

# DATA EVALUATION WITHIN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY: THE CASE OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT. The paper discusses the significances of the data evaluation within the social philosophy. After the first part pointing out some historical elements of the treatment of the data by philosophy, one focuses on the case of the data of natural resources (in a word, the environment), as they are assumed by the present philosophy. There are sketched the interdependence between the sciences of nature and the ones of man, and the specific and necessity of the social philosophy as the integrated and social interpretation of the data offered by the social sciences, by highlighting just the core problem of philosophy: the dialectics of the subject and of the object. The natural resources appear within the social philosophy as relating the data of natural sciences to the ones of the social sciences, and interpreting them in function of the challenges put to the whole humanity.

## I.

*Philosophy – torn between essence and existence Capitalising on the data*

Even from the beginning, philosophy was an “acknowledgment of essences”. This already presupposes a capitalisation of existence as well as, of course, certain aspects of existence. And also

from the beginning, philosophy as a rationalist approach to existence, has evidenced the fact that the essence of things is not exterior but interior to such things: for example, water (Thales of Millet), air (Anaximander), earth (Archelaus, although he spoke of forces such as heat and cold affecting earth) or fire (Heraclitus) as origins of the material mixture comprising man did not represent only naive moments of philosophical thought – as opposed to Anaximander's *apeiron* (belonging to the same Ionic school as the first) which reached an abstract stage of the unity of the world – and they also suggested a unity between essence and existence.

Capitalising on the data lead, due to the nature of philosophy of reaching the abstract and the universal, to the separation of the data offered to the experience of human knowledge and, on the other hand, to the play upon their essential singularities. It is actually a matter of<sup>1</sup> “bracketing” (Husserl) the “visible” (Merleau-Ponty), and not only of the Platonic print of philosophy as a conversation had regarding essences (ideas) detached from existence.

However, the historical condition of philosophy of following the Platonic path and being subordinated to the purpose of arguing the supremacy of essences (in their hierarchy up to the supra-mundane) lead to a separation from the data of reality and even to

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<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable to remark the displacement of savant thought (we use this French term to refer to applied self-reflexive thought regarding the rationality of its evolution) from the mythical thought: in this case nature was not separated from society (or more correctly, society was not separated from nature), separation being a later acquisition of the process of thought; the relationship between man and nature was considered by the magical thought as a relationship between equal entities, even more than that, society's aim – namely the group, and not the individual person and persons – was to copy the harmony of nature, therefore admitting its inferiority. The average element of this reasoning was imagining a community between the soul of nature, primordial and stronger, and that of man.

Also see Hans Kelsen, *Society and Nature: A Sociological Inquiry* (1941), London, K. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1946.

their depreciation. Only the birth of modernity brought the ideas of the re-linking of philosophy to the natural sciences and, therefore, to the human experience and the data of existence<sup>2</sup>. Thus, and regardless of the relative scholastic inertia, the establishment of the *Naturphilosophie* at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has revealed the potencies (what the scholastics called *natura naturans* in opposition to the result: *natura naturata*) manifested through laws based on tangible chemistry<sup>3</sup>. Starting from compared anatomical and zoological researches, Goethe also

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was the one who has noticed this trajectory of philosophy: “Plato, in his apprehension on ideas ... claimed that ‘shapes’ are the true object of knowledge, but he lost the real fruit of his apprehension, considering shapes as being completely strange from matter, and not limited and determined by matter (“Of the Advancement of Learning” (1605), in *Bacon, Morus, Hobbes, Locke*, București, ESLSD, 1951, p. 21); However, “when we speak about shapes we only understand the laws and determinations of the pure act, characterising the respective simple nature...Indeed, naming the shape of hear or that of light and naming the law of heat and the law of light is not one and the same thing.” (“Novum Organum sive indicia vera de interpretatione naturae”, in *ibidem*, p. 40); “human reasoning that we rightfully infer from noticing phenomena are called the interpretation of nature” (“Novum Organum...”, in *ibidem*, p. 25); “We uselessly try to progress in science in general and especially in their practical application, as long as the philosophy of nature will not be applied to specific sciences and as long as specific sciences, in their turn, will not be restored to the philosophy of nature; due to the lack of this relationship...morals and logic are suspended only at the surface of things; because as all these sciences separated and each established as a separate science, the philosophy of nature stopped supplying them. Nevertheless, this is the only science based on real data, namely on accurate observations...”

(„Novum Organum...”, in *ibidem*, p. 30).

<sup>3</sup> Also see Mai Lequan, “La question des frontières entre niveaux de réalité dans les premières formes de la philosophie de la nature de Schelling” in *Les actes du colloque international « Systèmes, images, langages »*, Bucarest, 14 et 15 juin 2006, Éditeurs: Mihaela POP, Sabin Totu, Viorel Vizureanu, București, Editura Universității din București, 2008.

sketched a philosophy of the nature of the one wholeness, universal and eternal<sup>4</sup>.

*The philosophy of nature and the philosophy of man*

The association Bacon made between the data of natural existence as they are interpreted by sciences and, on the other side, the sciences of man (social sciences) has emphasised the interdependence between natural and social data as well as, at the same time, the interdependence between the philosophical knowledge and interpretation of nature and the philosophical knowledge and interpretation of the world of man.

This latter world, as it is very well known, has a history influenced by both the separation from the data and the separation of the conscience turned to the inner subjectivity from the exteriority of the social world. The establishment of the sciences of man took place precisely in this framework. And precisely due to the pressure of the social data, philosophy tended to overcome the separation mentioned above. In this respect, a philosophical direction was the social one, established under the specific historical conditions of the reflection on the human status during the deconstruction of the absolute monarchies and the shattering of the *Ancien Régime* due to the explosive progress of capitalism, namely under the circumstances of overlapping certain different social antagonisms. J.J. Rousseau, and later Saint-Simon and Comte, have insisted on the evaluation of the problems of man *within the context of social relations*. The connections between the French and German social and theoretical experience – influenced for example by Marx's joining of the left wing Hegelianism with the above-mentioned French tradition – have allowed social philosophy to enter a path of development, regardless the drawbacks and the fact that it did not always maintained the same name. (A good example was precisely the establishment of “sociology” as opposed to the

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<sup>4</sup> Laurent Van Eynde, *La libre raison du phénomène. Essai sur la « Naturphilosophie » de Goethe*, Paris, Vrin, 1998.

spiritualist philosophy as consolidated further to the defeat of the 1848 French Revolution. French sociology (Durkheim), leaving aside the direction of concrete research, was exactly social philosophy)

A first problem is therefore, seeing in what respect we can talk about philosophy and in what respect about social philosophy.

Reflection on empirical data of this world and their testing according to universality criteria of falsifying through the analysis of the conditions of truth where social relations develop is a philosophical one. The social character of this reflection is given by the focus on and due to their framing into multiple social relations creating the world of man. If, for example, the purpose of Pierre Bourdieu's research had the performance and took place within a theoretical field delineated by social philosophy concepts (social system, social forces, bureaucracy, ideology, field, social order, alienation and social capital, etc.)<sup>5</sup>, a significant part of today's *mainstream* sociology is influenced by the off-cutting of certain aspects and their schematic treatment, which actually points out to an impoverished image of human experience. In other words, the fear of broad social interpretations turned sociology (so, once again, we do not reduce sociology to concrete research, namely we just use the word sociology with the meaning provided by its creators) from *social philosophy* to a *particular social science*, reduced, so many times, to an exposure of the correlation of collected data, and less to interpreting such data in their historical and social context.

### *Social philosophy*

Social philosophy is an *integrated and holist* construct concerning the reality of man. It deals with significances emerging from human activities, beyond the way in which these are suggested by the different social and human sciences separately. The need to interconnect them was manifested in the inter-disciplinary tendency, which is weaker than the one in the field of exact and

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Pierre Bourdieu, *Les structures sociales de l'économie*, Paris, Seuil, 2000.

natural sciences. The main reason behind this situation is not necessarily at the level of comprehension of such trans-disciplinarily, but rather it is influenced by the consequences underlying the interdependence of social phenomena and the historical reasons for veiling them.

Inter-disciplinarity as such is a philosophical approach to scientific knowledge. This was a stage subsequent to the fragmentation and specialisation of sciences. With respect to the human disciplines – developed later than the others due to the tradition of separating the object and subject by metaphysics and due to sciences brought about by modernity focusing on the object –, these disciplines became specialised, therefore separated, not only due to epistemic needs but also in the light of the tradition mentioned above. Man was decomposed, in the sense that its activities were separated and the interconnectivity between the object and subject was postponed. Moreover, the study of man itself was fragmented: this is not a critique towards specialisation and towards the doubtless progress in psychology or logics or epistemology, but merely an observation on the manner in which inferences were built within one and the same science while interdependent elements were separately approached. This situation was connected to the philosophic and ideological undertaken presumptions, deliberately or not by thinkers.

For example, economy researched the manner of manufacturing goods exterior to man. At a first view one can claim that man was, in that discipline, the actual labour force and that this was the only step further. Still manufacturing goods – in the emerging modern society – depended always on labour force, on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the labour regime<sup>6</sup>, on its evolution in search of a better way to sell itself, even on the refuse to work, and therefore on the manner of *considering itself as an active*

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<sup>6</sup> See Marx – in *The Capital* – who transcended this perspective: he explained the internal relations related to production and economy precisely taking into account the life of labour force; for example, the fight for the 8 hours of work was always related to economy as such.

*subject*. Economic science in itself did not take too much into account this manifestation of the subject: actually, for that economy the subject was not the labour force, it represented a fact, *without autonomy* as the other data pertaining to the production process, such as coal or raw materials.

Or the sociology which emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the social relations – which could involve relations between the different subjects – were conceived as asymmetric reactions between categories and forces which did not have the same power of being subjects. This also happens in reality, but the sociological schools did really transform into a rule the image according to which some categories did not have in general the capacity to invent a stable and harmonious society and that the respective categories had to receive thought and behaviour patterns, i.e., as a matter of fact that had to undertake the capacity of being an object.

Such examples were here provided with a view to contemplate over the clichés used for representing the history of human sciences: the aspects of these sciences “had to be” what they had been. Well, certain aspects represented only historical paths or solutions, just certain results (dichotomies) of the social and knowledge conditions of the respective age. These aspects were conditioned, of course – and this conditioning continued also by silencing, or forgetting, leaving outside the credited academic discourse certain research works and theories – but this does not mean that the Logic of scientific knowledge “demanded” such conditioning.

A second observation is that if man was treated in this particular manner where its capacity as subject is disrupted from its peculiarity as object, then the other elements of the processes of existence would be treated in the same manner. Of course natural resources are inanimate, so we cannot consider them as a potential “subject”. But the fact that for a long time it was considered legitimate from a scientific point of view to act upon them without taking into account the consequences, namely “the response” of the environment as a result of the agglomeration of its treatment as an object – infinite and without importance due to the fact that man

has always measured the exterior reality depending on his own limitation – refers to the idea that *the change of the scientific attitude towards the natural resources of existence is connected to the change of the attitude towards the man.*

Social philosophy questions just the contradictions derived from the historical treatment by various human sciences of the assumptions (transposed into the “common sense” underlying the social conscience) which represent the basis of certain interpretations of social phenomena, as these are of course reproduced by sciences: these contradictions rob interpretations of their respectability aura due to the fact that they are implicit or explicit in *mainstream* canonical works or that they are exposed by the political authorities. Interpretations and assumptions have a strong ideological meaning<sup>7</sup>, Kant had already disclosed this idea in *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, in 1784, discussing the antagonism between the rationality of creation and, on the other hand, the absurd of the “theatre of the world”<sup>8</sup>.

## II

### *The data of social and human sciences and the data of social philosophy*

The concept of data is also a philosophical concept. If, at a first sight, data appear as “the object outside us”, what is given to us through the senses, that is to say through experience, upon more serious reflection data are a complex made up from the object and subject, and the interface between them<sup>9</sup>. This conclusion does not

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<sup>7</sup> Ideology means in Marx’s interpretation to reflect, consciously or not, the social interests of the own appurtenance group or the groups of others.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Kant, “Idée d’une histoire universelle d’un point de vue cosmopolitique”, in Kant, *Opuscles sur l’histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, 1990, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> What Wittgenstein suggested when he wrote about the observation data which cannot be measured, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), translated into Romanian as *Cercetări filosofice*, translation by Mircea Dumitru and Mircea Flonta, in collaboration with Adrian-Paul Iliescu, București, Humanitas, 2003, p. 401.

cancel the objectivity of the world, but it underlines the fact that the world itself exist for people not only through what is called the active character of conscience, but also, and only to the extent that, only through experience the world becomes interesting, important/*sine qua non*, therefore “seen” or “noticed”. In this respect, the data concerning the world derived from sciences are always fewer than the world itself/existence<sup>10</sup>: data are not only knowledge about, namely the results of knowledge, but they measure the historical level of the “clash” between the object and subject, that is the actual level of science and, in more broad terms, the level of human civilisation. In this framework, there is also a process of shaping data, of ignoring already shaped data, of scientific construction based on construction or ignoring: again this entire complex process relies not only on neutral knowledge relations, but also on the values assumed by the wise subject, so, substantially it relies on its historical and social position in relation to the world.

There is a small paradox with respect to the knowledge of data. Although the idea regarding the infinite character of things and knowledge is well grounded in our mind, for it seems we assume Engels’ representation about the scale of complexity or scientific knowledge – the chemical element is superior to the physical one, the biological level is superior to the chemical one, and the human (social) element is superior to the biologic one –, we are convinced that our power of understanding the last level is fainter than that of understanding the first levels. And nevertheless, Giambattista Vico insisted (*De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, 1710) that *verum ipsum factum*: only what is man made can be truly known in depth. And the mind of man is not a neutral discovering element: it is historical, characterised by the history of the common sense (*sensus communis*)<sup>11</sup> made up of tacit beliefs, of “judgements lacking reflection”. Hence, our image about the possibility and the freedom of knowledge is characterised by historically derived clichés.

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<sup>10</sup> But even the concept of existence is open to the possibility, i.e. to the new phenomena derived from the militancy of conscience and man as such.

<sup>11</sup> We do not translate it with the term common sense, precisely because this one has also a moral meaning on which we are not going to insist upon here.

Data taken into account by social philosophy are none others than those considered by the social and human sciences, the only difference is that their interpretation is *social and integrated*. Such data, where human beings are involved, are interconnected with data which are apparently exterior to man. And if the social and human sciences analyse such data with their specialised objectives and evaluate them depending on specific criteria, they cannot be discussed from a philosophical point of view in themselves, but only in their interdependencies and their historical and social context.

*From the creation of data (natural resources) within sciences, to their evaluation by social philosophy*

From this perspective, the evaluation of natural resources related to production and life – air, water, raw materials and energy resources – as resources of human life cannot discount from the manner in which man acts for perpetuating humanity.

Philosophy mainly dealt with the manifestation of the capacity of man for action. His results being, before anything else, technology, philosophy annotated for a long time its dehumanising consequences through rationalisation imposed to man “from the outside” (Heidegger)<sup>12</sup>. Or, on the contrary, it wished to exempt

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<sup>12</sup> Ana Bazac, „Note cu privire la unele perspective critice asupra lui Heidegger”, in *Studii de istoria filosofiei universale*, XV, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2007, p. 349–386.

But also Günther Anders, *L'obsolescence de l'homme. Sur l'âme à l'époque de la deuxième révolution industrielle* (1956), Paris, Éditions de l'Encyclopédie des Nuisances-Ivrée, 2002, who discussed the “Promethean shame” of man of being inferior to its technology, including that of creating the atomic bomb which can bring upon the annihilation of humankind. In this respect (although the conclusion in the chapter *Le monde comme fantôme et comme matrice*, III. 20, does not refer to the scientific knowledge), “everything is less true than the amount of partial truths contained”, namely, here, the noticing of the pernicious aspects of certain human results does not necessarily lead (in the *mainstream* theory) to an understanding of the incidence related to the human activity if a social and holist interpretation of such activity is missing.

technology, showing that if science seeks to explain the world, and philosophy seeks to understand it, technology (and technical disciplines) actually tend to change it<sup>13</sup>, but not in a way that would disturb things: the scientific revolution is the one trying to replace certain means of thought and action, while the only aim of the technological revolution is to improve the already existing means<sup>14</sup>.

But the existing means are bivalent – they damage and benefit human beings at the same time.

Life's natural resources cannot be treated as an absolute exterior to man, for they have human meanings just due to their interconnection with the actions of man. Resources are processed, used, and thus transformed into elements forever marked by the artificiality of the human specificity. Although, of course, the standpoint towards the natural resources was historically determined, the first industrial revolution related to the ascension of capitalism was that which imposed the cliché of the inferior nature, inert matter as a source for survival.

But resources do not represent the exterior nature which can be or which must be “dominated” by man: if the attitude towards nature in general is that of domination, then the same relation can be noticed between man and man.

Social philosophy was that which first discussed the general qualities of the resources.

The first quality is that of their existence, and their abundance: therefore if the resources are sufficient or not for the survival of man. Of course, and before anything else, in order to know these qualities, people were unable to evaluate them in themselves. The description of plants and animals, for example, by Aristotle was subordinated to the epistemological motivation: of knowing them in a rational manner, namely to show their order in existence. (There was only one field which has generated reactions starting from the inexistence of sufficient resources: that of the

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<sup>13</sup> A suggestion to the 11<sup>th</sup> thesis on Feuerbach.

<sup>14</sup> Natasha McCarthy, “The wisdom of engineers”, *TPM, the philosophers' magazine*, Issue 41, 2nd quarter 2008, p. 38–43.

precious metals and which led to the development of medieval alchemy, accompanied by philosophical representations of the possibility of unity and transformation of the matter – see the issue of the philosopher’s stone).

The quality of sufficiency or insufficiency of resources appeared only as a result of the integrated analysis of the work process within the social history. In this respect, Sartre demonstrated in its social ontology that the initial *rarity* of goods – of course related to the precarious level of the using of the resources and technology (hence of the level of knowledge) – has constituted into a fundamental condition of the development of human civilisation: rarity was the reason/ground on which the relations of domination-subsumption were established, as well as the legitimising myths of the social order, as well as alienation and social separations, as well as the development on the principle of zero sum of certain societies on the basis of the exploitation of the natural and human resources of the others<sup>15</sup>.

This status did not essentially change with the first industrial revolution<sup>16</sup>, neither in the matrix Western world, nor in the Stalinist regime “in a country” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>. Rather, on the

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<sup>15</sup> See Ana Bazac, „Sartre și aventura conceptului de raritate”, *Sartre în gândirea contemporană*, coord. Adriana Neacșu, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, 2008, p. 105–162.

Sartre’s concept was however underlined by Marx’s theory of political economy: here *der objektive Mangel* (the objective default) was explained as a consequence of the low developed productive forces.

<sup>16</sup> Even the acceleration of the development of capitalism was the result of growth based on fossil energy. In this respect, one discussed on the alternative of such a type of growth: from centralised energetic systems (required by fossil fuels) to decentralised systems and an open energetic system, based on solar energy, see A. Simpson, „Solar socialism. The future will be shaped within a national system of local energy networks”, *Resurgence*, London, number 235, 2006, p. 14–15.

<sup>17</sup> Leaving aside the discussion concerning the nature of “the really existing socialism”, it is necessary to remember what is unanimously agreed upon: the fact that the system allowed the acceleration of the development of lagging behind areas, which means equilibrium between the fields of activity and the

background of the use of resources subordinated to profit and growth<sup>18</sup>, theory has included in itself the preoccupation for the better understanding of resources. The pushing forward the limits of production has implied the establishment of the modern sciences of nature: chemistry replaced alchemy, and a reason for this substitution was precisely the need to discover new sources and new possibilities of using energy and raw materials.

Further on, the consequences of the savage exploitation of resources did not represent data for sciences and philosophy until the moment when the accumulation of negative aspects forced reflection to warn: profits can be surpassed by irrecoverable losses.

One must admit that philosophy advanced sciences: the new, ecological perspective first emerged in theoretical works operating

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regions within these areas. After the fall of the “the really existing socialism”, what strongly emerged was exactly the minimisation, sometimes even until cancellation, of the acquisitions concerning the repartition of the development centres. We retain: „Măcelul viermilor de mătase”, *Gândul*, 24 July 2007, p. 6: “Until 1989, silkworms were raised on 5000 hectares cultivated with approximately two million mulberry trees. Now only ten hectares are cultivated. The remaining land was *cultivated* with villas.”

<sup>18</sup> See the analysis of the relation between the development of capitalism and, on the other hand, the ecocide in progress and the ecological imperialism (of the developed capitalist countries as opposed to the more dependent or poorly developed or southern countries), by Renán Vega Cantor, *Un mundo incierto, un mundo para aprender y enseñar. Las transformaciones mundiales y su incidencia en la enseñanza de las Ciencias Sociales*, Caracas, Fundación Editorial el perro y la rana, 2008, vol. 2, p. 219–354.

But, first Roberto Aguirre, *Les biocombustibles sont un mode d'impérialisme biologique*, 22 mars 2007, [http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/FR/readarticle.php?article\\_id=3549](http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/FR/readarticle.php?article_id=3549)

More practical: Working Group on Development and Environment in the Americas, Kevin P. Gallagher, Andrés López, *Foreign Investment and Sustainable Development*, Lessons from the Americas, [http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/FDIWorkingGroupReportMay08\\_ES.pdf](http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/FDIWorkingGroupReportMay08_ES.pdf)

Here, Leonardo Stanley, *Natural Resources and Foreign Investors: a Tale of three Andean countries*, April 2008, Working Group on Development and Environment in the Americas, Discussion Paper Number 16, <http://ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/DPI6StanleyApr08.pdf>

with philosophical concepts: the interdependence between alive and not-alive, the closed chain of existence<sup>19</sup>, the principle of caution in the relations between man-technology-nature<sup>20</sup>, sustainable development<sup>21</sup>, all these were proposed in the sense that without an anticipatory warning regarding the threats to the human world, and that without a transformation of philosophy from contemplating the world from outside to the conscience of the integration of the human activities, in all its aspects and its consequences, hence to an active philosophy including anticipation<sup>22</sup>, scientific data themselves become opaque and without any relevance for humankind.

As it is well known, the common conscience and the scientific conscience have transgressed, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the euphoric image on the sufficiency of raw materials and energetic resources – as part of the conception regarding the infinity of the world – to the idea of their finiteness. This idea was transposed into a philosophical language as a common sharing of the subject and the object of a same *finite destiny*. Moreover, the focusing on the consequences of “the rebuilding of the planet by the unleashed technology”<sup>23</sup> has opened up the space of the analysis of a *community*, by way of interdependence, *between the subject and the object*. In this way it seems that all these changes of angle, as a result of the technical practice and of the agglomeration of its consequences, set into shape a new ontology<sup>24</sup>.

But the problem of reciprocal limitations of man’s actions over nature and of the tolerance of this one, as well as of the

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<sup>19</sup> The concept was taken from Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Marele lanț al Ființei. Istoria ideii de plenitudine de la Platon la Schelling* (1933), București, Humanitas 1997; but see Barry N. Commoner, *Cercul care se închide* (1972), București, Editura Politică, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité* (1979), Flammarion, 2003, p. 359.

<sup>21</sup> René Dubos, see wikipedia.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Jonas, *ibidem*, p. 17, 261–267.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, p. 347.

<sup>24</sup> A neo-cosmology, according to Gérard Raullet, “Sur les antinomies de la néo-cosmologie mondialiste”, *Revue Tunisienne des Études Philosophiques*, no 36/37, 2004–2005, p. 21.

tolerance of man in front of its own transforming action, was mostly discussed outside the palpable framework – hence, social – where these correlations between man and nature occur. From this point of view, as mentioned above, the critiques of the first industrial revolution occurred within the theoretical tradition of separating the social from the natural and the artificial. But nowadays it is imperative to see that, if this critique is relatively easy to make upon integrating the data of natural sciences which reveal the ecological problem, the difficulty appears when the extension of the processes of this revolution is under discussion, even under the circumstances when the second industrial (IT) revolution is currently in progress<sup>25</sup>.

Jonas reminded us of the correlations between the increase of the population – food – industrial technology in processing food; and also the increase of raw materials consumption and energy for each inhabitant of the planet, as well as the irrecoverable warming of the planet as a result of this increased consumption<sup>26</sup>. But these correlations were performed completely outside the social relations where they usually occur, i.e. outside the commodification (treating resources as commodities) of natural resources as an indestructible aspect related to the modern system in progress. Therefore, one can say that a certain trend of social preoccupation regarding the relationship between man and environment was exterior to philosophy.

But approaching the same problems from this perspective means bringing to discussion their social causes. In this manner one can discern the common and different aspects from within the representations deriving from various social *Weltanschauung* regarding technology: mainly, from the representation of the technological utopia – that concerning the solving of all the

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<sup>25</sup> Simon Boyle, “Could ‘wild laws’ protecting all the Earth's community – including animals, plants, rivers and ecosystems – save our natural world?”, *The Guardian*, November 8, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2006/nov/08/ethicalliving.society>

<sup>26</sup> Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, p. 352–358.

problems between the subject and object by developing science and technology. These representations were not only the mere consequence of the modern and illuminist spirit of the belief in science and in the practical sense of man, hence also common to liberalism and Marxist socialism, but they were established as such in the context of the fight of capital for its own development and also in the context of the fight of certain political structures from the outskirts of the capitalist system in order to transcend the lagging behind and the increase of the population.

This does not mean that the practice of these structures would be ecologically excusable, or that it has not led and that it would not lead to the same results as throughout the rest of the world. On the contrary, our observation is that structural social relations of domination – submission, regardless of the objectives and the ideological framework involved, generates the same relationship with nature, with dramatic consequences<sup>27</sup>.

But the social analysis of this problem allows us to: 1) notice the limitations of the researches mentioned above:

- for example, Jonas did not criticise wars as well – which are harmful to nature, including during their preparation stage (guns experiments) – as phenomena affecting directly and individually in the sense of the alteration and annihilation “of the integrity of man’s essence”<sup>28</sup>;

- he also did not refer to the irregular distribution at a global level of the wasteful consumption of energy and raw materials, and

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<sup>27</sup> Also see China’s and India’s accelerate development: the devastating consequences for nature – and consequently for man as well – are obvious, but a) there is no moral argument in stopping the taking over of the same development pattern as in the West, b) there is no practical solution in stopping the generalisation of this development pattern, as capital became trans-national and, therefore, has the same interests worldwide, including in the former outskirts, as are for example China and India. As a result, instead of the possible future fights for ruling over resources, having even more disastrous consequences on the environment, considering alternative solutions emerges as an urgency.

<sup>28</sup> Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, p. 16.

also he did not refer to the fact that the western myth of the consumption society implied domination, poverty and depriving the “Rest” from their right to development.

2) And the social analysis especially allows us to improve our reflections regarding the relationship man-nature, man-man, therefore the subject-object relationship, within the new context of the rapid scientific and technological revolution nowadays<sup>29</sup>.

All the social aspects, collected and developed by sciences represent data for social philosophy. These data are interpreted according to at least the following reference marks: the quantity and quality of resources of existence (here we consider the natural resources), the quantity and quality of knowledge on these resources, the ideological, moral and political assumptions representing the substratum of theories and standpoints related to resources, the sufficiency and finality of resources, the attitudes (their consistency and inconsistency) and the social imaginary regarding the resources and relations between resources and the social organisation.

Further on, we will emphasise only several illustrative aspects regarding the manner in which social philosophy discusses the problem of resources: integrated within the social functioning.

In this respect: exactly because of the restrictive private interests, the present wars occur also for raw materials – and for water as well, and the perspective is not as far away as one might believe<sup>30</sup> – as it happened in the ancient times. It is worth mentioning that if the political structures warn us against increased tensions and military settling of conflicts<sup>31</sup> due to climate changes,

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<sup>29</sup> Also see Ana Bazac, *The ecological common sense. Tradition and discontinuity*, at the international conference Science and religion, an ecological approach onto the contemporary world, Bucharest, November 25–26, 2005, UEB.

<sup>30</sup> Ricardo Petrella, *Le manifeste de l'eau* (1998), Bruxelles, Editions Labor, La libre Belgique, 2006.

Also see [http://www.waternunc.com/fr/manifeste\\_eau.htm](http://www.waternunc.com/fr/manifeste_eau.htm). But also <http://www.euraqua.org/> and <http://pr.euractiv.com/?q=node/5423>

<sup>31</sup> Fiona Hervey, *At boiling point*, September 15 2008, [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d2fef714-7b0e-11dd-b1e2-000077b07658\\_dwp\\_uuid=5129ceb4-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658.html?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d2fef714-7b0e-11dd-b1e2-000077b07658_dwp_uuid=5129ceb4-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658.html?nclick_check=1)

such structures do not discuss the alternative of transforming the world order so as to stop the damaging and wasteful activities such as wars and military solutions to conflicts.

Or, the fact that saving resources is not only a matter of technology (related to technological means for saving), but also a matter of global distributive allocation of financial means so that saving does not occur only in certain areas, and the economic forces should not be made to “pay” for the temporary restriction of profits in regions where savings programs are implemented with the wastefulness and fierce exploitation of resources in other regions (see the large tropical reserve of Amazon). Or the fact that saving and war are interconnected phenomena: the saving of resources during peaceful times does not compensate for their squandering during wars: in this respect, local action does not cancel the global lack of responsibility<sup>32</sup>.

Or, the calculation of nature’s disturbances and damages, as well as of the affecting of the natural resources is performed in accordance with the monetary terms of the general commodification: in this sense one sells and buys the “right to pollute” with toxic and greenhouse gases, even if the objective is that of controlling and limiting the emissions of such gases<sup>33</sup>. The opposite of commoditisation is considering nature and resources as

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<sup>32</sup> Allusion at the aphorism: “thinking globally, acting locally” (at an ecological level). But see, for example, the fact that there is an Earth Day, when citizens are urged to save electricity. A very nice thing, but why, at least on Earth Day, there was no initiative of stopping nuclear experiments or experiments related to guns in general, or of stopping wars?

<sup>33</sup> See *Emissions trading* – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emissions\\_trading](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emissions_trading) – and *European Union Emission Trading Scheme* – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Union\\_Emission\\_Trading\\_Scheme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union_Emission_Trading_Scheme). Or Ugo Gilbert Tremblay, *La Bourse du carbone ou le nouveau terrain de jeux des maîtres du monde*, 6 août 2008, [http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/FR/readarticle.php?article\\_id=5090](http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/FR/readarticle.php?article_id=5090)

It is interesting to notice that, due to the fact that capitalism always needs a larger area for commoditisation, even the best intentions towards nature are translated by means of obtaining money from postponing the integrated treatment of the economic-ecological problem.

*public goods* or *common goods* and treating them globally in a radical manner.

Or, the ecocide is directly related to social inequalities, both in a country and at a global level: the over consumption of the average citizen from developed countries is a lot higher than the sustainability level, while the consumption of an average citizen in poorly developed countries is lower than the ecological sustainability level<sup>34</sup>. Facing this situation, a point of view pertaining to the dominant ideology was that the ecological problem at global level would be the result of the fact that new territories from within poorly developed countries have been transformed into fast developing regions, hence with a high level of consumption of raw materials and energy. Therefore, that the potential silencer imposed on the rhythm of development of these poorly developed countries would be in line with the need to quiet the ecological problem. At their turn, the voices of emerging countries are violent in supporting their right to an economic policy following the western

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<sup>34</sup> Also see *Mapping carbon dioxide emissions*, September 11 2008, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2af58b06-8012-11dd-99a9-000077b07658.html>: the USA annually discharge into the atmosphere 5900 million tons of carbon dioxide and 19.4 tons per inhabitant; Russia – 1670 million tons annually and 11.8 tons per inhabitant; China – 6720 million tons and 5.1 tons per inhabitant; Japan: 1250 million tons annually and 11.5 tons per inhabitant; India: 1360 million tons annually and 1.2 tons per inhabitant.

If we multiply the number of inhabitants, it results that annually, the USA with less than 5% of the planet's population is responsible for 26% of the annual carbon dioxide emissions, China, – 14.5%, while Russia – approximately 6%. And all this time the solution found was the trade with pollution rights: countries with a poorly developed industry can sell their pollution rights to the other countries. Also see José Manuel Barroso, *Global threat is opportunity*, September 15 2008, [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2f5587d8-834a-11dd-907e-000077b07658,dwp\\_uuid=499eb394-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658,Authorised=false.html?\\_i\\_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F2f5587d8-834a-11dd-907e-000077b07658%2Cdwp\\_uuid%3D499eb394-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658.html&\\_i\\_referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fclimatechangeseries](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2f5587d8-834a-11dd-907e-000077b07658,dwp_uuid=499eb394-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658,Authorised=false.html?_i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2F0%2F2f5587d8-834a-11dd-907e-000077b07658%2Cdwp_uuid%3D499eb394-83f9-11dd-bf00-000077b07658.html&_i_referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fclimatechangeseries)

pattern. It seems that it is a dialogue between deaf parties each pursuing its own justice.

But indeed, if 80% of the total global amount of these raw materials are consumed in developed countries (on 20% of the world surface<sup>35</sup>), then it is clear that the notion itself of development following the western standard pattern – GDP per inhabitant, increased resources consumption – cannot be globally applied: there just are not additional 320% resources available for consumption following the same pattern by the remaining 80% of the world. This reality does not make us want to join the dominant trend: the issue concerns whether or not we should *change the global development pattern*, and if the warnings of researches were in vain, regardless their innovative efforts and local initiatives which aim to revert the catastrophic trend of the nature's reply to man's irrational actions, this is exactly because of the system of social relations which *fragment* initiatives and emphasise social passivity. The ideology of an “ecologic racism” has developed and is developing just within this system: the conviction of people from within the northern hemisphere that their survival – namely within the standards of consumerism – would be directly related to the right of the current power structures to use any means to ensure their privileged access to resources<sup>36</sup>. In this respect, the consumerist ideology itself is connected to the ideology regarding productivity for the sake of profit<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Or 15% of the planet's population consumes 85% of its resources, according to Samir Amin, *Débaçle financier, crise systémique? Réponses illusoires et réponses nécessaires*, octobre 2008, Caracas, Venezuela, <http://www.michelcollon.info/articles.php?dateaccess=2008-10-30%2015:52:31&log=invites>

<sup>36</sup> Samir Amin, *La dimension destructrice de l'accumulation du capital*, [http://www.forumtiersmonde.net/fren/index.php?view=article&catid=54%3Acritical-analysis-of-capitalism&id=129%3Aa-dimension-destructrice-de-laccumulation-du-capital&option=com\\_content&Itemid=114](http://www.forumtiersmonde.net/fren/index.php?view=article&catid=54%3Acritical-analysis-of-capitalism&id=129%3Aa-dimension-destructrice-de-laccumulation-du-capital&option=com_content&Itemid=114)

<sup>37</sup> The relation between productivism for the sake of profit, productivity and consumption, and the logic of this relation, the production for the sake of profit would also generate the increase of consumption, but precisely for

The wasteful attitude towards resources occurs, as it was mentioned above, also due to social inequalities and poverty within one country. In this respect, the ecological and social problem interconnect<sup>38</sup>, and solutions as well<sup>39</sup>. It seems the “organised rarity”<sup>40</sup> (i.e. the structural domination relations for implementing the private and unequal sampling of resources) even during the current scientific and technological revolution it brought and brings about the dominance of nature even more so than 200 years ago.

These attitudes are closely related to the social images given to common use, and to which the thinkers contribute to a great extent, for in order to get recognition, tend to fit into the paradigms of the dominant ideological trend. The images related to the ecological problem – which also includes the problem of resources of various types – are bombing the social conscience in a contradictory manner: the environmental crisis appears very clearly but, on the one hand, certain messages are overlapping on such as the impossibility to solve the problem, or the fact that the problem is not so severe, or that the severity of the problem will only be obvious after several decades or even centuries<sup>41</sup>, or that it can be

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achieving such a production it is necessary to increase labour productivity, which means that salaries cannot be increased so as not to endanger the obtaining of large profits: therefore, salary expenses must always be smaller than productivity. The increase of consumption is consequently a long term tendency, of stage within the system, for the entire population: as a matter of fact, the living standard (standard of consumption) of the majority of the labour force increases a lot less than the productivity allowed by productive forces.

<sup>38</sup> James Garvey, “The wickedness of the long hot shower”, *TPM, the philosophers’ magazine*, Issue 41, 2nd quarter 2008, p. 85: “The developed world is responsible before anything else for one problem (climate changes) from which many useless afflictions derive.”

<sup>39</sup> See Clare Kendall, „New law of nature. Ecuador next week votes on giving legal rights to rivers, forests and air. Is this the end of damaging development? The world is watching”, *The Guardian*, September 24, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/sep/24/ecuador.conservation>

<sup>40</sup> Jean Ziegler, *Imperiul ruşinii* (2005), Bucureşti, Antet, 2006, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to notice the subsidising of researchers postponing the problem.

solved only by the world leaders – while the involvement of the citizen is efficient only at a strictly local level. As a result, the problem would be not one of immediate interest, thus becoming a “natural” phenomenon as inexorable as the rain after a clouded sky. In return, the conscience of the problem tends to be converted<sup>42</sup> into incertitude, fear, and the wish for compensation by way of a *carpe diem* kind of behaviour. The postponing of the attack on the social causes of the ecological crisis leads to the rapid enhancing of problems: but no one would ultimately claim that “we did not know about it”<sup>43</sup>.

The data offered by sciences must always be checked. But discussing for example if the oil and natural gas resources reach, and when do they reach, the peak of production after which the decline generated by their depletion occurs, does not represent undertaking the debate regarding the reorganisation of the relations between man and nature, and not exclusively through scientific discoveries. Still, the acute “pessimistic” impression here advanced does not need to cover the initiatives at the theoretical level but also on a practical one, or the pressures of institutions and people, in the sense of the change of people’s mentalities with respect to the entire problematic of the natural data, and of policies as well<sup>44</sup>.

Special data for social philosophy are the ones related to the genetic engineering of plants, animals and man as well. These general data offered by sciences – and as evidenced above, this is

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<sup>42</sup> Frank Furedy, *Cultura fricii. Asumarea riscurilor și moralitatea așteptărilor scăzute* (1997), București, Antet, f.a.

<sup>43</sup> Lou Keune et Francine Mestrum, *Le grand mensonge de la coopération au développement*, <http://www.michelcollon.info/articles.php?dateaccess=2008-09-13%2016:47:25&log=invites> mentioned exactly this idea “of not having known”, which was discussed as well in *Historikerstreit*, the controversy of the German historian during the 1980’s.

<sup>44</sup> Also see for example Whithin the Framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) (provisional), *5th International Seminar and Training Course for Eco-Kids Instructors for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development*, Paris, 6–8 November 2007  
[http://www.artech.or.jp/english/kids/envedu/EKI/itc/itc2007Paris\\_3.pdf](http://www.artech.or.jp/english/kids/envedu/EKI/itc/itc2007Paris_3.pdf).

not simply a quantitative evaluation of data (as new knowledge elements, but also as new phenomena controlled by man) but also a qualitative one, regarding the consequences of these phenomena, as of the consequences of the knowledge of the new data – are discussed in social contexts imbued with tacit or loud suppositions: for we are discussing science, we also have suppositions related to prejudices grounding these suppositions. From the point of view of social philosophy, the analysis of mentalities and of the presuppositions they organise around them is performed in the social circles where they occur, as also the consequences of various conceptions are judged: the articulation of ideas and their manifestation in the social practices.

Hence, from the philosophical perspective, the discussion on the resources of life proposes the concept of squandering or wastefulness, in more concrete terms – of *conscious squandering*. The wasting of natural resources is connected to the wasting of the human and the human suffering: it was calculated the phenomenon of avoidable<sup>45</sup> mortality, i.e. the phenomenon of wasting of the human being and of potential human creativity; equally one can calculate the wasting of resources due to their misappropriation in wars and destructive activities. Moreover, a plausible inference is that of the situation where the scientific progress and a constant deeper reflexive level in approaching the responsible essence of man coexists with/or, in functionalist terms, converge towards a more and more obvious human and natural wastefulness. If the wasting of resources is a consequence of the modern economic system, it can thusly be divided into, *grosso modo*, the unconscious waste – mainly until the Second World War – and the conscious one – especially after the 1960's.

Therefore, social philosophy explicitly faces the challenges and the uncomfortable issues resulting from certain specific social relations; it does not hide behind some impermeable “language-

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<sup>45</sup> See Gideon Polya, *Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950*, Melbourne, G. M. Polya, 2007; also see <http://globalavoidablemortality.blogspot.com/>, 2008 lecture.

games”<sup>46</sup> and infers the abstract concepts from the open expression of actual social instances: in this respect, social philosophy is the daughter of our century, profusely *a century of urgencies*.

*Instead of conclusions*

Philosophy moved on from *capitalising* on the data – granting of value, namely an intellectual operation of offering a place for the elements of existence within the coherent picture set up by our conscience – to the *evaluation* of data – i.e. taking such data into consideration in accordance with the consequences and influences received and given to infinite directions. This consideration means at the same time the grasping and designing of the significances of the data offered by sciences from the point of view of philosophical concepts of essence and existence, object and subject, universal and particular, movement, stability, intersection, dichotomy etc.

Social philosophy is the part, or even the historical moment of philosophy which, by bringing to analysis the social criteria in their historicity, also evidences the close connection between natural sciences and human sciences, as well between the data offered by the first and by the latter. In this way, with respect to natural resource, social philosophy offers space in a nonconformist<sup>47</sup> manner, for the anticipation of the dangers and also of the alternatives concerning the relations between society and nature. The freedom and responsibility of man are not real without being introduced into the field of analysis the real data in terms of their criticism. Therefore, the philosophical principle of pursuing the universal, namely of trying to reach the universal from the

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<sup>46</sup> It is the concept of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), translated into Romanian as *Cercetări filosofice*, translation by de Mircea Dumitru and Mircea Flonta, in collaboration with Adrian-Paul Iliescu, București, Humanitas, 2003, at least p. 92–93, 95, 102, 117, 341, 348, 386, 388, 393–394, 396.

<sup>47</sup> And opposite to the “positivist-analytical resignation of the contemporary philosophy”, Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, p. 16.

particular and the individual and to find their significances and consequences implies (or it is even equivalent to) acquiring the greatest possible degree of transparency of the entire process involved. Social philosophy is the opposite of horoscope-philosophy: it is the opposite of the expressing in an esoteric language the half-measure suggestions and abstractions which are consumed by ranks of readers who believe it to be fitting to their problems and their image of the world. Philosophy is perennial, but its *prorogans* moment is ephemeral in relation to our modern times.

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