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# Convivialist Manifesto

## A declaration of interdependence

Translated from the French by Margaret Clarke

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## Introduction

Never before has humanity had such a wealth of material resources and technical and scientific expertise at its disposal. Overall, it has become rich and powerful beyond the imagination of anyone in former centuries. That it is any happier as a result has yet to be proved. Even so, there is no desire to turn back the clock: we are all aware that each new day brings with it ever more opportunities for personal and collective fulfilment.

At the same time, it is no longer possible to believe that this accumulation of power can go on forever – in just the same way, according to some unchanging dictate of technical progress – without eventually rebounding on itself and putting humanity's physical and moral survival at risk. With each new day, the signs of potential catastrophe are emerging ever more clearly and worryingly. The only issues in doubt are which threats are the most immediate and which of the urgent problems should take priority. These threats and problems must be constantly borne in mind if we are to give ourselves a real chance of seeing today's promises come to fruition.

### The current threats

- Global warming and the disasters and huge migratory movements it will trigger.
- The gradual, sometimes irreversible, erosion of the ecosystem, and the pollution that is rendering the air in many cities unbreathable, as in Beijing and Mexico.
- The risk of a nuclear disaster much larger in scale than those of Chernobyl or Fukushima.
- The increasing scarcity of the resources that have made growth possible – energy (oil, gas), minerals, food – and armed conflict over access to these.
- The perpetuation, emergence, growth, and re-emergence of unemployment, exclusion, and poverty across the world, and notably in 'old' Europe, whose prosperity seemed assured.
- The now huge disparities in wealth between the poorest and richest all over the world. Such disparities fuel 'all against all' battles amidst a generalized ethos of greed. They foster the emergence of oligarchies – which divest themselves, in all but rhetoric, of respect for democratic norms.
- The disintegration of inherited political groupings, and the inability to form new ones, resulting in the proliferation of civil wars and tribal and inter-ethnic strife.
- The prospect of the re-emergence of large-scale interstate wars, which would, without question, prove infinitely more bloody than those of the past.

- The spread of blind terrorism, the exercise of violence by the weak against the strong, across the planet.
- Growing insecurity in the social, environmental, and civic spheres and the extreme responses it elicits from security-centred ideologies.
- The proliferation of covert criminal networks and increasingly violent, mafia-style organizations.
- The murky and disquieting links of such groupings with tax havens and speculative, rentier-style high finance.
- The increasing influence which the demands of this speculative, rentier finance are bringing to bear on all political decision-making.

And so on ...

### **The current promises**

Imagine, by contrast, what opportunities our world would offer us for individual and collective fulfilment if we could avert these threats.

- The global triumph of the democratic principle will be an infinitely longer and more complex process than some may have imagined after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – if only because democracy has been derailed by its association with speculative rentier capitalism, which has largely sapped it of its content and appeal. Nonetheless, wherever people rise up in the world, they do so in the name of democracy – witness the Arab revolutions, imperfect and ambiguous though they may be.
- The idea that we can put an end to all dictatorial and corrupt regimes has therefore become a real possibility, thanks in particular to the proliferation of grassroots experiments in democracy and the enhanced spread of information.
- Our emergence from the colonial era and the decline of Western-centred thinking opens the way for a genuine dialogue between the civilizations, and this, in turn, makes possible the advent of a new universalism. A universalism for a plurality of voices: a pluriversalism.
- This plural universalism will be based on the ultimate acceptance of the notion of parity and equal rights between men and women.
- It will be both an expression and a product of new forms of citizen participation and expertise informed by an environmental awareness that will be global in its reach. These new forms of participation will bring the issues of *buen vivir*, 'development', and 'growth' into the public debate.

- Information and communication technology are opening up ever more opportunities for creativity and personal fulfilment – in art, knowledge, education, health, public affairs, sport, and worldwide human relations.
- The examples of Linux and Wikipedia show just how much can be achieved in terms of creating and sharing knowledge and practice.
- The spread of decentralized and autonomous modes of production and exchange is facilitating ‘ecological transition’, particularly in the social and solidarity economy, where the involvement of women is key.
- The eradication of hunger and deprivation has become an attainable goal, provided existing material resources are distributed more fairly, within the framework of newly shaped alliances between actors in the North and South

## Chapter 1

### The central challenge

None of today’s promises can be fully realized unless we address the many different kinds of threat confronting us. In one group we have threats of a largely material, technical, ecological, and economic kind. We might term these *entropic*. Despite the enormous problems they raise, we could, in principle, respond to them in kind. What stops us from doing so is the fact that they are still not obvious to everyone, and mobilizing opposition to threats that are ill-defined and of uncertain timing is difficult. Mobilization of this kind is only conceivable as part of an ethics of the future. But at a much deeper level, what paralyzes us is our even greater incapacity merely to envisage responses to a second type of threat: threats of a moral or political kind. Threats we might call *anthropic*.

#### The root of all threats

Given this situation, there is one obvious and tragic fact we now have to face up to.

Humankind has achieved astonishing technical and scientific feats but has remained as incapable as ever of resolving its fundamental problem, namely how to manage rivalry and violence between human beings. How to get them to co-operate – so that they can develop and each give the best of themselves – and at the same time enable them to compete with one another without resorting to mutual slaughter. How

to halt the now limitless and potentially self-annihilating accumulation of power over humankind and nature. Unless it can come up swiftly with answers to this question, humankind faces extinction. And yet, all the material conditions for its success are present – we need only embrace, once and for all, the notion that these conditions are finite.

### **The current responses**

In finding a response to this problem, we have numerous elements to draw on, elements furnished, down the centuries, by religion, by moral teachings, political doctrines, philosophy, and the human and social sciences – insofar as these have not lapsed into moralism or idealism of an impotent or sectarian kind, or again into arid scientism. It is these precious elements that we need urgently to gather together and elucidate. And the account we offer must be easily understood and shared by all those in the world – the vast majority – who see their hopes dashed, who are suffering as a result of current developments, or are in dread of them, and who would like to help, to the extent that they can and in proportion to their means, with the task of safeguarding the world and humankind.

There are countless initiatives already working along these lines, with the backing of tens of thousands of organizations and groups and hundreds of millions of individuals. They appear in an infinite number of guises and sizes: movements for men's and women's rights, citizens' rights, the rights of workers, the unemployed, and children; the social and solidarity economy, with its various components – producer and consumer cooperatives, mutualism, fair trade, parallel and complementary currencies, local exchange trading systems, and numerous mutual-aid associations; the digital sharing-economy (Linux, Wikipedia etc.); de-growth and post-development; the 'slow food', 'slow town', and 'slow science' movements; the call for *buen vivir*, the affirmation of the rights of nature, and the admiration for *Pachamama*; alter-globalization, political ecology and radical democracy, the *indignados* and Occupy Wall Street; the quest to identify alternative wealth-indicators; movements for personal growth, for 'simple living', for 'frugal abundance', and for a 'dialogue of civilizations'; the 'ethics of care', the new 'commons' thinking, and so on.

If these immensely rich and varied initiatives are to prove strong enough to counter the life-threatening trends of the present day, and avoid being confined to protest or palliation, it is vital that their strengths and energies be combined. To do this, we need to identify and highlight what they have in common.

What they have in common is a quest for *convivialism* (the rubric we suggest to cover the minimum set of principles on

which we need to agree). By convivialism we mean a mode of living together (*con-vivere*) that values human relationships and cooperation and enables us to challenge one another without resorting to mutual slaughter and in a way that ensures consideration for others and for nature. We talk of challenging one another because to try to build a society where there is no conflict between groups and individuals would be not just delusory but disastrous. Conflict is a necessary and natural part of every society, not only because interests and opinions constantly differ – between parents and children, elders and juniors, men and women, the very wealthy and the very poor, the powerful and the powerless, the fortunate and the unfortunate – but also because every human being aspires to have their uniqueness recognized and this results in an element of rivalry as powerful and primordial as the aspiration, also common to all, to harmony and cooperation.

A healthy society is one that manages on the one hand to satisfy each individual's desire for recognition, and accommodate the element of rivalry – of wanting permanently to reach beyond oneself, and of opening up to the risks this entails – and on the other hand to prevent that desire from degenerating into excess and hubris and instead foster an attitude of cooperative openness to the other. It succeeds in accommodating diversity – among individuals, groups, peoples, states, and nations – whilst ensuring this plurality does not turn into a war of all against all. In short, we have to make conflict a force for life rather than a force for death. And we have to turn rivalry into a means of cooperation, a weapon with which to ward off violence and the destruction it entrains.

What we now have to invest our hopes in is that this really is what humankind has been searching for since the start of its history: a solid basis – ethical, economic, ecological, and political – on which to build a shared existence. A basis we have never really identified before, or have always been too quick to dismiss. We shall find it by looking to the sacred, to primitive religions and the great universal religions and quasi-religions: Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We shall also find it by looking to reason, to the great philosophical traditions and to secular and humanist moral teachings. And lastly we shall find it by looking to freedom, to the great political ideologies of the modern age: liberalism, socialism, communism, and anarchism. What will vary in each case is the emphasis placed on the duties and aspirations ascribed to the individual (morality) and to the group (politics), or on the relationship we should have with nature (ecology), with the transcendent (religion), and with material well-being (economics), depending on the scale and numbers involved. After all, teaching a handful of people to live together in the knowledge of their similarities and non-

destructive differences is one thing; teaching millions, or thousands of millions to do so, is quite another.

## Chapter 2

### The four (plus one) basic questions

What we need now, urgently, is a minimum set of principles we can all subscribe to, which will enable us all to give simultaneous, planet-wide answers to a minimum of four basic questions.

#### The four (plus one) basic questions

- *The moral question:* What may individuals legitimately aspire to and where must they draw the line?
- *The political question:* Which are the legitimate political communities?
- *The ecological question:* What may we take from nature and what must we give back?
- *The economic question:* How much material wealth may we produce, and how should we go about producing it if we are to remain true to the answers given to the moral, political, and ecological questions?
- An optional addition to this list of four is the question of our relationship to the transcendent or unseen: *the religious or spiritual question.*

One thing we should note here is that none of the collections of beliefs that have come down to us, be they religious or secular, provides a satisfactory answer to all four (or five) of these questions – let alone one that matches up, in scale or power, to the challenges currently facing the planet. The world's various religions, qua religions, are having difficulty updating their message to reflect the right politics, the right economics, and the right ecological practice. Meanwhile, modern-day political ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, communism, and anarchism have remained, qua ideologies, far too silent on the moral and ecological question. They have all assumed that human conflict results from material scarcity and from the difficulty of satisfying material needs. They conceive of human beings as creatures of need, not of desire. As a result, they have invested their hopes in the prospect of never-ending economic growth, which it is presumed will bring eternal peace on earth. But this assumption is not (or no longer) tenable. The aspiration to never-ending material growth sparks off as many conflicts as it resolves, if not more.

Most importantly, it takes no account of the now undeniable finiteness of the planet and its natural resources. Whether intrinsically desirable or not, unrestricted economic growth cannot provide a lasting solution to human conflict. At an average growth-rate of 3.5 per cent per annum, for example, world GDP would increase by a factor of 31 within a century. Do we envisage thirty-one times as much oil and uranium being consumed and thirty-one times as much CO<sub>2</sub> being produced in 2100 as compared with today?

### **Some tasks for thinkers**

The increasing inability of political parties and institutions to tackle the problems of our time and to gain, or even retain, the trust of the majority, stems from their incapacity to reformulate the democratic ideal – the only acceptable ideal because the only one that accommodates opposition and conflict. To do this, they would have to break with the twofold postulate that still governs mainstream political thinking – the thinking that inspires government policy and is the only one currently able to make it to power. The postulates in question are:

- the absolute primacy of economic issues over all others
- the limitless abundance of natural resources (or their artificially created substitutes)

Faced with the problems of today and tomorrow, political institutions, in their various guises, thus have nothing but yesterday's answers to offer us.

The same is true of the intellectual and scientific world, particularly the domain of social science and moral and political philosophy. It is from within this domain, because we are directly involved in it and well placed to assess the inadequacy of its theoretical tools, that we have taken it upon ourselves to draw up this manifesto, in the hope that it will resonate in the other fields of study.

It is important to understand that the generalized financialization of the world, and the subordination of all human activities to market or quasi market norms – under the aegis of what is generally termed 'neoliberalism' – was preceded, and as it were pre-emptively legitimized, by a sort of revolution, or counter-revolution, in economic, political, and social thought. A counter-revolution that culminated in the idea of the 'end of history', which, it was posited, would bring with it the global triumph of the market over all human activity, and the subordination of the democratic order to this one objective. Until the 1970s, the science of economics had confined its ambitions to explaining events in the goods and services markets in terms of *homo oeconomicus* – in

other words, in terms of the notion that, where the market is concerned, human beings must be thought of *as if they were* separate individuals, indifferent to one another and concerned solely to maximize their individual advantage. It then began to claim wider application for its theories, across all human and social activities. From then on, everything had to be justified in terms of rational, economic calculations based on monetary or symbolic profitability. For the most part, the other social sciences fell into line behind the economists. Political philosophy, for its part, realigned itself primarily around the problem of how to define justice-related norms and get 'rational' – that is, mutually indifferent – individuals to sign up to these.

From the start of the 1980s, it was thus a pan-economic vision of the social world – and indeed of the natural world – that held sway in the scientific and philosophical domains. The door was now wide open, in the Anglo-Saxon world – and in more and more other countries – to the dismantling of all social and political regulations in favour of solely market-based rules. After all: if human beings are merely economic entities, what language could they possibly comprehend other than that of self-interest, barter, 'something for something', and contractual obligation?

Based on this postulate, 'neo-management' took shape and began to spread across the globe, including in the public sector. If one assumes there is no 'intrinsic incentive' to work, and that nothing is done out of a sense of duty, or solidarity, or pleasure in a task well done, or out of a yen to create, then of course the only option is to activate 'extrinsic incentives' such as the desire for gain or hierarchical advancement. *Libido dominandi* – the lust for power – together with benchmarking and continuous reporting then become the basic tools in the exercise of 'lean' or 'stress-based' management.

Little by little, every area of life, down to emotions, friendships, and loves, found itself subject to the logic of accountancy and management.

More specifically, if the only object of existence is ultimately to make as much money as possible, then why not try to do this as quickly as possible, through financial speculation? Accordingly, the spread of market values opened the door to the rule of maximum speculative profitability and ultimately led, in 2008, to the subprime crisis – which in all likelihood will have a number of much more violent and painful 'aftershocks'. If the prime legitimate goal ascribed to human beings, and prized by society – the goal that trumps all others – is to make as much money as possible, it should come as no surprise that a climate of corruption is overtaking the world, facilitated by increasing collusion between the political and financial classes – at once a cause and effect of the universal spread of speculative and rentier values.

The charge against mainstream economics is that it has played a major part in shaping the world which it claimed to be describing and elucidating, that it has helped endow *homo oeconomicus* with ever greater substance, at the expense of all the other features that constitute human nature, and, by the same token, that it has – unsurprisingly – proved itself incapable of devising any credible remedies to deal with the catastrophe which it has helped to engender. To this must be added its manifest inability to pay regard to the finiteness of nature: it assumes that science and technology will always come up with replacements for natural resources that have run out or been destroyed. One urgent intellectual and theoretical task is therefore to put the economy and economics back in their place, notably by redirecting the latter's gaze to broad swathes of reality which, knowingly or unknowingly, it has been disregarding.

Another urgent task is to help foster forms of human and social science, of moral and political philosophy, that are permanently immunized against the pan-economic virus, that are finally able to see a human being as more than a mere *homo oeconomicus* and can thus consider in their entirety the problems that are inevitably thrown up by the legitimate desire of all individuals to achieve due recognition. What can we do to prevent such struggles for recognition from degenerating, as they so often do, into struggles for power and narcissistic confrontations that endanger the very ends and causes in whose name they claim to be taking place?

One approach is to posit that the well-being of all depends on the construction of a care-based society and the development of public policies that place a high value on work done for others and on those engaged in care-giving. Care and compassion – activities to which, historically, it is mainly women who have been assigned – are a human being's prime concern because they offer the clearest proof that no one is self-made, and that we all depend on one another. Care and gift are the tangible, immediate translation into action of the interdependence that characterizes the whole of humankind. Lastly, we shall have to learn how to devise a more lasting relationship with nature, and with culture. This implies resolutely moving beyond the narrow horizons of the present moment and the short term. We need at once to project ourselves into the future and to re-appropriate our past – meaning the past of the whole of humankind, with its rich diversity of cultural traditions. A new humanism, broader and more radical, is what we need to invent, and this implies developing new forms of humanity as well.

## Chapter 3

### On convivialism

*Convivialism* is the term used to describe all those elements in existing systems of belief, secular or religious, that help us identify principles for enabling human beings simultaneously to compete and cooperate with one another, with a shared concern to safeguard the world and in the full knowledge that we form part of that world and that its natural resources are finite. Convivialism is not a new doctrine, another addition to the list of doctrines, that claims to invalidate or move radically beyond these. It is the process of mutual questioning that arises between these doctrines under the pressure of looming disaster. It aims to preserve what is most valuable from each of the doctrines we have inherited. And what is it that is most valuable? How should we go about defining it? There is not, and cannot be – indeed should not be – a single, unequivocal answer to this question. It is up to each of us to decide what we think. Having said that – caught as we are between potential disaster and promising future, and hoping to find elements we can universalize, or pluriversalize – we do have one criterion available to us when it comes to deciding what we should retain from each doctrine. We must, without question, retain: anything that helps us understand how to manage conflict in a way that ensures it does not degenerate into violence; anything that helps us cooperate within the bounds imposed on us by limited resources; and anything which acknowledges the credibility of answers which other doctrines propose to this same question and thus opens us up to dialogue and challenge.

These considerations are sufficient to enable us to plot the overall lines of a universalizable set of beliefs suited to the urgent demands of the day and global in scale – although concrete application of it will necessarily be local and dependent on circumstance; and although there will clearly be as many, perhaps conflicting, permutations of convivialism as there are of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, liberalism, socialism, communism, etc. – not least because convivialism in no way invalidates these.

#### General considerations

The only legitimate kind of politics is one that is inspired by principles of common humanity, common sociality, individuation, and managed conflict.

The principle of common humanity. Beyond differences in skin-colour, nationality, language, culture, religion and wealth, gender and sexual orientation, there is only one humanity, and that humanity must be respected in the person of each of its members.

The principle of common sociality. Human beings are social beings and their greatest wealth lies in their social relationships.

The principle of individuation. Always bearing in mind these two first principles, a legitimate politics is one that allows each of us to assert our distinctive evolving individuality as fully as possible by developing our *capabilities*, our potential to be and to act without harming others' potential to do the same, with a view to achieving *equal freedom for all*.

The principle of managed conflict. Given that each of us has the power to express our distinctive individuality, it is natural that human beings should sometimes oppose one another. But it is only legitimate for them to do so as long as this does not jeopardize the framework of common sociality that ensures this rivalry is productive and non-destructive. *Good politics* is therefore politics that allows human beings to be individual by accepting and managing conflict.

## Chapter 4

### Moral, political, ecological, and economic considerations

We suggest the following as a minimum list of general factors to be taken into consideration.

#### Moral considerations

What each individual may legitimately aspire to is to be accorded equal dignity with all other human beings, to have access to material conditions sufficient to enable them to realize their notion of the good life – with due regard for others' notion of the same – and, if they so desire, to seek the recognition of others by playing a meaningful part in political life and in the making of decisions that affect their future and the future of their community.

What an individual must refrain from is crossing the bounds into excess and into an infantile desire for omnipotence (what the Greeks called 'hubris') – in other words, violating the principle of common humanity and putting common sociality at risk by purporting to belong to some superior class of beings or by appropriating and monopolizing possessions and power in such a way that the lives of all within society are compromised. What this means, in concrete terms, is that each of us is duty-bound to fight corruption. From a passive point of view, this implies refusing to do anything that goes against one's

conscience – in life, in work, in our activities in general – in exchange for money (or power or prestige). In other words, refusing to be lured away from what we believe to be right and intrinsically desirable. From an active point of view, it implies fighting the corruption practised by others, to whatever extent our personal means and courage allow.

### Political considerations

The idea that we shall see a *single* world state established at any time in the foreseeable future is idle fancy. Even though new political configurations are currently being sought – notably in Europe – and even though interest groups and NGOs offer various alternative modes of political action, the dominant form of political organization will continue, for a long time to come, to be one based on a *plurality* of states – whether national, pluri-national, pre-national, or post-national. From the convivialist point of view, states, governments, and political institutions cannot be regarded as legitimate unless:

- They respect the four principles of common humanity, common sociality, individuation, and managed conflict, and take steps to implement the moral, ecological, and economic consequences that follow from these.
- These principles are part of a generalized extension of rights – not just civil and political rights, but economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights – and renew and extend the spirit of the Declaration of Philadelphia (the 1944 re-writing of the aims of the International Labour Organization), Article II of which states that: '[A]ll human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.' Good politics is politics based on dignity.

More specifically, states acknowledged as legitimate guarantee their poorest citizens minimum resources – in other words, a *minimum income*, in whatever form, which safeguards them from the degradation of extreme poverty. At the same time, by instituting a *maximum income*, they gradually halt the shift of the wealthiest towards the degradation of excess and towards a threshold beyond which the principles of common humanity and common sociality are rendered null and void. That threshold can be pitched relatively high, but no higher than is dictated by common decency.

- They ensure ongoing balance between private, common, collective, and public goods and interests.

- They foster the spread – upstream and downstream of the state and market – of the kinds of associational activities that make up a world-wide civil society in which the principle of self-government once again comes into its own, operating in multiple spaces of civic engagement above and below the level of states and nations.
- They see digital networks – of which the Internet is a key example, but not the only one – as a powerful tool for democratizing society and for generating solutions that neither the market nor the state has managed to come up with. They treat them as commons and foster them through a policy of openness, free access, impartiality, and sharing.
- They reinvigorate the old tradition of public service, putting into operation a policy of preservation of the common goods that exist in traditional societies and fostering the emergence, consolidation, and extension of new common goods for humanity.

### **Ecological considerations**

Human beings can no longer view themselves as proprietors and masters of nature. On the assumption that, far from being its adversary, they are actually a part of it, they must re-establish with it – at least metaphorically – a relationship based on gift and counter-gift. In order to ensure ecological justice in our own times, and be able to pass on a well-stewarded natural heritage to future generations, humans must give back to nature as much as, or more than, they take or receive from it.

- The level of material prosperity that can feasibly be extended to the whole of the planet – using today's production-techniques – is approximately equal to that enjoyed, on average, by the wealthiest countries in 1970 or thereabouts. Given that we cannot require the same degree of ecological effort from the countries that have been exploiting nature for centuries and from those that are only just beginning to do so, from the richest and the poorest, it is up to the wealthiest countries to take steps to ensure the demands they make on nature are steadily reduced relative to 1970s standards. If they wish to maintain their present quality of life, then this is the prime goal to which technical progress must be directed, so that predatory consumption is significantly reduced.
- The number-one priority is to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to look mainly to renewable alternatives to nuclear energy and fossil fuels.
- The gift/counter-gift relationship, and the relationship of interdependence, must be applied to animals – which

must no longer be thought of as fodder for industry – and to the earth in general.

### **Economic considerations**

There is no proven link between monetary and material wealth on the one hand and happiness and well-being on the other. The ecological state of the planet requires that we seek out all possible forms of prosperity that do not involve growth. This means aiming for a plural economy and striking a varying balance between the market, the public economy, and the associational (social and solidarity) economy, depending on whether the goods and services to be produced are individual, collective, or common.

- The market and the quest for profitability are entirely legitimate endeavours as long as they respect the principles of common humanity and common sociality – notably via trade-union (and social) rights – and as long as they are consistent with the ecological considerations set out previously.
- The prime task is to fight the financial economy's drift to rentierism and speculation, which is the principal cause of current capitalist excesses. This implies preventing the uncoupling of the real economy from the financial economy, imposing strict regulations on banking activities and on financial and raw-materials markets, restricting the size of banks, and doing away with tax havens.
- This will make possible the exploitation of all humanity's riches, which encompass so much more than mere economic, material, and monetary wealth: the sense of duty done, for example, or of solidarity and fun; creativity in every guise – in art, technology, science, literature, and sport. In a word, all the riches inherent in any kind of gratuitous action or creativity, and in our relations with others.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Where do we start?**

Building a convivialist society in which all can share, which works to secure an adequate level of prosperity and well-being for all and does not look to endless upward growth, ever more elusive and dangerous, to provide these – this, and the battle against all forms of unrestraint and excess which

it necessitates, is no trivial undertaking. The task will be demanding and dangerous. We must not delude ourselves: if we want to succeed, we will have to face up to some formidable forces: financial, physical, technical, scientific, intellectual, military – and criminal.

### **What can we do?**

In dealing with these huge, often invisible or unlocatable, forces, our three principal weapons will be:

- *Indignation* in the face of excess and corruption, and the feeling of *shame* which we must evoke in those who, directly or indirectly, actively or passively, are violating the principles of common humanity and common sociality.
- The *feeling of belonging to a world-wide human community*, of being one of millions, tens of millions, indeed billions of individuals – from every country of the world, speaking every language, representing every culture and every religion, and drawn from all types of social conditions – all fighting for the same thing: a fully human world. To highlight this, the members of this community should adopt a common theme or symbol indicating that they are engaged in a battle against corruption and unrestraint.
- A reaching beyond 'rational choice' and a *marshalling of emotions and passions*. No enterprise, be it of the worst or the best kind, can succeed without these. The worst kind is the call to murder, which fuels totalitarian, sectarian, and fundamentalist passions. The best kind is the quest to build truly democratic, civilized, convivialist societies right across the planet.
- Armed with these basic tools, those who identify with the principles of convivialism will be able to make a major impact on established political practice and invest all their creativity in devising alternative modes of living, producing, playing, loving, thinking, and teaching – convivial modes, in which we compete without hating or destroying one another, in which we seek to re-territorialize, re-localize, and open ourselves up to global associationist civil society. That society is already coming into being in numerous forms, notably via the many different facets of the social and solidarity economy, via all the different permutations of participative democracy, and as a result of our experiences in global social forums.
- The Internet, the new technologies, and science itself are available to help us build this civil society, at once local and global in scope, firmly rooted yet open to change. A new kind of progressivism is emerging, one that is free of any kind of economism or scientism or tendency

automatically to assume that 'more' and 'new' mean 'better'.

- As a way of symbolizing the unity of convivialism, and giving it concrete shape, and as a way of bringing different points of view together and being able to advance convivialist solutions with the kind of authority and media attention demanded by the many urgent problems we face, it would perhaps be politic to set up a Worldwide Assembly comprising representatives from global associationist civil society, from philosophy, the human and social sciences, and the various ethical, spiritual, and religious schools of thought that identify with the principles of convivialism.

### **Rupture and transition**

There will have to be a huge shift in worldwide public opinion if we are to steer away from our present course, which is leading us to probable – or at any rate possible – disaster. The hardest task we face in achieving this shift is to come up with a set of political, economic, and social measures that will make clear to as many of us as possible the ways in which we will benefit from a convivialist 'new deal' – not just in the medium or long term, but right now. There is no blanket formula here. Too much depends on the specific historical, geographical, cultural, and political context in each country or region, and in each supra-regional or supra-national grouping. That said, any practicable convivialist policy will need to take the following into account:

- The urgent requirement for justice and common sociality. This implies resolving the staggering inequalities which the last forty years have seen open up all over the world between the very wealthy and the rest of the population. It implies instituting both a minimum and a maximum income, at a pace suited to local circumstances.
- The need to revitalize territories and localities, and thus re-territorialize and re-localize the things which globalization has divorced from their natural context. Convivialism is undoubtedly only possible if we open up to others – but it is, equally, only possible from within like-minded groupings robust enough to inspire confidence and fellow-feeling.
- The absolute necessity of safeguarding natural resources and the environment. This should be seen not as an added chore or burden but as a wonderful opportunity to invent new ways of living, to discover new sources of creativity, and to bring territories back to life.
- The compelling obligation to banish unemployment and ensure everyone has a proper role and function as part

of pursuits that are useful to society. The development of policies designed to promote re-territorialization and respond to environmental challenges will play an important role here. However, this policy of job reallocation will not come into its own or have a powerful enough impact unless it is combined with measures to reduce working hours and with a major boost to help the spread of the associationist (social and solidarity) economy.

In Europe, an added weakness has emerged, over and above those experienced by other regions of the world. Its cause lies in the rashness with which economic and monetary integration has been driven forward, with no matching integration in the political and social spheres. This lack of synchrony has left a number of countries in the European set-up in an unacceptable state of impotence and impoverishment. Whatever solution is adopted, it must, in one way or another, bring monetary, political, and social sovereignty back into line.

Where convivialism is translated into practical action, it has to provide real-life answers to the urgent question of how to improve the lives of the disadvantaged, and to the urgent question of how to build an alternative to our present way of life, fraught as it is with dangers of all kinds. It has to provide an alternative that no longer believes, or would have us believe, that never-ending economic growth can still be the answer to all our woes.

### **Convivialist Manifesto**

A different kind of world is not just possible; it is a crucial and urgent necessity. But where do we start when it comes to envisaging the shape it should take and working out how to bring it about? The Convivialist Manifesto seeks to highlight the similarities between the many initiatives already engaged in building that world and to draw out the common political philosophy that underlies them.

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This little book is the product – a very tentative one – of a series of discussions conducted by a group of forty or so French-speaking writers, from very varied theoretical and practical backgrounds, whose aim is to try to plot the outlines of a viable alternative world. Following the drafting of a first version by Alain Caillé, and the resultant entry of a further twenty or so participants to the group, numerous amendments were made, enabling us eventually to reach very broad agreement on the text you are about to read. As one might expect, none of the signatories agrees with everything, but all of them agree that attempting to set down what is essentially the ‘highest common denominator’ of the various alternative currents of thought has been a worthwhile endeavour.

Indeed, the chief merit of the Convivialist Manifesto, so we believe, is that it testifies to the ability of these writers – who otherwise frequently find themselves at odds with one another – to focus on what unites rather than on what divides them, and to indicate in which areas and along which lines this consensus can be elaborated and more firmly anchored.

To judge by the many expressions of support we have already received, and the countless offers of translation that were made even before the first version was published, it seems reasonable to conclude that this Manifesto answers a real need – the need, at the very least, to swell our ranks and thus become powerful enough to mount an effective opposition to the disruptive forces affecting the world.

The ideas expressed in this Manifesto are not owned by anyone. Their fate will be decided by those who read them – who may choose either to develop or to dispute them. For the present, readers who would like to show their support for the Manifesto’s core message, and be kept informed of developments, are invited to visit our website at <http://lesconvivialistes.fr/>.