considered. In a mixed expression this way has an epistemological function: it shows the importance of *change of perspective* in order to grasp reality. The distortion made by present representations of landscape can be *corrected*.

Instead of conclusions

The man-made structures are not nature, do not grow by themselves. Their deployment interferes in a complex manner with the environment, inducing its stress, imbalances, and even destruction. Nature has, nevertheless, a big flexibility, plasticity, and adapts to artificial objects, somehow integrating them within it. Then the natural-artificial landscape is brutally destroyed by targeting “only” the artificial part, buildings, roads, dams, nuclear power plants, or only “common” chemical plants, tunnels, water reservoirs, water desalinisation plants. The stress, imbalances, destruction of nature result: instantaneously and on long term, plausibly even irremediably.

The model of the human constructions is for every artificial object, thus for every human action. The deployed or erected structure is a pole of the human activity, a stake of all types of human experiences: because it signifies the *location*, the frame of all the human situations, of their lastingness, and the peculiarity of human deeds. Consequently, the destruction of locations, of homes by humans is pair with the extermination of humans by humans.

Analysed from an ontological standpoint, the human construction shows the *determinations* between the individual and the general: they are based on the human ability to give determinations, and more, to give determinations which have constructive meanings for the human species. In this respect, construction is *definite in the human reality*: people valorise it and thus, it is a stake. On the contrary, destruction is not able to give determinations / determinations with constructive meanings in the human reality.

Likewise, construction involves *correction* in a permanent process, thus includes also *valid* destruction. It emphasises the *responsibility* of the

⁶³ Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage*. Montreuil : Sujet/Objet, 2004.

actors planning and erecting it. Conversely, the *malignant* destruction is not a correction at all and shows the lack of responsibility of the actors undertaking it.

Therefore, historically and socially determined, the man-made destruction is part of the *ontology of the human*, as a response to *historically and socially determined existential conditions*. This response is, consequently, not absolute and inevitable, but generated by primitive ignorance and treatment of resources and human labour. And just this type of historical and social conditioning forbids the ontology of the human to being metaphysics, a deduction from principles from which the human reality would arise automatically. The man-made destruction is not tantamount to the inherent decay and annihilation of independent (substantial)⁶⁴ things.

Rather, the man-made destruction sends to other founding concepts, *intention, repair, economization, holism, cooperative imagination*. The claim “to take man not as reactive automaton or robot but as an active Personality system”⁶⁵ fits just with the anticipative construction of structures and devices, so as to prevent both the deployment of uninhabitable habitats for living beings and man and the transformation of structures into tragic survival envelopes⁶⁶ and defence tools. Therefore, even the above concepts are not independent and isolated intellectual tools: the processes of repair of existing structures must not be considered on a par with those of ruins and ruined spaces; the latter processes *continue* the wasteful use of resources from the former intentional destruction, as well as the waste of the human effort and creativity: the post-destruction repair is not an inherent solving as a simple cancellation of the former intentional destruction; it is a tragic wasteful deployment of the human actuality.

The distinction between *malignant* destruction of valid constructions – that can be negated by man’s rationality – and *necessary* destruction, pendant / correspondent to construction, is still a part of human ontology: always as a conclusion. In history, the late – very late – incapacity to consider this distinction was caused by knowledge shortcomings. In the “mature” modernity of the last 150 years this cause was substituted by the societal cause of capitalist tenets and relations. This substitution generated

⁶⁴ In its etymological and also Aristotelian sense.

⁶⁵ Ludwig von Bertalanffy, p. 208.

⁶⁶ Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*. Princeton Architectural Press, 1997.

the myth of capitalist creative destruction as the only basis of development and betterment of the human condition.

In fact, not only that there is a huge difference between the wars anterior to this interval – since the wars from the last 150 years involved the *knowledge* of their malignant feature, they being contemporary with the new “law of war imposing restrained behaviour to reduce and even avoid unnecessary destruction” – but the capitalist development was not and is not based on a one way leading from the inherent, inevitable destruction of the old to give room to the new that alone would assure progress. On the contrary, it is paralleled by an equally strong “conservative drive” led by the private interest, “to limit, and frequently inhibit, technological innovation in ways which are necessary for them to maintain their control over the various processes of production, delivery, and consumption”⁶⁷.

Historically, the humans and the modern entrepreneurs were interested only in the *desired output* of their endeavour. An *epistemology of blindness* or neglect of the *whole output*, thus including waste, has developed and it underpinned the practical endeavour itself.

But the capitalist type economic logic is more and so important that the conscience of waste and its harms, although present in the last decades, is *not yet dominant*: neither in theory and lesser in practice. To change this an *epistemological rupture* is needed, but this rupture has an exterior determinism. Theoretically, the human construction system must be *anticipative*, related to the anticipation of global and public interest, in order to destruct as late as possible, in as easy way and without harms to environment as possible.

The human constructions are not nature, but they are part of what we call environment. Consequently, their treatment is as ecologically necessary as that of plants and animals, of rocks and oceans, and is intertwined with the ecological treatment of nature. However, the human position towards the material constructs is not only a question of theoretical understanding, and its backwardness is corresponding to the backwardness of the global practical positions towards the human and natural environment.

⁶⁷ Simon Glezos, “Creative Destruction versus Restrictive Practices: Deleuze, Schumpeter and Capitalism’s uneasy relationship with technical innovation”, *C-Theory*, 2010, accessed at <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/view/14685> (viewed 3 October 2023).

More than a century ago, the World War One signalled that capitalism entered its *system crisis*, the capitalist structural relations generating more and inconceivably *more cruel destruction than the construction they would stimulate*. The system crisis showed that the beautiful development of science and arts is not depending on destruction, and destruction is not the “price” paid for this development. The capitalist system crisis pointed out that if it is not solved through the transformation of the system itself, its processes of decay accelerate as a *civilisational crisis*. As it continues and deepens, this civilisational crisis is much more difficult to solve. The degree of destruction of both nature and society and man is the measure of the civilisational crisis and assesses the directions of the human endeavour to reverse it and the difficulty of this endeavour. Therefore, the conscience of the meanings of destruction is vital, and philosophy is fulfilling / must fulfil its part in the duty and the only way of overturning the phase of existential risk jeopardising the human civilisation.

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