

Not human beings alone died at Hiroshima. Something else was destroyed as well, the Japanese study¹ explains—that shared life Hannah Arendt calls the common world:

In the case of an atomic bombing...a community does not merely receive an impact; the community itself is destroyed. Within 2 kilometers of the atomic bomb's hypocenter, all life and property were shattered, burned, and buried under ashes. The visible forms of the city where people once carried on their daily lives vanished without a trace. The destruction was sudden and thorough; there was virtually no chance to escape...Citizens who had lost no family members in the holocaust were as rare as stars at sunrise...

The Atomic bomb had blasted and burned hospitals, schools, city offices, police stations, and every other kind of human organization...Family, relatives, neighbors, friends relied on a broad range of interdependent organizations for everything from birth, marriage, and funerals to firefighting, productive work, and daily living. These traditional communities were completely demolished in an instant.

Destroyed, that is, were not only men, women and thousands of children but also restaurants and inns, laundries, theater groups, sports clubs, sewing clubs, boys' clubs, girls' clubs, love affairs, trees and gardens, grass, gates, gravestones, temples and shrines, family heirlooms, radios, classmates, books, courts of law, clothes, pets, groceries and markets, telephones, personal letters, automobiles, bicycles, horses—120 war-horses—musical instruments, medicines and medical equipment, life savings, eye-glasses, city records, sidewalks, family scrapbooks, monuments, engagements, marriages, employees, clocks and watches, public transportation, street signs, parents, works of art. “The whole of society,” concludes the Japanese study, “was laid waste to its very foundations.” Lifton's² history professor saw not even foundations left. “Such a weapon,” he told the American psychiatrist, “has the power to make everything into nothing.”

1. The Committee for Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 1977, 1981. *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. Basic Books. Cited by Richard Rhodes in *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* as “the most authoritative study of the Hiroshima bombing, begun in 1976 in consultation with thirty-four Japanese scientists and physicians.”

2. Robert J. Lifton, *Death in Life*. 1967. Random House.

Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, 1986. Simon and Schuster