
to react

It is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others. It is sufficient, that this is experienced to be a principle in human nature.

David Hume



To react.

Right now, before dark comes upon us, before the sun comes up again.

A sudden, fast and unknown threat is spreading all around the world. We all have this epidemic menace in common and the necessary practical prevention measures are hygiene and “social distancing”. How possible is it that the necessary isolation could nurture our reciprocal subjectivities or on the contrary give rise to loneliness? How possible is it for this emergency to awaken a more radical human emergence or, on the contrary, to deteriorate into a darker oppressive decadence? How much can we really understand and confront the viral danger without being overcome by panic, which causes other ails? How much will we seek renewed wisdom of our common humanity instead of aggravating the irrationality of prevailing individualism? The-

se big questions regarding future prospects are surfacing and combine with the small important questions in relation to the immediate urgency. They should not be separated. Pope Francesco is right when he says “...we are already starting to see what will come after. It comes later but it starts now” and we would add, that how it continues depends on us greatly. It is likely that this virus will last for a long time, it will disappear and reappear just like other epidemic illnesses will also make an appearance facilitated by human neglect and aggression towards our planetary resources. It is quite certain that the oppressive powers – who are responsible for the devastation that ruins the living conditions and hopes of the great majority of our species – will learn negative lessons from the current drama regarding the physical and mental health of their subjects. It is desirable that science and medical practice find effective preventive treatments, vaccines included. It is also known, however, that this indispensable endeavour is doubly obstructed, even diverted, by the conditioning of the bellicose-political and industrial powers as well as by the

presumptuousness of scientific omnipotence, which disregards a more prudent holistic approach towards human beings. Nonetheless, and above all, it is possible that common people equipped with will and good intentions shall undertake a path of all-encompassing human enrichment with more conviction, in different ways; guided by a stronger sentimental reasoning and aimed at a freer, communal and beneficial composite subjectivity.

We are facing an aut-aut. Everything can change at the crossroads where we are: slowly yet conscientiously for the better or more rapidly and unconsciously for the worse. People can either come together more deeply through a logic of affectionate and beneficial communities or lose themselves in the vortex of a society which is increasingly oppressive, extraneous and in deterioration.

Taking a closer look at this drama shows there is nothing absolutely new. Without having to go too far back in time: *“The swine flu epidemic in 2009 caused hundreds of thousands of deaths especially in North Africa and South East Asia. Even in Europe, however, where the threat was much less the media kept updating the total number of victims and suspected cases daily. In the United Kingdom the authorities were expecting 65000 deaths and there were 500”*.

“Naturally, this daily count in-

creased fear and pushed the political world to take hurried and frowned upon decisions (which included stock-piling of medicines), without taking the time to examine the facts. All eyes were upon the new unknown virus, disregarding the more serious menaces which were hitting the population, like the seasonal flu which in 2009 caused infinitely more victims than the swine flu. Seasonal flu continues to cause an enormous amount of deaths. Similarly, Malaria and tuberculosis cause millions of victims every year, especially in developing countries. It is in the U.S.A alone that nosocomial infections kill 99000 patients each year - yet another tragedy which nobody talks about” (Gerd Gigerenzer, professor at Max Planck Institute in Berlin, *Courrier International* issue no. 1533)

The novelty is in the rapid spread of the coronavirus on a global scale but it also inseparably unveils the effects of the clamorous ill-intentioned approach and evident unpreparedness on behalf of government institutions, as well as of a large part of the scientific and hospital-related authorities. The exponential growth of the global population together with savage globalization have concealed the increase of unsettling early first signs and evident dangers in the last centuries and decades. These have been kept hidden from the populations instead of having their nature and se-

riousness explained, impeding an elementary understanding of the necessary psychological remedies and behaviours. In recent years, for example, the governments of countries which have been affected the most such as Italy, the U.S.A and Spain have kept up their heavy cuts to health investment. These are criminal-like attitudes which are explained and aggravated by their direct involvement and responsibility in the environmental disaster in general, pollution in cities and in places of exploitation (i.e. work) - including the most sacred and important ones such as kindergartens, schools, hospitals, care homes and nursing homes.

This isn't new. However, it has worsened in its consequences. Not even the prevailing information chaos - in spite of some able journalists- is new, spreading partial, contradictory and unexplained news; more solito flaring up superficiality, oscillations, mistakes, government monstrosities and repression. These factors do not help individual, relational and collective responsabilization at all, which we are now in real need of. If factual evidence had been given and explained (which is completely different from the bombardment of randomly thrown together daily news with improbable predictions) regarding the tragedies provoked by existing diseases, curable yet uncured or neglected, as well as the massacres due to health malpractice; if the previous even-

ts analysed by Gigerenzer had been taken into consideration, we could all have been "*educated to risk*". This risk is the coronavirus today but it might take on different traits and shapes tomorrow. In the meantime, however, there are already multiple lethal risks to beware of in this oppressive era.

The real good news is that now we can try to recognize the global and permanent aspects of the menaces. We can identify known dangers, prepare and preserve ourselves from them, and be alert in relation to other dangers that might come. In order to do so, quoting the acute Gigerenzer, it is necessary not to be overtaken by the "*fear of scary risks*" which feeds confusion, carelessness and negligence. "*Identifying what scares us and the reasons why we are scared, is precisely an important aspect of risk education. Understanding uncertainty goes hand in hand with psychology*" (idem).

We are facing a problem of historical importance, inherent to the founding characteristics of this oppressive era which can be efficiently confronted and contrasted in the long-term only through rediscovering and activating the best essences of human nature. A shared human knowledge and the resulting wisdom can be a lifeline, while ignorance, lies, bourgeois instruction and private knowledge cannot.

For us, socialist humanists, this alternative knowledge, information and education – to be practiced and spread - can and should be placed within a wise framework and shared ways of living, a result of the choice made freely by a beneficial community. One where reflection and dialogue take place, where we increase self-awareness conscientiously and act together, hence supporting and caring for each other.

This is the reason why now is the time to react in an all encompassing manner, to take on new and more organic responsibilities to defend and improve our own life as well as that of our people. This means once again and even more so, learning who we are, learning how we represent and act, consequently founding, educating, expanding and building our Socialist Humanist Current.

To react for our beloved ones whom we long for and who long for us. For all the people we know and who we think of now more than ever. For those who are suffering, those who fight, those who heal. For those who are victims of the virus. For the homeless, immigrants, for those who are alone, for those who live mental distress exasperatedly, for those who are differently able and struggling even more. For young children who do not understand but count on their vital energy and the plasticity of their immune system. For old people who are scared yet do not give up. For those who

are not working, those who are running out of money. To react for those who can't.

To react by gaining strength from and following the example of women and men in the health services who are committed and exposed, who find courage in fear and transform professionalism into generosity.

To react from the moment we awake, regaining consciousness in the strange silence around us. Let's listen to nature which pulsates around us, and feel an integral part of it. Let's elevate our consciousness of being human among humans, lovers of life in all its shapes, hopeful, angry, fighting and careful. We need others and others need us now more than ever. Thinking about humanity as a whole does not mean overlooking the radical internal differences. We recognize ourselves as similar to every woman and man facing looming menaces, but we know that the neglect and insolent arrogance of a small minority of our very fellow human beings constitutes a menace in itself for the great majority. What is literally against nature is the arrogance and the omnipotence frenzy on behalf of oppressors, their permanent war-like stride, the patriarchal and anthropocentric logic which contemplates submitting and exploiting the female gender and populations - blatantly out in the open or in disguise. They do not recognize our common humanity

just as they do not respect the whole of the living. One thing is to agree on certain specific measures taken by the servants of the State and to consider the differences between who they are, another very different thing is to tragically delude oneself into believing that they can serve the function of being of general help for a humanity they do not know, one which they neglect and oppress. This is the reason why committing and fighting to defend and improve life means being implacable in denouncing them and choosing sides against them.

To react, discovering our psycho-physical wholeness, looking after our bodies and opening our minds. Let's wear our best clothes. Let's feed ourselves well, let's learn about vegetables and fruit, let's discover cereals, measure the proteins, ration the carbohydrates. Just like a master from the past said: we are (also) what we eat.

To react by observing our belongings: those big and small gifts, that we have received and maybe have forgotten or neglected, like a piece of furniture which tells so many stories.

To react by taking full advantage of those objects which aren't really objects: books. Let's look at them, browse through them, consult them, read or reread them and make notes on them. Whether literature or essays: we can learn through developing our unique, creative and original interpretative abi-

lity. Whether they are classics or not, it is up to us to decide which life lessons are worth learning or not. We can perceive the power of our reflective ability: from certain clues we start discovering and find ourselves inventing. Let's continue reading: letters, postcards, notes and messages, diaries, notebooks. Let's dive deeper into getting to know ourselves, not simply as to who we once were but also as to who we want to be, thanks to the people that have written to us and those that we have written about. In this way we are preparing ourselves to relive them once again and in a better way.

To react through movement, through physical activity wherever and whenever possible, even just near home or at home if there's no other possibility. Let's think about our every body movement as we make it. In doing so we will also see the mental benefits and a movement which was once unusual might become more effortless.

To react by looking at our dear ones, if they're not reachable at the moment we still have their memories breaching with longing and their telling-story photographs. In this way we will be able to find our gaze in theirs while gifting them with our own. If we look around we'll find things never seen before or we'll find new shades and meanings. Let's watch or read the news selecting consciously what is really significant and what isn't in

the evolving of the pandemic, but let's go beyond and try to understand and interpret what is going on in the whole world. Let's lift our eyes upwards: towards the moon, the stars, the sky, the clouds. Let's look far away, there's something on the horizon. Let's watch good movies and interesting TV series, being aware of just how important the moral and ethic code is to interpret them. Let's go on the web if we cannot avoid it, with the due caution in relation to machines that we do not control but which, on the contrary, control us.

To react by listening to others with intent, what was taken for granted or what we thought as already known yesterday may sound differently today. Let's learn how to fine tune our listening, to understand different tonalities and timbres, to elaborate the meaning, working the empathetic magic that allows us to discern the underlying thought process from what is said.

To listen to a bird's song or to the rustling of the leaves, usually surmounted by noisy chaos, they can really tell us something. Let's listen to a lot of music: jazz, classical, blues, rock, opera, whatever we like and whatever inspires us, trying to understand how it affects our moods and accompanies our (senti)mental interpretations.

To react by staying in touch and interacting with our people. Su-

rely, too often, under these circumstances, this is only possible through phone calls (or through other technical means) and this is limiting, however, we can try to concentrate even more on how we think of them. We can turn the partiality of the means into an opportunity to increase the intensity. We can make do with the imposed distance by activating our imagination and preparing for when we will next meet again. Let's tune our mutual thinking and choose the most appropriate words to convey it, so that mutual comprehension can soar, so the best intentions can then converge and be strengthened and the sense of community can alight, growing in spite of the distance. Planning and projecting together an ideal scenario implies knowing that we are together and that we can act in accord. Each relationship, if well cultivated, elevates its protagonists and potentially generates other relationships which intertwined with each other contribute to the commune that we're striving for.

To react through meditating, in other words, reaching the highest level of reflection. Let's seek a psycho-physical wholeness, a corporeal and mental one that is unreachable yet present. Wholeness in the times and places we have lived. Wholeness within, of the people and for the people we've met, the ones we know, the ones we love. Wholeness we've longed for, yet unexplored, felt in the still concentration of a

few minutes. The senses, the tensions, the intentions and faculties all palpitate and blend together, a chaotic and fruitful whole that must be ordered and understood. Feeling the body mentally and then letting it rest, letting our thinking run freely while it thinks itself as it tries to transform into actions. Looking for words and concepts to express. Meditating about our concrete being which constantly represents so as to act.

To react with love and for love. Right now is the moment to measure our love for the human species and all of nature, challenging the cynical odds, weighing our composed yet relentless hostility towards those who have led their fellow humans to the edge of the precipice and beyond, assaulting the planet that we live upon. We define our love towards the majority and the last, we don't know if they shall be the first but in the meantime we strive for their emancipation, identifying and condemning those who oppress them through wars, governments, patriarchal laws and industrial systems. The global view of our love deserves to be improved, fine tuned, and put into practice every day. Towards every form of life, as our first mistress taught us. Towards our pets, if we have any, which need us, comfort us and keep us company. Towards children, who gift us with their curious and hopeful stares deserving of constant careful thought which ought to be considerate, sup-

portive and never presumptuous nor forceful. Towards anyone in distress who under this harsh deprivation unleashes a human intensity, one which we can learn from and give back with respect, affection and solidarity. Towards those who are in need of practical, physical or psychological help measuring it against our own possibilities. Towards the good people, first of all doctors and nurses, who sincerely strive to heal people, we recognize and support their endeavour. Towards our comrades who are building a precious endeavour for the present and the future, through taking sides and through their commitment: the good they do equals the love we feel for them. Towards the many friends who support us because they understand that our presence is a sign and a possibility of a comeback even against the coronavirus. Towards acquaintances and family members whom we may often not think about, now is the time to express sincere closeness to them. Finally, and most of all, to those whom we have an intimate relationship with, first protagonists of our love in different ways: let's make sure they feel how fundamental they are for us, let's prepare for when we'll embrace them again long and tight, envisioning the sweetest and most audacious caresses, little kisses or the lingering type that never end... The generosity of reacting with love, by all of us, in our relationships, qualifies and conveys nobility to lo-

ving oneself, which doesn't selfishly sadden but gifts itself passionately. It is through this that we shall find how it can make us better and prepare us to deepen and enrich our commitment towards a better life.

To react by researching, as each one of us is capable of theorizing, individually and together. Let's identify blossoming ideas, arisen from experience or from previous ideas, derived from an articulate memory or striking imagination, so as to cultivate them with patience and courage, humility and generosity; let's offer them to others through dialogue in order to better understand and improve, intertwine and enrich, amend and value such ideas, let's write them down inlaying them with our general thinking and our common reflection, let's make of them a possible orientation in life. Let's learn how to analyse human behaviour closely examining what lies at the root, let's not stop at classifying or mathematizing but instead let's look for both the immediate and deeper meanings, of an event, an action, a gesture; let's have a whole picture prospect of our species to understand the semblance of a person, keeping in mind who they are to be able to better understand their words. Let's build our ethics and morals every day, knowing how they have an immediate expression in actions, a background in our interpretations and a principle in our being. Let's experience freedom evoking it in others, founding it within and for the

community, let's develop it in its positive and respectful aspect qualifying it as expansive. Let's make the good come true in the joy of living, through the humble fights and the great fights for existence, through the happiness for the different kinds of unions that we are capable of, through the smallest of pleasures as well as the most indescribable ones so that they grow, through the well-being of others which can become our own and be strengthened. Let's grasp and sing of the beauty which is around us, making life itself the starting point of our idea of the whole of the living, one which constantly arises and jolts. Let's comprehend and speak of the beauty of a thought, a word, a glance, an understanding, a person as proof of us as value driven beings. Let's reflect, respect and enjoy the beauty of each one of us: in this way we will experience beauty as a result of our own good. Let's trace a truth that is always relative and partial, even fleeting, but not because of this less true. Let's assimilate it in the knowledge of things and of our thinking, placing it within a whole picture outlook, which in order enriches, fine-tunes and adjusts itself. Let's live each one's truth within their subjectivities as they identify and indelibly intertwine with sincerity and loyalty.

Let's pursue justice for our people who have been mistreated, neglected and ignored for too long; let's restore value to their lives and their ideas, let's

offer ourselves as sherpas in their quest to reach their highest peaks, ones which they can hardly believe; let's find the right weighing of our mistakes and those of our comrades such as to be enriched in humility and coherence.

We will understand the sentimental foundations and conscientious value of our moral immediateness through experimenting, fine-tuning, improving it constantly and by gifting it and sharing it.

We are going towards an ethical horizon of possible socialist humanist communities, on a path where anyone and everyone can be a protagonist, and must be one, if they choose so. We shall understand that rules, sometimes spontaneous blossoms, can be cultivated and be an expression of our ability to choose within an effort of founding culture. This journey is at the beginning, yet it is evermore urgent, pressing and necessary in order to comprehend, support and nurture the best human emergence dealing with both individual and collective emergencies at times evident and at times hidden; to face the multiple and combined disasters due to their decadence with the risk of overwhelming many good people. Let's acquire the tenacity and patience befitting explorers of a future of possible happiness, one that is already present and rooted in a coherent and promising past even in its misadventures. In discovering our human essen-

ces, both in experience and existence, we can create a life more worthy of living.

To react means, once again, making choices and choosing ourselves, as we have tried to do since the beginning even when we still didn't know the theoretical meaning of this signifier. A life choice that is renewed by dedicating ourselves to our people, starting with those who want to express their best intentions and, in turn, learn to choose. It's what hundreds of our comrades are living with passion and determination, we can and must be even more by their side during the fantastic, rich and differentiated growth they are experiencing as protagonists. We can better talk to them if we listen to them more deeply, we can guide them if we let ourselves be guided by their suggestions, we can educate them if we realize each one's uniqueness and if we perceive that they, in turn, are also teaching us.

To react, in other words, to be born again.

*Here therefore **reason** instructs us in the several tendencies of actions, and **humanity** makes a distinction in favour of those which are useful and beneficial.*

David Hume

Dario Renzi, April 2nd 2020❖