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Revision of the human condition in the age of Anthropocene

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Abstract *The ecological crisis that the techno-scientific transformation of the earth has generated is about to unsettle the ground upon which humans build and consolidate their modes of dwelling. This forces us to be aware of something outside human manipulation, which is to say, the planetary dimension. Confrontation with the planetary dimension urges us to formulate new ways of thinking about the world that we inhabit. The increasing prevalence of natural catastrophes stirs the fundamental conditions upon which the existence of humans depends. At this moment, we are forced to admit that we cannot be free of the inertia of material reality. This paper argues that what is required is to view the human condition in contradictory double registers. While humans inhabit the human world as artifacts, they become part of the vastness of the planetary dimension in which humans are entangled with other life forms. Thus, we can pay attention to the reality that the planetary dimension that subtends the human mode of existence becomes unstable and extends beyond human comprehension. Adding to that, inasmuch as it is revealed through the fractures of the human artificial world at the moment of the disaster, it has to do with the sense of fragility that is intrinsic to the human condition.*

Keywords *the human condition, the otherness of the planet, Hannah Arendt, earthquake, Rinko Kawauchi*

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1. Anthropocene and the disruption of the human condition

In March 2011, Japan was severely hit by a tripartite catastrophe of earthquakes, tsunamis, and nuclear accidents, colloquially known as 3/11. That incident triggered a realization that the ground had ceased to be a stable substratum of the human world. The sea was the field of stirring liquid tumble villages and towns. The border between land and sea was ruptured. The world upon which our particular way of living was grounded broke apart. Even though those incidents came from the outside, they affected our sensibility in a way that requires us to understand the human condition in a state of uncertainty. In actuality, something unclassifiable within the predetermined category in humanist thought had irrupted into the human world. Facing such a disaster that dislocates humans from their habitats, it becomes evident how humans are conditioned by this dimension that goes beyond the limitation of human manipulation. However, it is difficult to respond to it because the thinking style still predominantly based on the anthropocentric presumption that the human world is a stable and durable whole which is protected by borders. Consequently, the irruptive potential of the disaster can be reduced into a controllable accident.

Accordingly, addressing the realness of the incident at the limit of manipulation, instead of reducing its other-than-human aspect into the objectivity of the inert material, requires us to relinquish the notion of certainty that has been quintessential to the human condition since the inception of modernity. The responsibility toward the disruptive moment of the natural disaster must begin with the dimension of uncertainty which is at the edge of the stable place in the world. Therefore, this paper claims that the question elicited by the ecological crisis pertains to the question of how we reconfigure the condition for the human form of existence as being open to its outside. This is concerned with the paradox that the worldly dimension that supports and subtends the existence of humans goes beyond its rational manipulation. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, it has to do with "a story of which humans are only parts, even small parts, and not always in charge" (Chakrabarty 178). Thus, the question of how to bring the vastness that goes beyond the limit of human manipulation into human modes of dwelling

remains. Following Chakrabarty, we can further problematize the notion of the human condition as one that it is exempt from a stable local place in the world. However, problematizing the human condition at the limit of manipulation requires the ontological account that concerns the difference between the stable human world and what remains outside of it. Even though those ecological incidents irrupt into the human world in a way that reveals its limitation, the distinction between the human world and the other side of worldly dimension cannot be reduced in a way that unifies the human and nonhuman.

For this purpose, I would like to pay attention to the difference between Chakrabarty's argument and Bruno Latour's idea of down to earth. Latour interprets Chakrabarty's definition of humanity during the Anthropocene, as "the question of establishing a new continuity between the domain of necessity (nature) and the domain of freedom (society)" (Latour and Lenton 659). On the basis of this relationalist view, Latour tries to redefine the agent of history as "earthbound," that is opposed to the exit from the terrestrial. Chakrabarty himself emphasizes the link between humans and planetary-scale complexes, of which humans are also a part (210). To that extent, one can assume that Chakrabarty agrees with Latour's discussion. However, there is a slight difference between them. It seems to do with Latour's misapprehension of what Chakrabarty identifies as the definition of humanity during the Anthropocene. Contrary to Latour's view that Chakrabarty proposes the establishment of a continuity between nature and culture, I would like to argue that Chakrabarty's questioning is concerned with the disruption of the border that demarcates human society. What is proposed in his argument is not the recovery of the continuity between nature and culture but rather the disclosure of the vastness of the planetary dimension that goes beyond human manipulation. That is, what is required is to view the human condition in contradictory double registers, as per Chakrabarty. In his view, humans are "belonging at once to differently-scaled histories of the planet, of life and species, and of human societies" (14). While humans inhabit the human world as artifacts, they become part of the vastness of the planetary dimension that remains outside of this human artifact. In this dimension, human existence is entangled with everything else. However, entanglement within the vast dimension does not necessarily mean a seamless continuous linkage with other living beings. Following

the basic thesis of the Anthropocene, we should pay attention to the reality that the planetary dimension that subtends the human mode of existence becomes unstable in such a way that it extends beyond human comprehension. In other words, it is radically indifferent to human existence. Thus, a reconfiguration of the human condition as a doubleness is required. This condition is not a self-contained human artifact that is characterized by its separability, but is immersed within the vast nonhuman dimension. However, at the same time, the vastness of the planetary dimension is hidden beneath the human world. That is, the acknowledgement that humans simultaneously inhabit two types of conditions is a challenge to the belief in the certainty of the human world.

To contribute to critical engagement with the theoretical consideration of the human condition in an age of the ecological collapse, this paper starts with a preliminary assumption that humans are conditioned beings. It is well-known that, in *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt argued that human beings do not exist by themselves. In order to exist, they must be conditioned in a certain way. In other words, human beings hold and inhabit their world by being conditioned. In her view, the word "conditioned" takes on theoretical importance because it concerns all kinds of human artifice that consist of things produced by human activities. Moreover, Arendt describes it as a place that humans inhabit: "In order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth, the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech" (173). First of all, Arendt emphasizes the extent to which such a human artifice made out of things as a context within which human action and speech become meaningful. While her discussion requires us to realize that the construction of the public sphere as the intersubjective realm is preceded by the objectivity of the world of things as a conditioning force, she also argues that it is produced as a human artifact. As far as it is constructed in such a way as to become a conditioner of human existence, it is distinguished from "a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world" (Arendt 9). According to Arendt, the condition upon which the order of human life is established is consolidated in such a way that it becomes a durable and stable human artifact. For human artifice to endure, it must be separated from the natural surroundings. In this regard, her way of thinking is caught within the fixed wall of the human artifact, that is exempt from the

uncertain incidents that come from the outside. Essentially, what Arendt identifies as human artifice points to the intergenerational time that is constitutive of the human condition that survives and outstands the logic of pure consumption. As Chakrabarty says, "the world that precedes us in time yet leaves to us its enduring institutions, ideas, practices, and things has to be intergenerational in orientation" (9). For Arendt, things that are constitutive of the human world are restricted to those that owe their existence to human fabrication. Thus, things that remain outside the modernist public sphere are so repudiated that they are grasped as objects of the non-world. To a large extent, her notion is in accordance with the modernist supposition that the human world is premised on the suppression of nature. As Julia Adeney Thomas argues, nature, figured as the form of modernity's unconscious, has been "repressed for the sake of a particular mode of subjectivity, pure freedom, and meaningful history" (21). In actuality, Arendt identifies the world's reality of things as something that conditions and sustains the human form of existence, on the basis of which a transparent public sphere of universal humanness was brought into existence. Yet, as far as the construction of human artifact is based upon the suppression of nature, it is necessary to pay attention to the act of violence that is hidden beneath the surface of the human artifact. Thus, even though Arendt admits that the element of violence is present in all fabrication of human artifice, she is unwilling to challenge it (139).

2. Modernity and its limitation in the Anthropocene

One is often oblivious to the dimension of the earthly world because the epistemic division that sustains the opposition between nature and human is intact. Perhaps, we can argue that it rests upon the principle of separability. In so far as this principle is inscribed within the social system, the human artifact is produced as the physically durable artifact that is protected against the threat of natural disaster. However, in actuality, after the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake, coastal areas in Tohoku were separated by a very long seawall. Furthermore, most of those areas were transformed into a no-man's land. Hence, former inhabitants had to be relocated to inland areas. These areas were reconstructed in accordance with

an engineering approach based on a principle of separability. With these regards, this is perfectly correct because the construction of sea wall makes the areas completely safe in the face of another tsunami. However, from a philosophical point of view, it may be argued that the reconstruction plans of such areas stem from our anxiety and fear over future ecological disasters. The artificial human lifeworld, which is temporarily solidified, is severed from the uncertainty inherent to the surrounding earthly world. Moreover, the predominance of a self-contained neutral space as the product of the principle of separability suppresses the uncertain and fluid reality of the world, making it invisible and insensible.

Those who have lived outside Europe accept the notion of the human artifact based upon the principle of separability because it is assumed to be a universal idea that can foster the modernization of human society in a way that overcomes the constraint of natural surroundings. In other words, as argued by Thomas, the idea of true modernity was premised on the rejection of nature (20). According to Thomas, since the mid-20th-century Japan, the binary opposition between nature and human invention has been theoretically elucidated in Japan. For instance, the influential scholar Masao Maruyama, Japan's foremost political thinker, excoriated Japan's reliance on the political authority of nature (shizen). In Maruyama's view, the political landscape established by reliance on nature for justification is hostile toward the development of the autonomous modern subject. A world that is trapped within a naturally given environment is supposed to be an archaic and holistic world in which the development of the individuals' subjective freedom is overtly suppressed. For this reason, Maruyama attacked its reliance on nature. By contrast, he posits the logic of invention (sakui), that is the world in which individuals can freely enjoy their own living is fabricated by the conscious act of invention. In Maruyama's view, this amounts to "the complete rejection of nature and the complete acceptance of invention" (Thomas 18). Thomas argues that Maruyama's theoretical attitude toward nature is consonant with that of various theorists of modernity, such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. In other words, Maruyama's theoretical attitude toward nature is in relation with the broader question of modernity as a project that aims to overcome the oppressive obstacles posed by an organic social order based on the idea

of nature. Furthermore, most theorists of modernity believe that nature should be suppressed "for the sake of a particular mode of subjectivity, pure freedom, and meaningful history" (Thomas 21).

How do we think of our thoughts about the suppression of nature? In Thomas's view, it is "a conceptual category along with the control of nature as a physical environment" (Thomas 20). Perhaps, this means that the suppression of the natural world proceeds with the consolidation of the artificial human world, such as suburban housing complexes. In other words, the universal concepts of utopia that is necessitated for the production of the human artifact, which are premised upon overcoming nature as an oppressive organism, were used to eradicate pre-existing natural places to induce the further extension of human artifice. That is, modernist utopianism has been used to ensure the transformation of pre-modern agrarian places into rationally planned urban spaces. This has to do with the demolition of natural places that have been intact before the establishment of suburban artificial spaces. Precisely because it is based on the presumption that natural things are synonymous with the pre-modern, savage organic order, the rational act of introducing the modernist ideal of human artifact is congruent with the overcoming and eradication of the natural world.

3. Planetary otherness, certain sense of outside

However, the shock related to earthquakes and other natural disasters unsettles the humanist narrative that ascertains the difference between an artificial world of things and natural things. These events cannot be comprehended in the modernist program, which inevitably necessitates the suppression and repudiation of earthly things since it presupposes the firm distinction between humans and nature. Thus, in the face of ecological collapse, it is necessary to admit that the human/nature distinction is not sustainable. Yet, it does not necessarily lead to radical break that makes the human and natural world continuous. Rather, the disruption of the distinction between humans and nature urges us to confront the limitations of human artifice based on the idea of modernity. In other words, the foundational separation of the human

world from its natural surroundings becomes untenable in a way that makes us realize how the mode of human is defined by its outside that radically exceeds any human conceptual grasp.

Similarly, in "The Climate of History," Chakrabarty draws attention to the fact that the current planetary crisis forces us to rethink the condition for the human form of life. Relying on Alain Wiseman's book The World without Us, Chakrabarty argues that "the current crisis can precipitate a sense of the present that disconnects the future from the past by putting such a future beyond the grasp of historical sensibility" (Chakrabarty 23). In a sense, Chakrabarty's argument pertains to the limitations of human historical sensibility beyond which the future world becomes unimaginable.

What Chakrabarty identifies as the world without humans becomes discernible at the limit of the stable human world. While it remains outside the human lifeworld, it really conditions and affects the way human beings live. What is posed is the question of how we can redefine and elucidate the hidden dimension on which human mode of living becomes entangled with everything else. Chakrabarty writes:

> It seems true that the crisis of climate change has been necessitated by the high-energy-consuming models of society that capitalist industrialization has created and promoted, but the current crisis has brought into view certain other conditions for the existence of life in the human form that have no intrinsic connection to the logic of capitalist, nationalist, or socialist identity. They are connected to the history of life on this planet, the way different life forms connect to one another, and how the mass extinction of one species could spell danger to another. (184).

In his argument, the word "other" would refer to the realm of the beyond. It refers to the alterity that goes beyond the limit of imagination, which is consonant with the current industrial society. In one sense, it is an unknowable, unrepresentable realm that we cannot speak of. Insofar as we can invent and consolidate the realm of human living in relation to it, it is regarded as something real. Yet, current ecological disruptive events urge us to be aware of what remains outside

the human artifact. It goes beyond human manipulation in a way that is incomprehensible within the category of humanist thought, which is premised upon the distinction between the human world and the natural world. To make further sense of what remains outside the human world, I rely on an ontological category that is reintroduced by Chakrabarty: the planet's otherness (67). Extending Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's prescient sentence in her *Death of a Discipline*, which states that "The planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it," Chakrabarty redefines the notion of the planet's otherness in terms of the ecological collapse that threatens the human world in a way that unsettles the ontological foundation on which a kind of human inhabitation becomes possible. For Chakrabarty, "the climate crisis is about waking up to the rude shock of the planet's otherness" (67). In his view, the planet's otherness has to do with the realization that all humans are preceded by a planet that is indifferent to the human existence. If this is the case, the order of human life secured within the stable human artifice will also be preceded by the planet's otherness. While humans inhabit the human artifice that is based on the repudiation of their natural surroundings, they are preceded by the planet that exists outside and before the fabrication of human artifice.

Chakrabarty's notion of other conditions can be read as relating to the question of the invisible, unrecognizable dimension that is apart from conceptions such as nation-state, civil society, and the public sphere, which are constitutive of the human world. Chakrabarty's discussion enables us to get in touch with the space of otherness within which "different life-forms connect to one another" (Chakrabarty 40). Later, in his 2019 article "Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category," he describes it as "the radical otherness of planet" (25). While it provides the ground upon which all actions and speeches of humans acquire certain realities, it is profoundly indifferent to the existence of humans (70). His reformulation of humans' existential condition can be read in relation to the post-human endeavor to overcome the divide between humans and nature. Yet, if we pay attention to his description of the otherness of the human condition pertaining to his concern about the finitude of humanity, we can read his reflections as a disclosure of the delimitation of the epistemic presupposition upon which the notion of the modern human condition is consolidated. Chakrabarty's works

have inquired into the epistemic shift in humanist thought concerning the human existential condition. That is, these are concerned with the collapse of the humanist distinction between nature and humans. The collapse does not bring about an interactive relationship with nature but rather discloses something like a remaining ground that radically exceeds the delimitation of the universal humanness sphere.

Thus, to reformulate the notion of the human condition, it is necessary to embrace the radical otherness of the planet. In Chakrabarty's understanding, the eruptive moment of earth scale phenomena, such as earthquakes and other natural disasters, reveals that the condition that makes human life possible belongs to the dimension that radically exceeds any human presence. This outside dimension has to do with "its very large-scale spatial and temporal process of which humans have, unintentionally, become a part" (Chakrabarty 15). Still, Chakrabarty develops the notion of the planet's otherness in line with a speculative realist's thinking:

> The planet exists, as Quentin Meillassoux says, "as anterior to the emergence of thought and even of life—posited, that is, as anterior to every form of human relation to the world" (Chakrabarty 87).

In a certain sense, Chakrabarty's recognition enables us to imagine that the human artifice that we inhabit is not self-contained but is preceded by something that remains outside. Nonetheless, if we return to the shock that is caused by the confrontation with what Chakrabarty identifies as the otherness of the planet, it is necessary to imagine it as something uncertain and awesome. In reality, he admits that a certain shock in the recognition of the planet's otherness causes a feeling of falling into the abyss of deep geological time (15). Although he connects its feeling with a sense of reverence, respect with fear (216), he does not scrutinize it any further in his writings. I propose that it can be further clarified by way of an engagement with an aesthetic experience. As Bernd Scherer remarks, the Anthropocene requires us to create new realities and explore new esthetic languages (212).

4. Beyond the limit of the human world, aesthetic realm, photography

If we follow Bell Hooks' suggestion that aesthetics is "a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming" (65), it is necessary to focus on a new way of addressing the abyssal realm into within which humans are thrown.

My contention is that the abyssal realm that emerges at a disruptive moment has to do with the aesthetic realm. Considering that it exists as a differentiated domain which is apart from the ordinary world of living, the aesthetic realm is revealed through the fracture of the human artificial world in such a way as to make us confront something that goes beyond its limitations. What if we are urged to ask the question concerning aesthetic dimension as an unrepresentable outside that is revealed at the edge of the human world? How can one address something that we are experiencing at the limit of our understanding? As Susan Sontag puts it, the camera enables us feel and intuit something that is beyond the representation of the world that is not released from the grip of certainty. A photograph is not just concerned with mirroring the present reality; it has to do with the encounter with something beyond:

> The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: "There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way." Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy (Sontag 23).

With regard to the shock experience related to the triple catastrophe of an earthquake, a tsunami, and a nuclear disaster, a lot of photographs were produced. We can recall several responses that have been formulated regarding this issue. Of particular importance is photographer Rinko Kawauchi's work *Light and Shadow*. As Teju Cole argues, one can grasp Kawauchi's work as one of several reactions to the tragedy, which allows to go beyond it, giving us a new language: "A focused and delimited view of the catastrophe is offered, and this delimitation enables the images to transcend their subject" (Cole 93).

Perhaps a delimited view of catastrophe has to do with the possibility of art work that is attuned to the hidden dimension intrinsic to the human condition. I am fascinated by the sense of fragility evoked by Kawauchi's photos. In a certain sense, it has to do with the aesthetic dimension that emanates alongside the disruption of the distinction between the human world and natural world. Her act of photographing is less a way of referring to the appearance of everyday reality and more a revelation of the luminous open space within which sensuous elements are free-floating and entangling with each other. In other words, in her practice, a sequence of photographs does not fix the appearance of everyday events but rather evokes the realness of ambiguous ethers that existed prior to the fixation of the predominant representation of the world.

Essentially, her response to the devastation was not directed at the tragedy she witnessed; rather, it was oblique. Her photographs urge us to feel the openness of the world emancipated from the glittering surface of the spectacular world.

One of the themes depicted in her photobook is a pair of pigeons, one black and the other white. She wrote the following:

> Looking at these pigeons, I thought of them as symbols of many things, especially the dualism of our world. White and black, good and evil, light and shadow, man and woman, beginning and end. Throughout existence, there have been and will be innumerable occurrences of delight and dread (Kawauchi 50).

Due of the previously mentioned devastation, many organisms, including pigeons, were expelled from a previously stable habitat. They were uprooted, bereft of the stable place in the world. However, an earthquake reveals a hidden reality that usually remains submerged beneath the consistent and coherent, yet illusory framework of the present world. Such an event urges us to encounter a dark and shadowy sphere that may have existed prior to the stable consolidation of the present world. Perhaps, we can call it an undifferentiated state of heaven (ame) and earth (tsuchi). Thus, it can be noted that her works enable us to realize that the world that we inhabit is not only the self-contained human world. It is open to a mysterious realm that operates at the edge

of the mundanity of the human lifeworld.

Thus, alongside Kawauchi's photographs, we can argue that the new way of seeing and telling might be adumbrated by referring to artworks that enable us to be susceptible to the non-dual dimension prior to the public realm that is based upon the nature/culture division. If the sensual dimension is revealed when the epistemic assumption based on subject-object dualism collapses, it is necessary to pay attention to the crack that opens slightly in the midst of the critical moment.

In actuality, photographs taken by Kawauchi during the COVID-19 pandemic disclose the sensual dimension that has been slightly emanating in the midst of the realm of daily life. I believe that the sensuousness that her photos evoke resonates with what Morton identifies as ambience. We can see them in her picture essay, "Keeping the fire going: a visual response to coronavirus." Kawauchi herself states that she clicked the shutter button without having particular themes in her mind and that she felt as though "the pictures revealed a microcosm of the world itself."

Thus, toward re-imagining the human condition, Kawauchi's ambient image of the microcosm enables a type of thinking that goes through the limit of the human artifice toward another dimension. By engaging with her work, we can further argue that a microcosm of the world corresponds to the incomprehensible and unspeakable dimension that withdraws the simplified macroscopic image of the world. However, it does not correspond to the small part located somewhere within a bounded whole. Rather, microcosms happen as a world of composition in which its constitutive elements are entangled in a way that resonates with other compositions, going beyond the limitation of the homogeneous image of the human world. This is, it evokes the microscopic open realm within which humans are entangled with thousands of nonhuman things that overlap and intersect.

5. Preliminary note for the novel understanding of the human condition: things, ruins, darkness

When the world is seen photographically, the worldly reality that evades us is discerned. Sontag argues that what is confirmed via photographs is the reality that everything is perishable and unclassifiable (80). Perhaps this means that the fragments that are components of the human world themselves are not subsumed into the stable and timeless whole but rather are always in a state of transition. They remain outside of the stable human artifact into which they have been subsumed. Thus, as far as the sensual quality such as ephemerality is disclosed by camera's intervention, the questioning of perishable and unclassifiable things that is enabled by it contributes to the fundamental problem that is posed to us by the Anthropocene. If one assumes that it disrupts the human artifice as a result of human activity to bring it into ruin, the problem can be formulated as the general question of the difference between the artificial world of things and the earthly things.

When Arendt designates the human condition as a human artifice, she assumes that it is composed of things that are result of human act of fabrication. That is, her reasoning assumes that the human condition is consolidated as a material construct that is spatially bounded to be rigidly separated from natural things. Perhaps, upon Arendt's discussion, we can further formulate the paradox of the human condition in a way that it needs to be configured as a human artifact at the cost of losing contact with planet Earth. Indeed, even though Arendt repudiates the Earth as a mere heap of things, she admits that earthly nature conditions human existence: "earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice" (2). Thus, such an argument engages in a thinking that conceives earthly nature as an indispensable element in terms of the enactment of the common ground upon which the human lifeworld is fabricated. Yet, her thinking of the human condition as human artifice necessitates delinking ties with the benevolence of the planet earth.

Her contention arises from her fear of the natural process that undermines the stable foundation of human artifice. This is evident in

her description of the chair as a human product. When she refers to the chair as the constituent part of the human life world, she designates it as a human product that needs to be erected against the harsh process of natural decay:

> If left to itself or discarded from the human world, the chair will again become wood, and the wood will decay and return to the soil from which the tree sprang before it is cut off to become the material upon which to work and with which to build. (137)

Furthermore, the human rational act, which makes the human condition withstand and endures natural processes, entails the subjugation of nature, which means overcoming the inert material process. In other words:

> Material is already a product of human hands which have removed it from its natural location, either killing a life process, as in the case of the tree which must be destroyed in order to provide wood, or interrupting one of nature's slower processes, as in the case of iron, stone, or marble torn out of the womb of the earth. (Arendt 139)

Yet, the current ecological crisis reveals to us that natural surroundings belong to the non-human geological dimension, of which humans are only small part. The natural realm that remains outside of the human artifice cannot be subjugated to the human willful act but rather overwhelm and subvert it. As Chakrabarty argues, what is at stake is a question of how to inhabit this Anthropocene in such a way as to "bring the geological into human modes of dwelling" (178). Moreover, he suggests that the disclosure of the geological dimension entails the problem of how we invent the human way of life in the midst of the vastness that exceeds any human presence. It further necessitates the new way of creating a human condition that is based upon the corruption of the binary opposition between human and nature. That is, it affects the question of inhabitation where the division between the human artifact and inert natural things is disrupted in ways that unsettle the human condition's stable character.

In this regard, its move toward the problem of inhabitation at the limit of the human artifact might resonate with Fred Moten's analysis of

Masao Miyoshi's consideration of a rematerialization of architecture as the practice of building the human artificial world. In Miyoshi's view, this means bringing the architecture as the product of modern idea of city planning into its outside material context (156). Following Miyoshi's argument that the rejection of modernist utopianism in architectural discourse around 1970 was inevitable, Moten argues:

> For Professor Miyoshi, the eclipse of modernist architectural utopianism was signed by the demise of mass public housing projects that, no longer an object of planning, had become objects of demolition. The utopian nature of architecture is tied to the utopian nature of city planning; however, the utopian is the "in-progress" of things, the (art) work, the planning away from the city into, and which is also enacted by the real assembly or assemblage that is present outside and underneath the city's absence. To ask the question concerning this is to bring the outside so deep inside that it cuts that opposition until it cannot be seen, then cuts where it was. (190)

When Japanese economic growth was about to decelerate in 1970s, the mass public housing project developed along the line with the extension of capitalist accumulation and mass production declined. At that moment, techno-utopianism promoting the further development of human artifacts became obsolete. Alongside with the obsoletion of the idea of relentless progress of the human civilization within Japanese islands, many buildings constructed during the developmental process were left over as a remainder. As Fredric Jameson argues, it could be little more than what Rem Koolhaas identifies as junk space, that is, "the residue mankind leaves on the planet" (Jameson 73).

Thus, although what remains after the loss of the ideal of modernist architectural utopianism becomes the object of demolition, it does not completely disappear. Rather, as Moten argues, it poses the question of the things that are present outside the human world. It should be noted that Moten uses the word things as an ontological referent in such a way that it needs to be distinguished from the generic term for something quotidian. Moten urges us to be attentive to the ruins, where what he identifies as things brings the outside into the established human world in such a way as to reconfigure the difference between the human world

and its outside. Whereas Western scholars, such as Latour, state that the current ecological crisis urges us to be aware of the unification of humans and nature, Moten clings to the difference that emerges at the disruptive moment when the distinction between the human world and the underworld of things collapses. This difference is related to the irruptive dimension in which humans are forced to be open to the reality of things. It has to do with the fractures through which things that are not recuperable to the human world are exposed. When attending to the world of things, instead of grasping them as being incorporated into the human world, one is forced to encounter otherness that exceeds human manipulation. Yet, at the same time, when attending to the world of things, one encounters them in a way that they happen when a limited and bounded form is stripped away. In his 2018 book *The Universal Machine*, Moten argues that things cannot be suppressed but "barely or nakedly appear in the lifeworld" (12). Following his view, we can further argue that what is at stake is the necessity of thinking of a productive difference that is irreducible to the distinction between the human and the natural world. It has to do with the fracture through which things that are not recuperable to the human world are exposed.

While things belonging to the realm of sensual alterity evade the human grasp, humans inhabit it. It orients the existence of life in human form at an ontological depth. It is a realm of ambiguity where light and shadow interpenetrate each other. Moten argues: "Taken out of the dark, brought into light but shadowed, brought out by shadow, dark to themselves, things are thrown into shade by shade throwing shade" (31). Moten's sentence reminds us that the realm of things resists the lightened sphere of transparency. As is often argued, light is endowed with active power that brings something invisible into the light. According to Jacques Derrida, the neutrality of lightning, pure transparency, is often synonymous with the violent oppression that makes everything the same. That is to say, within the neutrally lightened space, "to see and to know, to have and to will, unfold only within the oppressive and luminous identity of the same" (Derrida 113-114). Within the lightened sphere, which is yet oppressive, the gap between the appearance of things and its signification is closed in such a way that every action is reduced to the communicative sphere, which is based on the idea of a homogeneous transparent space bereft from the darkness.

For further continuation of this argument, it is necessary to anticipate the many implications of the realm of things as the one that is luminous but shadowed. To ask the question concerning that ambiguous and blurred realm is to pay attention to the rupture of the delimitated border within which privatized and enclosed sites are secured. Such questioning engages in the kind of thinking that is tied to the question of inhabitation by way of an engagement with architectural practices. It is about the way of building and inhabiting the things as public things that happen when the delimited construct of the human artifice is demolished. This inhabitation happens outside the city, as the human artifice that is constructed by way of the modernist architectural project. As Moten argues, things that are left over after the demise of modernist architectural utopianism might constitute another kind of architectural principle. It is "a nonexclusionary urban plan, structured by communicability rather than relation, in acknowledgement of an already given and incalculable wealth" (Moten, *Black and Blure*, 195).

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