

Global Dialogues 3

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# Convivialist Manifesto

## A declaration of interdependence

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Centre for  
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Cooperation  
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# Convivialist Manifesto A declaration of interdependence

With an introduction by Frank Adloff

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# Introduction

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## ‘Wrong life *can* be lived rightly’ Convivialism: Background to a Debate Frank Adloff

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In 1972, in its commentary on the *Limits to Growth* report commissioned by the Club of Rome, the Club's Executive Committee remarked: 'We are convinced that realization of the quantitative restraints of the world environment and of the tragic consequences of an overshoot is essential to the initiation of new forms of thinking that will lead to a fundamental revision of human behaviour and, by implication, of the entire fabric of present-day society' (Meadows et al. 1972: 190). This assessment, and its implied warning, have lost none of their relevance in the interim. On the contrary: climate change, now within touching distance, is becoming more and more apparent in its ecological and social effects; the finite nature of fossil resources is no longer an abstract notion; species extinction is proceeding apace; over recent decades, ecologically motivated movements and parties have been set up in a whole range of countries; and humanity seems gradually to be coming to the realization that there is a major need for action. Despite all this, too little has so far been done at the global level. The kind of urgent global cooperation that would be needed from the international community in order truly to get to grips with climate change has been at a standstill for years. On top of this comes a further series of massive threats to a peaceful, equitable form of coexistence: whole swathes of Africa are being ravaged by wars, corrupt governments, hunger, and displacement; social inequalities

are increasing dramatically in many countries; and the crisis affecting the economic and financial sectors and the ability of sovereign states to pay their way is still a long way from being resolved. The democratic project has widely been reduced to a series of hollow formalities and we continue to be witness to terrorism, civil war, and ethnic strife.

Against this background, a group of chiefly French academics and intellectuals have published a manifesto – the Convivialist Manifesto – that talks of turning the tide and of a positive vision of human coexistence. Is this just another piece of glib social criticism and a well-intentioned appeal for change? What good can the pleas of a few philosophers and social scientists do – that will be the question people will want to ask, and indeed should ask.

What is particularly notable about this Manifesto is the fact that a large number of academics of very varied political persuasion have managed to agree on a text outlining the negative trends that run through contemporary societies. The Manifesto identifies two main causes here: the primacy of utilitarian – in other words self-interested – thinking and action, and the way in which belief in the beneficent effects of economic growth is accorded absolute status. As a counter to these developments, the Manifesto sets out a positive vision of the good life: the prime concern, it says, is the quality of our social relationships and of our relationship to nature. The term it employs in this connection is ‘convivialism’ (from the Latin ‘con-vivere’, to live together). The term is meant to point up the fact that the main task we face is that of working out a new philosophy and developing practical forms of peaceful interaction. The aim of the Manifesto is to show that another kind of world is not only possible – witness the many forms of convivial cooperation already in existence – but also, given the crisis-scenarios outlined above, absolutely imperative (as is made powerfully clear on the Convivialist website: [www.lesconvivialistes.fr](http://www.lesconvivialistes.fr)).

The text presented here is the product of discussions held by around forty French-speaking individuals over a period of eighteen months and as such it cannot be regarded as the intellectual property of any one person. As highlighted in the introduction to the Manifesto, the project’s main achievement, before all else, is to have succeeded in securing a consensus despite the fact that the authors hold widely differing views on a whole range of issues. Internationally renowned academics and intellectuals such as Chantal Mouffe, Edgar Morin, Serge Latouche, Eva Illouz, and Eve Chiapello took a hand in the work and were the first to sign the Manifesto. Politically, the spectrum of contributors ranges from left-wing Catholics, through socialists and proponents of alternative economics, to members of Attac and intellectuals from the post-structuralist domain. Latterly, a number of internationally

influential public intellectuals such as Jeffrey Alexander, Robert Bellah, Luc Boltanski, Axel Honneth, and Hans Joas, have joined the ranks of the signatories. In addition – and this seems to me to be of particular significance as regards the potential political impact of the text – the Manifesto has been signed by a number of civil-society organizations and initiatives in France.

The original idea for the Manifesto goes back to a colloquium held in Japan in 2010. In 2011, the contributions made to the colloquium by Alain Caillé, Marc Humbert, Serge Latouche, and Patrick Viveret were published under the title *De la convivialité. Dialogues sur la société conviviale à venir*. Together with Alain Caillé’s little book *Pour un manifeste du convivialisme* (also published in 2011), these contributions provided the initial impetus for the debate about convivialism. Discussion of the concepts of conviviality and convivialism at the Tokyo colloquium focused strongly on the works of Ivan Illich. An Austrian-American writer and philosopher, Illich (1926–2002) was an out-and-out critic of technology and growth and in his 1973 book *Tools for Conviviality* was the first to use this latter term. The book evoked widespread international interest and was brought to the attention of the French public by André Gorz. As with Erich Fromm, with whom Illich was friendly, the point for Illich was to restore the primacy of ‘being’ over ‘having’ by exposing the flaws in technology and capitalism. Illich introduced the term ‘convivial’ to describe a society that imposes sensible constraints on the tools through which it functions (these may be technological processes but can also be institutions). If a technology has no limit imposed on it, claimed Illich, there will be a tendency for its benefits to be reversed. Thus, science and technology as we know them are no longer simply solvers of problems; they are also producers of problems – to which we respond with even more technology. The tools which society uses thus overstep a certain threshold and result in a curtailment of individual freedom. By way of example: where, as in American cities such as Los Angeles, the car has become the only means of transport because there is no longer any option to travel by cycle, bus, or foot, what we have is the emergence of a radical monopoly in the transport infrastructure – one which it is no longer possible to escape and which undermines individual freedom. According to Illich, control over social tools should lie not in the hands of these kinds of infrastructures and expert systems but in the hands of the general public. Only thus can we achieve conviviality. Such a shift, however, requires a radical reconfiguration of institutions to accord with convivial criteria.

The notion of conviviality has a second, much older root in a quite different domain. De-growth theorist Serge Latouche (2011: 66) points out that the term was first coined

in the early 1800s by the gastronome and philosopher Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. In his book *La Physiologie du goût, ou Méditations de gastronomie transcendante* (1825), Brillat-Savarin uses the word to denote the joy of coming together socially and of engaging in easy, amicable communication around the dinner-table. 'Conviviality' thus signifies the kind of friendly dealings which people can have with one another, and the kind of unconstrained relationship they can have with 'things' (whether objects, infrastructure, institutions, or technology) (see Humbert 2011).

From the text *De la convivialité* it is possible to identify two further discursive strands that worked their way into the convivialist vision as it was being formulated: the first is the anti-utilitarian line espoused by Alain Caillé (and Marcel Mauss); the second is the critical stance towards growth and economics adopted by Patrick Viveret and Serge Latouche. The philosopher Patrick Viveret (b. 1948), author of several reports for the French government, has been engaged for some time in working out a new definition of wealth and prosperity (2011). He considers that the root of the current crisis lies in the structural excesses of modern-day productivism, in both its capitalist and socialist permutations. Alternative criteria for measuring the good life are urgently needed, says Viveret, so that we can break through the fixation with economic growth. In particular, so Viveret believes, the yardstick of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) needs to be entirely rethought. The most prominent proponent of a decrease in growth – or 'degrowth' (Fr. *décroissance*) – is the economist Serge Latouche (b. 1940). He supports the idea of a society based on 'frugal abundance' (*société d'abondance frugale*) and, like Viveret, would like to see wealth redefined in a way that expressly counters the quantifying economic rationale of GDP, in which prosperity is defined solely in material and monetary terms (Latouche 2009, 2011). In Latouche's view, a convivial society must call the idea of economic growth radically into question and impose limits on itself. New forms of economic management are needed that break through the cycle of endless creation of needs – ever more numerous and theoretically without limit. Instead, Latouche (2011: 61 ff.; 2010) calls for a new, virtuous circle of restraint in matters economic, to be based on eight 'Rs' – revalue, reconceptualize, restructure, relocate, redistribute, reduce, reuse, recycle. Growth merely for growth's sake, meanwhile, might be characterized as an economic religion. This means, as Latouche stresses, that the concept he is proposing might also be termed 'a-growth' (by analogy with 'a-theism'), as a way of underlining that what we are also about here is psychologically overcoming the cult of the economic and the notion of *homo oeconomicus*. The irrationality of this creed, says Latouche, is also evident in the absence of any clear

<sup>1</sup> The term *décroissance* first appeared in the title of a collection of essays by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, published in French, on the subject of entropy, economy, and ecology (1979).

positive link between monetary prosperity on the one hand and happiness and contentment on the other.

The roots of degrowth lie on the one hand in efforts to address the ecological crisis and on the other in the field of development policy, where modernization of the South in line with Western economic ideas of growth and development has come in for criticism under the rubric of 'post-development' (again harking back to Illich). However, what Latouche means by degrowth is not some monolithic alternative to the existing capitalist set-up – and above all not some kind of economy without markets – but 'a matrix of alternatives which re-opens a space for creativity by raising the heavy blanket of economic totalitarianism' (Latouche 2010: 520). Included in this matrix are, for example, the non-profit sector, the social and solidarity economy, systems of local exchange (LETS), and regional currencies. However, the concept of degrowth cannot simply be introduced, without more ado, into existing cultures and social structures: as long as the legitimacy of basic social entities (such as work, social security, democracy, self-fulfilment) depends on growth, the social upheavals of such a move would be too great. To a society dependent on growth, any reversal in the latter will necessarily be construed as a catastrophe: 'Degrowth is thus possible only in a "society of degrowth"' (Latouche 2010: 521). Without a shift away from productivism, without a reduction in working time, consumption, and consumer desires, Latouche's vision cannot work. And yet he believes that this kind of self-limitation is not just possible but actually indispensable in view of the impending social and ecological crises.

What sort of social rationale could this kind of self-limitation be based on? What is the alternative to the quest for profit, growth, and consumption? What kind of operational logic might a convivial society be founded on? These are the questions pursued in particular by Alain Caillé (b. 1944), professor of sociology at the University of Paris X. Caillé may be regarded as the guiding spirit behind the Convivialist Manifesto (though he is too modest ever to admit this), and, by providing the conceptual basis for transforming convivial ideas into convivialism proper, he has played a major part in shaping the resultant political concept and movement. For Caillé, the all-important question is how people can live together without the constraints of community or conformity, and without (in his words) slaughtering one another. He sees one answer as lying in the gift paradigm, which he has played a major role in developing over the last twenty years and which he traces back to the sociologist and ethnologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). Mauss described how the exchange of gifts between groups of people made them into allies without removing their basic agonality or combative attitude to one another. Through agonal gifting, people recognize each

other as people and confirm their esteem for one another. Convivialism takes up this thought and highlights the fact that the simple acknowledgement of a shared humanity, and of a sociality common to all, can act as the basis for worldwide convivial coexistence (Caillé 2011a: 21). In Caillé's view, radical universal equality is therefore one of the preconditions of convivial coexistence, and this leads him to call for two kinds of limits on income: a minimum and a maximum. No one should fall below a certain minimum income and no one has the right to amass limitless wealth.

Before we consider Caillé's preliminary work for the Manifesto in greater detail, we will take a brief look at his prior writings, in order to have a better idea of what 'the logic of gift' is all about and what role Marcel Mauss plays in the convivialist project. This makes sense since Caillé is also regarded as the guiding spirit behind what has come to be known as the MAUSS movement ('Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales' – Anti-utilitarian Movement in the Social Sciences). This loose network of scholars was set up by Caillé at the start of the 1980s in concert with Gérard Berthoud and a number of other French-speaking academics from France, Canada, and Switzerland. Whereas in the early stages, the process of consensus-building inside the group was documented in a very modest newsletter – the *Bulletin du MAUSS* (1982–8) – between 1987 and 1988 this grew into the *Revue du MAUSS*, which has since been published twice-yearly. The journal promotes a non-utilitarian, non-normative interpretation of Marcel Mauss's theory of gift and at the same time uses Mauss to construct an action-theory alternative to existing sociological paradigms.

Most of these theoretical deliberations are based on Marcel Mauss's 1924 essay *The Gift* – undoubtedly his most famous publication (Mauss 1990). In this work, Mauss synthesizes the ethnological research of his day (the work of Franz Boas, for example, and Bronislaw Malinowski) and expounds the thesis that archaic and pre-modern societies reproduce themselves symbolically and socially via a cycle of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. According to Mauss, although the gifts thus offered appear at first sight to be voluntary, they actually have a highly binding character and are cyclically dependent on one another. The nature of gift, says Mauss, is ambivalent, since gift-exchange oscillates between voluntariness and spontaneity at one end and social obligation at the other. The giving of a gift is a deeply ambiguous process and one which Mauss sees neither in economic terms, as self-interest, nor in moralistic terms, as purely altruistic. Instead, Mauss stresses the essentially competitive side of giving: we cannot ignore a gift; we have to react to it as we would to a challenge – which we either respond to or decline to respond to (also tantamount to a response, only a negative one).

In writing *The Gift*, Mauss's aim was by no means simply to provide descriptions and explanations of the structures of pre-modern societies. He had wider-ranging ambitions: he was engaged in a kind of archaeological endeavour, aiming firstly to explore the pre-modern societies that surrounded him at the time, secondly to describe the precursors of our own modern society, and thirdly to provide sociological proof that the morals and economics of gift 'still function in our own societies ... hidden, below the surface, and ... that in this we have found one of the human foundations on which our societies are built' (Mauss 1990: 4). Mauss therefore unquestionably also had contemporary issues in his sights – he was, after all, part of the French anti-utilitarian tradition and was very sympathetic to the cooperative movement and other concepts and practices of autonomous self-management (Fournier 2006: 106 ff.). His contributions in the political field were driven by dual disapproval of utilitarian individualism on the one hand and bolshevist-style state-centrism on the other (see Chiozzi 1983). What Mauss was concerned with was a third principle – namely, solidarity as a form of mutual recognition secured by the exchange of gifts and founded on social ties and mutual indebtedness. The crux of the matter, in Mauss's view, was that modern social relations were increasingly cleaving to the model of barter, markets, and contracts: 'It is our western societies who have recently made man an "economic animal". But we are not yet all creatures of this genus....*Homo oeconomicus* is not behind us, but lies ahead' (Mauss 1990: 76). Hence, in contrast to proponents of later theories of modernization and differentiation, Mauss worked on the assumption that even in modern market-based societies, the logic of gift, in a practical sense, is not entirely extinguished and is capable of serving as a 'foundation' for morals.

According to Caillé, the motives for gift-giving can be viewed as a figure made up of four sides: 'interest as advantage' versus 'interest as curiosity', and duty versus spontaneity.<sup>2</sup> The contrast between duty and spontaneity appears as such elsewhere in Caillé's work; but when it comes to the polarity between 'interest as advantage' and 'interest as curiosity', Caillé is forever trying to find new, more appropriate terms with which to express this. Thus he contrasts self-interest with a form of friendship/friendliness which he dubs *aimance* (2000a, 2009).

In Caillé's view (and Mauss's), it is within this kind of highly taut 'rectangle' that the process of giving is played out. Other writers have also begun to see it this way – Marcel Hénaff, for example, stresses that Mauss's ceremonial gift must not be confused with either an economic or an altruistic-cum-moral gift (2010). Gift and trust are thus of fundamental importance for cooperation between the parties and for the establishment

<sup>2</sup> In an older text (1994), Caillé traces the misconceptions that have arisen in regard to the interpretation of Mauss's theory of gift back to the fact that often no clear theoretical distinction was made between utilitarian interest-as-advantage and ludic interest-as-curiosity, which led to precipitate conclusions about the (egoistic) advantage-oriented stance of those taking part in gift-exchange. Similarly, in analysis of gift-exchange, emphasis is often placed on the (Kantian-style) moral obligation to do something (e.g. give something back), with no notion that this obligation also has an element of voluntariness and spontaneity connected with it. Influential interpreters of Mauss such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Pierre Bourdieu have overlooked this multi-dimensional aspect of gift. It is also systematically ignored in approaches that mirror the dichotomy in social theory and either trace interrelated and reciprocal action back to instrumental rationality (Blau 1964; Coleman 1994) or see it as compliance with normative rules (Gouldner 1960). This blind spot is one of the very reasons why, according to Caillé, we need to develop a third paradigm (see also Adloff/Mau 2006).

of social order overall, and the only reason they are so important is because they are, paradoxically, both compulsory and voluntary, both self-interested and selfless. Giving always carries with it the risk that the attempted bonding will fail. Thus communities and societies mostly only come into being through the successful action of gift-relationships at the level of micro-interactions and at the meso- and macro-levels of society. As Caillé sees it, gift is to be found primarily in forms of sociability that pertain between relatives, acquaintances, friends, and colleagues. In fact, gift is the dominant feature of this kind of primary sociality; it is inherent to human life and is effectively what makes development and growth possible. Secondary sociality extends this primary human orientation to other spheres: working mainly through anonymous, impersonal links, it establishes a relationship to society as a whole, and to public space. The logic of gift has trouble finding a foothold in this context, but even here it does not entirely disappear.

Caillé has gradually expanded his role from that of social theoretician *tout court* to that of reform-oriented political protagonist of the MAUSS movement and champion of a 'third way', beyond the purported absolutes of state and market. Since the end of the 1990s, he has taken to intervening in political debates, particularly as he is convinced of the relevance of the gift-discourse in fostering discussion of the kinds of practical socio-political problems that feature in debates about minimum wages, reductions in working hours, or the strengthening of civil society, or within the framework of criticism of globalization. He believes, for example, that alternative, civil-society-based forms of economic activity offer a means of combining non-capitalist methods of goods-transfer with the elements of recognition and alliance typical of gift. His aim is not to get capitalist economics replaced but to complement it with alternative forms of exchange. For Caillé, the defining characteristics of a voluntary association include, for example, the fact that the two or more persons it brings together pool their resources, knowledge, and activities for purposes that do not lie primarily in the making of profit (Caillé 2000b). This means that, for him, the domain of civil society is bound up with the potential to transpose forms of gift-related primary sociality to the public sphere.

In Caillé's view – and here we return to the debate about convivialism – the idea of growth and material prosperity is a screen onto which all kinds of hopes and fears can be projected (2011b: 34-5). Hopes for prosperity have an integrating effect on societies, even if they prove illusory. What happens when high growth-rates (at least in Western societies) are definitively a thing of the past? What happens when unemployment cannot be suppressed through growth, when social inequalities continue to rise, and when wages are

<sup>3</sup> A few facts may serve to illustrate what is actually an already well-documented problem: since the 1980s, social inequality has increased enormously in Western societies, and has done so in times of both recession and boom; growth in employment has done nothing to alter this (Mau 2012: 52). In Germany, there is now more inequality despite growth. Incomes are concentrated in the top segment of earners – this takes a particularly blatant form in American society. The typical (median) annual income of an American household is \$50,000. Some hedge-fund managers now receive yearly incomes rising into the billions (FAZ, 6 May 2014). In 2013, David Tepper, founder and president of the Appaloosa Management hedge fund, earned 3.5 billion dollars – or 10 million dollars per day! Taken together, the 25 most successful hedge-fund managers earned more than 21 billion dollars – roughly equivalent to the GDP of Cyprus or Honduras in 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Caillé stresses (2011c) that the principle of voluntary association is dependent on intrinsic motives. If quantifying yardsticks and monetary incentives are introduced, this can lead to the erosion of these motives. Accordingly, Caillé is also sceptical in regard to measures to extend the definition of GDP and incorporate all kinds of work, including non-paid work, into one new indicator. Measuring the social value of activities can thus lead to that value being undermined. This makes sense: activities performed free of charge have no price, and do not seek to have one.

scarcely sufficient to cover the basic needs of life?<sup>3</sup> The only answer here, in Caillé's view, is to separate material prosperity from notions of what constitutes the good life. The value of democracy and convivial coexistence as ends in themselves must be held up as a counter to material considerations. This is quite clearly tantamount to a moral revolution, since it involves developing new frames of reference – a point also highlighted by Viveret and Latouche. However, these frames of reference are not being applied from outside, by the theoreticians of convivialism: they already exist all around us; they merely need to be strengthened.

At the theoretical level, convivialism seeks to synthesize a number of different, highly influential, political ideologies: liberalism, socialism, communism, and anarchism. Practically speaking, convivialism is already being lived out in a whole range of social constellations – first and foremost, of course, in the context of family and friends, in which, as ever, it is the logic of gift and not utilitarian calculation that counts. After that, there are the hundreds of thousands of associative projects at work in civil society, the volunteering tradition, the Third Sector, the social and solidarity economy, cooperative ventures and mutual-aid societies, ethical consumerism, non-governmental organizations, peer-to-peer networks, Wikipedia, social movements, the Fair Trade system, and many more. People are not only interested in themselves; they are also interested in others; they can act spontaneously and empathetically on behalf of others. And the quintessential organizational embodiment of this type of action is the autonomous civil-society association, in which the principle of gratuitousness, of mutual giving and taking, operates to full effect. For Caillé and other convivialists, this is crucial: we cannot rely (as socialism does) entirely on state institutions; political change does not come only through parties and states. Liberalism too, with its emphasis on markets, overlooks the possibilities of social self-organization. By contrast, the associative, civil-society-based self-organization of people is a crucial element in the theory and practice of conviviality. Free and gratuitous exchange between people can serve as the basis for a convivial social order that distances itself from a version of prosperity and the good life defined in purely material and quantitative-cum-monetary terms.<sup>4</sup>

This means that the approach to social change is essentially construed in pluralistic terms. No one social group (no one class or social movement) is identified as responsible for ensuring the change. There are many paths to open up and pursue – paths that all resemble one another in offering an alternative to the economization of life. This pluralism, Caillé believes, extends to relations between people, and between groups and cultures. He calls for as much plurality as is possible without jeopardizing cohesion. He calls for

equal rights to rootedness and uprootedness, for equality of rights between cultures and at the same time for the right of cultures to differ fundamentally from one another. What is therefore needed is a relativistic kind of universalism – a ‘pluriversalism’ (Caillé 2011b: 93). From a political point of view, this normative demand is highly significant. Thus, Paul Gilroy, who uses the notion of conviviality in the context of the debate about multiculturalism (2004: xi), stresses that the very fact of the concept’s ‘radical openness’ is of importance, given that the notion of (cultural) identity quickly leads to the reification and essentialization of designated groups.

In terms of Caillé’s blueprint for a convivialist manifesto, these arguments give rise to three demands:

1. For the sake of a common humanity and a common sociality, we must make a stand against excess – in other words, against extreme poverty and extreme wealth.
2. There should be maximum pluralism and equality between nations. At present, the West comes across not only as a cultural hegemon; in relations that have to do with development it sees itself as the one who is giving something to others (development, money, technology, arms, education, democracy, literature, etc.). But mutual recognition is only possible where no one sets themselves up as the sole giver and where the positions of giver and taker alternate.
3. Conviviality requires an autonomous society as realized through civil-society associations.

The Manifesto as a whole may therefore be seen as a call to join in in the quest for the kinds of ‘real utopias’ (Wright 2012) that can make both reformist and radical contributions to overcoming utilitarianism and unbridled growth. The closing pages of the Manifesto call for a convivialist New Deal. Such a deal cannot and should not be primarily an ‘expertocratic’ project in social planning. All of us are called to participate creatively in this endeavour, to bring our indignation to bear on it, and to shame those who are putting the potential for convivial coexistence at risk. This all sounds very naïve, but – as the Italian philosopher Elena Pulcini points out – therein lies the distinctively radical nature and strength of the convivialist project.

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# Convivialist Manifesto

## A declaration of interdependence

Translated from the French by Margaret Clarke

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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/>.

## 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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