

Filoponìa, a distinctive economic model

An introspective open letter to humanity

Ultimately, a viable and congruous model, first and foremost for the environment and social inequality, debt relief; a viable operational proposal for sustainable anthropogenisation and diffuse capital, all make Filoponìa both a model in its own right, outside the dualism between private and collective capital and thus a true, complete and real alternative.

Andrea Surbone - Filoponìa



Anonymous, 'The Ideal City', second half of the 15th century.

Andrea Surbone

Dear friend, I am writing to you,¹ and I do so to tell you how I arrived at a different economic model in its own right, especially concerning the dualism between private and collective capital. And then, I do so to explain to you how I arrived at it (and how I arrived at it, despite the fact that I only have a bachelor's degree): knowing the genesis

¹ ↪ Incipit of L'anno che verrà ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27anno_che_verrà_\(brano_musicale\)](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27anno_che_verrà_(brano_musicale))), a song by Lucio Dalla from 1978. In Italy, this intro is very famous and refers to the concept of an open letter on the social situation. The text here: <https://lyricstranslate.com/it/lanno-che-verrà-coming-year.html>

of the author as well as of his thought, the motivations underlying what is written in the book as well as the path is important;² I hope you will forgive me, therefore, the personal references, from which I begin.

I was born into a wealthy family, thanks to which my cultural upbringing was facilitated: primary schools at the Jesuits,³ where I remember Maria Teresa Frizzi, my teacher, who is thanked in the book *for the fundamentals*,⁴ for having been a teacher of life as well, teaching respect and responsibility in both actions and thought; then, in the public system, middle school, classical high school, a year of Economics and Business, with Mario Monti as professor of political economy and, finally, a degree from the School of Business Administration⁵ at the University of Turin. Afterwards, I worked in small and medium-sized companies, always in close and direct contact with the owners when I was not the entrepreneur myself. Concerning *Filoponia*, two experiences have strong relevance: having been editor of the magazine *Nuvole*⁶ and still a member of the Editorial Board and participating in the Neo-Keynesian Proposal.⁷

I like to call myself a Catholic-Communist; a catholic by upbringing and environment. Thanks to my mother, our house was a meeting point for dissenting Catholicism, with me, as a child and then as a boy, listening to the grown-ups with their profound speeches (though at the time difficult for me to understand); and a communist by ideal. It is a definition that brings together and best expresses my social thinking, understanding social as the sum of individuals and not as a category, and my tendency to spread thought and proselytise.

Now, before I start tackling *Filoponia*, a quotation is necessary:

The difficulty lies not in new ideas but in evading old ideas, which branch out into all corners of the mind for those who have been educated as most have been.

John Maynard Keynes, *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*

So, as in certain holistic sessions, close your eyes, take a deep breath and empty your mind of all thoughts. Although it seems like bizarre advice in this context, to listen to and then judge a new approach for the human consensus, one has to take a painful step back from one's beliefs and convictions.

Painful because we live in this society with its stratification in us now thousands of years old, and to detach ourselves from it is not only painful but also, at times, disadvantageous in one respect: how many of our positional privileges,⁸ small or large as they may be, do we abandon to live in a society that presents itself as improving as a whole? And how much are we willing to leave them in the name of a certainly profitable but painful double game? And I have only spoken of the negative side; there is also the positive side, which involves me believing firmly in one idea and then trying to seek another entails forcing oneself, which is painful. But it does not necessarily mean changing oneself: that is the positive side. You see, dear friend, I do not want to alarm you; I remain a left-wing militant in this society. I do not retreat into the ivory tower; on the contrary. I continue the battles I believe in, such as the Neo-Keynesian Proposal.

² ↪ The quotation chosen for the book was from René Daumal, *Il monte analogo*, Adelphi, Milan 1968: When you go venturing out, leave some trace of your passage, which will guide you on your return: a stone placed on top of another, some grass bent by a blow from a stick. But if you arrive at an insuperable or dangerous point, think that the trace you have left may confuse those who follow you. Therefore, retrace your steps and erase the trace of your passage. This is addressed to anyone who wants to leave traces of their passage in this world. And even without meaning to, one always leaves traces. Answer for your traces before your fellows.

³ ↪ <https://istitutosociale.it>

⁴ ↪ Citazione da *Filoponia*, in *Ringraziamenti*.

⁵ ↪ <https://www.saamanagement.it>

⁶ ↪ www.nuvole.it

⁷ ↪ <https://www.ismel.it/news/206-proposta-neo-keynesiana.html>

⁸ ↪ O, espresso in modo più diretto, quanto potere personale.

Nevertheless, my thoughts take me to the elsewhere from which I am writing to you, an elsewhere that succeeds in giving fulfilment and satisfaction to all socialist ideals.

But let us go in order, starting with a very brief chronology

Filoponia was born in Turin, Italy, on 2 November 2017, at around 11 am.⁹

The spark was that money was at the root of our social and environmental problems. And this idea began to take shape.

Then, the meeting with Dunia Astrologo and Pietro Terna, with the decision to write a book together, included the topic of automation and the consequent redefinition of work: *The Work and Value in the Time of Robots - Artificial Intelligence and Non-employment* was born. And by September 2019, the volume was in bookshops. After the *Battibecco*, the second part of the volume in which we three co-authors discuss our respective essays, more than 20 presentations with debates to follow and a continuum of chats and confrontations with anyone willing to listen and counter-argue, in February 2021, the subtitle of *Filoponia* was changed from *getting out of the money paradigm* to *getting out of the debt paradigm*. This is followed in spring 2022 by the two referees, economic, by Prof. Guido Ortona, and sociological, by Prof. Giacomo Balduzzi. Finally, in May 2022, the reading of an essay¹⁰ led me to a revelation: *Filoponia* presents an economic model other than the dualism between private and collective capital.

Dear friend, I am writing to you, then, with some (great) news: regarding *Filoponia*, I have the impression that I have come full circle and am standing outside of it.

Let us start with the novelty of the referees, which I have just mentioned. The two that have been collected so far (I am looking for others to cover the various facets) are the economic one, which sanctions the soundness of the proposed model, making *Filoponia* go from pure utopia to a real viable alternative; and the sociological one, a text with a solid Christian accent that captures the essence and knows how to narrate it through a contextualisation that best renders the idea of feasibility.

As for closing the circle, *Filoponia*, as you know, highlights two major problems: social inequality and environmental devastation. Both, in my opinion, share the cause - the current economic system - but not the solution. Suppose social inequality has been addressed through class struggle, i.e. by predicting a winner (which today is capitalism) for almost two centuries. In that case, environmental protection must be addressed through class unity: the environment wins, not one class over the other.

Although I had included, from the first draft, the elements necessary to close the circle, I was not aware of them until after the economic referee and my in-depth study; which I can summarise as follows: proposing to unite the classes to address the environmental problem could be interpreted as wanting to crystallise the current situation to collaborate and solve the environmental issue; which would be in favour of capitalism. As you know, this is not my intention. Here, then, is the closing of the circle: virtual money - as a *natural common good, like air*¹¹ - entails a new concept, that of *diffuse capital* - a capital that is at the disposal of everyone and that does not come from accumulation, whether private or

⁹ ↪ Dear friend, you may wonder how I can be so precise after so many years; there is a trick, in fact: as soon as I had the intuition, I wrote Sandro Casiccia an email asking him to meet me to discuss an idea. And I always keep the e-mails.

¹⁰ ↪ Gabriele Zuppa <https://www.gazzettafilosofica.net/2019-1/novembre/breviario-anticomunista-come-liberarsi-del-passato-per-incatenarsi-nel-presente/> su *Gazzetta filosofica*.

¹¹ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *I Certificati di Stima Sociale*.

*collective*¹² - which allows complete accessibility to do business; and it is precisely this diffuse capital that configures a different economic model, in its own right, as an alternative to the dualism between private capital and collective capital (in its various forms, community, cooperative, state...); thus closing the circle from the economic point of view because it allows the union of classes, but outside the crystallisation, I have just mentioned; a circle, therefore, that sees *Filoponia* from the outside.

The stand-alone economic model allows the two problems to be dealt with in the best possible way

The social one, moving away from today's dualism, may indeed displease the orthodox on both sides at first sight; however, on the one hand, it solves the issue *with a blow to the circle and a blow to the barrel*, i.e. by pleasing everyone (or almost everyone: the famous 1% may be displeased with the cancellation of the financial system); on the other hand, it imposes a society that manages to draw the good out of every human action or organisation, including companies.

The environmental one—by basing *Filoponia* on a paradigm quite different from the current one (people's commitment to a friendly environment, quoting Ortona)—succeeds, at least at the model level (but most probably also in reality: *all these problems are brilliantly solved*, again by Ortona), in combining a happy society (Ortona, again) with respect for the environment, without having to resort to draconian impositions.

The combination of the two solutions creates the necessary and reciprocal *quid pro quo* that human beings need when limits are set for them.

The (*big*) one from before is for me: on the one hand, the economic referee, and on the other hand, the closing of the circle gives me an awareness that I did not have until now, gripped by a thousand doubts and thoughts. You know me and know that I declare all this naturally and without any arrogance; in fact, I would say with certain amazement: as both referees state, I do not invent anything. I simply assemble elements that already exist and have been tested; the uniqueness, if anything, is that I do this in the absence of debt, from public to private.

Why tell you all this? Because I would not want you to think I have gone mad; I have not, quite the contrary.

To claim to propose a model outside of today's dualism seems like a gamble or even bluster.

Yet, although I do not belong to academic research, I have lived by carefully observing what was happening in the world and around me; I have mulled over what I watched; I have tried to dismantle and reassemble the elements in search of something new.

Here, dear friend: this is precisely what I have been working on; as if I were a chef à la Adrià, I have deconstructed society, recomposing it almost entirely: what has remained out of my deconstructed kitchen is the credit/debt system, the elimination of which leads to the redefinition of money by subtracting some of its functions.

¹²↔ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Spezzare le catene*.

Even when this is necessary to rediscover the correct relationship between anthropogenisation and nature and to avert the mad rush of all of us towards environmental disaster, I am convinced that human beings are hardly willing to give up their current comforts. If we want everything to change, everything must remain as it is.¹³

Let us resume the story as it unfolds chronologically

The first significant change was the addition of the chapter Distribution or redistribution, a solicitation triggered by the presentation in Cecina on 27 September 2019; listening to Dunia talk about redistribution, I realised that *Filoponia* had to position itself as a society of distribution, the only one capable of realising the ideal *People are individually different and socially equal*;¹⁴ and also because redistribution entails in its very concept of establishment the sanctioning, and therefore, de facto acceptance, of the presence of inequality, with a solidaristic attitude but still inequality. And putting *individually different* first means giving precedence to our essence. At the same time, the use of the copulative e serves to provide equal dignity to the two concepts. Therefore, *distribution* has two main *filoponic* pillars: the emancipation of income and the gratuitousness and comprehensiveness of the welfare state.

The second and third arose from the correspondence with Álvaro de Regil Castilla, which began on 27 November 2019, lasted for a few months, and addressed two aspects: the environment and doing business.

Concerning the first, the initial version, the one published in the book, took for granted both the extreme seriousness of the situation and that *Filoponia* acted within the limits of sustainability; but not much at all for a work that places the environment among the three constraints to be respected.¹⁵

You see, my dear friend, I quote two quotes from the book to demonstrate the confession, the mea culpa in footnote 12: *Equally indisputable is the scarcity of resources: only blindness - or, in Filoponia's hypothesis, self-interest - can think of disregarding models that do not take into account the scarcity of resources. [...] sustainability penalisation (along the lines of the ecological footprint indicator, which we will discuss later) that takes into account all the elements driving our planet towards the point of no return.*¹⁶

In short, as I continued with this course of study, I was focused on the economic aspects and took the environmental issue for granted; until Álvaro pointed out to me the narrowness of the treatment of the topic, urging me to go deeper and give it the centrality and urgency it needed. And so I did, even though I am deeply convinced that it is not enough for nature to take its course. If it is true that the cause is anthropogenisation, then it is man's task to decrease,

¹³ ↩ Destructuring the *If we want everything to remain as it is, everything must change* by Tomasi di Lampedusa in *Il Gattopardo*, 'my book' since childhood; a few years ago, it was replaced by *Il deserto dei Tartari*, by Dino Buzzati: that Drogo in whom I identify, both caught up in the continuous fantasising, he of militias, I of humanity.

¹⁴ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

¹⁵ ↩ Besides, in writing the book, we also used a quantitative limit in characters (including spaces), which *Filoponia* slightly exceeded. However, the real limit was in the shortcomings of myself and my thinking.

¹⁶ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapters *Sinopia e I produttori*.

energetically, the economic activity;¹⁷ and whose goal is sustainable anthropogenisation, one of the six macro-ideals¹⁸ to which *Filoponia* gives effect.

Here we come back to deconstruction: one of the elements that I recompose in a different position is degrowth; degrowth that, as it is today, does not entirely convince me, so much so that in the *Prologue chapter*, I write: *It is clear how much the world is running, at a fast pace, into an ever strong acceleration, towards a more and more divisive gap: from the inequality of incomes to the consumption of depleting resources; such a race can only lead towards disaster, both social and environmental. And unfortunately, all adjustments, from guaranteed minimum income to happy degrowth - to name but a few - have such shortcomings and drawbacks that they are ineffective or utopian.*

*What is the core, the lowest common denominator? Because if all solutions, including the most discordant ones, are fallacious, logic dictates that it must be the lowest common denominator that is fallacious. Filoponia's thesis is that the lowest common denominator is the credit/debt system, embodied in the paradigm of money, the devil's dung.*¹⁹

What doesn't convince me about degrowth? Three things

The first is that *degrowth is not a model, but a degrowth movement, in that it is an inevitable and indispensable factor for any sustainable model*²⁰ (probably including *Filoponia* among the possible models); that is, degrowth starts from the proposition of a generalised behaviour that would naturally then result in an economic model. Whereas I firmly believe that: *On the other hand, the environmental disaster is caused by man, by the Anthropocene; it is man's duty to solve the problem. Therefore, even if the solution is shared, we must act on the social part of the problem to solve the environmental one.*

*In the following chapters, we will focus on respect for people: Filoponia shows how a better society could be one that succeeds in giving full human satisfaction but with complete respect for the environment.*²¹ Degrowth is present in *Filoponia*, but it is an indispensable part of the economic model, not an essential precondition for the natural advent of the economic model. It seems a vague or confused matter, but it upsets the approach: a movement offers indications while a model indicates rules; and if in *Filoponia* there is only one and impossible one, the *global environmental balance*, to govern the entire anthropogenisation, in degrowth, there are infinite indications of behaviour that spring from a more than justified alarm, but which, without being framed in a different and harmonious economic and social model, runs the following risk: *the answer to alarmism is often the hedonistic orgy: when all is lost, one might as well go wild in pleasure; and plunder what little remains instead of rationalising consumption. It is a human reaction, and it is neither the task of these pages to analyse it nor to pass judgement on it. The mission is to propose a paradigm that can also be accepted by that segment of people who would give themselves over to hedonistic orgy. Filoponia offers a new paradigm, albeit without the presumption that it is the only one possible.*²²

¹⁷ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from the chapter *L'ambiente: Reorienting the concept of growth is the only way to bring the anthropogenic ecological footprint within the limits of sustainability and restore vitality (not to be confused with growth) to the world economy. Wanting to give an example full of consequences in a model that envisages, as we shall see, both the penalisation of sustainability, thus curbing transport, and the preponderance of leisure time over work time, redefining the concept of speed is one of the many actions we can take to bring anthropogenisation back into the global environmental balance.*

¹⁸ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from the chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi: Sustainable anthropogenisation, We are all children of God (and the Gods, wanting to include polytheistic religions as well); Libert ,  galit , Fraternit ; Men are all equal; Protect life, Live humanely, Don't give in; People are individually different and socially equal: thanks to the economic model in itself, Filoponia implements these ideals.*

¹⁹ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter capitolo *Prologo*.

²⁰ ↪ Quote from  lvaro, from our correspondence.

²¹ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter capitolo *L'ambiente*.

²² ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *L'ambiente*.

One more hint at the model, this time a lexical one. Within degrowth there is ecosocialism. But why ecosocialism? Yes, it is true: capitalism, with its disruptive expansive force, has greatly accentuated the race towards environmental disaster: this is undeniable. Just as it is true that the concept of debt, so deeply ingrained in us in the form of our attitude towards existence (I take today what I could not/should not take, putting off restitution until tomorrow - except that the law of entropy is very clear about the concept of restitution and the impossibility of creating or recreating what has been wasted), has fostered this acceleration and havoc. But it is equally true that human beings have always sought to bend nature to their interests and to subjugate it; if it is true that capitalism has been the powerful instrument with which this havoc, generalised and exacerbated, has come to pass, it is equally true that the matrix of this havoc lies in the debt system. It is this system that we must work on to bring about substantial change; and that is what *Filoponia* does. *To speak of socialism is to address only one part of society, whereas we need to address the whole of humanity, whether it is a degrowth movement or a stand-alone economic model. I would propose, then, to call this degrowth movement Pachamism instead of ecosocialism; or, Globalism, which, however, sounds much less good.*²³

The second is that degrowth does not imply the paradigm shift I advocate: the current debt-based system is unaffected by degrowth. *And it is precisely from the founding element of debt - the forma mentis of mortgaging the future - that we deplete the environment so much that Earth Overshoot Day occurs early every year.*²⁴ Of this, I am profoundly convinced; right from the introductory chapters, I state: *this is the real goal of the following pages: a new, fairer and, arguably, happier social order. And Filoponia's thesis is that to achieve this one must start with the economy. Therefore, it is not enough to invent alternative currencies, work only on money, focus on ethical finance, or think of green economies to do all this but permanently preserve the credit/debt system; and to present all this as if it were a new economy. The new economy and debt are an oxymoron.*²⁵

The third reason is that degrowth lacks compensatory elements, i.e. those elements that allow human beings to accept penalising conditions on one aspect of life as long as they can be compensated on another element. And, as I have written above, it is not enough to raise the spectre of the end of humanity; it is necessary to propose a model that manages to provide with certainty other satisfactions, as long as they are as much as possible in the same sphere: in the face of the imposition of an economic limitation, one obtains the removal of another economic restriction. In my opinion, it is not enough to propose: behave well (decrease), and you will access paradise (a cosy life on Earth).

The correspondence with Álvaro also dealt with doing business. Although we had the same objective - a fairer society outside the capitalist model - we did not reach a common ground. However, the many facets debated allowed me to better focus my thinking on doing business, taking it to a higher and better structured level of elaboration. The chapter devoted to it, for example, has gone from two pages in the published volume to ten in the first revision.

*The first revision*²⁶ *was closed in June 2020, including the two new chapters, The Environment and Distribution or Redistribution*

The second significant change in September 2020 was the increase in income emancipation. Initially, it was a *universal basic monthly income of equal real value for all and sufficient for basic needs.*²⁷ It then changed to a *universal basic*

²³ ↩ Quote from Álvaro, from our correspondence.

²⁴ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Prologo*.

²⁵ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Prologo*.

²⁶ ↩ This is the first revision regarding only the fundamental ones; there have been nine revisions so far.

²⁷ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, in the version published by Meltemi, from chapter *Le persone*.

monthly income of equal real value for all and higher, though not exaggeratedly so, than necessary for basic needs,²⁸ and finally became a universal basic monthly income of equal real value for all and higher than required for basic needs, pegged to the local consumer price index and taking into account the free services provided by the state. The emancipation income will guarantee, therefore, both the satisfaction of basic needs there and a good life; for one to be able to speak of emancipation, it is necessary for people to be able to find their position in the world, in other words, for them to be able to realise themselves, without this realisation having to be tied to economic anxiety, to having to earn money to be able to afford this realisation. As long as the universal income, in whatever form it may take, stops at merely constituting economic support, there can be no emancipation: such a universal income will be yet another chain; Filoponia, in its search for a better society, also believes in people's attainment of happiness and bets on it: guaranteeing a real emancipation income; the common basis from which we can all start to face life serenely and realise ourselves.²⁹ This emancipation income is a fundamental building block as it is a prelude both, in social terms, to the happy society Ortona talks about in his assessment and, in economic terms, to break the chains of the money/power binomial. Indeed, this element was also present when the book was published. Still, its constant increase illustrates well the path of thought underlying Filoponia: an idea increasingly tending towards the pursuit of happiness, be it environmental (each new revision incorporates further facets of respect for the environment, right up to the last one that goes so far as to theorise sustainable anthropogenisation) or economic, the one I will tell you about below, dear friend.

The second revision closed in September 2020

The third significant change was the addition of the chapter Breaking the Chains.

2020, despite the setback due to the lockdown, was an intense year of presentations; of these, the meeting on 13 October at the Rotary Club of Alba, I believe, was the one that had the most impact. Before that, there had already been meetings with the business community in February, the presentation of the book at the Centro Einaudi in Turin, and, again in Turin and in March, a meeting focused solely on Filoponia with the *focolari*.³⁰ However, the friendship born with Cesare Girello, the accountant and Rotarian who organised the meeting and presented us with pertinent and debate-provoking questions, allowed the discussion to continue well beyond the physical time of the evening in Alba. In which I address the money/power binomial, listing and motivating the elements in Filoponia that break this destructive binomial: *Breaking the chains is more a titular suggestion than a reality; with Filoponia we want to address a single link: the money/power binomial. And dissolve it.*

Some chains, including psychological ones, have no relation to the money/power pair; yet once this has been broken, it turns out that other subordinations also crumble [...]. Nonetheless, not all chains can be broken by a few pages of an instruction manual; the conviction remains firm, however, that the custom of a society that has dissolved the money/power binomial brings with it an awareness of ourselves at the level of the individual as well as that of society, marked by a profound inner, relational and economic freedom.

The money/power binomial is self-perpetuating: power reinforces money and vice versa, at every level, from individuals to states; this has been happening for millennia, with a habit-forming stratification within us, until it has become a constitutive pillar of our present society. The solution proposed by Filoponia is not, however, that of a class clash,

²⁸ ↩ Quote from Filoponia, in a later version (June 2020), from the chapter *Le persone*.

²⁹ ↩ Quote from Filoponia, in the current version (July 2022), from the chapter *Le persone*.

³⁰ ↩ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movimento_dei_focolari

although this is still fundamental today to countering rampant injustice, but rather the creation of a priori conditions capable of separating these two elements.³¹

In conclusion, there are many theories and even practices for a more respectful and equitable way of doing business, but as long as you don't break the money and power pair, they remain voluntary acts; it is like exposing yourself to temptations to resist them: in the end, humanity is divided into a high percentage of unmindful waverers and a few saints or heroes; isn't it more efficient to operate in an environment that cannot offer such temptations?

We need, dear friend, to break the shackles to have a normative act that removes us from the temptation to prevaricate. If *Filoponia* can be called a model in its own right, it is also thanks to the mechanisms and their consequences described in this chapter. All the other elements are not enough: it is imperative to separate money from power; so as not to leave a chink through which iniquity can reintroduce itself. A further and fundamental step towards a happy society.

And the third revision was closed in November 2020.

This is also a moment of awareness: seeing *Filoponia* change, grow, and go from phase to phase increases the desire to spread it, lavishing it with renewed commitment. Thus, the Factsheet was born, collecting helpful quotes to give a taste of it. And, immediately afterwards, the Manifesto, solicited by the organisers of the Philosophical Café³² in which I sometimes participated, Maria De Carlo and Federico Virgilio; a preparatory document for a Café dedicated to the *Filoponic* proposal, which also collects some quotations, but organised into ten topics, plus a Foreword and Conclusions: 1) *Environmental rule and penalisation of sustainability* 2) *Virtual money Unit of measurement and fiduciary intermediary* 3) *Getting out of the credit/debt system* 4) *Filoponia and meritocracy; personal commitment* 5) *Participatory democracy and P/L* 6) *Breaking the chains, i.e. dissolving the money/power pair, subdivided into subsections 6a) macroeconomics and 6b) microeconomics* 7) *Distribute upstream, not redistribute downstream* 8) *Full employment but for a few hours; the possibility of mutual free choice* 9) *Free enterprise* 10) *Participatory and personal choice.*

The Filoponia Proposal

Arranging it into ten topics by squeezing quotes from various parts of the book has allowed me to illustrate, at least in broad strokes, the *Filoponia* proposal; wanting to offer it to you too, dear friend, I try to summarise it point by point: you will get a little *Filoponia* vignette³³ out of it!

In the Foreword, the two immense current problems, social inequality and the plundering of the environment are sketched out. *On the other hand, the very unravelling of the topics addressed has led to a deepening of Filoponia's central theme; identifying the root no longer in money as we know and use it today, but in the credit/debt system [...] which we have stopped opposing today. A system whose symbol, as well as solid arm, is still money: money and debt are connected and linked to the point of becoming, in terms of the paradigm of contemporary society, glimpses of the same landscape. However, in our perception, they remain separate. While debt is monolithic, money is multifaceted: and it is in its facets that the constituent instruments of the society in which we live are forged. Therefore, both must be*

³¹ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Spezzare le catene*.

³² ↩ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDK8zMQP43sJLfMZ4KGmU3g/featured>

³³ ↩ [https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/bignami_\(Sinonimi-e-Contrari\)](https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/bignami_(Sinonimi-e-Contrari))

resolved, not just one of the two; to exit, then, from the paradigm of money must correspond to escape from the paradigm of debt.³⁴ Whereas, concerning the environment: The current society, based on capitalism and its financial drift, exploits both the workers and the environment; if the workers have the tool to counter, it is the class struggle for the environment. On the other hand, the commitment of all humanity is needed.³⁵ [...] Today, the slogan must become *Humans of the whole world unite!* Above all, it is not only the classes that must unite; it is the infinite social, cultural, anthropological, and so on facets that make up the very diverse front for the preservation of Mother Earth that must also unite with all the others, with those who have not cared about the environment so far.³⁶

1) Environmental rule and sustainability penalisation.

Filoponia proposes a sovereign rule, global environmental balancing, to bring the Anthropocene back below the insurmountable boundary of what the Earth provides annually regarding resources and resilience to anthropogenic degradation. [...] This new society will counteract any violation of the sovereign rule of global environmental balancing and the emergence of tachy-production through the sustainability penalty contained in the price of products, thereby encompassing the market and its rules in respect of the environment. This will apply to people as well as states. [...] The human species has also evolved and prospered thanks to a high capacity for adaptation; it is time to put this capacity to use again.

We do not need rules and restrictions on people; that is not the way forward here. Instead, only one rule is required, valid for everyone and all our creations, the economic one in particular: nothing can be done beyond that impassable limit.³⁷

2) Virtual money: unit of measure and fiduciary intermediary.

In the chapter, Sinopia talks about changing money: as long as a substitute instrument is found, we will now see how this can be done 'by subtraction' from today's concept of money.

Filoponia envisages money, although understood only as a unit of measure and a fiduciary instrument for realising economic relations.

Thus were born the Certificates of Social Esteem (CSE) [...] However, it is necessary to amend the concept of money from the characteristics that have made it the devil's dung to maintain instead of the simplification it brings. [...] CSE is like a natural common good, like air: a good that does not need to be produced and therefore is not subject to market fluctuations.³⁸

3) Getting out of the credit/debt system.

The framework within which all this will take place is the abandonment of the credit/debt system, the mortar that has cemented the money/power pair and with which, as a consequence, Today's society has been built and gradually expanded. [...] Today, debt is so intrinsically intertwined with the various levels of society, from the individual person to states, that it is too big to fail. Not so: it is not so, it may not be so.³⁹

³⁴ ↪ Quote from Filoponia, from chapter *Introduzione*.

³⁵ ↪ Quote from *Manifesto*.

³⁶ ↪ Quote from Filoponia, from chapter *L'ambiente*.

³⁷ ↪ Quote from Filoponia, from chapters *Il mercato* and *la penalizzazione di sostenibilità e L'ambiente*.

³⁸ ↪ Quote from Filoponia, from chapters *Sinopia*, *Spezzare le catene* and *I Certificati di Stima Sociale*.

³⁹ ↪ Quote from Filoponia, from chapters *Spezzare le catene* and *Prologo*.

4) Filoponia and meritocracy; personal commitment.

There is, then, a final consideration regarding Filoponia: the antithesis between meritocracy and Filoponia, i.e. industriousness is understood here as a personal commitment to the actions one performs.

In social terms, meritocracy is the artificial and arbitrary construction of a caste; Filoponia is the democratisation of society.

The concept of Filoponia encompasses the overall attitude, from school preparation to the way of approaching life and employment. This concept is not to be confused with submission or passivity; instead, it is the opposite: for it exalts social action, i.e. both putting oneself at stake no longer only for one's benefit - and crushing people and despoiling the environment - but also for the benefit of the community by collaborating with others, and living with full respect for the environment, the supreme Common Good. Thus, new wealth will be created based on solidarity and no longer prevarication.⁴⁰

5) Participatory democracy and PJJ⁴¹

Filoponia's real bet - and we will see this better later on - is on people, on the intrinsic positivity of the human animal, misled by its nature because of the paradigm of money, which has exalted, by contrast, its most detrimental and aggressive aspects; even in those who oppose this paradigm. In addition to the necessary - and by no means simple - personal change in each one of us, the most obvious instrument of this challenge is the PJJ, popular juries by lot among the entire population to democratise certain decisions that today reside, instead, in closed centres of power (as we shall see in the following chapters). Such a task, therefore, can only bet on the capacity of people to take responsibility and to deliberate: in the full conviction that a new society must be founded both on a new paradigm and - also and above all - on the active involvement of each individual and knowing full well how much commitment is required of citizens.

Here Filoponia inserts participatory democracy deep into the social fabric. It also does so as an exercise in participation and freedom: the crisis of democracy has become an almost planetary phenomenon based on citizens' disaffection and alienation - whether induced or voluntary -. PJJs, whose mandate is decision-making, have an educational side because they bring people back to public discussion, participation, and active involvement. [...] In wishing to be a social proposal, Filoponia does not go into the territory of politics; however, it seems implicit that the involvement of everyone through participatory democracy leads - in time perhaps, but surely leads - also to a democratisation of politics and its procedures; extending participation and a sense of the common good to this basic sphere of society, that is the basis for the task of the PJJ.⁴²

6) Break the chains, i.e. dissolve the money/power binomial and 7) Distribute upstream, not redistribute downstream.

I have already written to you about these topics, so I won't bore you any further, dear friend; indeed, I imagine your difficulty in trudging through this Filoponia, partly described, partly quoted. However, my wish is for you to be fully acquainted with its genesis and development: and I hope this will be pleasing to you.

⁴⁰ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Le persone*.

⁴¹ ↩ Andrea Surbone: [Democracy, Condorcetism and Popular Participation](#) — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, February 2021.

⁴² ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Giurie temporanee sorteggiate*.

8) Full employment but for a few hours; possibility of free mutual choice.

Full employment for all, therefore, will fundamentally become an opportunity for sociality when automation is complete. And even before automation is complete, emancipation income will allow people to be freed from blackmail (take this job because otherwise you don't have the money to survive), allowing them a certain choice of the work they will do.

Filoponia emphasises a renewed and reinvigorated civicism: from participation in PjL to that slice of time that is due, i.e. not subject to our discretion.

In these pages, we use the term duty and its derivatives, contrasting it with an obligation; the difference, in fact, between obligation and duty, lies in those who benefit, with obligation benefiting the specific interest of one or more subjects (the employer, for example) and duty benefiting the general and collective good. And with a high civic and moral sense of duty that is not present in the obligation.

So, will it be a world of the algorithm, inoperative and depersonalised? Raising doubts and inconsistencies about this outcome, Filoponia has already argued for full employment: for the pride of industriousness, in collaboration and no longer in competition, but still industriousness; that Filoponia which will be the most distinctive part of everyone's wealth [...].

Full global employment, albeit with a reduced hourly commitment compared to the present, and a significant change in tasks: some will be swept away, others will be modified, and still others will see robots performing repetitive and heavy jobs.

[...] it will be within this mutual evaluation between worker and employer that the choice of the job by the worker and the worker by the employer will take place.⁴³

9) Free enterprise.

Here, dear friend, I depart from the Manifesto to share with you, from my recent correspondence, a reply to Álvaro: As for doing business, since the Lower Palaeolithic Homo has been dedicated to the production of commodities, i.e. material products and immaterial products; and they did this either alone or in organisations. Ants, too, are organised to produce. Still, in their organisations, there is no trace of thought, i.e. of deliberate research to improve (the production cycle as well as the well-being of the group - music, poetry, democracy and so on; nor is the fundamental element, rebellion, present). We could say, then, that the conscious production of goods is what differentiates the human animal from other animals.

Today, this difference, limited to organised production, we call it doing business, although I doubt that such a definition was used in the caves.

Doing business, therefore, is not capitalism, it is humanity.

Capitalism is one of the possible forms taken by doing business; speaking only of our times, one can also do business in socialism and, as you propose, in ecosocialism in the form of micro-enterprises and cooperatives.

Why then would it be impossible to imagine another way of doing business that is different from capitalism, socialism and even ecosocialism?

⁴³ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapters *La piena occupazione, La vita e Retribuzioni*.

Therefore, it is not a question of which form of enterprise but which way of doing business.⁴⁴

And Filoponia is concerned with this meaning of doing business, outlining, therefore, this renewed aspect of the model in its own right.

10) Participatory and personal choice.

Filoponia also sets itself the obligation to produce a logical and viable framework in the present: the fulfilment of which is left to the social and political will, however future and distant this may be. And in pursuing all this, try to smooth out friction to facilitate a peaceful transition: one wants to bring one's thinking to the social debate, not to incite bloody revolution.

The indispensable paradigm shift must therefore be based on a collective consciousness-raising that leads humankind to deliberate on a new society; we can no longer limit ourselves to a class consciousness, the result of the segmentations of our society. In this sense, a 'social' proposal is needed, i.e. one that concerns the human race. In economic terms, it involves workers and employers: everyone will have to play their part, personally and socially.

Therefore, it is up to the social and political debate to understand whether it benefits, how much it helps and to whom it benefits; Filoponia's objective is - we repeat - to contribute to the intense debate on the future. We live in a phase of social and environmental changes that are very rapid and substantial, a phase that imposes on us the importance and urgency of starting to discuss alternative societies as well: in short, to examine every possible scenario.

In fact, a new paradigm must propose a society that can recognise, respect and value different lifestyles; to be able to speak to all of them. If instead of excluding, we want to include, we must not only address a Western-type view of life; it may be that a nomadic shepherd has a different concept of time, space, and life than we do; therefore, he may not want to recognise himself in proposals that speak of smart working and access to twelve-tone concerts; or societies based on contemplation rather than action, to name two cases among many possible. It is quite likely that both are more interested in an environment conducive to pastoralism and contemplation than a simple emancipation income, the concept of the latter being strongly intrinsic to a Western worldview. It is right to ask this question; human evolution has not followed a single path; the various societies have developed different capacities; and the encounter, the contaminations between these asymmetries have been the catalyst, especially when the differences were more profound. If we want to maintain a high level of evolution, we must imagine a society that is profoundly inclusive and respectful of diversity. Everyone indeed has basic needs - one's subsistence or, for Filoponia, a good life -which is declined in economic terms; however, the need for a new society leads us to guarantee the distinction necessary for progress, not to reduce everything to a mere economic facet: this respect is fundamental for further and continuous human development.⁴⁵

I want to conclude the passage dedicated to the Manifesto by quoting Álvaro, again from the recent correspondence, who, in pointing out to me the objective of this open letter to humanity, best describes and summarises my work: *The important thing is that you summarise very clearly the filoponic concept and its main characteristics: credit is eliminated, and money is varied, a sphere of real democracy is established whose main characteristic is deliberation, and cooperation and agreement are encouraged. Ortona's etymological description of Filoponia seems excellent to me: 'friendship for personal commitment': Surbone's utopia prefigures a society based on the commitment of people in a*

⁴⁴ ↪ Quote from correspondence with Álvaro.

⁴⁵ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapters *Introduzione*, *L'ambiente*, *Conclusioni* and *Distribuzione o redistribuzione*.

friendly environment, where this commitment is rewarded by society essentially on the basis not of how much commitment has produced, as evaluated by the market in monetary terms, but of how much and how a person has committed.

I think this is the spirit of Filoponìa that you should emphasise more, that it encourages the common good, friendship and cooperation for the well-being of the community because, as a member of it, my well-being will be little or a lot to the extent of the effort of all its members for the common well-being. That is to say, to achieve my greater well-being, I must strive for the common welfare.

It goes without saying that, for an integral Filoponìa, it is imperative to emphasise the community's effort to care for nature, which is our home, as our friend or mother, since we depend on her and all species contribute to our life.⁴⁶

Having prepared these documents, I presented *Filoponìa* at the Philosophical Café on 30 November 2020. The presentation is significant because it coincides with my acquaintance, which immediately became a friendship, with Enrico Tramutola, a comrade, trade unionist, pensioner and former train driver on the railways. Thanks to the comparison with his life path, struggle and work, the chats with Enrico were very useful in refining the discourse on *filoponic* equality in labour relations, between the private ownership of the means of production and the personal ownership of labour power.

Not only that. His militant will to disseminate leads to organising an invitation-only discussion.

The online meeting is held on 19 December 2020. It leads to the Cenacle's constitution being shelved pending a discussion with Pietro Terna on the fine-tuning of the economic model, which takes place ten days later. This is followed by the involvement of Guido Ortona and, finally, a general revision of *Filoponìa* to clarify many aspects that generated possible misunderstandings.

These include the function of P JL, especially concerning the remuneration of labour, which leads to changing the title of the chapter from The Remuneration of Labour to Wages, the virtuality of filoponic money, and the function of the state. And to prevent even more possible misunderstandings, *moorings are added: Like any utopia, read with our adult eyes, so imbued with today that we become, willingly or unwillingly, its runners, we risk missing Filoponìa; on the contrary, it manifests all its effectiveness and simplicity if we observe it with the eyes of childhood: innocent, curious, far-sighted. Nonetheless, to these eyes of ours, some points remain so obscure, distant and confined in the non-place as to constitute a stumbling block; we will encounter a handful of them, and strong in this warning, we will try to draw them to us, in full light.*⁴⁷ In addition to P JL and labour remuneration, they concern overall purchasing power, the stability of the model between inflation and deflation, the potential scarcity of workers and their choice of even unpleasant tasks, and the transition from the current model to the filoponic one.

Above all, there is the transition of *Filoponìa's* subtitle from *getting out of the money paradigm* to *getting out of the debt paradigm*.

⁴⁶ ↩ Quote from correspondence with Álvaro.

⁴⁷ ↩ Quote from *Filoponìa*, from chapter *Introduzione*.

The more I proceeded, dear friend, the more I had the feeling that I was going in the right direction but on the wrong track; it is true that the absence of interest leads to the abolition of the credit/debt system and that this is also present in the volume published by Meltemi. Still, it is also true that in that version, the consecution was money-debt. In contrast, all these insights led me to reverse it: debt-money. On the other hand, the appearance of the credit system⁴⁸ precedes, and by a long way, that of money. Indeed, it is closely correlated with the invention of writing, which came into being to fix the terms of credit and only later, much later, to fix the beauty, for example, of poetry, which until then had been kept in the oral tradition.

It is not, however, just a question of time; it is the personal, psychological implications that make debt the natural enemy of man and the environment. *Tachyproduction*⁴⁹ is also based on instalment purchases, either direct or mediated by payment instruments such as credit cards. The plundering of the environment is based, as I have already told you, dear friend, on the mindset underlying debt. And with money, that, therefore, becomes its armed arm.

Returning to models, the essence of capitalism is accumulation through parthenogenesis, that is, the ability to generate more money through interest. Today, with financialisation, we have come to easy accumulation: the more you have, the more you earn. It follows that a model other than today's dualism must necessarily eliminate the credit system.

Here we come to the third revision, which closed in March 2021

During this revision, Enrico proposed to schematise, making them visible and usable as an image, the proposals contained in *Filoponia*: the Outline was born, an agile tool for an initial contact with the theses of *Filoponia*. A year of continuous work on the text followed: three revisions in this period. Above all, on 14 December 2021, during a Neo-Keynesian meeting, I met Lorenzo Giustolisi, a trade unionist of the USB, the Italian section of the World Federation of Trade Unions.⁵⁰ I was already in contact with the CGIL,⁵¹ again through the Neo-Keynesian Proposal, but with Giustolisi, the relationship immediately became one of friendship and close collaboration, to the point of organising a presentation at the Turin headquarters on the summer solstice of 2022. The purpose of the meeting was to present *Filoponia* as a model in its own right, outside the dualism between private and collective capital.

This milestone was like a thunderbolt for me. Had I developed a model of my own? And how had I not realised this before?

The elements are all there from the text published by Meltemi, yet I could not see the whole picture; you see, dear friend, do you know *La pista cifrata della Settimana Enigmistica*?⁵² It is that game in which if you connect the dots, a figure appears: well, *Filoponia* had all its dots, but I could not connect them and see the figure! And it took me a good four and a half years to join them. Gabriele Zuppa's essay gave me the cue to join them.

⁴⁸ ↪ Dear friend, don't you also find it funny, to be mild and polite, that the system is called the credit system, using a word whose meanings are almost all positive, when in reality it corresponds to the dark side, the debt that, as I write, crushes and shackles states and companies, peoples and people?

⁴⁹ ↪ In *Filoponia*, from the chapter, *The Market and the Penalisation of Sustainability understood as the pernicious mixture of overproduction and the incessant reassortment of goods (or the increase in production inflated by planned obsolescence)* - and whose definition can also be extended, regarding the food sector, to the loss of biodiversity in favour of hyper-production, with monocultures and mono-farms whose extensive dimensions occur to the detriment of a territory's biodiversity -, to the hypertrophy of waste, from pollution to the dastardly consumption of soil and energy. And examples of soil consumption are certain robbery agriculture, such as today's quinoa farming, or the commodities market - especially agricultural commodities, which directly starve the world -and real estate speculation, so intertwined with financial speculation.

⁵⁰ ↪ www.wftucentral.org

⁵¹ ↪ www.cgil.it

⁵² ↪ <https://www.lasettimanaenigmistica.com>

The presentation of the solstice went very well because it went very badly: I got it completely wrong; by talking to you only about the technical aspects, I assumed that you would have done it after an hour or so of my chatter, which was not exhaustive, what took me almost five years.⁵³

That is why, dear friend, I am writing this letter to tell you where I am today and how far I have come. And all this knowing full well that I am not exhaustive even with this letter: apart from the fact that the complete vision can only be had by reading *Filoponìa*, I believe that I have not reached exhaustiveness; and who knows how many other revisions I will make in this continuous quest of mine.

However, the notes made to me were basically about surplus labour and price formation, hence the class struggle and the presence of the same; then how to arrive at the *filoponic* society and theoretical references.

I had to fully understand how far *Filoponìa* could withstand such criticism, justified there by my mistake in expounding the theses, but which had substantial implications for the text far beyond that single presentation. In the end, I succeeded, so much so that the last major revision, the fourth, saw the deletion of a chapter, admittedly a bit meagre in content as well as length, *Value, Price and Money*, replaced by *Class Struggle, Value and Surplus Labour, Prices*; the former was placed between the premises, the latter as the outcome and, therefore, inserted immediately before *Conclusions*.

To find adequate answers, I read *Wage, Price and Profit*, written by Marx in 1865; the first quote I offer you, dear friend, is the following:

A man with no free time at all, who throughout his life, apart from purely physical breaks for sleeping and eating and so on, is taken up with his work for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. He is but a machine for the production of wealth for others; he is physically broken and spiritually brutalised. Yet the history of modern industry shows that capital, if not restrained, works unscrupulously and mercilessly to plunge the working class to this level of the most profound degradation.

Immediately followed by other quotations:

By buying the labour-power of the worker and paying its value, the capitalist, like any other buyer, has acquired the right to consume or use the commodity he has bought.

It is an incontestable fact that the working class, taken as a whole, spends and must spend all its wages on basic necessities.

[...] we might ask what is the origin of this curious phenomenon, whereby we find in the marketplace a group of buyers who own land, machines, raw materials and the means of subsistence, all of which, apart from the soil in its natural state, are products of labour, and on the other hand a group of sellers who have nothing to sell but their labour-power, their working arms and brains. How is it that one group buys continuously to make a profit and get rich, while the other group sells continuously to earn their livelihood? An examination of this question would be an examination of what economists call 'primitive or original accumulation' but which should be called primitive expropriation.

⁵³ ↩ Quote from the correspondence with Lorenzo.

[...] the need to struggle with the capitalist over the price of labour depends on its condition, on the fact that it is forced to sell itself as a commodity.

At the same time, the working class, regardless of the general servitude attached to the general wage labour system, must not exaggerate to itself the end result of this daily struggle. It must not forget that **it struggles against the effects but not against the causes of these effects; that it can only curb the downward movement but not change its direction; that it only applies palliatives but does not cure the disease.** That is why it must not allow itself to be absorbed exclusively by this inevitable guerrilla warfare, which springs incessantly from the capital's constant attacks or market changes. It must realise that the present system, with all the misery it heaps on the working class, generates at the same time the material conditions and social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society.

I inserted the bold in the last quotation because this is where my reasoning starts.

Every major social proposition, from ideologies to religions, is composed of two elements: ideals and their contextualisation; if ideals need revision to be changed, which can go as far as the abandonment of the initial theory, contextualisation, on the other hand, does not; on the contrary, ideals must remain unchanged as the context changes.⁵⁴ And then: If the chapters *Doing Business* and *Breaking the Chains* offer guarantees to both poles of dualism, to propose themselves as another model, and to withstand the consequent redefinition of classes and the eventual struggle between them, *Filoponia* must also be examined in the light of the theory of value.⁵⁵

Reasoning that I could summarise as follows: Marx contextualises his thought of equality by illustrating the situation of the working class in his time; a case, moreover, that today is not much better in substance and the aggregate, although there has been some beneficial improvement, thanks to the struggles and the workers' movement, in the countries of the global North, but simply by relocating the most aggressive exploitation, of the environment as well as of people, to countries in the Global South, where these movements were less intense or even absent.

Yet, *Filoponia*, in its deconstruction, removes the two pillars of exploitation at its base: misery and the selling of labour-power along with control over both it and the worker himself. I won't bore you with how this is achieved, dear friend. Still, the *filoponic* society upholds and respects equality within the human race: preponderance of leisure time and emancipation income resolve at the base being less than a beast of burden and having to spend all his wages on necessities. *Filoponia*, for there to be real and deep equality, adds that the objective of *providing everyone with the completeness of the cognitive tools necessary for a profound understanding of the reality in which one lives must be achieved: to arrive at reasoned choices, not to become easy prey due to naïveté, to enjoy life to the full.*⁵⁶

Does it still make sense to subdivide the *filoponic* society into classes? I leave the answer to a great thinker, David Graeber: *Every morning, we wake up and recreate capitalism; so if one day, when we wake up, we collectively decide to create something else, then capitalism would no longer exist. In its place, there would be something else.*

⁵⁴ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

⁵⁵ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

⁵⁶ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lo Stato*.

One could even say that this is the essential question - perhaps, in the end, the only real question - of all social theory and all revolutionary thought. Together we create the world we inhabit. However, if one were to try to imagine a world in which we would like to live, who would come up with one exactly like the one that exists now? We are all capable of imagining a better world. Why, then, can't we create one? Why does the mere idea of stopping building capitalism seem so inconceivable?⁵⁷ Any addenda to this piece would be redundant.

Let us now look at price formation: [...] *having dealt with the macroeconomic aspect through another society, which has solved the problems of exploitation [...], price formation can once again become a microeconomic factor only.*⁵⁸

And again, *Filoponia* lacks gender issues and the various civil battles; this is not because they are not very topical issues - see the cancellation of the right to abortion in the USA - but because *Filoponia's* target is the whole of humanity, made up of females and males, homosexuals and heterosexuals, religious and atheists and so on.

Therefore, there is no point in fighting for individual goals of individual categories; on the contrary, doing so diverts attention from the real struggle, which affirms that we are all equal. *Once we are all equal, all individual goals will be achieved naturally:* in the big, there is the small, or, more specifically, in the societal ethos, there is the civil ethos.

This is why *Filoponia* has no mention of classes or consideration of class struggle. *Let us return to classes and the struggle between them: Filoponia refers to humanity and individuals rather than classes. Either because the removal of the generative instruments of social inequality will inevitably lead to a redefinition of social classes and the struggle between them and, consequently, to a new way of relating, perhaps even a new form of 'class struggle, but certainly not the one we know: think, for example, of the subdivision between rich and poor which, thanks to the emancipation income and the wage system, becomes a difference - rather than a subdivision - between rich and wealthy. Or to the disappearance of the nagging for survival, which entails a lessening, at least, of the current clash.*⁵⁹

Dear friend, you may think *this is all fine and dandy, but how does one arrive at this society? And who should take it upon themselves to propose it, promote it, and fight for it?*

Legitimate and crucial questions; also regarding the only problem, albeit a potential one, highlighted in the economic referee: *it would be necessary to investigate whether any of Filoponia's prescriptions might not create the seeds of anomic behaviour (to give an example: in a capitalist economy, a competitive market by its very nature makes a tendency to the emergence of monopolies, which we know to be inefficient, which does not theoretically invalidate the merits of a competitive market). Assessing this risk requires more in-depth analysis than I can do here, and I refer the problem back to the author.*⁶⁰

Well, a chapter is devoted to this inescapable subject in the book. Can we start with a single territory?; in which I propose that an experiment be carried out, the purpose of which is also to flush out any anomalous behaviour: *Once the parameters have been set [...], the exit from the paradigm is implemented, at least on paper. In reality, the transition will require a period of adjustment [...].*

⁵⁷ ↪ David Graeber, *Bullshit jobs*, Garzanti, Milano 2018.

⁵⁸ ↪ Quote from the correspondence with Lorenzo.

⁵⁹ ↪ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

⁶⁰ ↪ Quote from the economic referee Guido Ortona.

Therefore, the experimentation phase - and subsequently that of constant attention - becomes very important to highlight the critical points and moments, those where the transition is less smooth or where any germs of anomalous behaviour lurk,⁶¹ and to find appropriate corrective measures: every new model needs to be refined in practice and shared and deliberated upon thanks to the contribution of those who are its actors; especially where respect for diversity, as we shall see in the next chapter, becomes the inalienable ingredient of human evolution; in such a context, the contribution and experience of all those who will inhabit and act in the new filoponic society assume an inalienable value.⁶²

Having also addressed this potential critical issue, I try to answer, dear friend, the two questions seen as a whole; so, in the wake of Keynes, the quote at the beginning of this letter of mine to you: *Filoponia at this point becomes a problem of listening and examination (another not insignificant issue raised at the solstice).*

Everyone is looking, moreover, for an alternative society, the way out of this (exasperating) current situation. Few, however, can listen: doing so, in fact, entails breaking out of the habits, in some cases centuries-old, that we have ingrained in us, whether positive or negative. A new society envisages a redesign - not induced but consequential for the proposed model, for otherwise it would be brainwashing - of the human being as a whole, which succeeds in saving the positive aspects and rebuking or eliminating the negative ones. This is what Filoponia does: it has thought and now proposes a better future through a different economy.

Above all, the risk we all run is that of falling in love with the means while sometimes losing sight of the end. I am referring, in particular, to the class struggle, which has aspects of great fascination and allows for a very engaging epic narrative: it becomes preponderant over the end - eliminating exploitation - which is a solid and important ideal but also more prosaic.⁶³ Moreover - and, given the friendship, I have already told you this - in this affair of the end, the means also lurks the danger of attachment to one's sphere of power.

Will the filoponic context, so different and distant from the one in which we live since the birth of the industrial era, see the presence of the class struggle? It is hoped that some form of struggle will remain: a society without conflict is doomed to flatten. Filoponia aims, and declares it from the very first pages, at a conflictual that is a heated debate and not an armed clash. However, still, a conflictual is understood as a confrontation between different ideas and, therefore, no longer arising from prevarication. Furthermore, within dualism, the mutual conflict also includes revolution and repression; Filoponia, on the other hand, sociologically focusing on the concept of fraternity,⁶⁴ proposes social deliberation as a means to realise his ideals.⁶⁵

Class struggle, revolution, and repression call for an uprising in arms against someone that is against an enemy. In this sense, for there to be a revolution, there needs to be a division among human beings, one part of which is the good guys and the other the bad guys, and in which both are considered the good guys. Filoponia, on the other hand, addresses the whole of humanity and does not point to an enemy but instead points to a different model. Therefore, Filoponia is not achievable through a revolution - uprising in arms, but against whom? Against oneself? Moreover, with the fluid transition sanctioned by deliberation, there is no victory or revenge against anyone. It is the environment and humanity

⁶¹ ↩ The reference to anomic behaviour was included in *Filoponia* after Guido's remark.

⁶² ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Si può cominciare da un singolo territorio?*.

⁶³ ↩ Quote from the correspondence with Lorenzo..

⁶⁴ ↩ From Pope Francis' message at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences plenary session on 24 April 2017. *Indeed, while solidarity is the social planning principle that allows unequals to become equals, fraternity enables equals to be different people.*

⁶⁵ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

as a whole that wins: *the devil's dung is transformed - and with the fluid transition, it is not possible to do otherwise - into Certificates of Social Esteem: an extreme initial and necessary forcing; and, in a certain sense, the ultimate victory of the devil himself, finally cleansed of all sin and transfigured into its positive opposite;*⁶⁶ *the road that remains, therefore, is social deliberation.*

*The questions that arise from this are whether humanity will want to accept this path in its own right; whether the proposals contained herein have the evocative force to propose this deliberation and make people accept the experimentation of the model; there are no certain and precise answers: all that remains, then, is the commitment to spread Filoponia as widely as possible.*⁶⁷

All these important steps are in the fourth revision, which is closed in August 2022.

Let us come, dear friend, to theoretical references and their absence in Filoponia

The last aspect is that of references, which you raised. As you know, I do not have references stemming from studies (I mean the grand theories, of whatever affiliation they may be), and, above all, I do not consider it worthwhile to ostracise the minor (intellectually, as long as they are minor), or simply various and different stimuli. That is why Rino Gaetano was already mentioned, but in the new chapter I included them. Among the ideals I have implemented, Arto Paasilinna, Emperor of Irony: an insertion sought and wanted precisely to reinforce the concept that ideals spring, yes, from great thinkers, but they can also come from the people (like the Tierra y libertad of Zapata, my myth);⁶⁸ and from observing the world and confronting anyone. Here, then, are my references, perhaps not very theoretical but harbingers of a model, the filoponic one, which, at the very least, subjects fundamental aspects to debate: debt, for example, or the absolute equality expressed with the Standard Labour Value.

More than a few names, I believe it is essential to reiterate the observation and comparison with everyone, listening with humility but also making a rigorous selection; and having the same attention to every form of communication: music and cinema, just to give you two examples. This is my life and my method.

On the other hand, you already find many names in this letter, others are in the *Acknowledgements*; one more I would like to give you, however: *Strengthened by a robust cultural background and serene due to the absence of economic nagging, the entire world population will have the tools to live their free time to the full and according to their own choices and, if they wish, to consciously devote themselves to politics, and thus realise the universal epistocracy, the latter accompanied by the note: 'I owe this oxymoron to the ironic creativity of Sandro Casiccia';⁶⁹ not only do I consider Sandro my mentor, I quote him here because his creativity on the epistocracy is the only witty quip in Filoponia, whose writing is far from hilarious: *From this question, Filoponia proceeds by trying to follow the succession of empirical interlocks whose aim is a verification of the logicity of the proposed model; even at the cost of a pace that is both know-it-all, as the report of a vision can be, and pedantic, heavy-handed, penalising, as an instruction manual can be; in the conviction that the goal can be worth the journey. In such an approach, there is also - it must be admitted! - a literary artifice: the attempt to recreate the burdensome everyday life that money imposes on all of us, made up of continuous gestures and thoughts, of worries that clog our minds, of bureaucratic fulfilments and many other afflictions; in this way,**

⁶⁶ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Si può cominciare da un singolo territorio?*.

⁶⁷ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Lotta di classe, valore e pluslavoro, prezzi*.

⁶⁸ ↩ Quote from the correspondence with Lorenzo.

⁶⁹ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *La vita*.

Filoponia becomes a reading far from pleasant, yet it is a reading that leads us to a better world. The very sobriety of the treatment, typical of the user manual, is not functional to the enjoyability of the text, relying instead on dryness and conciseness.⁷⁰

I realise, however, that citing references also frames a text within a theoretical framework that gives it connotations and is necessary to justify statements.

Yes, I know: *Filoponia* lacks this theoretical framework, it is true; or rather, it lacks the analysis of the current situation, which should prefigure the nucleus, the proposal as a whole, and link it to the elements, historical and contemporary, present today in the debate on the future. We can, however, say that *Filoponia*, being a model in its own right, is instead a theoretical preconstruction, dense, then, with unjustifiable statements in the light of the current model. It is precisely its being an instruction manual devoid of a theoretical framework that makes *Filoponia* a theoretical preconstructor. It lays renewed foundations, all concrete and yet to be optimised and consolidated through practice so as to be in a dynamic state of becoming that will lead to a different reality. The object, finally, is of observation and analysis, on which, cross-referenced with the already known current reality, could rise to be an updated theoretical construct. This could be a philosophical, speculative action, the development of which, apart from being premature at the moment, would, in any case, be beyond my possibilities as I do not possess the necessary knowledge.

Consequently, I take the analyses for granted. Apart from the above shortcomings of my expertise, there are plenty of assessments of the current situation, and the general picture is widely shared. There are proposals for the future on which I have no competence to make judgements. However, I have a solid sense underlying *Filoponia*, of which I have already written to you: The new economy and debt are an oxymoron.

You see, dear friend, we are almost at the end. I have opened up, trying to show you the birth and evolution of Filoponia; now, with respect to this solid feeling, I would like to strut a little with you: telling you about the confirmations of my theses.

Of the referees I have already told you, now I will disturb philosophy and religion. In the summer of 2020, Alessandra (my wife and the fundamental name for *Filoponia*. I thank Alessandra Capitolo as co-author for her dialectic made *Filoponia* a presentable work. This is the first acknowledgement I put at the back of the book) pointed out to me Darwinism and Politics, edited by, among others, the philosopher Gabriele Zuppa. We immediately exchanged our respective works and a profusion of compliments. For his part, the initial and most important was telling me in our first phone call (I quote from memory): *Filoponia has as its characteristic the contextualisation of the various proposals, trying to see them not only in their distinct particularities but also from a comprehensive perspective.*

Moreover, the relationship between science and philosophy is a subject very dear to him:
Economics, if it does not try to get out of its initial perimeter, consciously involving itself in the understanding of society in its totality of aspects, it becomes an economy of a society about which it knows little, hence an economy of and from nothing. [...]

⁷⁰ ↩ Quote from *Filoponia*, from chapter *Introduzione*.

Of course, this also applies to the bureaucrats of 'philosophy' and all 'sciences'. Every science, which does not know how to determine and determine itself in a philosophical vision of the whole, is a science that soon decays into technique, which in turn decays into bureaucracy. [...]

Economics, isolated from the complexity in which it is embedded, is a miserable philosophy and, therefore, as such, it succeeds poorly in being a science.⁷¹

From his other compliments to Filoponia, here are two more: [...] Andrea Surbone, author of a visionary and, simultaneously, very concrete essay. His is an attempt to think of the hidden side of possibility, which is not in view in the repetition of every day, but that which can illuminate the future. And, after I sent him the generous version of the emancipation income, just inserted in the text: Hi Andrea, you know what? It is as if I had already read these considerations... if you had asked me if they were already in your essay... I would have said yes!

As for religion, the confirmation comes to me from none other than the Pope! Following the sociological referee, in June 2022, with Giacomo Balduzzi and their respective families, we went on a visit to Nomadelfia: interesting and, above all, in the fraternity, very engaging. So, I then bought *The Dictatorship of the Economy* by Pope Francis from 2020, finding in it great contiguity with my text.

As you will have seen, *Filoponia* does not invent anything, limiting himself to deconstructing and recomposing; however, to find in the Pope's writings almost identical phrases, common invectives, shared solicitations... well, it is a pleasure!

And it helps legitimise *Filoponia* as an economic model in its own right, outside the dualism between private and collective capital.

Related links:

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⁷¹ ↩ Dalla Postfazione di Gabriele Zuppa a *Darwinismo e politica*, AM 2020.

❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.

❖ **About the author:** Andrea Surbone, writer, publisher, ex-winegrower and visionary; author of *Philopony - get 'em out of money* in the book *Il lavoro e il valore al tempo dei robot - Intelligenza artificiale e non-occupazione*, by D. Astrologo, A. Surbone, P. Terna, Meltemi, Milano 2019 – www.meltemieditore.it/. He has written fiction with *Dusts* and since November 2007 writes *have a nice week*, a small column of glances at the world, sent every Monday by email. Publisher of the magazine *Nuvole* (for paper issues from 16 to 23) and still a member of the Editorial Board (www.nuvole.it). Spokesperson of a proposal for political economy (www.propostaneoeconomiciana.it). Promoter of a political proposal (www.surbone.it/per). Andrea is a graduate from the SAA School of Management in Turin.



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❖ **Tags:** Capitalism, Participatory Democracy, Environmental Sustainability, Degrowth, Work, Money, Free enterprise.

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