From Ancients to Dust...

Through Veneration and Condemnation: Exploring the role of Cultural Heritage and Iconoclasm

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Abstract

This essay attempts to discover a correlation between a perceived veneration of an *inherent value* of the cultural heritage which is enlightened in the face of the iconoclastic acts of IS (Islamic State). Firstly, the essay establishes how UNESCO could be perceived as a Social System which educates its central binary codes through communication. The codes central to the System are *cultural preservation* and *cultural destruction*. Through examining the official documents of the System and analysing their content through Content Analysis, the essay delineates how an *inherent value* is manifested in cultural heritage. Further it examines whether the System is successful in communicating and implementing its positive binary code into its surrounding environment. The conclusions are that the System aspires to connect what it deems an “outstanding universal value” with an *inherent value* of democratic *human rights*. It is also concluded that the System is successful in implementing its positive core binary code into its environment. However, there are indications that this efficiency could dramatically decrease in the future, thereby rendering the System’s value as an ideological standpoint less valuable in the face of theologically motivated iconoclasms.

**Keywords:** *Systems Theory, Binary Code, Iconoclasm, IS, UNESCO, Inherent value, Human rights, Outstanding Universal Value, Critical Discourse Analysis, Content Analysis.*
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Introduction

“[…] these ruins felt more important to us than our own lives and souls.”

Veneration, the sense that some material objects are worth our awe and deepest respect is of vital importance in our world and stem from vastly different reasons. But in all cases, there is something which we could arguably call inherent value, the essence of the object’s representation. This is true over large parts of the world’s cultures, from the Catholics’ transubstantiated altar bread, churches of stone and paintings in museums. And of course, the monuments left in ancient stone throughout Iraq and Syria. A couple of years ago I was in the middle of writing my essay for the bachelor’s degree in religious science, an observation of the communicative elements revolving IS destruction of the museum in Mosul, Iraq. As the text of the essay came together I woke up midday on a Sunday, feeling the late hours of the weekend, and a series of news-flashes caught my attention. The following few minutes were spent watching a 1:33 minute long video of men taking sledgehammers, drills and modern equipment to ancient monuments. A cold, hollow sense grew in my stomach as the video rolled. As they gathered the pieces of architecture in a large pile, realisation overcame me, and sure enough. A pillar of dust, sand, debris rose into the sky. Some of the most valuable pieces of ancient history had turned into dust and nothing more. I had to admit, the effect was spectacular.

As expected, the condemnation of the world started filling the news. Irina Bokova, the director-general of UNESCO proclaimed these acts to be a war-crime, that the destruction was a cultural cleansing of the Syrian people. This was hardly surprising, after all I’m sure my own shouts of outrage had caused some disturbance in the building. But after the initial shock of the news, there emerged a set of patterns in the languages of the reporters, those interviewed and others. It seemed that the systematic destruction of this cultural heritage brought forth a sense of anger that had almost been more appropriate if the coverage had been about the 2015 attacks in Paris. But again, there was a genuine sense of passion about these monuments I found intriguing. Was the usage of these extreme words indicatory that not only was this a group of terrorists promoting an extremist version of a religion. But also, that these monuments were something more than simple stones found in a museum, they apparently were a part of our shared culture. But how is this inherent value created?

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Purpose
The purpose of this essay is first to establish how UNESCO, as a branch of UN, could be viewed as a System per the theories of Social Systems designed by Niklas Luhmann. By establishing how the System establishes its own binary codes and ideological foundation I will assess how the System views what it deems “cultural heritage” as focus points of inherent worth. I will further assess whether the condemnation of the destruction of cultural heritage, perpetrated by the group known as IS, gives an indication as to the heritages’ role, and its potential inherent value, in several sources of media. Specifically, whether one could argue that these objects seem to an object of be adoration in a way that goes beyond a respect for cultural heritage and more closely resembles theological veneration. That is, contemplation and veneration aimed at objects considered representations of a transcendent entity. This, I will propose, indicates that these monuments should not be regarded as simply “cultural heritage”, but as something more. This essay also has the aim of explaining whether UNESCO’s condemnation in relation with the clearer condemnation of other representatives establishes that there is a dissonance between the System and the medial environment it attempts to influence. This by examining the documents outlining the “outstanding universal value” of cultural heritage and their role as possible manifestations of an ideological ideal, human rights. This will be discussed in relation to the condemnations of IS’s actions today. I will attempt to analyse whether UNESCO is failing to establish itself clearly as a System through its binary codes and by extension fails to in its goal to the world about the values of cultural heritage and the need for their preservation. The conclusions regarding the System’s success in transmitting the messages of the cultural heritage’s worth will be somewhat speculative as to their actual impact on the overall environment. The conclusions will be focused regarding the impact on the medial environment as representatives of the population that partake in the medial communication.

One important note is that since some discussion will touch upon the concept of cultural genocide and similar phrases, I need to clarify that despite appearances, the practice is not specifically illegal under international law. Although black market trade, vandalism and other forms of practical crimes can be tied to individuals or organisations, the act of cultural genocide, as will be defined later, is only condemned rather than illegal. This partly since unlike its parent (genocide as recognised by the UN), individuals cannot be charged with the

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2 Nović, Elisa, The concept of cultural genocide: an international law perspective, First edition. 2016, 239
crime. As UNESCO primarily operates through The Hague convention from 1954, with its second protocol from 1999, it is unfortunately not legally prepared for cultural destruction on a large scale from stateless groups. These two documents focused on cultural preservation in armed conflicts where the two parties can make claims of nationality. This does not include IS. I would also like to observe that NGO’s will not be covered as to their relation to the System and the primary question. Neither the secondary question concerning inherent value will be discussed in relation to NGO’s.

The System does not make a clear distinction between cultural and natural heritage regarding their inherent value. Both are considered manifestations of “outstanding universal value”. However, cultural heritage is of course dependent on human involvement. The artefacts targeted by IS are exclusively created by intelligent life and are by the System’s definition cultural. This essay will be focused on the “cultural heritage” although the points made could often easily be traversed to the latter as the System and its environment determines what I call cultural value. This can be applied to the first as well as the latter with minimal changes.

Research Questions

**Primary Question:** How does UNESCO, as a Social System, succeed in communicating and reproducing its binary codes to its environments and competing Social Systems?

**Secondary Question:** To what extent does the condemnation of IS destruction of cultural heritage indicate veneration of the heritage that goes beyond profane adoration?

Disposition

The essay begins with a discussion of the theoretical prolegomena which discusses Social Systems theory. Thereafter the relevant material and the methods used in the text are outlined and briefly discussed. The methods used in this essay is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and furthered by additional analysis done through Content Analysis. Finally, a short overlook is provided over the status of research in the field of modern Iconoclasms and the role of cultural heritage as venerated in “the secular western world”. After the Analysis section I will

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4 Davidson, Lawrence, Cultural genocide, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 2012, 128
7 Gerstenblith, Patty 2008 From Bamiyan to Baghdad: warfare and the preservation of cultural heritage at the beginning of the 21st century., 11
8 UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. 1972-11-16, page 1
review the material. Firstly, the theoretical material of the System will be presented as I attempt to convincingly argue how the System is structured around its binary codes. Secondly, empirical material such as news articles and similar texts are discussed to outline how the iconoclasms are condemned and portrayed in the news. The Analysis is divided into four chapters dealing with the Social System, the attempts at a universal coherence, the perception of false idols and, lastly, the presupposition of agency in “civilisation, democracy”, etc. The answers to the research questions will be presented in the Conclusions.

Theoretical Prolegomena
The theory used in the essay is Social Systems Theory, specifically the theories of social communications as devised by Niklas Luhmann (d. 1998), sociologist of Bielefeld University in Germany. This theory has been further developed by Peter Beyer, professor of religious studies at the University Ottawa, Canada. I will also add my own critique to the theories presented.

Throughout this essay UNESCO will be referred to as the “System”. Further, I will use the term IS, since it is the term used by the group itself. IS, as a Religious System, is dependent upon communication. That it is a Religious System is evident by its quotations regarding idolatrous monuments and false idols, which highlights the focus on communication towards a transcendent entity.

Social Systems
Luhmann defines a Social System as a socialised function that operates through communication. Whether its socialisation, entertainment, politics or religion, social systems operate through communication and require meaning to function. Meaning, he argues, is the horizon of possibilities that is present in every actualisation. Specifically, that meaning is the binding concept between actuality and possibility which systems strive to bridge itself between through their function and links, which is done through communication.9 A system originates from a need to distance a social function from its environment. In this case, UNESCO’s need to enforce documents outlining their goals of protecting the world’s cultural heritage comes from a noticeably worry10 about the environment’s disregard for the protection and understanding of these monuments. A system observes a problem, and then

9 Luhmann, Niklas, Social systems, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif., 1995, xxiii
10 “Noting that the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened […] with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction” In Convention Concerning the Protection of the Worlds Cultural and Natural Heritage, page 1
communicates its solution to its environment and competing systems. This to enforce its solutions through its own elements (laws, principles). To do this, a system needs to re-evaluate its foundations and its relationship with its environment to establish a boundary (at least internally in the system) between itself and the surrounding environment.\textsuperscript{11} The base of an established system is a set of binary codes. Simply put, binary codes are the core structure of a system’s function.\textsuperscript{12} These binary codes are put into operation by the overall system, which determines what the system is. The core of the System UNESCO, outlined in the basic binary codes through which the System revolves itself around, are \textit{cultural destruction} and \textit{cultural preservation}. These are the main issues that concern UNESCO in the face of modern iconoclastic activities and around which the System orientates. An important thing to note is that beyond the core binary codes, there are outer phenomena that express the purpose of the system but in different ways. Actions or even rituals, centring on outer codes that are different than the central binary codes are often still a part of the overall System. Since they are carried out by the System in its procedures, these practices still revolve around such centralized binary codes. For example, UNESCO focuses to promote \textit{human rights} are ultimately expressions of its need to further \textit{cultural preservation}, ergo to promote the centralised binary codes around which the System revolves. This is a typical principle of the System, much like the confession is a typical principle of the religious system “the Catholic Church”. But in both cases the “true” purpose of the procedure is something other than the action itself. Religious systems might perform societal actions but ultimately perform divine communication to further the binary code \textit{salvation}.\textsuperscript{13} Binary codes determine what the system incorporates, but it is related to every part of the system’s operations. UNESCO’s finances are not maintaining its core code of \textit{cultural preservation}, but needs these elements to function. These are connected to the binary codes and are important for the System’s reproduction.\textsuperscript{14} Regardless of the function of social systems, its binary codes are either positive or negative. A religious system furthers its complexity around the code \textit{salvation} rather than \textit{damnation}. The religious system revolves around these binary codes, but they are also the origin of the system. Simply put, without the threat of \textit{damnation}, \textit{salvation} would not be needed. Although systems are

\textsuperscript{11} Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 9
\textsuperscript{12} Beyer, Peter, \textit{Religions in global society}, Routledge, London, 2006, 44
\textsuperscript{13} Beyer, Peter 2006, 44
\textsuperscript{14} Beyer, Peter 2006, 92
not independent of the environment, as a system is not an antithesis of an aspect of its surrounding environment, there needs to be conflict for it to establish itself.\textsuperscript{15}

Luhmann argues that systems are autopoietic\textsuperscript{16}, i.e. that the system \textit{aspire}s to reproduce and sustain itself independently towards its environment (at least internally within the System). On these grounds, binary codes need to be complete, complementary and \textit{originate} within the system itself.\textsuperscript{17} A system’s communication does not incorporate all relevant communication, but it needs to prove itself as valid in the face of a destabilised environment. Otherwise its message would be ignored.\textsuperscript{18} An aspect of the theory is that all systems in an environment are not hierarchal, but integrated. UNESCO is an educational organisation, but it also incorporates and influences systems of economics and politics.\textsuperscript{19}

UNESCO as a System is \textit{educational}; specifically, the intention of the system is to further knowledge and human social conduct. This is clear since the principles found throughout their documents, even the name (United Nations \textit{Educational} Scientific and Cultural Organisation), point towards \textit{understanding} as the foundation of the system. Arguably the binary codes through which the system orients itself are \textit{understanding/ignorance} since it is the foundation of all educational systems. However, I argue that while the System is \textit{educational}, the aspect of the System that I will observe is \textit{communicational}. Systems devoted to education or similar social functions, rather than material production\textsuperscript{20}, must traverse its boundaries towards its environment through communication.

Luhmann argues that education is built by intention (furthering understanding) and that its attributes are built accordingly.\textsuperscript{21} Considering UNESCO, the purpose of the organisation is to preserve, educate and acknowledge natural and cultural heritage which have “outstanding universal value”.\textsuperscript{22} Education is the transference of knowledge to another party; the educational system must communicate this value with its environment and other systems. This purpose can only be achieved if successfully transmitted. Luhmann argues that communication derives from three foundations: transmission of meaning, receiving of meaning and finally selection of it, which implies understanding of it. The latter cannot be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Beyer, Peter 2006, 49
\item \textsuperscript{16} Autopoietic entails that the system itself produces the elements of which it’s dependant of its own and through its own means. Explained in Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Beyer, Peter 2006, 81
\item \textsuperscript{18} Beyer, Peter 2006, 43
\item \textsuperscript{19} Beyer, Peter 2006, 40
\item \textsuperscript{20} While material production needs communication to market itself, its objective is not social.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 244
\item \textsuperscript{22} Convention Concerning the Protection of the Worlds Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, page 1
\end{itemize}
controlled, but very well desired. The System tries through communication to make the receiver understand, and through understanding convey meaning and thereby transforming acceptance or rejection to understandable concepts.\(^\text{23}\) The third principle is important as this is what constitutes a response, thus allowing the system to further reproduce, establish greater complexity and thereby distance itself from its surrounding environment.\(^\text{24}\) However, communication provides the receiver the freedom to accept or refuse understanding of the communication.\(^\text{25}\) Communicating meaning implies selection of meaning, in this case the world’s heritage, but it also identifies dangers. Further, the communication establishes the System’s horizon, which is the potential meaning it selects.\(^\text{26}\)

The System communicates its core binary codes, but seldom uses them outright, with similar phrases.\(^\text{27}\) Concepts that aren’t the same as System’s core binary codes are still vital to the overall System’s reproduction.\(^\text{28}\) Beyer also identifies that some of these represent something without which the System cannot survive.\(^\text{29}\) For example, while UNESCO is founded upon principles of human rights, these components are not in of themselves necessary for the prevention of cultural genocide and/or iconoclastic destruction. The System is nonetheless founded upon these principles and cannot function without them. Countries (the System’s environment) or political institutions (systems) that lack these rights can potentially prevent cultural destruction. However, the System argues that it is more likely that human rights will prevent cultural destruction. It is also important to note that systems are inherently unstable. Social systems are created by a sense of need, something is recognised as wrong in the environment which needs to be corrected by the system’s binary codes. The System’s attempt to further establish itself is always done by competing with its environment and other systems for complexity.\(^\text{30}\) Cultural preservation is found outside UNESCO, but the System’s own principles are considered the best way to achieve the goal of the System’s function, namely cultural preservation. In a brief note, I will use the phrase human rights as recognised in the UDHR by the UN. This definition entails the overall “spirit” which is found throughout the declaration of human rights. Many articles express similar values under the epithet “human

\(^{23}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 149
\(^{24}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, xxix
\(^{25}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 244
\(^{26}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 140
\(^{27}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 17
\(^{28}\) Beyer, Peter 2006, 91
\(^{29}\) Beyer, Peter 2006, 91
\(^{30}\) Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 11
rights”. The definition I use is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available under references.

As for the relationship between environment and different systems, Luhmann argues that the relationship is per necessity asymmetrical. Specifically, since the System is attempting to be an independent source of communication and meaning it must, through boundaries, separate itself from its environment. However, the environment around the system is made up by elements and other systems which give it a greater complexity by default. UNESCO must thereby transmit its complexity (human rights, inherent value etc.) to both its environment and other system, the components of which (individuals, organisations etc.), must be able to understand the information, despite the greater surrounding complexity (the system’s environment) and competing sources of communication and understanding.

Ideologically the System will circle briefly around “cultural genocide”. I will use the definition of Dr. Elisa Novic, writing her thesis regarding “cultural genocide” under international law, which states that the phrase adheres to “intentional destruction of assets of cultural heritage, such as cultural or religious monuments”. Cultural genocide is not yet illegal under international law, but is viewed as an implementation of genocide. Novic argues that “cultural genocide” has been narrowed with “genocide” due to inclusion of elements of culture and society. I will argue that how System ideologically might benefit by using the phrase “cultural genocide”. This since the System is already using a narrative similar to it, and by standing in the middle of its ideological stance it risks losing its authority to convincingly communicate its binary codes.

Inherent Value
Here I will discuss what constitutes inherent value. Throughout the essay, it will be argued that monuments declared as cultural heritage have inherent value. Specifically, the System argues that cultural heritage has an “outstanding universal value” which is not explained other than its worth for “history, art or science”. William Frankena, a professor of morals, defines “inherent value” as “things that are good because the experience of contemplating them is good and rewarding in itself.” This is the definition I will use throughout the essay when

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31 Luhmann, Niklas 1995, 182
32 Novic, Elisa 2016, 5
33 Davidson, Lawrence, 2012, 2
34 Novic, Elisa 2016, 55
35 Novic, Elisa 2016, 59
36 Convention Concerning the Protection of the Worlds Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, article 1
37 Frankena, William K., Ethics 1963, 82
discussing cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is a clear example of material objects whose entire worth lies in its ability to conjure certain facts about the world and emotions about them through contemplation.

Arguably inherent value is related to veneration of these artefacts, that the contemplation of them is what constitutes their value for both Systems (UNESCO and IS). Specifically, I argue that veneration should be considered “to regard with reverential respect or with admiring deference [and] to honour (an icon, a relic, etc.) with a ritual act of devotion”. It does imply “a holding as holy or sacrosanct because of character etc.”. But I further the definition by arguing that veneration is a type of worship, but where the communicative targets an “unidentified” entity.

As the value is dependent on the System’s communication to a perceived transcendent entity, the actual form of communication is dependent on the System. IS perceives these objects as false idols and uses, in their communicative act towards their transcendent being, iconoclasm as a communicative ritual. UNESCO on the other hand, perceives these to contain an inherent value of human rights, and will instead respond with cultural preservation. As cultural heritages have been re-valued and re-contextualised to function in the post-modern/modern era, our awe of them transcends simple adoration. By exemplifying, Nils Billing, Egyptologist and lecturer in religious history, argues that monumentality provides a concept that lies beyond everyday life. Monuments (or heritage that survive their creators) established a direct and eternal communication with the gods. I argue that the same monuments now acts as focus points of communication with a transcendent ideal, as opposed to a traditional transcendent entity, of inherent value (outstanding universal value) which I deem indistinguishable from the principle: human rights. This conclusion is partly inspired by Flood, drawing upon Jean Frodon, who argues that “If transcendence inhabits these objects, if a belief that the fundamentalists perceive in opposition to their religion is associated with them […] It is against this, […] that the explosive charges that annihilated the Buddhas were placed.”. This can be also be applied on the iconoclasm of IS. David Freedberg argues that iconoclasm is an action whose essence is manifested in the destruction of the symbolism that the artefact represents. Iconoclastic actions do not just entail the removal of the material

38 Merriam-Webster 2017, “venerate”
39 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum, 652
40 Billing, Nils. Monumentality and Iconicity — The storage of cultural legacy in ancient Egypt. 2017. (Unpub.), 4
41 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 653
42 Freedberg, David, The power of images: studies in the history and theory of response 1989, 415
object, but the identity of its representations.\textsuperscript{43} The current destruction of IS resembles those perpetrated by the Taliban. Flood argues that the Taliban’s destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan in 2001 was an aggressive protest communicated to the international community expressed through iconoclastic activities. The protest could be seen in relation to the UN’s economic funding given to the artefacts rather than the people under the Taliban regime. However, the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage perpetrated by the group IS should be considered religiously motivated. As a socially constructed religious system, IS performs an iconoclastic ritual that must be understood as a religiously motivated communicative act with a transcendent entity. The reasoning is that these acts are expressions of the Systems core binary code (salvation/damnation) through which the religious communicative system establishes its boundaries with its environment. Throughout the essay there will be examples of soldiers of IS stating that since these objects have been/are venerated they must be destroyed. Noting that I will not argue whether this is the case for the group, as that would require information directly from their own perspectives. The essay will instead focus on if whether the communicative system UNESCO and its surrounding environment (UN’s member States’ and their inhabitants’ medial environment) consider these artefacts as containing inherent value and revere them to an extent that resembles theological veneration.

Like Flood, argue that the artefacts of earlier cultures as well as natural objects are transformed into cultural icons which receive our veneration. The postmodern, and to some degree the modern, society has exchanged places for artefacts of transcendent communication, from church to museum.\textsuperscript{44} Although the artefacts have been reimagined and repurposed in another physical space, their essence as communicative points for a secular fetishism and veneration is much like the settings in a mosque, church, etc.\textsuperscript{45} Communicative elements and rituals surrounding them are present in both settings, but the transcendent ideal that which the veneration is aimed is different. Billing argues that monumentality “[…] provides a time concept that lies beyond the world of daily life”\textsuperscript{46}, which serves as a one-way communicative element (emanating from what I would call a social system) towards its audience.\textsuperscript{47}

Architectural features address different concepts of spacing and art could transform the ontological paradigm of individuals and society.\textsuperscript{48} This is important to note for several

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\textsuperscript{43} Freedberg, David 1989, 392
\textsuperscript{44} Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 652
\textsuperscript{45} Freedberg, David 1989, 409
\textsuperscript{46} Billing, Nils 2017, 4
\textsuperscript{47} Billing, Nils 2017, 8
\textsuperscript{48} Billing, Nils 2017, 9
reasons. Firstly, it coincides with the “rescue narrative”, where the argument could be made that the sense of preservation furthers an inherent value which is built upon a coherent sense under the System. It should be noted that which system this is could vary a great deal. Where the rescue narrative once was portrayed by national states and their museums, there is now a wider perspective inclined with the globalised society. Furthermore, the notion that a transformation of the monuments “essence” can occur is closely resembling Flood’s argument of veneration of cultural heritage. Specifically, that the objects, through the modern eras nationalism to the post-modern sense of international coherence, have transformed from cultural icons into cultural idols.49

Flood argues that our cultural heritage has transformed from proclamations of the national state towards the global community.50 This is important as media sources as well as representatives of universities and others condemn these iconoclastic activities as if they had a universal cultural value transgressing national boundaries. More importantly, the documents of the System outline the mentioned “outstanding universal value” of the heritage. This does come with some problems that need to be addressed.

Critique

When evaluating something as abstract as inherent value, a few things need to be scrutinized. Initially the theoretical foundation needs to be evaluated. Firstly, while communication is indispensable to System Theory, I argue that the theory fits better in somewhat liberal societies. Beyer argues that although we do not share values, ideologies, etc., the world is global through communication.51 However, Beyer overlooks that communication is mainly accessible to those willing to accept its transference, alternative sources and interpretations of communication. Some level of “freedom of speech” is needed for communication. Ironically, the relativism of a liberal society with human rights and freedom of speech are needed to establish seemingly objective, universal set of inherent values in cultural heritage.

Secondly, the postcolonial critique of the western world’s fascination of cultural heritage is vital to the perception of our veneration of cultural heritage. Beyond the problem of accepting “western authority and legitimacy” when determining inherent value, there is also the “rescue narrative”52 which is a modern approach where the safeguarding of cultural heritage can be colonially motivated. Most noticeable is that as a part of the UN, UNESCO as a System

49 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 651
50 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 652
51 Beyer, Peter 2006, 34—35
52 Gerstenblith, Patty 2008, 47
describes cultural heritage in terms of the “world’s” property. This is inherently problematic since the international law’s current state views “culture” as more specific to states rather than globally. This enacts a troubled relationship between museums and colonialism, much like the one between internationality and nationality. Although I will not argue for or against the “rescue narrative”, I will show that the System operates around a coherent sense of internationality.

Lawrence Davidson, history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania, argues that knowledge is not necessarily successfully transmitted through internet-technology. Communication as a founding principle for an international coherence is thereby less homogenous than desired by Luhmann. The mentioned third principle of Luhmann’s theory of communication is a therefore somewhat flawed. I will return to this point and possible problems for the System’s future.

Finally, there lies a certain naivety upon my own and the System’s perception of “inherent value”. However, there is consensus that these monuments have a value that goes beyond monetary worth. Referred to as an “outstanding universal value”, it is deliberately vague. However, Riegl argues that we consider all historical monuments as a link to an irrereplaceable human event which has lead up to this point in history. These monuments/artefacts, he contends, are not only historically, but also aesthetically valuable as they are human-made artistic constructions. This is important since if we simply appreciated historical monuments due to their history, then all would be valued equally highly. This is also inherently problematic since the international law’s current state views “culture” as more specific to states rather than from a global perspective. The inherent value is thereby hard to establish, but I will argue what the System considers “outstanding universal values” are manifested in the world’s heritage.

Existing research
There has been some research done regarding the veneration of cultural idols. Noticeable here is Finbarr Barry Flood, Professor of the Humanities, whose article “Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum”. Flood, professor of the humanities at Trinity College in Dublin, discusses how the Taliban destroyed the Buddha statues of

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53 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 653
54 Novic, Elisa 2016, 12
55 Flood, Finbarr Barry 2002, 653
56 Davidson, Lawrence 2012, 2—3
58 Novic, Elisa 2016, 12
Bamiyan, Afghanistan. This article describes not only a modern Islamic iconoclasm but also puts these acts in relation to our modern veneration of cultural idols. This is an instrumental piece which I will use to further our understanding of the destructions of monuments carried out by IS. I have modified the theoretical approach used by Flood by adding the social systems theory of Niklas Luhmann.

Patty Gerstenblith, research professor of law at DePaul University, author of “The Buddhas of Bamiyan” describes the responsibility of international law strongly emphasising the role of The Hague Convention. She adds certain studies of World Views to describe the philosophical relation with the monuments, namely how our perception of their preservation is absented from international law.

Whitney Bern, a lawyer specialising on immigration, has done research of note regarding the current destructions of IS, describes how cultural heritage is directly and intimately linked to the human predicament. Her article “Terrorists and Antiquities: Lessons from the Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, Current ISIS Aggression, and a Proposed Framework for Cultural Property Crimes” is of note when examining the perspective from international law regarding the possible prosecutions of groups responsible for these acts.

Regarding “cultural genocide” and similar legal debates there has been a substantial amount of literature produced. Some, like Davidsson’s “Cultural Genocide” from 2012 will be used in this essay. More extensively from a legal perspective is Elisa Novic’s “The Concept of Cultural Genocide” from 2016 which will also be used. Its main area of discussion is the inherent problems of disuse of the phrase “cultural genocide”, combined with attempts to discuss whether it is prudent to use it or not.

Material
When analysing the System, the main material is made up of official documents issued by UNESCO. Here the outlining of the System’s boundaries is expressed in language that in some way is rooted in the same system’s binary codes. These are the documents describing ideological roots and expressions of concern in the face of cultural heritage at risk. Their purpose is to show how the System’s communications establish its principles and functions regarding the “outstanding universal value” of the world’s cultural heritage. This material has been gathered mainly from UNESCO’s own archives, available on their website. Some of the data connected to UNESCO will be treated as environmental material since, while they are press releases from the System, they are nonetheless not documents which have been verified
by the States. These member States are what makes up the legal power of the System, implementing the System’s binary codes in their place in the environment.

The environmental material will be comprised of rawer data than the material related to the System. Specifically, this is comprised of news articles, interviews in media and papers which condemn, argue or otherwise stand in relation to the iconoclastic activities. A balanced portion of the analysis of this data will be between those interviewed in media and those that have written them. These are the ideological expression in text which I will argue are representations of the System’s environment. Its communications are inspired by the system but not a part of the System itself. The collection of this material has been made through searching through search engines, google foremost, on subjects such as “ISIS, Cultural Heritage, UNESCO etc.” The chronological span of the articles is mainly 2015—2017.

My motive for using this material is to establish the place that world heritage and cultural preservation has in the represented ideological sources which broadly encompass all these texts. Its purpose is also to establish whether cultural destruction is ideologically countered. Specifically, if the System’s binary codes are properly transmitted to its environment. An important deduction to draw from this material is whether there seems to be a similarity between the perceptions of material originating in “media” and those emanating from UNESCO itself.

One of the main texts is the “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”, which was adopted by the General Conference in 1972. This document outlines how the cultural heritages of the world are characterised. The result is listed by the System as world heritages.\(^9\) It is also a document outlining the reasons for and the philosophy behind cultural preservation. But it is of note that this document is not legally binding in the same fashion as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), whilst being important due to its ideological grounds for the overall System.

Method
Throughout this essay two methods will be used. The reason for this is that there is a difference in epistemological foundation between the “purer” ideological documents of UNESCO and the “rougher” news articles where the ideological approach is more hidden.

The primary method used will be Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The reason for this is that the words used, or not used, have a clear effect in how news in the environment are

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presented. The method is ideal when examining the empirical material. CDA examines of how the discourse describing the environment and the correlating System are created. CDA will be used to observe ideological grounds for the media’s coverage of the destruction of the cultural heritage. These are set in relation with the System’s goals. As the System expresses its binary codes and structures itself around them, the communications entail the System’s environment and its relationship with the overall System. The international System projects ideology and meaning, which inherently are reproduced and forwarded to an international public. Initial use of CDA will be to analyse the presupposition of inherent value that corresponds with phrases used by the System. By analysing the empirical material’s coverage of the destruction of the cultural heritage, I will discuss if they share the System’s view of an “outstanding universal value” we could describe as inherent value. As the words used often are rather dramatic, this will be indicatory of the central place of these monuments of cultural heritage. Throughout the coverage, the empirical material often presupposes and nominalises the articles in a way that portrays a deeper, inherent value of the monuments. Whether this is successful or not will be judged based on what impact the destruction of the monuments has. Structural opposition in relation with the destruction and those responsible furthers the perception of the humane of the System and its environment. Furthermore, large portions of the empirical material use a personification of concepts central to the social systems relevant to the essay. The System promotes democratic values such as human rights in a way that, seemingly, presupposes agency behind them. This is repeated by media and representatives of institutions. A note of interest will be whether there is a sense of authority and legitimacy that is expressed thoroughly by the quotations of the interviewed individuals or the usage of verbs by the news articles’ authors. In some instances those interviewed in the news cannot be considered as “ideological” representatives of the System. Soldiers, ministers of Syria and others may be expressing thoughts much like the social system. What is interesting is instead the selection of what is to be communicated of the news’ authors as members of the medial environment of the System’s communication.

The secondary method used in this essay is Content Analysis. The method’s function is to establish patterns. It will be used when analysing official doctrinal documents issued by

60 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea, How to do critical discourse analysis: a multimodal introduction 2012, 25
61 Machin, D. & Mayr, A. 2012, 153
62 Machin, D. & Mayr, A. 2012, 39—42
63 Machin, D. & Mayr, A. 2012, 171
64 Machin, D. & Mayr, A. 2012, 60
65 Nelson, Chad & Woods, Jr., Robert H. Content Analysis 2011, 110
UNESCO. The contrast between CDA and content analysis is that the latter establishes something beyond the expressed words and can focus on “overall tendencies” without providing specific words, whereas CDA is more efficient when used on specific texts. Grenholm, the Swedish theologian, argues that content analysis enables the broader phrases associated with the concepts of the text.\[66\] This methodological framework is strengthened by James Drisko, Professor of psychology and Tina Maschi, Professor of psychology. They argue that Content Analysis determines how the correlation between texts and its context, and can make inferences that are based upon a wider range of interpretation.\[67\] The method is largely built upon logical arguments and linguistic relationships.

Systems Theory does not necessarily rely upon outspoken words to establish its core of binary codes and the boundaries through which the System identifies itself. This means that I will have to argue how these binary codes are established in these texts, what the binary codes are, rather than analysing the usage of words. The content of these documents communicates a message that while not expressing the binary codes, furthers the positive code cultural preservation. A purpose of the essay is to establish whether the text correlates with the intentions of the System. It further suits the task since the method is suited to analyse documents over a wider span of time.\[68\] The success of the method is dependant to a large part of the validity of the coding. Specifically, whether the System is centred on my proposed binary codes. In this essay, the empirical material of news articles, etc., will be matched with the theoretical material of UNESCO’s documents. Personal views are relevant, but there will not be enough data to establish that the social system’s binary codes are sufficiently communicated to the environment simply by individuals’ views. Epistemologically, I will assume that the expressions used in the articles are sincere.

**Analysis**

**The Social System**

This chapter is dedicated to further explain how UNESCO operates as a Social System in accordance with Luhmann’s theory. I will attempt to show how the System recognises a troubled environment, and in accordance establishes a set of binary codes through which the System revolves and with which it ultimately tries to influence its environment.

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\[66\] Grenholm, Carl-Henric, Att förstå religion: metoder för teologisk forskning 2006, 213—214

\[67\] Drisko, James & Maschi, Tina, Content Analysis 2016, 27

\[68\] Nelson, Chad & Woods, Jr., Robert H. 2011, 112
Initially there is a need to establish, mainly through Content Analysis, how UNESCO as an educational system expresses their ideological foundation through its communication, expressed through official documents. I will not argue with legal reasons why UNESCO should operate in certain ways. The System’s relations with other systems and its own environment is much too complex for any observer to accurately conceive of and argue for responsibilities in a Master’s thesis.

UNESCO’s purpose is educational, this since its purpose is to further knowledge and protect the values that they perceive in the world’s cultural/natural heritages. It is of note that the System is currently at a legal disadvantage due the fact that it operates primarily by The Hague convention. It is therefore restricted since the document is made in events of conflicts between states or, since 1999, civil war. Actions of terrorists and other non-recognised aggressors are therefore not included with similar repercussions. 69

The System’s need to communicate its positive binary code cultural preservation is expressed in the following way:

“[…] the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction […] Considering that deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world […]” 70

The System furthermore communicates a concern that since “the magnitude and gravity of the new dangers threatening them, it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value [...]” 71 there is a need for establishing the System’s boundaries with its surrounding environment. 72 Specifically, the System recognises that the world’s heritage is in danger in a way that it needs to communicate its principles throughout the State Parties and the institutions therein. That the destruction of any item [heritage] constitutes a harmful impoverishment for the overall world is vital, as this establishes a sense of unity between the System and its environment. The sense that it is harmful should be considered vital here, as it does give indications as to how the System perceives the “outstanding universal value” of the System.

70 UNESCO, Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, page 1
71 UNESCO 1972, page 1
72 Beyer, Peter 2006, 86
“Building on more than a century of jurisprudence in international law, there is increasing recognition of the connection between attacks against cultural heritage, human rights and security.”

Earlier I argued the System incorporates and centres around codes that, while not the core binary codes, are vital for the System’s further complexity and differentiation from its environment. Here we see not only how “human rights, security and cultural heritage” are all melded and mixed into a brew that nourishes the System, but also seem intertwined by the System’s communication. There seems to exist a presupposition regarding the relationship between human rights and cultural heritage. While not surprising, it’s of note when regarding how closely attached the attack on these monuments seem to be with the values of human rights. This is a key feature in the condemnations of the System.

The first article of the UNESCO convention from 1972, regards the definition of cultural heritage, and incorporates everything from archaeological features, monuments, sculptures, buildings sites, etc. and combinations. The vital part is that these in ways are “of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science […]”. It is important to connect this with the theoretical approach of an inherent value in these monuments. This since the broad definition makes it clear that it is not simply monetary worth applied to the cultural heritage. The mentioned Riegl argues that while there is a difference between aesthetic and historical value. However, the System deems it unnecessary to separate these values from each other. Therefore, there is reason case simply to talk of an “outstanding universal value” which I determine to be an inherent value as I have defined.

Furthermore, as these monuments seemingly have a “universal value” the System argues in favour of an international value. That this is of “outstanding” value entail that the member States considers them as valuable beyond only economic value. Here we might notice two things. That the System views these monuments of cultural heritage as the world’s property, could arguably be considered false promotion, as a from legal point of view, this is not the case. That this is ideologically favourable for the System’s success in establishing itself, despite the lacking legal authority, will be discussed later. Secondly that the value does not seem indicatory of economic values furthers the concept that this inherent value is ideological. We could also recall Riegl’s arguments that the modern era viewed these monuments as organic organisms with which man ought not to interfere. Visible later in the

74 UNESCO 1972, article 1
material, there seems to be reason to argue that this is as true in the postmodern era as it was then, that the values of these monuments are almost eternal.

In the fifth article of the UNESCO Convention the sovereignty of each State in the UN, and UNESCO, is considered paramount to the preservation to the cultural/natural heritage in their geographical regions, and shall be carried out to the “best” of their abilities. However, the sixth article states that the value of these heritages are in relation to the international community as a whole and that help should be granted to identify and preserve heritage across State nationality. To accomplish this, a council called “the world heritage committee” was established in the UNESCO-outlining document from 72. As a part of its work is the establishment of a list of world heritage in danger, but may only add such heritages that are in serious and direct danger. In this piece we know that while UNESCO, as a part of the UN, does propose a universal set of guidelines for preservation, it is still bound by the recognition of each state’s sovereignty. While the legal enforcement of the System is limited, its communicative efforts are recognised and inserted into its environment. That other environmental States, and the System itself, can aid furthers the enforcement of the System’s binary code *cultural preservation*. Again, the System’s need to reproduce is mainly educational and ideologically motivated.

Furthering the recognition of each State’s sovereignty, article 31 specifies that the convention needs to be subjected and ratified by States in accordance to each constitutional ground. Article 32 invites parties beyond those not members of UNESCO to take part and have access to the content of this communication. This is another example of how the System aspires to communicate its message towards its environment, by inviting not only member States but also outsiders to partake in the ideological communication of the Convention. That each State needs to adapt the communicated binary codes according to each State’s own legal procedures is vital for a democratically aspiring System. However, this entails inherent troubles when enforcing the inherent value of human rights properly in each environmental unit.

“These attacks are often compounded by the looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects, which contribute to global organized crime and, in turn, to

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76 UNESCO 1972, article 5 paragraph d)
77 UNESCO 1972, article 6 paragraph a)
78 UNESCO 1972, article 6 paragraph b)
79 UNESCO 1972, article 8, paragraph 1
80 UNESCO 1972, article 11, paragraph 4
81 UNESCO 1972, article 31, paragraph 1
82 UNESCO 1972, article 32, paragraph 1

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fueiling armed conflict. [...] protecting cultural heritage and integrating the cultural dimension in conflict prevention and resolution constitutes more than a cultural emergency – it is a political, humanitarian and security imperative.¹⁸³

This quote is vital in understanding how the System, bound by the legal documents, aspires to establish a further complexity with competing systems. In these documents, the System establishes a direct connection between these monuments and its role as a humanitarian, security and political point of focus in conflicts. It puts a stress on the fact that not only does the loss of heritage entail a cultural loss for the System and its environment. It also highlights its link to security strengthens the need to condemn the destruction. Importantly, the possible destruction of these monuments, that their illicit trafficking and destruction also elevates conflicts further establishes the structural opposition between the System and those that would see them destroyed. That these monuments not only are worth protecting and have an intimate connection with “illegal” trades by “global organized crime” that furthers “armed conflict” entails a convincing narrative of security. A connection between “peace” and human rights to these monuments, could be argued, strengthens the presupposed legitimacy of the System. It is also strengthened by adding a sense of alienation and malicious character of the competing System (IS). These are agents that are perceived as wanting to destabilise the environment and stands as a destructive force against human rights and the world’s heritage.

While the System strives to further its complexity, there are clear examples of how the System seemingly fails in relation to its environment, expressed through the member States: “[…] recognizing that the destruction of heritage does not destroy their place in human memory and spirit;”¹⁸⁴ This quote is from the adopted text of the Budapest Convention, an official text of UNESCO. 

Observe also this proposed alteration to the Budapest document by Australia: “recognizing that the attempted destruction of our heritage is an act of harm to the human spirit and the world's inheritance.”¹⁸⁵ The reason why it is of importance to observe this proposed text is that it’s a clear example of how the System’s environment has a slight dissonance with the System itself. The proposed text was never accepted, but recommended by several States. This indicates that the System’s adopted text speaks of an approach where the destruction, is not as damaging to the “human spirit”. This is contrary to its environment who argues that iconoclasm is a direct harm on the “human spirit”. “Human spirit” should be considered a

¹⁸³ UNESCO 2014, page 2
¹⁸⁴ UNESCO 2002, article 6, page 4
¹⁸⁵ UNESCO 2002, article 6, page 5
variation of human rights, which I argue is the “outstanding universal value” that constitutes an inherent value. The monuments act as manifestations of the System’s world view of said value.

Whilst only briefly mentioning the videos of the destruction, it is important to recognise that these are perpetrated by individuals who are very much aware of the significance of their actions.\(^86\) Considering my earlier argumentation, our veneration of the inherent value which we perceive in these thereby, becomes a secular religious communication to the ideals we perceive. These could arguably be the overall concept of human rights, expressed as the System’s “outstanding universal value”. The destructions of these are in their essence a communicative act towards a transcendent entity and should be regarded as such first and foremost. The propaganda of the videos, as discussed later, is a demoralising tool aimed at the profane social systems opposite to IS. UNESCO’s and other communicative sources in this essay portray a clear sense of inherent value in these monuments, performing a veneration of sorts, similar to prayer as a communicative act.

“Acknowledging and promoting respect for cultural diversity, within a framework based on human rights and through appropriate educational and cultural initiatives,”\(^87\) Here we can see the incentive by the System to further establish itself as a force of authority in the face of cultural destruction. Two things of note; human rights are essential to the furthering of this. Further, while cultural diversity is important, it is presupposed and not truly debatable that any cultural diversity that does not promote human rights and the furthering of these ideals is not as valuable as the System’s own “western” ideals of human rights.

In “Protection of Heritage and Cultural Diversity” document from 2014, we can observe how the System expresses an increasing concern of cultural destruction:

> “Such attacks against places of knowledge, memory and culture of universal significance bear witness to a process of cultural cleansing underway and nurture a spiral of vengeance over the long term. They also highlight that culture is a deliberate target at the frontline of contemporary crises and that it should therefore be also at the heart of security, humanitarian and peace strategies against persecution based on identity, culture or religion.”\(^88\)

Potential attacks, directed at the world’s cultural heritage, are described as “cultural cleansing”. Using this phrase conveys not just a strong sense of urgency, but it is important to

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\(^86\) Freedberg, David 1989, 409
\(^87\) UNESCO 2014, page 8
\(^88\) UNESCO 2014, page 8
note that it has a close affiliation with “genocide”. In this instance, we can see how the System’s attempts to further its complexity and introduce its core binary codes into the environment. Of note is that a structural opposition is furthered by referring that the opposing binary code of the System (cultural destruction) furthers a “spiral of vengeance”. This implies that the System’s own perspective and actions furthers cultural preservation that counterbalances this. That the preservation of culture should be guarded “against persecution based on identity, culture or religion” is established as early as 1948 in The Hague Convention.89 This in turn is based upon the principles of human rights (UDHR). Again, there is a clear relation between the safeguarding of these monuments and the safeguarding of human rights. The description that culture is a “deliberate target” implies that these monuments are something that represents a negative code to the responsible group, the competing System (IS). The competing System (IS) recognises something in these monuments that conflicts with its own desire to achieve salvation. Noting that, it is accurate that cultural heritage is targeted as evident by IS’s actions. But more importantly the connection between these attacks and strategies to protect against persecution of principles central to human rights is further established. This furthers the concept of an inherent value linked to human rights, both as something targeted by IS as well as something worth protecting against these attacks.

Aspirations of unity
Here the analysis will focus on how a coherent sense of value is established by the System’s environment and expressed in the material. The focus will be on how the usage of phrases portrays a united sense in the face of these destructive acts. The method used is primarily Content Analysis.

“Affirming also that “all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind,”90 The System’s origin, in The Hague Convention of 1948 is already establishing a sense of international coherence regarding cultural heritage. Thus, we can observe a foundation of inherent value ideologically connected to diversity, richness and a universal heritage.

The iconoclastic activities of the competing System (IS) in its own destabilised environment (war-torn Iraq & Syria), troubles the System regarding the world’s cultural heritage. Ideologically these systems compete in their international environment of communication.

89 UNESCO 1954 first protocol, page 8
90 UNESCO 1954 first protocol, page 8
UNESCO, media and political agencies therefore needs to establish themselves as distinguished from their environment as well as competing systems. The System’s possibility to identify and express itself, thereby reinventing and re-establishing itself, is because of its difference with its own environment. In order to maintain itself it establishes boundaries through binary code. Ergo, the System observes how the environment exhibits cultural destruction, and through outlining its principles instead attempts to further its positive binary code cultural preservation. Below I will show a few examples of how Irina Bokova, director general of UNESCO, expresses viewpoints of the System she represents in relation to the environment where the iconoclastic activities occur.

As the BBC reports about the destruction of Nimrud they quote Irina Bokova: “Nothing is safe from the cultural cleansing under way in the country: it targets human lives, minorities, and is marked by the systematic destruction of humanity's ancient heritage” Noting firstly that Bokova uses the phrase “cultural cleansing” when describing the destruction of Nimrud, implies that, while the System does not use the phrase “genocide”, the phrase is still very much similar. The same specification of “cultural cleansing” can be found in UNESCO’s documents. This shows that while the System doesn’t use the phrase, the sentiment of the practice is condemned in similar ways by the System. Bokova argues that the “cultural cleansing” targets “human lives, minorities” which implies that the value of these monuments goes beyond simply a “symbolic” one. Finally, that the destruction is “systematic” furthers the notion that these are not random acts of brutality, but strikes at the heart of the System’s overall principles of human rights and more importantly the prevention of genocide. This is in line with the definitions of genocide produced by the UN, where there must be a clear [systematic] intent upon destruction. But this is currently restricted to biological beings rather than culture, despite Bokova’s quote above.

“The deliberate destruction of heritage is a war crime,” Irina Bokova, director general of UNESCO, said. ‘We will do everything possible to fight against this and document it, to ensure that those responsible are identified and brought to justice.” Not only are IS’s actions condemned in a particularly strong sense, but it is also important that Bokova, and by extension UNESCO, claims the authority over both these heritage sites as well as regarding

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91 BBC. Nimrud: Outcry as IS bulldozers attack ancient Iraq site 2015-03-06
92 UN News Centre. UN condemns destruction of Nimrud heritage site in northern Iraq. 2015-03-06
93 UNESCO 2014, page 1
94 UNESCO 1948, article 2
95 UNESCOPRESS. UNESCO Director-General condemns destruction at Nimrud 2015-04-13
the legality of the destructive actions. The destruction is considered of the illegitimate agents a war crime, something which is in strong contrast to the legitimate authority of UNESCO.

The BBC furthers the discourse of a unison heritage of the world by quoting Lamia al-Gailani, an Iraqi archaeologist, who expresses herself in the following way: “They are erasing our history, […] It is a horrific crime against the cultural heritage of the whole world.”96 The readers of the article are recognizing two elements in this passage. That “they are erasing our history” implies an international identity that coincides and is manifested in these monuments. This perspective is strengthened by the usage of “cultural heritage” that belongs to the “whole world”. The second note of importance is “erasing”, implying that the destruction of these monuments eliminates a part of our identity. That the loss of these monuments constitutes a definitive loss of this value. The monuments’ value is thereby tied to the physical object. The statement presupposes that not only does all the world share these heritages, but that the destruction of them constitute a “horrific crime” that entails their inherent value to the world.

Al Jazeera published December 1st, 2016 that “we have responsibility as archaeologists in Iraq, but so do my colleagues everywhere else. This is not Iraq’s heritage, but the whole world’s.”97 a quote from Abdulameer al-Hamdani, an Iraqi archaeologist. Again, this is an example of how the personification of the world and its heritage is coherent with the values transcribed by UNESCO. The nationality of the cultural heritage is secondary to its value to the rest of the world, furthering a sense of a singular identity. Lastly, “responsibility” doesn’t entail a form of action in response to the destruction, it does imply guilt in inaction. The lack of specifics in “colleagues” might entail a perception that the need goes beyond the intellectual world.

A columnist, John Becker, writes in Al Jazeera: “We feel sad, as a lot of people in the villages worked at Nimrud,’ said Amar, 23. ‘People would come from all over Iraq to visit this place and now it's gone.’98 Quoting a young man named Amar. The use of people is a collectivisation that in of itself doesn’t mean much. It could mean either the population of Iraq, but also those who visits from the outside. However, it does entail a certain sense of broader belonging with a broader population of the nation. That “it’s gone” further emphasises the value of these monuments as a “trace” rather than a memory, since the loss of

96 BBC 2015-03-06
97 Beck, John. How ISIL destroyed Nimrud. 2016-12-01
98 Beck, John 2016-12-01
99 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, 100
the physical site seems important beyond simple recollection of it. Using the phrase “causality” ascribes an inherent value of the holy sites linked to a broader sense of identity. This isn’t surprising on a local level but it does point towards an ideological approach used by the journalist on an international level.¹⁰⁰

“The systematic destruction of cultural symbols embodying Syrian cultural diversity reveals the true intent of such attacks, which is to deprive the Syrian people of its knowledge, its identity and history […] this destruction is a new war crime and an immense loss for the Syrian people and for humanity,”¹⁰¹ As the director general condemns this she also ascribes the cultural heritage with a value that transfers knowledge, identity and history. The loss of these artefacts is also ascribed to the System’s principle of an “outstanding universal value” which again points towards inherent value. That the destruction is “systematic” entails intent which stands in direct correlation with the cultural diversity promoted by human rights. This is furthered by the statement that the destruction deprives the Syrian people of their identity, while also stating that the value is for overall the “humanity”. Important to note is also that these attacks are considered to have a “true intent” behind them aimed at the cultural heritage.

“[…] amid overwhelming evidence that the Islamic State’s barbaric campaign against culture amounts to a war crime, the world must be ready to use force to stop it. […]”¹⁰² There is again a sense of a coherent international community, responsible for the world’s heritage. The article promotes the possibility to “use force” in the face of the destructive acts, implying that the protection of these monuments is of such importance that there is a need to consider violence simply to protect them, rather than the people IS persecutes. This suggests a clear worth of the heritage. But the author does not specify that the “culture” has a specific value, only that they are worth fighting for. This entail that the cultural heritage has a value, simply because of its cultural status, as is the aim of the System.

“False Idols”
This chapter deals with the descriptions in the empirical material of IS’s motivations when destroying sites of cultural heritage. The main discussion will be focused on how the news or debate articles portrays these actions. The methodological approach will primarily be CDA.

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¹⁰⁰ The Guardian, Islamic State destroys ancient Mosul mosque, the third in a week 2014-07-28.
¹⁰¹ UNESCO PRESS. Director-General Irina Bokova firmly condemns the destruction of Palmyra’s ancient temple of Baalshamin, Syria 2017-01-20.
¹⁰² Eakin, Hugh. Use Force to Stop ISIS’ Destruction of Art and History 2015-04-03.
“IS, […] says shrines and statues are "false idols" that have to be smashed.”¹⁰³ This article extends the ritualistic behaviours of the religious system IS, specifically that the cultural heritage is not just traces of ancient cultures which determine the outlining of history as we know it, but they are also “false idols”. That they are idols implies that there is some agency which venerates these artefacts. Since their original groups of religious communicators are long gone, those perceived as the oppositional force to IS have taken their place as venerator of the “false idols”.

“[ISIS] a group that has delighted in destroying archaeological sites in Syria and Iraq, labelling them as pagan.”¹⁰⁴ Of note here is “delighted”, a verb that adds a sense of sadism to the competing system (IS). Using CDA we can determine that these are mental processes that transfer affection¹⁰⁵, in this case a “savage” and “morbid” delight in the destruction. Regardless of actual events the usage of “delighted” creates an additional savagery that stands in opposition to the aforementioned “humane” civilisation.

“The militants claim that such mosques have become places for apostasy, not prayer.”¹⁰⁶ In this instance we observe how the group is theologically delegitimized by describing them as militants, rather than theological authorities. IS, according to the article, views their actions against the mosque as an act of purification as to rid the sanctified place of “apostasy”. The article furthers the concept, as per Beyer’s model, that this is a ritualistic observance of the religious system’s communication towards their transcendent entity. The destructive act towards a mosque, where the group perceives that the ritualistic and communicative acts draws towards damnation and hence must be stopped.

“But, as a symbol of polytheism, it was also a glaring target to ISIS.”¹⁰⁷ Noting that the perception from this source is also that the religious system IS main motivation for its communication is religious. This is consistent with my own assessment of the purpose of IS as a religiously communicative system. “Target” furthers the perception that these destructive acts are systematically executed rather than random acts of vandalism. It furthers the sense of determined “evil” of the group and is also consistent with the “intent” in genocide.

¹⁰³ BBC 2015-03-06.
¹⁰⁴ Loveluck, Louisa & Ryan, Missy. Islamic State militants partly destroy Palmyra’s Roman amphitheatre 2017-01-20
¹⁰⁵ Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, p. 107
¹⁰⁷ Jeffries, Stuart. Isis’s destruction of Palmyra: ‘The heart has been ripped out of the city’ 2015-09-02.
“[…] (UNESCO) had also condemned the destruction in the Syrian city and called on the international community to ‘stand united against cultural cleansing’.” This quotation is a clear line between the ideological stance against the destruction of Palmyra and the documents of the System itself. “Cultural cleansing”, its close resemblance to “cultural genocide” invigorates a clear structural opposition with the System UNESCO. The appeal to “stand united” against “cultural cleansing” could be seen as a dichotomisation between good and evil, or something akin to genocide in the face of human rights.

“‘And no amount of physical destruction can remove the knowledge of mixed cultures, creative thinking and love of beauty that bequeathed a desert ruin. In the face of heritage, at the end of the day ISIS is powerless.’” Quoting Mike Pitts, editor at British Archaeology, this is somewhat contrary to the perception of the overall tendencies to describe, by both IS and its opposites, cultural heritage as an irreplaceable part of this world. Specifically, that these are irreplaceable heritage sites stand in strong contrast to the mentioned proposed additions by Australia to the Budapest Convention (see p. 23). This example shows the complexity that exists in the environment. The environment’s complexity is vital for the furthering of the System’s establishing of boundaries.

The first interview by the BBC with Ali al-Bayati states that: “Sheikh Ali al-Bayati, who grew up in this area, tells me 95% of the site has been destroyed. ‘I’m very sad, he says, sometimes these ruins felt more important to us than our own lives and souls.’ And what ISIS has done here, is just part of a pattern of cultural destruction here in Iraq and in Syria.” Of note is first “pattern” which furthers the notion that these are systematic acts of destruction. That these destructive acts are following a pattern indicates the mentioned “sinister” ambiance behind the competing System (IS). The indication that these monuments are of such value that they all but exceed that of their very souls and lives at times is a dramatic statement, but should of course be taken seriously.

A written quotation from the man adds a touch of drama to the narrative. “‘One hundred percent has been destroyed,’ Ali al-Bayati added. ‘Losing Nimrud is more painful to me than even losing my own house.’” We can see the apparent sense of ownership and/or belonging. This man has a clear sense of preciousness attuned to the site. By using a powerful

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109 Jeffries, Stuart 2015-09-02
110 BBC. Nimrud: Photos show IS destruction of ancient Iraqi city 2016-11-15
111 BBC. 2016-11-15
comparison between “my own house” and Nimrud there is authority and ownership over the site as if it was something owned by him, but also a sense of pride and identity. This seems to be something which has been destroyed that is also something which has inherent value, due to the fact that he did not actually own the site, but the contemplation of it arguably provided him with a sense of belonging and meaning.

“The jihadist group has denounced pre-Islamic art and architecture as idolatrous, and has destroyed several other ancient sites in Iraq and neighbouring Syria.”\textsuperscript{112} An initial observation is the delegitimizing phrase “jihadist", which indicates preferences to violence before theological knowledge and authority. Describing the groups motivation as due to the “idolatrous” character of monuments, while I argue it is an accurate observation, furthers the perception that the competing system’s (IS) motives are religious, and the communication directed towards a transcendent entity.

“Islamic State militants have been destroying ancient relics on several sites, saying they promote idolatry that violate their fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law,”\textsuperscript{113} This is one of the fewer instances of where “IS” is articulated as “Islamic State”. Overlexicalization, where certain phrases are overtly used delegitimises the “State” behind IS.\textsuperscript{114} In this case, the “militants” are specified as members of the “Islamic State” while simultaneously concluding that the destruction is the result of the groups own “fundamentalist interpretation” of Islamic law, rather than the destruction being something that’s inherent to Islamic law. Using “fundamentalist” also furthers a structural opposition as to the “actual” Islam. This is not surprising, but it’s noteworthy that there seems in some cases, from the author’s perspective, to be an almost reluctant dissonance between “fundamentalism” and “Islamic”.

“This is only the most recent proof of Islamic State fighters destroying invaluable heritage sites.”\textsuperscript{115} Clearly “invaluable” is a vital piece of this sentence as it entails the mentioned inherent value in these cultural heritages. Again, the already mentioned focus on pronouncing the “Islamic” in “IS” is interesting. These examples are both from the Daily Mail, a known tabloid, but they illustrate that the overall opinion in news seem to be focused around the group as a fundamentalist version of the “true” faith. This rather than it being something inherent to the religion itself.

\textsuperscript{112} BBC. 2016-11-15
\textsuperscript{113} Malm, Sara. Shock new video shows ISIS thugs smashing historic Iraqi city of Nimrud with barrel bombs, bulldozers and jackhammers in orgy of destruction slammed as a war crime by the United Nations 2015-04-12.
\textsuperscript{114} Machin, D. & Mayr, A. 2012, p. 37—38
\textsuperscript{115} Malm, Sara. 2015-04-12.
“A second reason and of course the one that they are citing is the reason of idolatry. That these objects in the museums were once worshiped by ancient Syrians and Acadians they actually narrate their videos to let us know that the prophet Muhammad destroyed idols in Mecca. So, we [...] stand in that sacred lineage and be destroying idols as well. In earlier cases in iconoclasm [...] the objects were actually being worshipped. No one is worshipping these ancient objects in the museums. [...] they are the heritage of all of humanity”116

This article is of interest due to its critique of the noticeable trends in the empirical material not to question the System’s (IS) claim that these monuments are “idolatrous”. It is important to note here that while the interviewed individual, Dr. Joan Branham, a professor of art history, also points to the overall international “ownership” of the heritage, she for example disagrees with, earlier opinion of Flood, namely that our relationship with our heritage could be regarded as veneration. While she does have a point, these are remnants of dead cultures, one could argue that veneration must be viewed as something beyond a communication towards a classical theological entity. As has been expressed, there are reasons to view the inherent value as a variable of our “shared past” and principles of human rights. Branham does say that “[...] they can actually destroy something that the world really cares about, these antiquities.”117 I am not arguing that veneration can be applied to everything we care about, as this would be false to the point of absurdity.

As to the structural opposition, although not expressed towards any competing system in the System’s documents, is furthered by the environmental material through some of the quotes by the competing System (IS) themselves. “God has honoured us in the Islamic State to remove all of these idols and statutes worshipped instead of Allah in the past days,’ one militant says in the video. [...] Another militant vow that ‘whenever we seize a piece of land, we will remove signs of idolatry and spread monotheism.’”118 In the basic accordance with CDA, this is an example of how the competing System (IS) determines these monuments to be idolatrous. Note however, that he [IS militant] speaks of the monuments in a past sense, rather than these being venerated today.

“For the ISIS militants, this site was not something to be cherished for its huge historical and archaeological significance. Instead in their ultra-extremist view, this was a place of false idols, and therefore to be eradicated. [...] the militants posted videos online of their systematic destruction of Nimrud. Sparking outrage around the world, the United Nations calls this a war-crime. One particularly poignant part of that crime was the destruction of these [camera showing the

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117 Wilkinson, Kate. 2015-07-22.
118 Malm, Sara. 2015-04-12.
Again, by using nominalisation I argue that the author’s use of “systematic” implies a sense of determination and intent in the responsible agent rather than random pillaging. “Outrage” also implies that the reaction is dramatically angry due to the severity of the destruction. This in turn implies that the acts have targeted something of inherent value to those that have become outraged. As already described, there have been no traditional worship or veneration of these monuments for thousands of years. Though the journalist does not seem to make this a noticeable point, but rather points to the actual historical/archaeological value. Whilst also acknowledging that the competing system (IS) does view them as idolatrous. This entails that the values are similar as those ascribed by the System.

**A perception of Agency**

This shorter chapter will deal with the overall tendencies to ascribe the System and its environment as manifesting more abstract concepts such as civilization or “the will of the world”. This is done to further establish the correlation between a sense of an international community and their overall values specifically human rights, manifested in these monuments.

Irina Bokova argues that: “The propaganda and hatred that underlies these acts […] demands in response messages of peace and knowledge of history. UNESCO supports all [who] explain the importance of this heritage and why nothing justifies its destruction. […] I invite political and religious leaders along with civil society”\(^{120}\). By using the concept of “hatred”, a strong sense of alienation between the System and the competing system (IS) is created through the connotation that the word “hatred” entails.\(^{121}\) “Hatred” is not only an emotion here, but it’s a part of the ideological roots of the antagonists (IS). Arguably in contrast with the System’s own principle of human rights and more importantly establishment of its focus on the binary code cultural preservation. Vital is also that the System stands for “civility” in structural opposition with the competing System (IS).

“This is not just the destruction of ancient ruins, this is the destruction of civilization,” said Maamoun Abdulkarim, Syria’s antiquities minister.”\(^{122}\) Again, through structural opposition,
IS as a religious system (and discourse) is set up against “civilization” as a force of good. That civilization is destroyed with the destruction of these monuments adds severity. While it could be debatable whether the Syrian minister promotes human rights and “cultural diversity” as the System, there is a clear recognition of the monuments’ foundations of “civilization”. The competing System (IS) is not only destroying ancient cultural monuments, but the foundation of “the civil world”.

“For IS] "defy the will of the world and the feelings of humanity“; Here the personification of the world’s will and feelings is manifested as contrary to the ideologies of the competing system (IS). This not only cloaks the agent of the “will” and “feelings”, but also provides a clear sense of wrongness in the perpetrator against these emotions. “Humanity” becomes not just something which inherently possesses a sense of agency through nominalisation. Through structural opposition “the will of the world” is something that is associated with the opposite of IS, something good and humane in relation to the evil of the group. By destroying the cultural artefacts, the focus of good intentions, will and feelings of identity of “the world”. Not only are the objects of cultural heritage targeted by these offenders, but the whole world.

Discussion
One recurring theme of the material is the absence of collectivisation ascribed to faith. Instead through delegitimization by the System and the environment, the competing system (IS) is classified as “militants, jihadists”, etc. This create a sense of legitimacy on the behalf of the System, and vice versa. It also establishes a structural opposition between the System’s principles of inherent value manifested as human rights and the competing system’s (IS) systematic destruction or “cultural cleansing”.

As to the primary question regarding the System’s aims to communicate its core binary codes and ideological roots to the environment a few things are of note. The complexity between the System and dissident arguments are not only found in certain parts of the news material, but also in States that compromise the System itself. This is most noticeable in the Budapest Convention, where Australia et al proposes a firmer text than the one accepted by the States.

123 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, 39
124 This is simply since the UNESCO Convention of 1972 has not been ratified by Syria
125 BBC. 2015-03-06.
126 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, 171
127 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, 143
128 Machin, David & Mayr, Andrea 2012, 39
As this is recommended by other States but not accepted this indicates the environments complexity. It shows that while System successfully entails its own ideological foundation, there are voices calling for stronger actions. Regardless of the System’s unknown motives for not accepting the firmer text, here the actual substance of the text from an ideological perspective does not properly acknowledges the threats posed towards the System’s core binary codes.

Further, while the System describes how the monuments can never be eradicated, but lives on in the human “in human memory and spirit” this seems inconsistent with the System’s insistence that these are acts of “cultural cleansing”. The dissonance between official statements and the System’s principles puts the System at a definitive ideological disadvantage. This not only entails an unclear logical derivation from the System’s own perspective, but demonstrates unclarity in the face of these acts. Arguably the inherent value of these monuments is beyond their physical form, namely that what these monuments represents, an “outstanding universal value”, is something beyond their monumentality. But this is a troublesome path for the System, as it risks the monuments to become of a secondary priority. This is also somewhat contradictory from the System’s insistence of the value of the actual cultural heritage, not just what they represent.

Furthermore, that Australia et al. argues that IS ‘[…] act of harm to the human spirit and the world's inheritance,” indicates that the environment contains dissident ideological arguments that could destabilise the System’s ability to properly communicate and implement its binary codes. The System’s attempts to insert its positive binary code into the environment might not be successful within its own perimeter. While not all member States express their point of view of the cultural heritage’s value the same, they all express concern regarding them. This could be indicatory that ideologically: the possible sense of veneration is created locally, rather than globally. This makes coordination to further cultural preservation more difficult, even if the values remain without the System.

Throughout the material there is a clear connection between human rights, security and value. I have attempted to show in this analysis that several instances are clear where the System itself draws a clear line between them, arguing that the value of cultural heritage must be preserved as its illicit trafficking and destruction furthers conflict, vengeance and destabilising of the environment. It is evident by the structural opposition used by the sources of media that these iconoclasms are abhorrent. This seems indicatory that the medial environment is at least partly influenced by the overall ideologies of human rights. But the correlation between the
medial environment and the System indicates that *human rights*, and by extension *democracy*, is not as much an ideology. Instead it is a phenomenon that is seemingly filled with an agency, a transcendent ideal that we *venerate* in these monuments.

I have also shown several examples of usage of phrases like “cultural genocide”, mainly cultural cleansing. This is problematic from the System’s own perspective, since cultural genocide is *not* illegal. While it is true that the System abstain from the phrase, as they use language like it and ideologically furthers prevention of genocide, it lies in the System’s interest to advocate more strongly for the implementation of cultural genocide as a legal definition. I argue that the examples shown in the analysis also establishes a clear view of authority where the System’s authority seems inseparable from “civilisation” and stem from judicial legitimacy as well as ethical.

Regarding the **secondary question**, namely that our adoration of these monuments is similar to a religious communication I call *veneration*, there have been no definitive answers. However, the outrage, the condemnation and the insistence upon these monuments’ worth indicates that both the System and its environment perceive them in greater esteem than simply adoration of their historical, scientific worth. I have attempted to show how cultural heritage manifests a transcendent ideal, *human rights*. This since the concept does seem *universal, infallible and without reproach*. The cultural heritage is manifesting a common *inherent value*, shared internationally. Of note is that while I argue that the *inherent value* is still structured under the same epistemological thought of social constructivism, there seems to be an *inherent value* in the monuments regardless of the System. An *inherent value* in these monuments, which I deem to be what is called “outstanding universal value” by the System, has been shown to be proposed by locals in accordance with the System and its environment. Ultimately, I argue that this “value” is derived from similar foundations of cultural diversity and identity found in *human rights*.

The purpose of the System is *not* to enforce *veneration* of cultural heritage. However, I argue that the System’s tendencies to describe these monuments are indicatory with the proposed concept of *inherent value*. This has several times been ascribed to an “outstanding universal value” and which in turn often seem closely related to *human rights*, specifically the rights of cultural diversity under the principle. These monuments are valuable in themselves, something indicatory of an awe that is related to a sense of a common heritage and an identity strengthened by legitimacy and righteousness.
IS’s iconoclasms, motivated by naming the cultural heritage idolatrous as per the “will of the Prophet”, is not directly indicatory that they perceive the monuments as venerated by those affiliated with the System. The competing System (IS) ascribe the idolatrous nature of the monuments mostly due to a past worship. However, their communication is attributed towards a transcendent entity, which puts their beliefs at odds with the System’s veneration. Their insistence that these objects further damnation in turn furthers the System’s and the environment’s veneration and sense of connection with them, as they stand opposite to the competing System (IS).

There are however some indications that parts of the environment do not view these artefacts as objects of veneration. These examples are not disproving my theory, but entails the complexity of the environment. I argue, however, that they offer an indication that the System’s communication is not entirely accepted by the environment. The binary codes, while accurately communicated to the environment, do not necessarily lead to veneration. Despite the System’s insistence, that while containing inherent value, parts of the environment do not always consider these monuments irreplaceable. There are arguments that the value of these monuments is not tied to the physical objects themselves, but to commemoration and knowledge extracted from them. However, while this might be true for the environment, the System does believe these physical objects to be of “outstanding universal value”. This is indicative of the System’s failure to communicate this sense properly to its environment.

**Finally:** In the face of the destructive acts the System’s aims has proven somewhat successful in implementing its core binary codes. Cultural Preservation seem vital for the environment. I argue that the System has somewhat successfully implemented its binary codes as an ideological ground of the environment. One thing that is very consistent in the material is the perception of the “universality” of the inherent value’s width. The System’s insistence upon this as a universal value is not questioned in the medial environment. While there are certain indications that a locally produced sense of worth is present, there is a recurring sense of universality. However, Ali al-Bayati’s words echo something important: that the monuments were more important than their very lives and souls does entail that they transfer a sense of meaning and purpose. This I argue is a very clear indication of inherent value and of the veneration that this man feels towards his local cultural heritage.

Throughout the material, the System argues from points that rarely regards economic value, which is to its advantage. By arguing from military and economic points of view, UNESCO runs the risk of being simply redundant as an educational social system. Furthermore, this
could further the perception that *human rights* and minorities are economic rather than ideological. Thirdly, this could not only fail to engage IS as a competing communicative religious system, but also reinforce the perception that the educational System is powerless in of itself.

The ascribed sense of agency, often in the form of “feelings of the world, civilisation” and similar abstractions are arguably instrumental in widening the System’s aims. While not directly establishing its binary codes, it does further the width of an *inherent value* in these monuments that coincides with its own description of “outstanding universal value”. This furthers an overall perception of unity. While the System and environment compete, their ethical and societal legitimacy is universally recurring.

I hypothesise that in the long run, if the inconsistencies shown in this material progress, UNESCO as an educational System risks losing its legitimacy as an ideological agent. Regarding the System’s third principle of communication, as mentioned by Lawrence, there might be a discrepancy of their message and the world’s willingness to accept it. As a part of a globalised world, the System’s need to establish itself clearly as a countering argumentative force towards those that enforces the negative binary code *cultural destruction*. While they do this already, there are cause for concern that the environment favours stronger condemnation and structural opposition to the point that the System’s own ideological standpoint becomes too weak, and its implementation in the environment is ignored.

Conclusions

1) This essay has further attempted to establish how UNESCO should be considered an educational System that communicates and implements its core binary code *cultural preservation* to its medial environment. The essay shows that the System has been successful in implementing its code, thus furthering its own complexity and the clear stance against *cultural destruction*. The condemnation following these iconoclastic actions are aimed at *cultural cleansing, hatred* etc. which destabilises competing communicative Systems. Through promoting the core binary code and ascribing the iconoclasms of IS as targeted towards the foundations pf civilisation, and that these actions pose a threat to the “will of the world”, the System successfully furthers its own binary codes as preferred in the medial environment. However, the System’s grasp on the environments ideological roots will likely wither as the environment’s complexity increases and it itself takes firmer stances against *cultural destruction*. 
II) There are indications found in the material, both stemming from the System and its environment, that a sense of awe and respect aimed towards monuments of cultural heritage indicate something akin to theological veneration. This is arguably, since the monuments are considered manifestations of an “outstanding universal value”, an international perception that we share an ideological ideal of human rights. The environment and the System argues thoroughly that these monuments are vital for the overall humanity and have value that cannot be specified other than by its sign of cultural diversity. I conclude that the “outstanding universal value” referred to by the System should be considered an inherent value of human rights which is considered manifested as forms of communicating this ideal to the world’s population. This entails the strong condemnation shown in the thesis as these monuments have been destroyed. Through international implementation of this “outstanding universal value” this results in veneration aimed at this perceived universal transcendent ideal.

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