A Philosophy of Catastrophes or a Catastrophe of Philosophies?

By

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Introduction

In these times of ecological and human crises, accompanied by a viral crisis not unrelated to the first two, the works of philosophers, or at least those who claim to have a philosophical approach to ecological problems, abound with very different views on these crises. I will focus here mainly on philosophers of nature, or of ecology, who are interested in a theme that is very much in the media these days: that of "catastrophism,"[1] i.e. the possibility of the collapse of humanity as a result of the serious ecological problems we have just mentioned, particularly those linked to the problem of global warmin.[2] Analysing their works is not straightforward because of the diversity of their attitudes to this issue. Some philosophers have long denied the existence of global warming, which tends to put an end to the debate. But it has to be said that this 'species of philosopher' is becoming rarer as evidence of global warming accumulates, thanks in particular to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). So Ferry, who claimed in 2015 that "the climate debate is far from settled", is backtracking in 2021 with the publication of his book devoted to the "seven ecologies" (see below for more details). In practice, these days, most philosophers, unlike many politicians, recognise the seriousness of the ecological state of the planet. However, their attitude to this situation, and in particular to global warming, is not identical. There are those, like Servigne, Stevens and Chapelle (2018), who advise us to "live with collapse", in other words to accept the imminent catastrophe, arguing that "another end of the

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[1] In ancient Greek, as the Bailly Greek-French Dictionary (1929, 1055) shows, the word 'katastrophè' has two main meanings: the first is that of reversal (or upheaval) and the second that of end or death. There is already a problem of definition: an upheaval is not necessarily synonymous with collapse or death, but more often than not, the philosophers of catastrophes will invoke the death of humanity: this is the meaning we will retain here.

[2] For the purposes of this book, the term philosopher or philosophy of catastrophes applies to all authors who deal with these catastrophes, whether or not they are convinced that they can occur.

world is possible." But philosophers such as Grange (2012, 48), Stengers (2013, 43) and Flipo (2014, 102-107) propose, on the contrary, to fight against the possibility of collapse by targeting capitalists in particular. Others, such as Latour and Schultz (2022, 26), also want to avoid these catastrophes, but by essentially attacking the Economy (or Economisation), its 'steel cage' and its so-called scientific laws of production', and, more broadly, all poor humans with their selfish calculations of interests in a productivist perspective (Latour 2021,77-89; Latour and Schulz 2022: 29,35,87). Stiegler (2009, 2010, 2020), on the other hand, is more concerned with the modern technology that is modifying the biosphere, what he calls the 'technosphere'. There are also those, like Morin (2020), who point to a multitude of targets encompassing all those already mentioned, and even adding others such as our 'frozen' reason. Some, who are much more openly optimistic, such as C.Larrère and R.Larrère (2020) clearly assure us that "the worst is not certain" (this is the title of one of their books), while advising us to prevent these catastrophes through a multitude of local struggles, in preference to a frontal attack on the capitalist economy (2020, 174). But there are also some who are much more optimistic, such as Sagoff (2008), who support the work of the Break-through created by Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger (2007) and share the values of the 'ecomodernist manifesto': they assert that, in any case, human ingenuity will enable us to deal with the risks of collapse when the time comes. This highly optimistic attitude is also Ferry's, but with a twist: he is an unwavering supporter of capitalism, the only system he believes to be "capable of innovation" (2021, 197-198). More recently, Buéno (2022) has come close to defending this view. Although this author wants to "get out of the realm of certainties" (2022, 22), the fact that he believes that, in the event of a serious ecological crisis, thanks to new technologies, mankind will always be able to transcend the Earth and find in the rest of the universe the resources necessary for its life and development is practically equivalent to affirming that there will never be a collapse.[3]

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[3] As he points out, we must not remain here with pre-industrial ways of life, because "if

It should be noted that, according to Michéa (2017, 185), this type of opinion can already be found among post-modernists such as Deleuze and Guattari (1972): authors who believe that the world's problems stem from the fact that capitalism is entrenched and must be forced to go beyond its limits.

These different types of position therefore reflect several philosophical currents that are currently clashing on the subject of disasters and, where applicable, their possible avoidance. In this book, we would like to show that many of these philosophical approaches are problematic, for different reasons, depending on the case, both in terms of the targets of their statements and the types of solutions proposed, and that, in our opinion, they bear witness to a kind of powerlessness on the part of current philosophy to deal with the serious crises facing humanity. So much so, in fact, that we may well wonder whether we are not witnessing a kind of philosophical catastrophe. To address this question, our book will be divided into eight main parts. The first will essentially be devoted to a general clarification of the main philosophical theories on the nature and causes of the crises we have been talking about, and to an analysis of the main actions that their authors advocate. The second will be a critical historical study of the opinions of these philosophers on the causes of these crises. The third will show that, in general, the solutions they propose are inadequate given the nature of the problems concerned. The fourth and fifth parts will show the nature of the errors made by most philosophers of nature in dealing with current human and ecological problems. The sixth will lay the foundations for concrete solutions to deal with these problems effectively and efficiently. The seventh and eighth will show, with the help of philosophical works published very recently, that certain philosophers, admittedly few in number, have fortunately become

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we manage to go beyond the limits of the earth, our horizon will no longer have any." He adds, to convince us to move beyond terrestrial limits, that "if the Earth is our cradle, we don't stay in a cradle all our lives." (2022, 339-340) In conclusion, he invites us to "transcend ourselves" (ibid).

aware of the inadequacy of the traditional solutions of their colleagues, and that we can therefore optimistically anticipate a new conception of the philosophy of nature adapted to the demands of the ecological crisis we are experiencing, which would bring together these philosophers and the defenders of the theses we support in order to move towards a humanity more concerned with democracy, including economic democracy, and respect for ecological constraints.

PART ONE

The Main Theories of Philosophers of Catastrophes on the Nature and the Causes of Ecological Crises

In general, any problem requires an understanding of its causes before action can be taken to solve it. The current ecological, viral, social and economic crises are obviously no exception to this rule. The problem is that these crises involve complex issues (Morin, 1990) about which it is difficult to come to a definite conclusion. A typical example is global warming, about which even scientists can sometimes disagree (see below). Another example is the nature and origins of economic and social crises, on the interpretation of which economists will differ according to their economic theory, whether classical, neo-classical or Marxist. Insofar as economic problems can interact with ecological problems, the complexity and diversity of solutions increases still further. There is therefore no reason why philosophers, who are very often dependent on the analyses offered by specialists in the so-called hard sciences (particularly ecology) or the social sciences (of which I believe economics is one), should not have very different attitudes to these fundamental issues. In order to draw up an overview of their main positions, I will use mainly (but not exclusively) the problem of global warming, which is omnipresent in their works on environmental disasters. I will examine three major questions that all these philosophers inevitably have to ask themselves in an attempt to propose a solution to these serious problems. The first is the conclusion they draw from what they learn from ecological specialists: is there realistically[1] a problem of global warming caused by human beings or by certain human beings[2] and, if so, what is its nature? The second question, if the answer to the first question is yes, initially

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[1] "Realistically" is taken here in the double sense of real and important.
[2] Clearly, if this change is not caused by human beings but by phenomena linked to solar activity, for example, the problem is completely different.

concerns the study of these human causes: who are the human beings fundamentally responsible for this problem? Finally, the third question deals with the means of action proposed by these philosophers to remedy the problems they have perceived and take action against those they believe to be responsible for them.

Chapter 1

The philosophers of catastrophes face up to the reality and importance of the problem of climate change

There are three main categories of philosophers. The first consists of the so-called "negationist" philosophers, who deny the existence of this problem. The second encompasses those who, like the collapsologists, recognise the problem but believe that it is too late to avoid it. The third group includes philosophers who tell us that the worst is not certain and that ecological disaster can still be avoided.

The first category: "negationist" philosophers

In my view, it brings together three very different types of authors.

The first type are climate sceptic philosophers who believe that global warming is not man-made. A typical example of this was for a long time Luc Ferry. In a Figarovox article dated 24 September 2015, this philosopher argued that "the climate debate is far from settled" and that it pits the "warmists" against the "climate sceptics", a clan with which he openly aligned himself at the time. Indeed, on the same day, in the same column, the physicist Jacques Treiner, a specialist in climatology, tried to convince him that the scientific references on which he was basing his opinion actually concerned people who were not climate specialists, but to no avail. In desperation, Treiner concluded that "there is a difference between a scientific statement and an opinion - a matter for the philosophy of science - and that if a philosopher of his reputation doesn't help poor scientists, the task is obviously much harder." What Treiner perhaps failed to see was that Ferry is a great defender of capitalism and liberalism (which, in our

view, is its main but not exclusive political expression): [1] it was therefore unrealistic to expect him to immediately recognise the climatic phenomena linked to this type of economy, which currently dominates the scene. Proof of this came four years later when he reiterated his position in a new article (Figarovox, 3 July 2019) in which he insisted that "it is time to stop using ecology as an instrument against a liberalism that we need more than ever to create the wealth that no one wants to do without." At the time, Ferry belonged to the clan of 'liberal-capitalist' philosophers who, with the support of scientists who were 'not specialists in the question' (such as Allègre, cited as such by Treiner), were the very type of negativist philosopher. However, with the accumulation of evidence of these ecological problems, particularly climatic ones, he had to change his opinion while continuing to remain faithful to his liberal pro-capitalist ideas. This leads us on to the study of other living categories of philosophers who are not negationists or former negationists, but who are almost certainly negationists, which may seem surprising at first sight.

The second type of this category of philosophers, found for example in the "eco-modernists" movement, includes those who also deny the problem posed by climate change, but on the basis of a very different kind of negationism. Their fundamental idea is that, whatever happens, it will always be possible to find technical solutions that will resolve ecological problems, particularly those resulting from global warming. Their blind confidence in the power of technology is such that it allows them to deny the importance of the effects of the problem, which is practically tantamount to denying the problem itself. More broadly, they believe that the effects of all types of damage to the functioning of ecosystems can be corrected using these new techniques (examples of which are given below in a separate section). As such, they can be described as "*ultra-technical*" philosophers, and the only question left for them to resolve in the context of this line of reasoning is that of finding the least costly measures that will achieve

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[1] See Richard and Rambaud (Routledge 2021a).

the desired effects, such as lowering temperatures in the case of global warming. This will be done within the usual framework of neo-classical economic methods, principally cost-benefit analysis (see below). These technicist philosophers therefore generally ally themselves with neo-classical economists on this last point, and more broadly with the defenders of the capitalist model. An interesting example in this category is Ferry. As we have seen, he no longer denies the reality of climate change. His conversion is the result of becoming aware of the 'Cradle to Cradle' concept developed by Braungart and Mc Donough (2010) in a book which claims that products can be recycled ad infinitum, regardless of production volumes. As a result, as he states in one of his latest books on the "seven ecologies" (2021), "everything can be recycled", which allows him to assert both that "no one denies global warming" and that we can continue to make profits without resorting to a punitive economy such as degrowth (2021, 28, 29 and 158). For a variety of reasons, then, philosophers who deny the reality of climate change are becoming a rarer species as technical solutions are proposed by the defenders of the current economic system.

Within this first category of philosophers, there remains a third type of actor, very different from the first and second. These are philosophers who, like the Greek stoics, notably Zeno of Citium, are pessimists or fatalists by nature. They therefore have a very particular focus on predicting misfortune, particularly death, considering the evils that befall mankind as an inevitability against which there is no point in resisting, but nevertheless preparing for them as best as possible. They therefore accept all events that occur in nature, whether or not they are caused by human beings. Under these conditions, their primary aim is to harden themselves to withstand these unfortunate or dangerous situations: to face them with lucidity and courage. Unlike climate sceptics, these philosophers 'deny' a priori the seriousness of the problem of climate change by trying to eliminate the effects of its unfortunate consequences on human beings. They do this by adopting an appropriate asceticism to mitigate the physical and moral

consequences (see below for more details). In short, whatever the pessimistic forecasts formulated by certain scientists, these fatalists also manage to deny the need for action to avoid these disasters by the very fact of their mental ability to bear them. We will present them later.

The second category: "collapsologist" philosophers

These are philosophers who recognise anthropogenic global warming and, more generally, the existence of limits to the exploitation of nature that must not be exceeded or the resilience of current eco-systems will be called into question. But, because of the inaction that has prevailed for almost fifty years now, since the first warnings about the limits to growth were issued around 1970, in particular those of the famous Meadows report (1972), they feel that it *is* too late to act, or even, for some of them, too late to act to avoid a total collapse of current society. Servigne, Stevens and Chapelle (2018, 16), for example, state that "we envisage the collapse of thermo-industrial civilisation (or even more) as a process ... that has already begun ... and that will continue indefinitely." Cochet (2019,115, 116), for his part, is even more pessimistic and radical, telling us that "the collapse of society is... certain in 2030" and that humans can only marginally modify the fatal trajectory leading to this collapse. In short, these philosophers are proposing a course of action based on a pessimistic vision of the current situation, ranging from the 'grey' catastrophism of Servigne, Steven and Chapelle to the 'black' catastrophism of Cochet, as opposed to the 'enlightened' catastrophism of other philosophers who envisage a possible catastrophe in order to avert it more effectively (see below).

The third category: optimistic anti-catastrophist philosophers

All these philosophers, who are many and varied, openly criticise not only the negationists but also the collapsologists: they reject the fact that it is already too late to act, albeit in different tones. Some of them, like Bernard Stiegler (2009, 2010), do so in the name of what might be

called an 'enlightened' catastrophism, which consists of admitting the possibility of collapse as a simple attitude of prudence that forces us to act quickly and take steps to avoid it. As Dupuy (2019) shows, this position is close to that of the philosopher Jonas (1995, 233), for whom "the prophecy of doom is made to prevent it from coming true" and is normally associated with proposals for appropriate avoidance measures. But there are other philosophers who are even more optimistic. This is the case, for example, of Larrère and Larrère (2020), who generally denounce "catastrophist blindness." According to these authors, it is "the worst service we can do to groups fighting to defend their living environments" (2020, 162). To reassure us, they assert that "the worst is not certain" (the title of their aforementioned book). It seems that a philosopher like Latour, who also wants to avoid catastrophe, is close to this position (2022, 26). With these more encouraging views, we conclude this preliminary study of the main types of observation that philosophers of nature make about the current ecological situation. We will now examine the types of action they propose in the light of these observations and the main targets of these actions.

Chapter 2

The targets of action and the actions of the philosophers of catastrophes in the face of future disasters

All action presupposes a goal (such as solving a problem) and a relational target, whether it involves things or people. Our question here concerns ecological action, in particular to solve the problem of global warming. We will take up one by one the three categories of philosophers identified earlier (negationists, collapsologists and 'anti-catastrophist optimists') and analyse their types of action.

The case of negationist philosophers

We have seen that they can be classified into three types: climate sceptics, ultra-technicalists and stoics.

For climate sceptics like Luc Ferry before 2021, the issue is quickly settled. Insofar as for them, in particular, the man-made climate problem does not exist at all (it is essentially a temporary warming due to causes external to human action and temporary), there is obviously no need to act on these external causes if these causes, such as the movement of the planets or solar eruptions, are virtually inevitable.

As for 'technicist' or ultra-technicist philosophers, who can recognise the anthropogenic nature of ecological phenomena and their seriousness, action may be called for if global warming or, more broadly, anthropogenic ecological disturbance is observed. In their view, this will be the work of technicians. The aim will not be to prevent global warming by modifying the current economic system. It will essentially consist of finding technical means of reducing, if not eliminating, its ecological effects: for example, sending metal particles

into the stratosphere to trap the carbon emitted or protect it from the sun's rays. This is the position of philosophers such as Mark Sagoff (2008), who support the work of the Break-through created by Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger (2007) and share the values of the eco-modernist manifesto. In the same vein, we find the case of Ferry, who draws on the work of Braugart and McDonough (2010) to claim that simple, well-designed recycling of objects will always solve all ecological problems, whatever the volume of production, a thesis contested by authors such as Latouche (2019, 57) and Bihouix (2014).[1] This is also practically the case for Buéno (2022), who ultimately proposes abandoning planet Earth for a more liveable one. As we have seen, this type of action is generally based on cost-benefit analyses that make it possible to choose the least costly technical options at both macro-economic and micro-economic levels.

Finally, as far as the stoic negationist philosophers are concerned, the main aim of action will be to transform the state of mind of all human beings so that they are better able to withstand the inevitable hardships caused by the ecological changes that are about to take place (see below for more details).

The case of collapsological philosophers

These philosophers recognise the anthropogenic nature of ecological crises, but tell us that it is unfortunately very late, even too late, to take precautionary measures. This attitude seems all the more logical to them because, in their view, identifying the causes of ecological phenomena is difficult and/or diffuse. Servigne et alii (2018, 279), for example, believe that "in this state of war, the modern camp is invisible" and that, in particular, capitalism is a "hydra." Rather than taking immediate action, they therefore advise us first and foremost to undertake an "inner journey", which, they stress, "is not a rejection of

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[1]Latouche believes that this common sense will not suffice if it simply aims to avoid "calling into question the religion of growth." This also seems to be the conviction of an author like Bihouix (2014), who highlights the problems generated by the rebound effect in a context where everything can never be totally recycled.

politics; on the contrary, it would even be the prerequisite for rethinking politics and finding the resources to do so" (278). Cochet (2019), for his part, takes a much more pessimistic view than Servigne et al., arguing that the main problem is not economic but a dominant liberal-productivist ideology that leads to a crescentic "automaton system" "that no human force can control" (14,116). He concludes that "Gaia has acquired irreversible autonomy" (244) and that it is too late to take measures to avoid catastrophe.[2] All the more so since, in his view, humans are subject to problems of duplicative mimesis and 'specularity': they wait to act until others do so (37 and 199). For him, therefore, catastrophe is inevitable and must be accepted. Servigne et alii, who are less pessimistic, mainly propose, like the stoic negationists, to play on the transformation of the state of mind of human beings, either so that they can eventually find political solutions to the problem posed, or, if the plan fails, to prepare them to live through the ordeals that await them: for collapsology, this means "learning to live with bad news" (28), "giving meaning to one's suffering" and, above all, "sharing one's pain" with others, particularly through sharing rituals (79). In contrast, Cochet (2019) presents a much wider range of solutions that fully accept the reality of collapse.

The case of anti-catastrophism optimist philosophers

This category is extremely diverse. We will distinguish between philosophers whose main targets are technology, all human beings, at least modern human beings, and capitalists, but we will also mention the special case of those who take a very broad approach to this question.

Philosophers who target the techniques

For these philosophers, notably Stiegler (2010), the action to be taken must essentially concern the 'technical' or 'technological' system, of

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[2] Whereas Servigne et al believe that it is impossible to show with certainty that a collapse will occur (2018, 60).

which the machine is chronologically one of the first manifestations of the industrial revolution (see below). So while 'technical' philosophers see the technical system as the solution to current ecological problems, Stiegler, an enlightened catastrophist, sees the technical system as the cause of current problems. Influenced by the studies of the philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1958), he believes that it is mainly technology, and not economic systems, that shapes (or distorts) ecological and social systems (2010,127). For him, it is new [technical] knowledge that will give rise to new economic systems. (2010,129).[3] It is true that, in some of his writings, he indicates that one of the tasks is to extricate these techniques from their submission to capitalism so that they can give rise to another economic system.[4] We might therefore infer from this position that Stiegler, despite his focus on technology, seems to admit that it is first and foremost the economic system of capitalism or the market[5] that needs to be overturned if we are to have access to other technologies capable of resolving the current environmental problems, and that this action needs to be taken at all levels where the capitalist system makes its mark, starting with companies. Without expressly saying so, he seems to be invoking the notion of the "Capitalocene" (see below). However, this position is contradicted by other statements which point to the primary responsibility of technology, particularly that of the digital society. Indeed, one of his fundamental theses, inspired by some of the

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[3] "Here, the interface between the technical system and social systems does not operate via the economic system , but precisely through those social systems which are bearers of knowledge which society holds. Such forms of knowledge and their valorisation are the only possibilities we have for struggling against the production of information without knowledge. Developing such forms of knowledge and valuing them economically will cause a new economic system to emerge from the heart of the social system , and respecting these social systems means constituting an economy of contribution , contra the economy of carelessness ."

[4] "Our epoch is characterised by the fact that it is the economic system dominated by fictitious capital that imposes a technical system the evolutions of which it presents as ineluctable -an ineluctability supposedly extending to the liquidation not only of the state , but of all long circuits of transindividuation ... but in reality such arrangements are historical , and perfectly contingent - what is more are profoundly toxic" (2010, 123)

[5] He seems to confuse these two concepts when he says of capitalism that "the problem is not the state, it's the market" (2019).

writings of the post-modern philosopher Derrida, in particular his 'Plato's pharmacy' (1968), is that all technology is a pharmakon,[6] meaning that while in some respects it may be beneficial to humans in others it is 'necessarily poisoning', at least without a prescription for its use (Stiegler 2019). In the latter case, it is the techniques themselves that pose a problem. This assertion seems all the more likely given Stiegler's belief that "technology is evolving faster and faster, until it overtakes us" and that "we no longer control this technology... [including] ...people in top management" (ibid, 2019). He even goes so far as to say that technical organisation is "imposed by technical capital" (2017). We will therefore consider Stiegler to be a representative of the philosophical school that puts the omnipotence of technology at the forefront of the causes of the current problems we are discussing. Like Ellul (1977), he is an advocate of what we might call the Technicocene concept (see below). As far as the problems caused by technology are concerned, he points out that these are not just ecological issues, but also those concerning the treatment of humans by other humans. In particular, he defends the thesis, in line, he says, with Marx,[7] that the proletarianisation of workers is above all a loss of knowledge (and not pauperisation) resulting from an evolution in technology, in particular from the fact that the machine becomes fixed capital:[8] hence what he calls a process of "grammatisation" (2017). He also believes that this proletarianisation and grammatisation also affect consumers as a result of the development of marketing techniques (ibid, 2017). More broadly, he questions calculation techniques: he even believes that these calculation techniques are the cause of the development of "negotium": practically the loss of free time: "otium" in Latin meaning free time (ibid, 2017). Finally, although he speaks of the violence of capitalism as "infinitely greater than that of the state" (2019), he does

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[6] This Greek term is ambiguous in that it has two meanings: poison and medicine.

[7] He points out that for Marx the machine is something that deprives people of their knowledge and praises him for wanting to invent a new relationship between man and machine (2017). And he regrets that current Marxist philosophers like Badiou consider that these questions of technique are of no importance (2017).

[8] On the nature and importance of this concept, see below.

not use the word Capitalocene. Instead, he uses the term Anthropocene,[9] which he classically links to the emergence between 1780 and 1850 of an industrial and machine-based society, as opposed to a previous rural society (2017). However, the term Anthropocene refers to a very broad responsibility of all humans, a responsibility that is generally traced back to a new geological epoch that appeared at the end of the 18th century with the same industrial revolution that Stiegler talks about. This would seem to contradict the term Technicocene that we used earlier to describe Stiegler's focus on the role of primordial techniques. It appears, then, that Stiegler has a very particular conception of the notion of the Anthropocene. This leads us directly to the case of philosophers who make this notion the basis of their reasoning.

Philosophers who target all human beings

As early as 2012, Comte-Sponville (2012, 192) indicated that when it comes to ecological crises, "it is not so much capitalism or globalisation that are at issue here as anthropology and politics." Even more recently, Larrère and Larrère (2020), in the same vein as Comte-Sponville, despite certain reservations, attack the anthropocentrism of the human race as a whole, while clearly rejecting the thesis of the sole responsibility of particular groups such as capitalists. These two philosophers openly state that "the critique of capitalism is not enough to explain our current ecological condition" (163). They therefore reject the concept of the Capitalocene proposed by philosophers who invoke the actions of capitalist entrepreneurs as the main cause of the planet's ecological and human problems (see below). The reason for this is that, in their view, this concept of the Capitalocene, like that of capitalism, is not sufficiently encompassing: in effect, it does not imply the subjugation of non-salaried labour (particularly that of slaves and women) and the appropriation of land. On the other hand, it seems to them that the concept of the Plantantionocene, proposed by Jason Moore (2015), is better able to

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[9] A term coined by the scientist Crutzen (2002).

take this into account. The latter puts the beginning of the attacks on nature and humans in general (not just wage earners) at the time of the invasion and appropriation of the New World by the Europeans, i.e. at the time of the 'discovery' of America in 1492 by Christopher Columbus, an appropriation whose consequences are still evident today in certain parts of the globe. The thesis is that by seizing the land and putting the slaves, men and women, to forced labour in the mines or on the colonial plantations, these European conquistadores took advantage of cheap nature and cheap labour (Larrère and Larrère, 2020, 44). But even this concept of the Plantationocene is not entirely acceptable to the Larrères: for them, "while the Plantationocene brings in a more diversified vision of capitalism ... it is subject to a comparable critique, since the only way to be included in it is to be subject, in one way or another, to capitalism or to be a victim of it" (ibid, 163). They therefore also reject this vision in the name of their opposition to the idea that capitalism alone is responsible for the emergence of the planet's ecological problems, and will ultimately find more merit in the concept of the Anthropocene, despite certain hesitation. They point out that this concept is ambivalent because "it can be understood as both an affirmation of human power ... and an acknowledgement of its powerlessness (all these changes were neither intended nor foreseen, they are beyond our control)." It should be noted that this argument of environmental degradation as "the result of unintended consequences, unforeseen at least at the outset, of our technical actions" (ibid 171) is recurrent in their demonstration, and has a certain link with certain theories defended by Stiegler. But in the end, on balance, they believe that the term Anthropocene, despite all the criticism and controversy it has provoked, "is not without merit" (ibid 45). Indeed, for them, "to speak of the Anthropocene is to affirm that we are not facing a passing crisis, that we are in a new situation and that the change is global, massive, lasting and, perhaps, on a human scale at least, irreversible: in other words, that we have entered a new era" (ibid 46). As we can see, this last quotation refers to a collective, that of "we" human beings, all responsible for the misdeeds of the Anthropocene (born in the 18th century) of which we are a

constituent part. In this regard, they invoke a thesis by the philosopher Sartre (1960, 232) who, in his Critique of Dialectical Reason, testifies, with what he calls the "pratico-inerte", to a "massification of the results of a multitude of insignificant individual actions … catastrophic."[10] According to Larrère and Larrère, it is at this level, that of the individual human being responsible for the situation, that action should take place. They are wary of action at the global level because, at this level, "what knowledge gains in generality, it loses in precision. It does not take into account the diversity of the world's social and environmental situations. It does not provide the means by which we can influence them, and systematically reflects our failures and our powerlessness" (ibid, 174). This type of position also appears to be that of Charbonnier, an author who also attacks collapsologists, denouncing the "renewed Darwinism of the prophets of the apocalypse" and their failure to propose political solutions to the ecological crisis (2020,350-351). In fact, in his book Abondance et Liberté (Abundance and Freedom), devoted to "an environmental history of political ideas" and published the same year as the Larrère book, this philosopher concludes his work by saying that it is indeed the Anthropocene that has "created a monster" and that the main obstacle to political thinking adjusted to the climate crisis "is within us, among us: in our laws, our institutions, more than in an overhanging economic spectre that we could comfortably denounce from the outside" (2020,424). Logically, he is careful to say that capitalists and their excesses are only some of the agents of this situation (ibid, 424).[11] It seems to us that this type of position is also

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[10] Sartre (1960) uses the example of Chinese peasants: "uprooting a tree .becomes deforestation in the perspective of a great plain and terraces of loess united by the work of separate men, and deforestation, as the real meaning of the individual action of uprooting, is nothing other than the negative union of all the isolated by the material totality they have produced." which leads to the "constitution of a material totality abolishing separations in the common unity of a destiny (floods)."

[11] Like Larrère, Charbonnier points out that capitalism does not allow us to capture historical reality correctly because it is not the only source of domination that has played a role in modernity. He also adds, to clear his thought somewhat, that other solutions critical of capitalism have led to the same "productionism" as he has (2020, 396-397). This is an obvious allusion to real communism.

that of Latour (2022) who, in his "Memo on the new ecological class", carefully avoids talking about capitalists. He clearly prefers to blame the current ecological problems on all human beings, including the non-bourgeois classes, who have followed the advice of economists to produce and consume on a massive scale without taking into account the limits of absorption of this consumption by the planet (2022,30).[12] In his view, this logic of production and consumption, this pervasive productivism, is inexcusable. This is why he absolves the lobbies of any influence they might have over the masses. Indeed, he points out, "It's not enough to point to disinformation campaigns, the power of lobbies, the inertia of mentalities: none of this has ever prevented millions of activists from throwing themselves wholeheartedly into their battles" (2022, 39). So it is indeed humans as a whole who are responsible, at least those who have participated in the economic growth that began with the industrial revolution in the 18th century: they have even, according to him, "gradually engendered planet Earth-or at least its tiny habitable part" (2022, 43).

Philosophers who essentially target consumers.

The category of optimistic philosophers also includes two less extensive variants of the Anthropocene conception. It is first the case of thinkers who completely absolve capitalists of any responsibility for ecological problems, which is something that Larrère, Charbonnier and Latour do not do, since they include them among their responsible humans. They are philosophers who want to demonstrate that capitalists have a virtually unassailable mode of management or who consider that their economic tools are the ones that should be favoured to resolve the ecological crisis.

The first variant can be illustrated with the case of the philosopher Comte-Sponville. In his book "Is capitalism moral?" (2004), Comte-Sponville sets out to prove that capitalist economics and management

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[12] He makes it clear that "we have become accustomed to understanding growth as the only way to get by, forgetting the destruction it causes" (2022, ibid).

are hard sciences that have nothing to do with moral issues or social choices. In particular, he argues that capitalist accounting is based on the use of objective calculations (of the type where two plus two equals four): it therefore belongs to the Pascalian order of the hard sciences (the mathematical order) and not to that of the social or moral sciences. From this he logically infers that scientific management cannot be criticised (see below for more details).

The second variant is represented by the philosopher Bourg, long-time adviser to Nicolas Hulot[13] Minister for Ecology at the start of Macron's Presidency. Although this author often questions the capitalist system in his many writings he has an ambiguous attitude, for two main reasons. Firstly, in some of his works, he attacks the market rather than capitalism, which for us is an erroneous assimilation:[14] this is the case of one of his latest books devoted to "the market against humanity" (2019a). Furthermore, he is careful not to propose the slightest measure that could directly affect the management of companies. He prefers to attack consumers. Thus, before the famous yellow waist-coat revolt in France, he advocated the introduction of an environmental tax, a neoclassical-inspired tool, typical of the solutions favoured by supporters of the current economic system to avoid calling it into question (Richard and Rambaud, 2020; Rambaud and Richard 2021ab; Richard, 2023a and b). After the resulting social crisis, it became difficult for him to continue proposing this type of measure. He therefore set his sights on a system of maximum consumption quotas that would hit households. In all these lines of reasoning, it is symptomatic of both Comte-Sponville and Bourg that the main culprit is the consumer who does not know how to restrict his desires, and not the producer of the goods they consume: the latter is obviously 'irresponsible' since, according to them, all he does is obey consumers' orders. With regard to Bourg, Flipo (2014, 102-107) regrets that capitalism 'is hardly criticised by him' and believes that his 'centre-right ecologism serves no practical purpose in terms of reforming

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[13] With Hulot (and Jancovici), Bourg wrote a book on ecological taxation (2008).
[14] See below for an explanation of this fundamental point.

societies'. A reading of his book on the historical roots of our ecological crisis (2019b) reinforces this view.

Philosophers who question capitalists in particular

Finally, given the major role played by capitalism in the economy, there are relatively few philosophers (or sociologists) who deal with nature and ecology and who, like Michéa, Grange, Ferreras, Stengers, Flipo and Barrau, have for several years been highlighting the responsibility of capitalists for the ecological disaster. In 2008, [15] Michéa took the view at that the left had lost all spirit of anti-capitalist struggle and given way to the religion of progress. Since then, he has published a number of works devoted to this struggle, including, most recently, the book 'Notre ennemi le capital' (2017), which we will use as a reference below. Grange is also one of the first to clearly want to "break with the logic of financial capitalism" (2012, 58) and, she says, to "move beyond decades of sterile ethical-philosophical speculation to tackle the real problems" (ibid, 59). [16] Ferreras (2012) seeks to democratise the capitalist companies by giving work councils a right of veto over decisions taken by capitalists in their board of directors. In another more recent book written notably with the philosopher Lamine (2023, 358-9) she even proposes more radical solutions (see after). Stengers also clearly states that her aim is to "fight against the empire of capitalism" (2013, 43). Flipo, as we have already seen, strongly criticises Bourg for his inaction against the capitalists (2014). We might also mention Barrau (2020). Although his attitude is nuanced, mainly because of problems relating to the means of action (see below), he indicates that in this matter of the responsibility of the actors in the ecological and social crisis, "unbridled capitalism plays a major and obvious[17] role" (2020, 167) and even goes so far as to say

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[15] Interview in Revue Contretemps N°32 July.

[16] She takes aim at the philosopher Claude Larrère and backs up her attack on moralist philosophers with a quote from Gunther Anders (in "If I am desperate"): "We cannot be content today with interpreting the Nicomachean Ethics while we are piling up nuclear warheads."

[17] Emphasis added.

that "it is not just a question of criticising capitalism in discourse, but of bringing capitalism down" (2020, 98). Such are the rare philosophers of nature whose target is capitalists, that is to say, a target of relatively few people on the scale of humanity. In contrast, there are philosophers who have a much larger target, on the scale of continents or groups of countries, but who do not use the concept of the Anthropocene.

Philosophers who target Europeans or Westerners

The philosopher Joanna Macy emphasises, along with Molly Brown, the culpability of all members of Western civilisation in the destruction of nature (1998, 39). This indictment of the European continent, which some critical philosophers such as Warin (2010) have described as 'Western hatred', originated in the general context of what has been called the nebula of 'post-colonial studies', one of the earliest initiators of which was E. W. Saïd, in particular with his books Orientalism (1978) and Culture and Imperialism (1993).In his vision, it is no longer just certain well-targeted European actors, such as European capitalists and the politicians who have supported them, who are held responsible for the planet's serious human and ecological problems, but all Europeans or, in an even broader sense, all Westerners (including Americans and Canadians in particular, who are more often than not descendants of European emigrants). This accusation is aimed not only at Europeans themselves, but also at their techniques, which have contributed to the acceleration of the current ecological disaster. Historically, authors who claim to be part of this movement generally trace the first seeds of the European "poison" back to the conquest of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. As Warin (2010) points out, according to the post-colonialists, this conquest "gave the world its shape", in effect "westernising the world", to borrow a phrase from Latouche (2005). It should be noted that, paradoxically, according to some specialists in the field, these so-called post-colonial attacks on the West stem from the thinking of Westerners. As Warin (2010) shows, it was "linguists such as Sapir,