

Convivialism or barbarism: The new convivialist manifesto

Dialogues in Sociology
1–20
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DOI: 10.1177/29768667261442861
journals.sagepub.com/home/dss



Alain Caillé¹ and Frédéric Vandenberghe² 

Abstract

The Convivialist movement was founded over a decade ago in order to meet the challenges that our inherited modern political philosophies – liberalism, socialism, communism and anarchism – are no longer able to meet. Convivialism is a new political philosophy that aims to give a coherent answer to the most urgent problems of today. This new manifesto updates the diagnosis of the ecological, economic, ideological, anthropological, democratic and geostrategic challenges. It has been written in the hope of serving as a basis for discussion and as a possible starting point for debates between social movements from the North, South, East and West, to elaborate a solemn Declaration of General Interdependence.

Keywords

convivialism, basic principles, struggle, recognition, pluriversalism, global citizens' parliament, declaration of general interdependence

Introduction

Why a new convivialist manifesto? Because the conflicts that are now engulfing the world are identity conflicts. Every state, every culture, every religion, every gender, every individual wants to be recognized as having more or at least as much value as others. These struggles for recognition, in which everyone wants to assert a denied value or regain lost greatness (Make America, or Russia, or China etc. great again), are destroying all the moral and democratic balances we have inherited. They are leading the world towards a new struggle of all against all. *Convivialism or barbarism: The new convivialist manifesto* is intended as a contribution to the preparation of a major symposium at UNESCO that will bring together a hundred of the highest intellectual, moral and religious authorities of our time, who will be asked to say what is permitted and what is forbidden to humans now that the very survival of humanity is at stake.

Towards a declaration of general interdependence

The aim of this *New Convivialist Manifesto* is to set a dynamic in motion. A dynamic of survival. Or rather, to set a new horizon for better living – together. For a variety of reasons, the future of our planet and humankind looks bleaker and more uncertain with each passing day. The confrontation of ever more formidable economic, financial, military and techno-scientific powers, the over-exploitation of nature and the acceleration of global warming leave us with little choice but to chart an alternative course. All these factors are contributing

¹Paris-Ouest-Nanterre University, Paris, France

²State University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Corresponding author:

Alain Caillé, Paris-Ouest-Nanterre University, Paris, France.

Email: alaincaille90@gmail.com

to a state of growing barbarism and a struggle of all against all – and against the planet. It is *now* – that is, in the next few years – that we, members of humanity, are called to raise our self-awareness and the reckoning of our place in the world. Do we want to persist in a trajectory of escalating power and barbarism that leads to our own demise, except for the survival of an ultra-wealthy few? Or will we show ourselves both willing and able to curb the disparities of power and serve the common good?

How can humanity become self-aware? Certainly not by adding up the voices and opinions of individuals. Our proposal, since it is a question of consciousness, is to bring together some of the highest intellectual, moral, scientific and religious authorities (the best known, and therefore the most influential) representative of the traditions specific to the different cultural areas of the globe. Each of these is the repository and culmination of an age-old process of reflection. Uniting them is a chance to ward off violence and avoid a war of all against all.

It is true that words are weak next to weapons, and that good intentions are not enough. But if the personalities brought together succeed in agreeing on a *common denominator* as to what humans are empowered to aspire and undertake, and, conversely, what they should be restrained from doing, this could be the start of a global shockwave of potentially irresistible force. A shockwave fueled by a clear understanding of the general interdependence in which we live. An interdependence – between all humans, all societies, and with nature – that is the very condition of living on Earth.

Who should choose these personalities, and according to which criteria? There is no good answer to this question a priori. All that can be done for the moment is to invite NGOs and networks dedicated to serving the common good and human dignity to join the dynamic. Each will develop and defend its own conception of what we can aspire to and what is not permissible if we want humanity to have a future. A beautiful future. The documents drawn up by each of the networks involved in this dynamic will act as working documents for the global convivialist assemblies of these representatives. These proceedings will give birth to a general and global *Declaration of Interdependence*. This Declaration

will be added to the *Declaration of Human Rights* and addresses the new challenges we are faced with today.

The present *New Convivialist Manifesto* is a primer for this dynamic, a call to ideas and a working document. It is bound to dialogue with other documents and endeavors of the same type.

Nota bene: To those who are legitimately worried about the idea of entrusting the discussion on humanity's moral standards to a handful of wise women and men speaking for 'ordinary' people, we think that if they are indeed wise (and hopefully more so than many involved in institutionalized politics and its short-term quest for power), they will know that their task is limited to the design of general principles, while all of the concrete decisions and measures can only be made by ordinary humans of good will with respect to local conditions, institutions and concerns. Yet a reflection on these general principles and some of their implications is necessary to guide and frame practical and local applications.

Why a new convivialist manifesto?

The Convivialist movement was founded over a decade ago in order to meet the challenges that our inherited modern political philosophies – liberalism, socialism, communism and anarchism – are no longer able to meet. We need new philosophical bases (Convivialist International, 2014, 2020). This is why Convivialism is about founding principles. At its core is the art of living together. The ability to coexist, thrive and even to oppose each other – without killing each other. This is basically what all religions and philosophical systems in the world have sought to do. The current disarray in which we find ourselves today is largely due to the fact that we no longer know which of these systems we should devote ourselves to, and to which cultural and philosophical resources we should draw from. The political ideologies of Western modernity are not dead, but they are proving to be powerless to enlighten our present, not to mention the future. They also tend to be dismissive of non-Western traditions and fail to take the finiteness of the Earth's resources into account.

Neoliberalism – the ideology and set of policies that posit that infinite economic growth is the best and only solution to the world’s problems – thrives on the obsolescence of our former grand ideologies. It has come to dominate the world as an inescapable mold. It is a simplistic answer, but one that is effective in making people believe it is pragmatic and that there are no real alternatives. Neoliberalism is based on two axioms:

1. Greed is good.
2. There is no such thing as society. There are only individuals driven by greed.

These two axioms are false and deleterious. They can only lead to the breakdown of all social ties, the struggle of all against all, the general aspiration to omnipotence and the irreversible degradation of our environment. Applied neoliberalism funnels economic resources and power to an out-of-touch financial elite and its dependents, undermines democracy, fuels inequalities, provokes increasing insecurity, environmental degradation and mass movements of population through migration. It then catalyzes increasingly strong counterreactions that fail to address the true causes of this disarray. Faced with the sense of desolation created by the loss of social ties and the worsening economic situation of the majority, the only remedy seems to be the revival of nationalism and racism, authoritarianism and the erosion of the Rule of Law, as well as masculinism and fundamentalism. Since society is falling apart and our livelihoods are menaced, these strong men say, let us make our nation as strong as possible. Let us rebuild our society, but only for those who share our skin color, our religion and our national heritage. And let us entrust our future to these authoritarian leaders who will drain the swamp, calm the waters and protect us from all of those who are not like us and do not think like us.

Around the world, the same scenario keeps repeating itself in a vertiginous crescendo. The ravages wrought by the hegemony of the neoliberal ideology and speculative and financial capitalism is producing the rise to power of authoritarian leaders, hand in hand with the class of ultra-rich tech capitalists who want to go even further along the path of

economic and environmental deregulation and the destruction of the welfare state. The paradox is only apparent. Voters vote for ever more radically neoliberal politicians because they present themselves as ever more nationalistic and racist. *Subjectively*, these figures provide disillusioned voters with more meaning and reasons to live and hope. They pretend to destroy a system that has left so many behind. Yet *objectively*, they contribute to lower standards of living for the majority in the short or medium term, axe social provisions that provided protection for the left-behind and channel even more resources to business elites. Voters are ready to accept the effects of these policies because they cling to, believe and cherish the imaginary remedies authoritarians advocate to take hold of power. More and more societies are becoming trapped in this vicious circle in which all values of truth, humanity and justice are set to collapse. ‘I don’t care what’s true, what’s a fact and what is fake, what is legal and what is illegal, as long as I can feel big and powerful in the shade of the Big Man’.

Convivialism offers a way out of this impasse by proposing a few principles from which to build a version of the good life upon which the majority of human beings are likely to agree with, across the diversity of cultures.

User-friendly principles (a reminder)

The times of one-size-fits-all ‘universal’ solutions designed in the West are over. It is time for trying potentially universalizable principles that can ring true from the Fijis to the Arctic, and from South America to Southeast Asia. The feedback we have gathered from the first two Convivialist Manifestos (Convivialist International, 2014, 2020) gives us some reasons to believe our five principles can be just that: universalizable, i.e., potentially appropriated and acculturated almost everywhere on the planet. The first Manifesto – published in 2013 in French, and in 2014 in English (Convivialist International, 2014) – subtitled *Declaration of Interdependence*, attracted the interest of important Chinese, Japanese and Korean philosophers. The Chinese saw the idea of convivialist interdependence as echoing with the ancient

philosophy of *gongsheng*, while the Japanese thought it resonated with the notion of *kyōsei*. Our second manifesto was co-signed by almost three hundred intellectuals from thirty-three different countries, with diverse ideological and political orientations. Both manifestos have been translated into a dozen languages.

After a great deal of discussion, the people who recognize themselves as convivialists agreed on five principles and a ‘categorical imperative’ that we believe must be respected by any society wishing to be a good place to live in while being socially and environmentally sustainable.

One of our great scientific advances has been the discovery of the interdependence of everything, from the microscopic to the macroscopic, from the mineral to the living. One of the great realizations of our globalized world is that we – humans – can now actually *feel* it. Consider how the Covid virus spread from a Chinese market to the remotest places in Africa in a matter of weeks. Interdependence is a fact of life. We better recognize it rather than try to isolate ourselves behind walls and borders that can only provide imaginary protection. Each and every one of us, each and every society, and every living and non-living being in the world, are all linked together. We all have a responsibility towards one another. Our ability to survive, not to mention to live the good life, is dependent on our capacity to build harmony across the levels of our interdependence.

So, here are the principles on which convivialists agree:

The common nature principle. Humans do not live outside of Nature, and there is no ‘pristine Nature’ preserve on the planet by now. Like it or not, we are part of a greater complex of living and non-living beings with which we are interdependent.

The common humanity principle. Beyond differences of skin color, nationality, language, culture, religion or wealth, gender or sexual orientation, we are all human. There is only *one humanity*, diverse and plural, which must be respected in the person of each of its members.

The community principle. Humans are social beings for whom the greatest wealth lies in the relationships we have with each other within smaller and larger communities.

The individuation principle. While respecting these first three principles, legitimate politics are those which enable each individual to have his or her singular individuality recognized by developing her of his capacities and power to act with and for others in the perspective of equal freedom. Unlike narcissistic individualism, the principle of Individuation only recognizes the value of human subjects who assert their singularity while respecting their interdependence with others and with nature.

The creative conflict principle. Since each of us and each of our societies has a vocation to manifest its individuality, it is normal for humans and societies to come into conflict. But it is only legitimate to do so without endangering the framework of Common Nature, Common Humanity and Community that turns conflict into fruitful and non-destructive rivalry.

In addition to these principles, we feel the need to add another, overarching imperative that perhaps goes without saying but is better made explicit:

The mastering hubris imperative. Hubris is human, but taming and channeling its excesses has always been key to the flourishing of cultures and individuals since prehistoric times. For rivalry to serve the common good – i.e., equilibrium and harmony among all five principles – rather than having it spill into barbarism and brutalism requires the art of taming unbound desires for power (omnipotence) and wealth (*pleonexia*: the desire to possess more and more). There is nothing wrong with striving to be the best and wanting to excel, but only as long as it is also beneficial to others.

Taking stock of the past while looking to the future

It was only gradually that it came to us convivialists that the last four principles actually expressed the heart of each of the four great Western modern political ideologies. The Common Humanity principle can be seen as deriving from communism. The Creative Conflict principle can be seen as deriving from (political, economic and cultural) liberalism. The Community (or common sociality) principle can be seen as expressing the core of socialism. Finally, the Individuation principle can be seen as deriving from anarchism. As for the Common Nature principle, it encapsulates the core concern of environmentalism and political ecology. One of the critiques of the environmental movement has been to denounce its too narrow focus on ecological issues and its failure to expand into a viable and full-fledged political avenue that does not wholesale social and individual well-being and 'end-of-the-month' concerns to 'end-of-the-world' catastrophism and enforced killjoy asceticism. Convivialism, we believe, squares that circle.

The imperative of controlling *hubris* is in fact a meta-principle, the principle of principles. It traverses all others and serves as a regulator and safeguard. For, taken to the extreme and untempered by the others, each principle runs the risk of inverting into its opposite. The love of Nature turns into a hatred of humanity. The love of an abstract Humanity turns into a hatred of imperfect and limited, concrete people. Community turns into various forms of racism, exclusive nationalism, closed-off communitarianism, or simply corporatism and clientelism. Legitimate Individuation turns into narcissism, indifference to others, or libertarian anarcho-capitalism. Creative Conflict turns into an agonistic nightmare, the battle of egos, principled opposition and destructive conflicts. The Hubris imperative can therefore be described as 'categorical'.

We have plenty of examples today of unfettered excess – *hubris* – driving an all-around radicalization of all of these basic principles. A world of such excesses – and its corollary in the form of power and wealth grabbing – is unsustainable. It is apt that the ancient Greeks and Romans thought

that *Nemesis* (vengeful justice) fatefully falls on those who thought themselves all-powerful.

What's new in the new convivialist manifesto?

The *Second Convivialist Manifesto* (Convivialist International, 2020) did more than simply set out these principles. It suggested a whole range of economic, social and environmental measures that seemed to flow from these principles. It also proposed a reflection on the relationship between Convivialism and the democratic ideal. Nothing in these manifestos seems outdated or in need of correction. They sketched out the necessity and possibility of radical reformism. Every statement taken from an objective point of view remains valid. But what was not taken sufficiently into account or stressed is essential: the *subjective* dimension of individuals, but also of collectives.

The conflicts that are multiplying around the world undoubtedly have a strong material and objective – i.e., economic and geostrategic – component. The struggle for access to natural resources, minerals, land, water and rare earths is becoming fierce. But it is coupled with and exacerbated by the struggle by individuals and collectives, nations and religions, genders and sexualities and all types of identities, to have their intrinsic value *recognized*. This is a struggle between subjectivities, individual and collective. We argue that it is fueled by the hegemony of neoliberalism, which it reinforces in turn through its inherent process of atomization.

The issue at the bottom of this is that we humans not only have material needs to satisfy but also needs for recognition. Recognition of our worth as individuals and as part of collectives. The explosion of identities and identity politics is bound to the destabilizing processes wrought forth by neoliberal globalization and is heightened by experiences of humiliation and dependency. We can only hope to move beyond neoliberal hegemony while avoiding the pitfalls of reactionary authoritarianism if we are able to address these fundamental needs for recognition. With this in mind, the *New Convivialist*

Manifesto invites us to reconsider the state of the world and the challenges we face.

They are numerous and formidable, let us make no secret of that.

Only those who prefer to cover their eyes and ears are still unaware that humanity is threatened by disasters on a scale far beyond those of the past. Our very survival is now at stake. The world's youth is well aware of this, overwhelmed as it is by loss of meaning, eco-anxiety or closed opportunities and hopes for a decent living. They no longer know how to imagine a future in which they can live, love, invent, work and enjoy themselves in peace, even while local, joyful and creative experiments are multiplying left, right and center in remarkably lively and inspiring forms. Humanity's resources in terms of inventiveness even in the darkest of times is an energy source we need and can tap into.

If we should refrain from an all too easy catastrophism, we still need to make diagnoses with a level head. We see three main types of disaster looming on the horizon, all largely interdependent. The first, the best documented and most immediately visible, is the *climatic and environmental* catastrophe.

The second catastrophe is *geostrategic*. The world order of the Cold War is over, and History did not end with the lighthearted and global triumph of capitalism-infused democracy. Even the unity of 'the West' is put into question. In today's multipolar world, where more than a dozen states can be said to be actual or aspiring regional or global hyperpowers, all vying to assert their status, the risks of large-scale, devastating conflicts are ever-increasing.

The third is the *human* catastrophe. It is more diffuse and multidimensional. It is tied to various levels and different varieties of distress. It materializes in abject poverty of whole segments of the population, or the too common feeling of having no tangible hopes for a future. Hopes for individuation, community, and a place in this world and on our planet. This distress sends whole generations of youth on the death-ridden paths of illegal migration, or in the arms of fundamentalist, jihadist, and criminal organizations. In affluent countries and social classes, addiction to screens and social media is hacking at people's very capacity to think and even read and

write. Not to mention the alarming disasters in terms of public health engendered by processed foods, intensive agriculture and pesticides.

Meanwhile, the extremely rapid and unregulated advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are a source of hope but also of great concern. The ideal of a rational, autonomous, self-aware and well-informed human subject was at the heart of the Western Enlightenment project and a foundation for democracy. The omnipresence of algorithms in the construction of the public sphere and the fabric of everyday life entails formidable consequences that need to be thought out with respect to the common good.

We can only overcome these perils if we are fully aware of the *general interdependence* in which we all find ourselves. This interdependence does not only concern human beings. Our fate is also indissolubly linked to that of the biosphere – Nature or Gaia, however you prefer to name it. We humans are in a symbiotic relationship with all living (and even non-living) things within this encompassing whole. Yet not all humans are equal in the fluxes making this interdependence. The world is divided between rich and poor, North and South, between rival states, between those with influence and the marginalized and excluded, between the powerful and the dominated, believers and non-believers, and so on.

At the same time, it is up to all human beings to take responsibility for their own destiny, by understanding the full implications of their interdependence. To achieve this, we need to be fully aware of the challenges we face along the way, whether economic, ecological, ideological, anthropological, geostrategic, as well as those linked to our uncertainties about the very idea of democracy.

Economic and ecological challenges

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres argues that global warming could be to the human race and many other living species what meteorites were for dinosaurs, and that we need to stop playing Russian roulette with our planet. This is a vindication of environmentalist movements and all those who are mobilizing to try and save what can be saved of the

climate and the biosphere. Unfortunately, however, there is every reason to fear that their struggles will be doomed to failure if they are not backed up by a large-scale ideological offensive. An ideological offensive powerful enough to offer a genuine, positive and seductive alternative to the neoliberal ideology and its reactionary avatars.

Proof of this is provided, if proof were needed, by Trump 2.0's blatant attack on universities and scientific research. The aim is to reduce scientific research as much as possible to eliminate inconvenient facts. For example, research that includes the words 'climate' or 'global warming', but also 'women', 'disabled', 'equity', 'inclusion', 'social justice', 'gender', 'diversity', 'racism', etc. are no longer to be funded by public money. The conjunction of neoliberalism and conspiratorial, masculinist and bellicose nationalism has resulted in a gigantic enterprise of denial and the construction of 'alternate realities'. Reality and truth are no longer tolerable. The very bases for a common are undermined.

For many people, and understandably so, end-of-the-month concerns outweigh more abstract and unpalpable longer-term concerns about the end of the world. Neoliberalism creates a world in perpetual crisis, multiplying emergencies that prevent thinking long term. It seems impossible to convince a majority of citizens to join the fight against global warming and environmental degradation unless a positive vision can convince them that they have everything to gain from escaping the grip of neoliberal illusions of fatality, fear and anger-infused reactionary nationalism. The highest priority is to escape the indexation of all aspects of life to the perversions and hubris of the market as it is instituted in the brand of financialized and offshore capitalism.

A first set of easily achievable measures to begin loosening this stranglehold in the short term would be to recover the unpaid taxes by major corporations (even the IMF agrees on this), to raise a 2% flat tax on the wealth of the world's 3000 known billionaires, and at a lower or equal rate the 22.8 million people whose net wealth (excluding personal residence) exceeds one million dollars. These simple measures, which would recuperate an estimated 86,000 billion dollars for governments, would be

painless for the wealthy (Zucman, 2025). This, combined with an international agreement to bring back corporate tax rates to the levels applied in the United States until the 1970s, would quickly generate *two to three thousand billion dollars per year* (Zucman, 2025). This type of new public wealth is enough to finance basic education, healthcare, social measures and environmental protection worldwide.

As far as the ecological transition is concerned, it is unfair to ask the poorest people in the world, those who have little influence on global warming, to restrict their consumption without first asking the wealthiest people to do so, for they bear responsibility for the present situation. Incidentally, the only way to rally the majority of humans to the environmental struggle is to *guarantee an improvement in the purchasing power of the poorest quarter of the world population*, to ensure that the standard of living of the following 50% is maintained, and to reduce the income and/or wealth of the richest 25%. To achieve this, it is vital to *introduce some form of incompressible minimum income in every country* at a level that is sufficient to prevent people from sinking into dire poverty while maximizing overall wealth and capping excessive wealth accumulation.

To reduce today's extravagant inequalities to less unreasonable levels (two or three dozen people own as much as the poorest half of humanity, or four billion people), world public opinion must be brought to consider these unfathomable discrepancies to be profoundly and fundamentally illegitimate and to support the *outright banning of tax havens*, which represent one of the two central engines of rentier and speculative capitalism. There is no rational or economic argument in favor of their existence, apart from robbing the public and encouraging the laundering of criminally acquired funds. The same is true of cryptocurrencies, which are cloud-located tax havens that have a tremendous cost in terms of energy. Their banning would represent a major step forward in the fight against drug traffickers and mafias, and hence towards the necessary moralization of public and political life.

The second driving force behind rentier and speculative capitalism besides tax havens is the guardianship of states through public debt. In

2023, for example, developing countries spent \$1400 billion to repay their foreign debt, including \$406 billion on interest payments. Many rich countries are also strangled by debt and therefore cannot afford to invest in the transition to a greener economy (OECD, 2025). According to the World Bank (2024), global debt reached \$315,000 billion (€290,000 billion) in 2024. That is more than three times the size of the global GDP. Clearly, such an amount of debt cannot be repaid. It is therefore necessary to revive the ancient practice of ‘jubilee’, which in Mesopotamia and ancient Israel allowed all debts to be canceled at least every fifty years. And, to begin with, provided UNESCO’s educational and health standards are met, it is necessary to cancel the debts of the poorest countries.

The fight against global warming will necessarily involve substituting fossil fuels with renewable energy sources (solar, marine, wind, geothermal, etc.) as quickly as possible. But the main and cleanest sources of energy are those that are not spent. From this point of view, one of the fairest and most effective solutions would be to introduce a form of rationing in the form of a *Carbon Card and an Electricity Pass*, coupled with innovation incentives. Each person would be *allocated* a given CO₂ and kWh quota, depending on the region (e.g., depending on residing in urban or rural areas) and other residential or professional factors. Those who exceed their quota would pay in proportion.

A first step towards energy sobriety would be to limit Internet operators, who rely on energy-intensive data centers and infrastructure. Added to their economic and political power as well as the opaqueness of their algorithms and how they undermine the creation of a neutral public space, it is essential to enforce solid regulations before their influence over our democratic institutions, processes and cultures definitively tips in their favor. It is essential that these giants own the social and fiscal obligations in proportion to the value they extract from their services and the actions of consumers.

All of these measures are more than reasonable, and feasible without any intrinsically dangerous economic disruption. They would in no way affect production and exchange capacities. Quite the contrary, in fact. However, these measures appear

almost unimaginable in the context of the world as it is, because states and nations, at least in the West and the South, have been largely dispossessed of their traditional means of controlling the economic and financial flows that pass through them. At the current stage of humanity’s history, it is only at the level of individual states or proto-federations like the European Union that it is still possible to act against the secession of the financial elites (and criminal networks) who intend to capture the bulk of the planet’s resources for their own benefit, while seeking shelter from the consequences of their predation in protected residential areas.

Rentier and speculative capitalism has basically freed itself from territorial and national anchorage. It thrives in thousands of free ports, closed enclaves, special economic zones and tax havens, immune to all state intervention. It is a machine for destroying the very possibility of a Common Humanity and Community. Fostering feelings of a common humanity and global interconnectedness is a must if we want to confront the *hubris* of global finance.

Ideological challenges: What kind of universal for a common humanity?

No human being can live or even survive without a sense that their existence has meaning. This meaning is provided by the culture into which we are born, by religions, by philosophies and, for the last two or three centuries, by the great political ideologies of modernity: liberalism, socialism, anarchism and communism. Yet they are obviously no longer up to the challenge of our times.

We urgently need a *grand narrative* that can be shared by the majority of humans on this planet. Rather than trying to replace all other inherited, former or current narratives, a way forward is to boil things down to the greatest common denominator. The one that can be heard across the diversity of all human cultures. The five principles of Convivialism for the good life may well represent this common denominator. Or at least a workable version of it.

However, these principles need to be embodied, enculturated and appropriated, and linked to

existing narratives, ideologies and traditions. The principle of Common Humanity, for example, has long animated the great universal religions of Christianity, Mahayana Buddhism and Islam. The principles of Community and Common Nature inspire the Confucian tradition of *gongsheng* in China and *kyosei* in Japan, as well as the *buen vivir* of America's native peoples and the *ubuntu* of southern Africa. The Individuation principle echoes notions found in Taoism, Hinayana Buddhism, and the quest for deliverance (*moksha*) by Hindu renunciants (*sanyasins*). All human cultures across history have created varieties and mixes of these principles.

But the great religions themselves developed from older, more general beliefs and practices, including the cosmologies of the indigenous people, who attributed a subjectivity not only to animals and living things, but also to parts of the physical world. These forms of animism correspond to a spontaneous and universal tendency in the human mind and human cultures to see the world as inhabited by agency. This is what we do every day when we talk of 'Nature' as being generous or even of 'stock markets' as being 'nervous' or 'excited'. This ingrained animism seems to run in contradiction with the supposed objectivity and universality of science and technology. Yet they are just different ways of feeling and looking at the world. Scientific rationality wants to see only material cause-and-effect relationships between material entities devoid of consciousness. Our animistic nature sees intentionality in events, occurrences, animals, and things. We live in both these worlds at once, constantly shifting from one to the other.

Both these worlds are forms of universalism. One is objectivist: The scientific/rational, which divides between subject and object. The other is subjectivist: Animism, which sees interactions between subjects, whether they are human or non-human. Are these two forms of universalism as irreconcilable as they seem? Not necessarily. Scientists are beginning to recognize the existence of consciousness in a whole range of animals, from mammals to insects. Many environmentalists and jurists are proposing that rivers, glaciers and mountains be granted legal personality. Some of these propositions have even been passed into law.

All of this should encourage us to think differently about the question of universalism. Why is this question of universality important? Because it is clear that humanity will not be able to face the terrible trials that lie ahead if it does not recognize itself in a set of shared values. In other words, in a form or another of universalism. This question seems destined to break itself on the obvious observation of the incredible diversity of cultures. A major obstacle in finding a common ground for living in an interconnected world has historically been the West's claim that it could and should impose its own model and definition of the good life on everybody else, by force if necessary. There have also been other stakeholders that have pretended to be the bearers of universal truth and that all of those who do not agree should be either converted, vanquished, exiled, or killed. For sure, there cannot be one 'truth fits all'. So how do you manage to find a common denominator and a potentially universal set of values or principles, when faced with this irreducible diversity of substance?

The fact that the West has sought to impose its vision of democracy by force, as part of the imperial domination it exercised over the planet for centuries, and that this domination has been accompanied by racism and contempt for the dominated populations has made it less and less credible in the eyes of a large part of humanity. In the end, it seems that even if democracy had been effectively instituted and implanted across the world – one that is universally respectful of human rights, justice and universal suffrage – it is less than certain that this would be enough to give human beings sufficient reasons to live.

We must therefore go past the West's political ideologies and look to the great cultural, religious and philosophical traditions the world has produced over the course of the last centuries. Each of them enunciates human, existential and metaphysical truths that are inaccessible to objectivist science. Some indeed claim to be the bearers of an absolute revealed truth. Even if these pretensions were true, the fact remains that these truths have been the subject of multiple and often contradictory interpretations. Interpretations that are properly human, therefore contextual, and at least relatively... relative.

There is no need to make an *a priori* decision between all the existing systems of beliefs, but it is essential to ensure peaceful forms of coexistence in the name of a principle of equal ideological dignity which recognizes that, unless proven otherwise, each one tells us something precious about the human condition. The corollary of this principle is that no one should be forced to believe. In matters of religion, as Islam affirms, there can be no obligation, only consent.

What we must think about, then, is a form of *plural universalism* (or 'pluriversalism') based on the assumption that, across all cultures, a certain number of essential truths have been stated about the human condition, but in languages and concepts that cannot be directly translated into one another. In addition, these truths have been formulated in the context of societies of infinitely variable size, density, cultural geographies, and political or religious traditions. What can be held as true in a tribe of a hundred individuals in a rainforest setting or in a settlement of two or three thousand in semi-arid conditions is obviously not transposable to societies of tens or hundreds of millions of people like in our modern nation-states. And vice versa. The principles of Common Humanity and Community operate on immeasurable scales, depending on whether we assume that only the members of our tribe are truly human, or that all the inhabitants of the planet are. We are dealing with a different combination of Common Humanity and Community every time. And each of these combinations determines a different type and degree of Individuation. The fact remains that, whatever the scale and whichever the context, the same general principles can be said to apply.

Anthropological challenges: What does it mean to be fully human?

The plurality of doctrines, religions and cultural traditions is matched by an equal multiplicity of conceptions of what human beings are or should be. Here too the immense challenge is to agree on a minimum shared vision of what makes us human.

The main point is that in all societies, those whose generosity or inventiveness is appreciated (at least in certain domains and within certain

limits), those who give and give of themselves, are recognized as having value. People who give life, fertility, benefits, harmony and peace to our loved ones or our allies. Or, reversely, people who give death, injury or harm to our enemies. Everywhere, it is how we fit in multiple networks of giving (giving, receiving and giving back) that allows us to be recognized as fully human.

In all societies until very recently, it was primarily between women and men (and their lineages) that the distribution of the roles of donor and receiver was organized. Depending on the society, however, the respective status of women and men – the value placed on them – has been extremely variable. Because of the intensity and duration of caring for infants and young children, women have been identified with the domestic sphere in many complex societies. The importance of these responsibilities has often been met with inferior power to that of men, although this situation has not prevented many women from gaining prestige and reaching the pinnacle of power.

In the eighteenth century, in the wake of the democratic revolutions that shook Western Europe, established social hierarchies, including gender roles, started to be questioned, as were their naturalized or sacred foundations. This led to the rise of emancipation and equality movements, from feminism and minority rights to gay and LGBTQ+ movements. On these 'cultural' issues in particular, there tends to be an abscess of fixation, a huge bone of contention between the most progressive fringes of the West and many societies in the Global South. Even within the West, women and minority rights have given rise to sometimes violent backlashes and the defense of heterosexual and patriarchal models in significant parts of the population.

Particularly spectacular in this respect is the gap, almost everywhere in the world, between the voting of women and that of men. In a nutshell, a majority of young women aspire to more freedom, while many young men want to be reassured in traditional roles. Here too, neoliberalism plays an extraordinarily ambivalent role. In essence, it undermines all forms of solidarity and social belonging. It can therefore only encourage *individual* and atomized

Table 1. The ecological transition.

The climate crisis and other ecological crises are accelerating. Despite agreements such as the Paris agreement, emissions continue to rise, and global warming is likely to reach 2.5 to 3°C, or even more than 4°C, by 2100. Most countries have committed to achieving 'carbon neutrality' by 2050, which means that the oceans and forests could absorb all CO₂ emissions. We are a long way from this goal. In 2019, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere reached a level not seen in 2 million years. The rise of renewable energies (solar panels and wind turbines) has reduced the share of fossil fuels in global energy consumption from 86% to 82%. However, coal, oil, and gas consumption has increased by 55% (International energy agency, 2025).

In addition, six of the nine 'planetary boundaries' have already been crossed: global warming, biosphere integrity (there is talk of a sixth mass extinction of animal species), biochemical cycles, soil quality (with intense deforestation), chemical and industrial pollution, and freshwater scarcity. The only limits not yet exceeded are the ozone layer, ocean acidification, and atmospheric ozone levels.

Techno-market solutions – carbon trading, pollution rights, and geoengineering – are clearly not up to the task. Solutions must be sought in three complementary directions:

1. *Promoting decarbonization* through a significant increase in CO₂ prices, the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, and financial support for the poorest to help them make the ecological transition.
2. *Energy, democracy and agroecology* – it is necessary to promote decentralized and community-based renewable energies to break the control of corporations. Regenerative agriculture and food sovereignty must gradually replace industrial agriculture.
3. *Care-based economies and social cohesion* – priority must be given to well-being, the protection of common goods, and the limitation of extractivism and profits. But none of these measures will be achievable without a significant break with neoliberal ideology and financialized capitalism.

liberation, which is an effective way to boil individuals down to consumers. The recent alliance of neoliberalism and reactionary forms of nationalism designates challenges to traditional feminine and masculine roles as an enemy and a scapegoat. The political discourse of neoliberalism is the exact opposite of its economic message praising unrestrained economic freedom and is readily instrumentalized by the tenors of authoritarianism.

Today, inevitable discords over the definition of what makes and should make a woman or a man risk undermining any agreement on our Common Humanity and the conditions of Community, and in the end any form of peaceful coexistence on a global scale. And yet, we have a habitable common world to build together.

Upstream of the opposition between the various conceptions of relations between women and men, we find an equally radical opposition between two opposing visions of the human person. The first conception, a holistic one, sees the person as a bundle of relationships. The collective is always more valuable and important than each of its individual members. The second conception, an individualist one, considers that these collectives are groupings of

individuals who have duties and obligations first and foremost to themselves.

In many societies, traditional bonds still hold water, and individuals are still bound by a whole set of relational obligations. This remains true even in the West to some degree. It is the triumph of the radical economic theory of neoliberalism that would have us believe that we are all rational, selfish and profit-seeking individuals, indifferent to others and thinking only of our own interests, and that that is a good thing. But it is precisely this reign of neoliberalism that we need to get out of. The fact that neoliberalism has bred a new brand of libertarian capitalists who now lead omnipotent big-tech companies and who legitimate many forms of brutality (online but not only) so long as *they* augment their profits, makes this an even more pressing necessity.

Women's control over their fertility has helped transform the inevitability of motherhood into a free choice. As a result, women have begun to gain access to a whole range of jobs and positions previously reserved for men. This relatively recent anthropological revolution has helped relativize the opposition between women and men. It has

empowered women to rebel against the physical and sexual violence inflicted on them with impunity by men who abused and abuse their principled 'superiority'.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that there is no unchanging human essence, and there is no conception of the feminine and masculine that can apply always and everywhere. The main difference is that only women bear and give birth to children. If we are to have any chance of successfully facing up to today's terrible challenges, we must learn to respect conceptions of what it means to be a human being, a woman or a man, even if they are very different from our own. Our proposal is that conceptions of relationships between people, and between men and women, are respectable if they respect the following imperatives:

- Prohibit all violence by men against women (and vice versa if the situation arises).
- Affirm principled equality for both sexes and recognize their equal basic rights.
- Accept all sexual practices between consenting adults within the sphere of intimacy.

These simple rules are imperative, but they will not suffice to solve the primary problem facing human beings, the one that lies at the root of all others: the potential limitlessness of desire (Table 1).

The question of which authority could impose limits on the desire for omnipotence, for *hubris*, and how to apply such limits, is crucial. We now know that it will be impossible to produce ever more to satisfy ever more needs in a finite world. Yet it is the infinity of desire that exacerbates what humans feel to be needs. At the same time, we are witnessing a vertiginous accumulation of economic, financial, technical, scientific, military and digital power in the hands of a few. This quest for omnipotence has become uncontrollable. The bigger it gets, the more it threatens the survival of humanity and biodiversity. We must therefore subordinate the five principles of Common Nature, Common Humanity, Community, Individuation and Creative Conflict to the categorical imperative

of keeping *hubris* under some form of effective control.

It is important to note that controlling *hubris* does not mean preventing human beings from living passionately and giving the best of themselves in the activities of their choice. But it is essential that guardrails prevent the enactment of these principles from tipping into domination and exploitation.

These issues are extremely sensitive and complex. Their complexity is doubled by the vertiginous rise of Artificial Intelligence, the effects of which are difficult to assess at this stage. Some are undeniably positive. AI will enable unforetold progress in the field of medicine and help solve major scientific and technical problems. Other effects are far more uncertain and reasons to worry. The increase in productivity brought about by AI risks wiping out a great number of jobs in what were once prestigious professions (accountants, translators, journalists, and even writers, painters and composers), but also hand workers and even taxi drivers. All social classes will be impacted, and the utopian framings of AI leaders are best taken with a fair dose of restraint. As a result, one of the core sources of human pride – earning a living through hard work and inventiveness – is threatened. This could be good news if so much time was freed so that people devote themselves to meaningful activities. The aristocratic ideal was precisely founded upon exemption from work, and we know what cultural riches this system created. But nothing is worse than being deprived of work without having chosen this. This can only fuel even greater social turmoil and feed political extremes.

Another danger is the disappearance of any taste for effort. What is the point of learning, if no matter how knowledgeable or competent you are in a given field, AI is always a notch better? After the discovery that the sun does not revolve around the earth (Galileo), that humans are descended from a long line of animals (Darwin), and that many of our decisions are not the result of our conscious will (Freud) a fourth and even more serious narcissistic wound is looming. The machine that was supposed to be the perfect servant of mankind is increasingly taking on the appearance of an absolute master, omniscient if not omnipotent. The all-knowing subject-object of the quantum computing machine.

In the same vein, a new species of superhumans is poised to emerge, at least for those who have the means: 'augmented' humans, equipped with micro-chips that will enable them to harness all the resources of AI for their own personal benefit. Or even escape death somewhere in the *cloud*, if you believe in this mythology. Here again, we are moving ever further from our aspirations to a Common Humanity and Community. *Hubris* triumphs without safeguards.

These threats need all be taken seriously. They question our inherited conceptions of what makes humans human. The answer undoubtedly lies in an awareness of the limits and contradictions of the trans-humanist and uber-digital *hubris*. What is the point, for example, of trying to make individual consciousness survive in the form of a hard disk if it is clear that what it knows is derisory compared to the knowledge of AI? And what would these false humans be without bodies?

What the supposed omniscience of AI (which is never infallible, by the way) shows is how the greatness of what it is to be human does not rest upon the quantity of data stored in our individual memories nor our calculus capabilities, but upon our capacities at being empathetic, fragile and vulnerable – and also grand and magnificent. It rests in the way we feel pleasures and pains in our flesh, in our sensations, and how we express and share them.

What is certain, in any case, is that we must continue to teach our children as if we and they were called to live without the help of AI. To learn to read and write. To learn history and math. To put effort in learning musical instruments and sports. To learn to fail... and succeed. It is the only way we can make good use of our humanity and avoid becoming slaves to our digital selves.

Democratic challenges: Which democracy?

On the surface, it is all very simple: we are all democrats. Even though more and more countries are declaring themselves hostile to 'Western democracy', there are very few which do not proclaim themselves democratic – at least in their own way.

Democracy remains the best legitimation. Even the Chinese Communist Party insists that it is a form of democracy. But the reality is very different. Contrary to what seemed likely not so long ago, at the end of the twentieth century, we are witnessing the proliferation of dictatorships and autocracies, and some of the world's oldest and most solid democracies are backsliding at astonishing speed.

The first question is why, even in liberal democracies, voter abstention is generally on the rise, and masses of people are voting for political entrepreneurs who, in the longer or shorter term, remove democratic guarantees and confiscate the power of the people in whose name they claim to speak.

Why is this so? There are several interdependent factors. The most important is the global hegemony of neoliberalism and rentier, speculative capitalism. It has been widely documented that it has acted to erode state sovereignty, in favour of non- and even anti-democratic economic powers. People therefore feel they have less and less power over their country and their lives, at the same time that the world is increasingly unstable. The society this generates can be described as 'totalitarian in reverse' (or 'fragmentarian'). Where totalitarian societies sacrificed the individual to the collective, the race, the state or the party, our societies dissolve collectives into aggregates of consumers.

Permanent acceleration and incessant technological revolutions give rise to a triple panic: first, an *economic panic*, linked to a constant deterioration in the standard of living and living conditions of the majority (at least in developed countries and in the lower classes of developing countries). Second, an *ecological panic*, which creates both eco-anxiety and the denial of the reality of climate change (yes, they are two sides of the same coin). Finally, an *identity panic*. Nobody knows what or who has value anymore, nor who, apart from the market and social media, is likely to recognize it.

So-called left-wing and progressive parties are unable to respond to these panics because they are unfolding on a global scale, while electoral struggles are confined to a local or national scale that is increasingly powerless to control global interdependencies. The failure of progressivism also results from the inability, up to now, to come up

with new ideological foundations able to reconcile social, identity and environmental issues in the wake of the collapse of communism and socialism.

Faced with this failure of progressivism, and of all the powers and elites in place, authoritarianism presents itself as the incarnation of a kind of political Left by default – a sort of progressivism in reverse – that speaks more and better than the actual Left in the name of the people and the disenfranchised working class in particular. It provides a reassuring identity, promises to return power to the state and to the nation, revive the empire, and re-embed a society atomized by neoliberalism in the mythology of lost unity.

Coming to power in societies that are still democratic, thanks to control over social networks and the production of information, authoritarianism tends to turn into a form of tech-fascism. In the name of a pseudo direct digital democracy on social media, which gives everyone the illusion of being able to express themselves freely while hateful opinions saturate a virtualized and fragmented public sphere, twenty-first century authoritarianism aims to destroy existing institutions. Once the institutions that ensured the stability and reproduction of the democratic order – the judiciary, schools, universities, public health services, the free press, associations, trade unions, NGOs etc. – have been delegitimized, all that remains, as in the totalitarian regimes of the past, is the law of permanent movement, destruction and chaos. Society can then move in any direction at the whim of the autocrat and the economic and power interests of its courtiers.

Another reason for the decline of the democratic ideal is its indeterminacy. We all think we know what we're talking about when we speak of democracy, but nothing is less certain. We are all familiar with the famous phrase 'government of the people, by the people, for the people', and with calls for freedom and equality. But each of these elements is prone to deleterious interpretations, like when 'the people' is reduced to a fraction of the population. Authoritarian regimes claim to act in the name of the left-behind, but only those of the same race, religion and ideology, scapegoating those who are not. In the same way, we can cherish collective freedom, the sovereignty of the people,

while sacrificing all forms of pluralism in the process. We can also go the reverse way and extoll the sole freedom of individuals who believe they have every right and owe nothing to the collective.

The representation of equality has changed radically over the last decades. Prior, it was understood primarily as meaning the equality of conditions (income and wealth). Since neoliberalism became hegemonic on a global scale, valuing personal enrichment above all else and boiling down political freedom to economic freedom, the redistributive ideal of equality has shifted to an essentially economic ideal of equality of opportunity. The latter postulates that everyone has the right to reach the pinnacle of wealth, prestige and power. Yet this is clearly an unattainable goal, except for the very few whose success stories legitimate the myth.

This is why, after the class wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, our neoliberal world has turned into a ring in which the battle for recognition of everybody's value and dignity plays out. It is a fight for equality between individuals, peoples and cultures, as well as a fight for equal conditions, equality as fellow human beings, and a fight in the name of individual and collective differences. It is the fight of formerly colonized peoples who remain dependent and victims of racism and contempt. It is the fight of women. It is the fight of forbidden sexualities. It is the fight of the defenders of nature and non-human beings.

All these quests for equality and recognition are the very expression of the democratic dynamic and, as such, fully legitimate. But they are only likely to succeed if they do not clash with each other and end up fragmenting society in as many niche identities, and if they do not upset a whole set of long-established customs shared by the majority of a country's population. The risk is to provoke the type of *backlash* that turns democracy against itself and which is becoming increasingly common.

One conclusion to be drawn is that the democratic ideal is both far more complex and fragile than was previously thought. Its realization presupposes a certain balance between the degrees of openness and closure of the body politic, between individual and collective freedoms, between equality in practice and equality under law, between

equality of conditions and equality of opportunity. Democracy is all the more difficult to preserve, let alone prosper, that the struggle for recognition now rages on a global scale and within every country.

In this generalized chaos of competing identities, the only compass we have, and which we must preserve at all costs, is knowledge of and respect for factual realities. The essence of democracy is the acceptance of differing points of view on the *same* reality, not dehumanization on the grounds of alternate realities. If there is no *minimum* agreement on the reality of reality, there can be no collective deliberation. Constructive opposition is transformed into destructive conflict, from which only an autocrat can emerge victorious by imposing *his* 'alternative truth'. This is perhaps the biggest challenge democracy faces in today's unregulated digital public sphere.

Social networks play a key role in this erasure of a shared reality. They exacerbate the fragmentation of neoliberal societies into closed communities or small groups that ignore or hate each other. We believe what we want to believe, and we want to believe that we are more valuable than others. More valuable than other social groups, other religions, other countries. Social networks are therefore the ideal instrument for the triumph of commercial, ideological, political and geostrategic interests. The engineers in charge of promoting them have no qualms about saying one thing and its opposite, depending on the audience they are addressing. As many alternative truths emerge as there are audiences and vested interests.

Ahead of these extraordinarily effective manipulations, we need to beware of the de-socializing role played by screens and video games in people's lives, especially the youth, whose brains are still developing. Studies are unanimous in showing that increased screen time leads to a lowering of intellectual standards, a loss of attention span, and increasing difficulty in relating to real people, not to mention formulating articulated thoughts and arguments that are more than simple concatenations. The arrival of smartphones in 2010 has led to a significant increase in mental illness and a surge in depressive episodes among teenagers. Suicide rates

have almost doubled among boys. Among girls, the rates are even higher (Battaglia and Santi, 2025). For all these reasons, young people should not be exposed to screens before the age of six, and smartphones should be banned from schools. Access to social networks should not be allowed before the age of sixteen (this is already the case in Australia). But it is not just young people who find themselves subject to the dictatorship of their peers' opinions. If they want to escape the dictatorship of commercial brands or the engineers of political and ideological chaos, adults too would be well advised to use social networks as little as possible.

The now dominant idea in the West is that to be in a democracy is to have the right to do and believe whatever you want, including nonsense. That it is forbidden to forbid. Yet these forms of libertarianism always hide a strong impulse to ban certain practices and even certain words, as the case of the US under Trump 2.0 blatantly shows. No democracy can resist such hypocrisy and the erosion of all social norms of decency.

It is therefore vital to set up, restore and reform independent public agencies with unquestionable authority in charge of building and communicating the most reliable data possible on economic, social, medical, climatic, environmental, and other realities. And, as the Covid crisis made clear, it is just as vital to make differences of methods, analyses and conclusions between experts and within these agencies visible and understandable for a greater public.

Civic education must teach people how to use social networks properly, and how to distinguish between plausible opinions and digital intoxication. There is work to be done.

Geostrategic challenges

Not since the Second World War have the risks of major regional, continental or global conflicts been so high. Economic rivalry between states is growing ever fiercer. It is exacerbated by the accelerating scarcity of agricultural land, water, oil and gas, ores, precious metals, and so on.

To all these economic, technological and ecological risk factors, we must add the growing

instability of the world since it has become multipolar. No single state can make peace by imposing itself, and we see the return of imperial desires and the politics of regions of influence on the global stage. There is no longer a world policeman. Neither the UN, nor the United States, nor China, are in a position to play this role. All that exists are regional policemen, with uncertain and fluctuating jurisdictions, battling against each other.

All this is well known. What is required to fully grasp the scale of the problem we face is an appreciation of the centrality of struggles for recognition, not only within states but also between them. It is time to come to terms with the fact that countries (and their leaders) are not only motivated by material interests, but also symbolic drivers related to their perceived greatness, their place in the world, their identity and the respect they command. These immaterial interests have become so important that they increasingly operate on their own, largely independent of economic factors. Hatred is growing between different societies and cultures, and within them. Boding to the history of the early twentieth century, this trend announces nothing good.

The trade war declared by the current US Administration against the whole world, and more particularly against China, shows to what extent prestige issues are inseparable from economic issues, and can even prove more powerful than them.

For more than three centuries, the West dominated the world. It saw itself and was largely seen as being enviable and envied. The West was the one who distributed recognition. All the peoples of the world measured the value of their existence by the yardstick of the West and what it brought them. Yet the recognition they received was often colored by contempt and racism. Today, Western hegemony is being challenged and threatened from all sides. Former empires, once assured of their worth and power, were humiliated and scorned by the West, and are now raising their heads anew. This is the case of China, first and foremost, which is closest to achieving technological, economic and military hyper-power. Same for Russia, which is desperate to recover what it can of its lost empire,

starting with Ukraine. Neither have Turkey and Iran forgotten that they once dominated a large part of the Muslim world. India too remembers its past greatness and aspires to renew with it. These and other countries converge in their resentment towards the West, which defeated them and despised them for so long. In this context, the so-called 'Israeli Palestinian conflict' crystallizes many of the struggles that are tearing the world apart. Between the global North and South, between Western democracy and its contestation. Between an Israeli democracy gone mad, genocidal, and a resistance that knows only how to use terror.

In the West, confidence in the ruling elites and societal institutions is eroding as its dominance over the rest of the world continues to erode. Living standards are falling, the promises of a better life for every new generation are proving illusory, and identities are wavering. All forms of hierarchies and domination are being challenged. Calls for the destruction of the former social order paradoxically meet with the desire to return to the stability of traditional values.

This dual critique – of Western domination over the rest of the world and, more generally, of established hierarchies – is legitimate and necessary. These critiques enable people who feel humiliated to regain a sense of pride by asserting their own value. But there is a limit to this. At the same time, the world as it was instituted in the twentieth century needs more than a blind defence. It needs to be reformed. Thus, criticism of the West is legitimate and necessary, as long as it does not actually serve to consolidate the power of dictatorships and destroy the democratic ideal, ultimately turning against the people. In any case, with the arrival in power of the new US administration and its sympathies for Russia and authoritarian rulers, the dividing lines between South and North, East and West, are becoming blurred. The very idea of the 'West' is increasingly muddled.

However uncertain these times may be, we have no other ideal to fight for in the end than the democratic ideal and the respect that it guarantees for justice, pluralism, freedom of opinion and speech, human rights, and the checks it allows against the over-concentration of power. If the West is to be

criticized, it is not for having invented the modern democratic ideal, but for having failed to respect it, for having used it way too often as an alibi for its imperialist (and racist) domination of the rest of the world and a legitimization for its own crude interests. The Global South is correct to call out the West's hypocrisy and double standards in who is called out for abuse and who is not. But brutal authoritarianism is no alternative to remedy those ills, on the contrary. The fundamental issue today is how to breathe new life into the democratic project in a world and in societies that are significantly different than what they were in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

We believe that a similar diagnosis can be made regarding the nation-state. The Covid crisis showed how the response to such events is best operationalized at the nation-state level. Citizens' response was also instinctively to turn towards their national government. The nation-state is engrained and offers effective governance when it is at its best. The problem is how to better coordinate nation-states among themselves, not only in crises of the Covid type, but also in general. It is to halt the potential of conflict between increasingly nationalistic entities. Another problem is how to federate increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. The menace is therefore both from within and without. The fact remains that the nation-state is key for addressing global issues like climate change and the degradation of the biosphere. The nation-state model must be reformed, but it remains the most effective institution from which to implement the principles of Common Humanity and Common Nature.

The very idea of building a peaceful world order (the League of Nations, then the UN) by giving equal weight to each independent state is largely illusory, given that some have only a few tens of thousands of citizens, while others have hundreds of millions. And that their power, economic, cultural, religious and political are unequal.

Empires had the great merit of ensuring a degree of peace over vast areas over long periods of time, respecting the diversity of the cultures or religions they dominated as long as they did not challenge the hegemony of the emperor and his court.

However, no country today is likely to impose its hegemony over the entire planet. We will definitely not be able to live 'all united under one sky' according to *Tianxia*, the Chinese empire's formula. There is nothing to suggest that a world state could soon be born (assuming it is desirable). The bold European attempt to invent, through forgiveness and promise, a new political reality, post-imperial and post-national, with no historical equivalent to date, is a fragile and imperfect success. So, it is not obvious that it can be generalized. Even today, it is too weak politically and militarily to carry much weight on the world stage. The invasion of Ukraine and the new isolationism of the United States represent a challenge that could enable it to make progress.

What needs to be done? There is currently no simple, satisfactory answer to this question. Until such an answer is found, the world will not be able to live in peace. In the meantime, the priority seems to be to restore at least some of the powers and sovereignty that neo-liberalization processes took from nation-states and allow them to resist the laws of the markets. To give people a sense of power and choice over their destiny and curb the impulses for resorting to the illusions provided by strong men, exclusive nationalism, and scapegoating.

For the time being, governments find themselves torn between two increasingly strong tendencies, which are opposed in appearance but which are complementary in reality. On the one hand, since governments are subject to the laws of financial markets, they are incapable of imposing even modest taxes on capital, let alone to attract it. The answer has been to create special economic zones within their borders where social and environmental standards do not apply, and taxes are evanescent. It is impossible to create a political community inspired by the principles of Common Humanity and Community in an environment ruled by laws of exception.

On the other hand, states *seem* to be growing stronger by becoming authoritarian and committed to nationalist and ever more illiberal and anti-democratic forms of capitalism. In fact, these are two sides of the same coin and the two moments of a vicious circle. The fragmentation and objective fragility of states drive them to seek or display an

imaginary power. But the more they want to make this power effective, the more they have to deal with the elusiveness of capital flows. All they can do to counter this elusiveness is fantasize and delude themselves with the illusion of power.

Until the right balance has been found between the nation-state and post-national formulas, there is no other solution than to assume that *existing borders are in principle intangible* (which condemns, for example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Rwanda's invasion of part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the invasion of part of Armenia by Azerbaijan, and the planned annexation of Gaza and the West Bank by the State of Israel). On the other hand, those in power have an absolute obligation to respect their minorities, and to provide all those over whom they exercise power with the conditions for their material survival, the preservation of their identity and the conditions for individuation and community. A good part of the problems linked to migration would then be solved.

Towards a global citizens' parliament

All human beings are driven by a legitimate need for recognition and justice. It will be impossible to face up to all the challenges that lie ahead, and to build a habitable world where life is good, without answering these needs. It will be impossible to resist the onward march of ecocide and the proliferation of autocratic dictatorships without creating a new brand of humanism that cares for nature and is aware of its fragility, thereby making it both plausible and desirable (particularly in the face of AI). No state in the world and no existing international organization is powerful enough to impose a universal standard of justice. But only if this aspiration for justice finds a planetary expression, only if it becomes a widely shared matter of course, will it be able to impose itself on rulers and elites.

It is therefore essential to find a common expression within social movements that aspire to build a post-neoliberal, post-imperialist and post-growth world. The convivialist proposal is to have some of the most prominent moral, intellectual, scientific and religious authorities of our time cooperate to synthesize and formulate the basic principles and

values for such a world, to say what each of us has the right to hope for, and what we must refrain from. In this way, they will formulate a new Reason for the world.

This *New Convivialist Manifesto* has been written in the hope of serving as a basis for discussion and as a possible starting point for debates between social movements from the North, South, East and West, to elaborate a solemn Declaration of General Interdependence. Contrary to the Enlightenment project, our present and future now require that we take the historical and geographical diversity of cultures into account as much as possible. Diversity must be respected but also transcended, because our interdependence, that between us, between the regions of the globe, and between humanity and nature, is now total. We will either save ourselves or perish together. There is no peaceful, prosperous nor desirable world in which only a fraction live the good life, while the rest of humanity struggles for bare survival with no hope for acquiring dignity.

The meeting of the world's moral leaders, which we are committed to trying to initiate in cooperation with other movements, should be a prelude to a *Global Citizens' Parliament*. This will only be possible with the mobilization of all international networks concerned with the common good of humanity. It will be up to these leaders to designate the members of the Global Citizen's Parliament by drawing lots, so that any human volunteer is likely to be chosen. Born of a process that is both horizontal and vertical (*bottom up* and *top down*), composed of an Assembly, a Council of Elders, and a Committee of Experts, it would embody the global conscience of humanity. It would represent the compass we so desperately need.

How can this be made to happen? It is not enough to say that such a project would be good or even essential. Individual and collective forces must back it, being aware of the seriousness of the issues at stake and ready to fight to bring about this new world. Let us hope that the social movements that already exist identify with this project and recognize the power and the possibilities contained in the overarching principle of generalized interdependence. For example, missions such as the fight against global warming are best realized through the abolition

of tax havens and the fight against endemic corruption. Fragmentation can best be countered by unity under the umbrella of interdependence. If movements and people from different avenues commit resolutely to this fight, then we can regain hope.

Epilogue

Let's dream a little (but not too much).

By the early 2050s, the ideas and proposals advocated here (amended and supplemented by the many networks that joined the initiative) have spread far and wide in world public opinion. They have become so obvious to the greatest number of people that, little by little, elites and governments had to rally behind them. The catastrophic trajectories to which the world seemed inexorably condemned were reversed or largely modified. And here we are in 2050.

The proliferation of associations and NGOs is fostering unprecedented democratic inventiveness at local, regional, national, and international levels.

The application of strict social and environmental standards makes it possible to link corporate activity with respect for the common good. A form of prosperity without the urgency of indefinite GDP growth is everywhere, thanks in particular to companies claiming to be part of the social, solidarity, and environmental economy beyond shallow greenwashing strategies.

The drastic reduction in inequalities has led to the rebirth of public services and the feeling of a common. Everywhere, people enjoy an effective right to education, health, justice and security. International solidarity mechanisms have been put in place to empower those countries, regions and social classes where these achievements are still inchoate.

Thanks to the policy of guaranteed universal minimum income, poverty has not disappeared (will it ever?) but no one is condemned to misery.

Contrary to all expectations, and precisely because of this limitation of economic overheating, the objectives of the Paris Agreement have almost been met. Global warming has not exceeded two degrees and will not increase any further. The enormous resources that are thereby spared are

redirected towards measures of adaptation, fueling innovation and local projects.

Countries once thought to be uninhabitable have turned out to be fully habitable again.

Relations between men and women, between the two sexes or between the different genders, have been pacified. Relieved in good part of the strains of uncertainty due to the neoliberal economic order, differences and diversity appear less threatening. The recognition of the value of individuals flows with ease. Machismo and racism are on the way out. Men and women enjoy more possibilities.

The regulation of the Internet, social media and AI at the national and international level has allowed for new rises in IQ and literary competencies worldwide, fueling a revived public sphere cleansed of much of its brutality. Limitations of 'fake news' and conspiracy theories allow the formation of a new common from which shared values are more easily expressed and recognized. The threat of civil war in many countries, including the US, has died down.

Science has found a new place within society. A balance has been found between relativism and positivist objectivism. The successive crises have allowed both for scientists to better explain their knowledge and for the public to understand how that knowledge is produced, what it is worth, and what its limits are.

The major conflicts between states, which have threatened world peace, are now settled by the arbitration of the Global Citizen's Parliament, whose moral authority nobody thinks of challenging.

This vision of a peaceful society obviously evokes an imaginary, utopian world. But it is a concrete utopia. Nothing it suggests is unattainable. It is there, just within reach. The aim of this Manifesto is to outline a viable path from the desirable to the possible, and then from the possible to the real.

Transition must be radical, yet if it is to foreshadow the world we want, it must also be gentle, because barbarism cannot be fought with barbarism. Transformation must be both gentle and radical, transformative and evolutionary, democratic and constructive.

We need to transform society, culture, the economy, politics and ourselves simultaneously. Let us

start with ourselves and create together, in the interstices of the system, convivial communities, alternative societies, solidarity-based economies, emancipatory cultures and participatory democracies. Let it be contagious and inspire more efficient ways of implementing policies that strike a balance between the five principles.

Yes we can. If we unite our ideas and ideals, our strengths and weaknesses, our hopes and fears in a radical, transformative and prefigurative project. We have the power to change the world. Only the effects of neoliberalism have made us believe otherwise. To make this change possible and realize the utopian world we've sketched out, we need to start here and now. If we want to move forward to 2050, we urgently need to agree on the proposals defended here or on alternative proposals of the same type. None of them are unrealistic or unduly complex. Together, they shape the systemic change we hope to see in this world.

Acknowledgements

A French language version of this text was published as Les Convivialistes Associés (2025) *Convivialisme ou barbarie. Le nouveau manifeste convivialiste*. Lormont: Le Bord de l'Eau.

Author's note

The Manifesto was originally published under the name of Les convivialistes and signed by three hundred persons. As the anonymous collective does not have an ORCID-number, we decided to retain only two names. The full list of signatories can be found on the website www.convivialisme.org.

ORCID iD

Frédéric Vandenberghe  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0614-8420>

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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