

Confronting the virus

Sentimental reasoning against reason of state

“Until it is only in my mind that I have the idea of good, without making it real through my actions, without upholding it as a life principle, it is not a truth in me but a mere representation”
Ludwig Feuerbach

The situation in which we find ourselves is difficult and strange. We have adopted some practical prevention measures which are fundamental to containing and defeating the epidemic. We have done so promptly and autonomously following medical advice. We agree with certain government measures to that extent and only to that extent. Given the methods and arguments used by institutions and the media; given the design, the priorities and the whole-picture prospects, we are now more alternative than ever, therefore distant from and in opposition to the oppressive powers with all their articulations.

An act of humility

What is it that people (including ourselves) are making out of all of this? Science can provide some useful coordinates but it cannot give certain, definite or conclusive answers. As a matter of fact, one should recognize that it will never be able to do so precisely because we are a part of a bigger everything, conventionally known as the universe, and because as a human species we cannot reach exhaustive knowledge and even more so domination. Unfortunately, it is evident that the bellicose-industrial powers, can corrupt, violate and destroy a part of nature as they are already doing with the world we live in. They have always been deployed in order to massacre, exploit and oppress women, children and men. It is not difficult to infer that the artificial turmoil of our natural habitat is linked to pandemic and endemic pathologies.

The whole world population is shocked and under threat. It feels exposed perceiving it's own weakness, it is oppressed by fear of the disease and fear of death to different extents. Under these circumstances of extreme need, it is possible and essential to shake one's self up, to learn to protect ourselves rediscovering the strength in humanity and liberating the courage of caring and healing. We are talking about sentiments and reasonings, about the endeavor of life and its prospects, which we can see in the present, long for in the future and learn from those of the past. We need to have a whole-picture outlook now more than ever. This is precisely why we should begin with serious reflection as well as with an act of humility. We are a special species among others. We can discover so many things regarding the living and know some important things for certain, yet they are still relative and partial: we have absolutely no right to claim them as absolute truths. We can change the environment around us and even our own selves. We can do so positively with respect and patience or on the contrary, with violence and rage in a destructive sense. We are a perfectible species, hence, always imperfect.

In the midst of confusion we are gradually beginning to realize what is happening, but we do not know the exact origins, the development nor the solution to this new surprising, epidemic and lethal phenomenon which the coronavirus is. At the very least, we have some elements to try to deal with it and we need to know how to think and interpret them well. What's more, we consider this global disease to be somewhat a product of the alterations caused to the natural universal system, which as a human species we are all co-responsible for.

Human potentialities

It is therefore the time to ask ourselves about our potentialities, while also bearing in mind our limits, in order to direct them and to invest them in the best possible way. Our health is a psycho-physical matter, a constant dynamic balance between body and mind which permanently and mutually influence each other. It is us, more than anybody else, who activate the abilities of the biological and corporeal foundations of our existence, strengthening, weakening, developing or reducing them, through our own mental representations and constructions. How we reorder our representations is inseparable from the living human organism. An efficient and strong mental state helps the physical condition and this at the same time gives way to a beneficial way of thinking.

Thinking about caring and caring for one's self

Why is this simple outlook so important? Because it is based on specific essential knowledge which is certain, it is supported by experience itself, it is within reach of whoever wants to choose it, it is innovative and it holds important surprises. At the same time it is, not by chance, widely ignored and contradicted. The oppressive powers (in their own way) ask us "how are you?" and suggest or impose the "what to do", not caring at all about encouraging us to think about how we feel in relation to our physical and mental health. All this makes the immediate results in the fight against the virus more uncertain and draining. Furthermore and what's worse, is that generally speaking and in the long term this can be found to be of very little use, if not useless or even harmful.

This in turn, explains contradictory decisions taken and information given by the powers above which have contributed to aggravating the chaos caused by the epidemic. Their "staying home" slogan is a mere temporary and punctual imposition as opposed to a comprehensive invite like our own one "I'll try to care for others and for myself". It is not about underestimating or overlooking cautiousness but rather, framing it within a long lasting bigger picture perspective in common as opposed to solely individual and temporary. Why is it that they don't do this? In the first place, because they do not trust common people and the only caring they believe in, is based on a coercive and externally directed 'doing' (more or less explicit depending on the situation). This mindset relies on the "laws of the jungle" or in other words, on a doubtful evolutionary heritage which completely ignores creative and augmentative abilities of people, relationships and communities. They avail themselves of fear, as opposed to courage, forcing an escape towards the private dimension and putting forward estranged and alienating "ways of protection" instead of encouraging attentive and beneficial reciprocity.

Notwithstanding the brave commitment of so many women and men saving so many lives in the public health system – massacred by different governments' policies throughout the years – this governmental outlook has not at all managed to obtain a generalized and co-shared responsibility on behalf of the people. This is evident with the sudden and absurd mass migrations from one city or region to another as well as the dangerous behaviors in everyday life. On the other hand, the simple and inert "staying home" slogan is not a long term solution, unless we learn healthy and solidarity rules for life. On the contrary, it could cause serious psycho-physical disorders as well as potentially increasing "family" crimes which primarily affect women and children.

Reawakening our conscientiousness

Unfortunately this psychology, which is a threat to one's self and to others, is widespread among so many people. It is the bitter outcome of a profound dormant

conscientiousness. Neglecting to contemplate an inner world recognizing that of others, obscures the vision of the external world. Failing to reflect upon one's self as well as upon those nearest to us predisposes us to accept whatever lies are widely spread by often anonymous strangers. An obsession with "doing" reduces the human dimension of being to a mere existential trudging.

There are however some people who are starting to shake themselves up. The sardines* are a clear and genuine example of this. They are people who ask us questions and talk to us, they are reacting to the current difficult circumstances trying to represent life more thoroughly, they are starting to understand the fundamental value of choice as well as of better choosing one's self together with others. In this way, our actions can become more coherent, attentive, self-aware and useful. The daily decisions we make fall under the rediscovery of our own all-encompassing abilities to choose. They are a sign of the reawakening of our conscientiousness, of the revival of a sentimental reasoning of being in this world, one that not only allows, helps and directs self-care but which is also a miraculous cure in itself. It is this sentimental reasoning of the good that can defy the dominant reason of state which causes so many ills. This sentimental reasoning profoundly belongs to us and if rekindled and well directed, can guide us towards possible happiness specially in such a seriously difficult moment as the one we're in.

Politics unmasked

In the meantime, the reason of State continues to rage towards its subjects; deaf and abusive, greedy and smarmy in its shady business, presumptuous and cold in front of a humanity in pain. It is now beginning to become known how the rapid and terrible diffusion of the coronavirus in Lombardy is linked to the abundance of particulates, poisoned outcome of senseless industrial development, as well as the toxic urban concentrations which are exalted even now with incredible cynicism. There has been a generalized neglect of workers' security conditions starting with those related to health, on behalf of the masters, rulers and administrators. Even in the most affected zones of the epidemic, like in Lombardy and the Bergamo region in particular, there is still hesitation to close all unessential industrial plants. Accumulation and over-profits, the deities of thy lords, claim sacrifices from those who work to the extent of risking even life itself. The slowness to contain the danger is also a consequence of the masters' greed which has been seconded by all government parties. The oppressive system tries to control and manipulate the majority of the common people in any given situation. Many of whom are excluded de jure and de facto from citizenship rights like immigrants as well as the homeless.

The negative logic of the oppressive powers ends up in a fatal syllogism: the more it prevails, the more it fails, and that failure drives it to further ill-treatment and persecution towards the people. This new stress test caused by the epidemic is revealing. The decadence which democracies are experiencing is becoming worse and worse, the authoritarianism which is ill-concealed by smarmy official statements makes its way to the predatory narrow mindedness, given by the rulers' "jungle". It is important to remind ourselves that in these cases the model which prevails is the original and most tested one, which isn't fascism or stalinism (even if their traits and residues do show), but the most long-lasting and most organically oppressive dominion that humanity has ever known: the imperial one. Which is the historically longest empire built upon a war "philosophy" based on a coercive community, hence capable of adapting in such a way so as to preserve itself? China. Where, even throughout millennial dynasty and regime changes, a certain type of structure and bureaucratic control over different ethnicities enclosed in a protected territory is still maintained. An empire which is capable of extreme and implacable violence within its borders - let's not forget the Tien an Men square - yet careful in the last decades not to have

been involved in international conflicts. An empire which keeps growing in its industrial and technological power subjugating its subjects to the harshest sacrifices and to monstrous exploitation and pollution; depriving them from formal and bourgeois freedoms, yet promising “security” as it apparently has guaranteed in relation to the outbreak, not however without significant delay and a silence worthy of blame.

The Chinese influence on the world is destined to grow not only economically speaking but above all ideologically, whether directly or indirectly. It is seen as or it could be seen as an alternative or a remedy to decrepit democracies. This is already the case in South Korea, where in the midst of the medical crisis, democracy is adopting the “big brother” model with CCTV cameras in the houses of all people who are ill. And similarly, in the most “civilized” Great Britain, where a serial killer is in charge of Downing Street. Before mending his ways, he was following on the footsteps of some of his fellow countrymen doctors who have been implementing a “euthanasia” protocol in relation to old aged people for a long time as well as “Royal College of Paediatrics and Child health guidelines” which explicitly give consent to denying the treatments to keep children alive for those whose “quality of life” is deemed “insufficient” (see Il Foglio, March 17, 2020). Not to mention the trumpian madness which includes walls, eradicating “Obamacare” and public attitudes calling for imprudence in relation to the virus, only to then turn drastically. Nor can we forget Macron who at the beginning assisted and allowed the reckless making out, prancing and parading along the Seine by a frustrated Parisian petite bourgeois, to then give a long overdue turn suggested by the... stock market.

Governments, or in other words, their business groups or administration councils, hesitate and decide, lie and belie, soften up and repress, calm people down as well as terrorizing them, they boast and commit perjury. These are now the only remaining expression of politics. As a matter of fact, political parties have disappeared with the exception of Zingaretti’s message about him being positive to the virus as well as the hysteric allusions to compulsory military service by the brute Salvini. Where have all the left wing groups and organizations gone? They give some sacrosanct complaints of governmental wrongdoings, sometimes they place responsibility on the government, neglecting or ignoring the whole human framework which is taking shape. Another case is that of the “Lotta comunista” newspaper (February 2020 issue) which dedicates an article to the so called “superstition virus” defined as “useless electoral speculation” confirming not only significant cynicism but also a shift of their marxism from science to science-fiction all together.

As far as we know, the only significant and praiseworthy exception is given by the all-encompassing reflection, on behalf of the North-East Social Centres, about the epidemic and the solidarity actions to fight against it. The attitudes which prevail on the left-wing are in line with and worsen the indescribable sectarianism or the arrogance shown by most of these groups towards the sardines and the simple radicality of their message.

We are unfortunately talking about the tragic fulfillment of a long parable for those who have continued to believe in political redemption or in the possibility of a new form of politics. Unfortunately this is not possible: politics and even democracy with all its different shades, including that which calls itself revolutionary and/or communist, is a State affair. As such, it is rooted in the use of violence and in the predisposition and preparation for war (they have even declared war against the virus not realizing the paradox). Any political practice implies distancing oneself from humanity and its most essential traits, not understanding or taking an interest in the centrality of the inner world. In the end, politics as a whole goes right back to its initial beginnings. Behind its mask it unveils its permanent origins, its bellicose, coercive and repressive calling. The proof of this is found not only in armed conflicts but also in the permanent attacks against women, racism expressed in the government and by common people, in both bio-political and technological attempts to

control and pervert human communication as well as human choice; and in the fact that every political subject tries to invariably prevail over their adversaries through abuse of power, deceit and conflict. The rational reasoning of the oppressive powers, with its different shades starting to blur, has become the tragedy of human irrationality for each and everyone one of us. It unravels itself anywhere and everywhere as misconception of our species starting with dismissing the female gender which creates, cares for and nurtures our species.

An existential crossroads

In the urgency of the moment and beyond, we feel we're at a crossroads. Containing and defeating the epidemic is a priority but, while we try do to so, the whole of our inner predispositions is put to the test; the same goes for practical aspects of our existence as we wonder what will happen after.

Let's take a look at the different possible directions. On one hand, there's the "nothing will be the same" line broadcast by journalists and politicians with little imagination, an apparently insignificant recipe but actually fatalistic and thus mortifying towards our ability to choose. On the other, there's the commonplace mantra of "going back to normality". Seriously?! normality? When will we understand that their normality does not exist? Permanent war is not humanly normal, nor are violence against women and children, xenophobic and racist ferocity as well as an increasingly tightly packed, obsessive, extraneous and dangerous society. This leaves us with the digital hope option: let's take refuge in the internet, let's get intoxicated by fake or distorted news, let's give away our personal data and turn it into merchandise, let's invent superficial and deceptive relationships, let's compromise our cognitive abilities, let's stop wearying ourselves by thinking with our own heads and in our own time handing it over to electrical appliances; but then we mustn't complain if we find ourselves poorer and weaker from a human standpoint... There's the cry of rebellion, the permanent hostility - "gilet jaune" style - that promises some adrenaline fixes and produces an exponential increase in frustration and in the inability to think positively. On the other hand there's the further retreat into private life, which means extending the captivity condition we're experiencing these days. And then there's the overrated formula "life goes on" encouraging resignation and submission waiting to be stricken by other viruses or authentic wars of different kinds and degrees. Conversely there's the possibility and the right, even the need, to invent a different life, our life, one more worthwhile living and enjoying while also confronting difficulties. This possibility can take shape if we overcome the emotional thunderstorm that had already been raging and has now worsened running the risk of becoming permanent and endemic: many people have already fallen prey to it.

Let's try to reflect without stopping at first impressions, let's get back in charge of our incredible mental resources. Otherwise our already mistreated capabilities will lose sharpness. Intelligence rattles like rusty machinery or gets paralyzed by fear instead of elaborating our intuitions clearly and warning us of possibilities and threats. Memory only goes as far as short term or chases after past tragedies, instead of revisiting our journey and remembering the greatest challenges overcome by humanity and by each one of us, even in the saddest moments and in spite of masters and rulers. Creativity gets limited to opening a window and singing a distasteful song that, defying superstition, says "we're ready to die"**, instead of giving life to our theoretical and affection oriented purposes in order to project the extent to which we are ready to live. Reason gets tangled up in calculating the probabilities and timings of the end of this epidemic without evidence instead of tracking down and evaluating the most important data and cautiously assembling it gauging trends and real possibilities. Sentiment, often reduced to hate or shrunken to simple emotions at

best, can turn into panic. When it could instead elevate itself and finally give sense to love for humanity and life. This would mean recognizing sentiment within love towards our loved ones, our friends, and ourselves. Basically, it means finding courage. This is so, because whoever loves life as a whole and in all its shapes can find the necessary self-courage and the right direction at this crossroads.

Rediscovering ourselves more as human beings for the better

Many people, overtaken by the understandable, yet not well pondered, human need to go back home or to meet with loved ones, have set out to travel or go out and about in the cities, putting themselves and their dear ones at risk. This is understandable, not acceptable. One thing is leaving the house individually due to necessary essential needs, a very different one is multitudinous travel and groups rambling about. Let's reiterate it: it is necessary to convince ourselves, as well as other people, to keep the most careful behavior, criticizing social and relational irresponsible attitudes. These are unfortunately an expression of the crisis of sentimental reasoning as much as of the increasing dismantling of state-based societies as we know them. At the same time, we refuse and condemn the intimidating and repressive excesses on behalf of institutions towards the common people. We know that certain authoritarian attitudes can easily ground their roots in an already fragile context characterized by the degradation of conscientiousness, like the Italian one. Furthermore, hostility which is uncalled for together with legalistic persecution against people who are circulating due to evident necessity without posing any risks, do not help the collective effort of commitment against the virus, and may instead aggravate mass nervous breakdowns.

It is a comforting sign to see that so many people are showing to have understood and upheld a responsibility principle born out of an altruistic positive commotion that can grow and be radicalized in affection and moral terms. We are talking to an increasing number of women and men of all ages, from different social backgrounds, who acknowledge this spirit in us as well as embracing it themselves. It is from them that we get further motivation to develop and refine our humanist socialist commitment to make it more coherent, while offering it to them. The fundamental endeavor of conviction, listening and accompaniment which we are carrying out, aims to spiritual activity as opposed to pure passivity. Taking care of one's self as well as caring for others, certainly requires vigilance, caution, respect and explanation of the guidelines, but this is only the beginning. We need a solid, confident and constant utilization of our best essential energies. In the darkest moment of decadence, the lights of seeing and living life differently can shine bright. Now is the time to rediscover and elaborate our practical-oriented purposes which liven us up. Above all, our ability to interpret life globally, to be able to imagine it, project it and to long for it. An ability which is within the depths of each one of us but one which we often do not properly own, as we entrust it or delegate it to state institutions. Yet, we feel the warmth and the power of sentiments which emerge towards other people, towards the rest of humanity, towards the other species, towards nature as a whole and it is all this that we could and should theorize upon and use to build a new culture.

It is right in this very moment when we are facing the viral menace that we can sense its crucial importance, as a safeguard, growth and possible change. It is up to us and to each one of us to interpret growth, love and the vital creation to which we are predisposed to and feel emerging, even if maybe somewhat misunderstood. It is up to us, in togetherness: being in touch with others, feeling each other, meeting up with each other (obviously under safe circumstances) listening to each other, exchanging thoughts and opinions, reconnecting even in the distance.

In doing so we will realize the extraordinary similarity we can perceive in our relationships and in our chosen groups, as well as the equally astonishing diversity of which

we are all protagonists in every single dimension of our subjectivity. In this way we will discover how much we are relentlessly driven to life but we have to learn to do so and even this imminent tragedy is urging us in this direction.

It is precisely now that it is finally possible to learn to recognize and to choose what is good and what is evil. It is fundamental to reconquer, rebuild, embody and experiment the current state of moral and ethical values. Both within and outside of ourselves we feel how all this is related to the proximity to or the distance from others at every different level, from the simplest to the most complex one. Therefore the protagonists of an emerging and passionate sentimental reasoning can reveal and redefine themselves as all-rounded subjects. People that are, interpret and act while relating to one another as well as together. We are experiencing this practically speaking in the interpersonal dialogues with so many friends, in the La Comune teams, in the “Scuola Internazionale***”, in the distribution of the newspaper, in the theoretical research. We can see evidence of this in the fundraising campaign in particular, which carries on even in these difficult days . This shows quality and coherence from our comrades, the value and the generosity of all those who are making donations, but above all conviction and determination towards our totally independent endeavor. We can see and experience the possibility of being more humane to better dedicate ourselves to others. The project, the prospects, the ambitious idea and the humble and explicit practice of that free and alternative commonality where we find our origins and get our name from, are now all the more actual, practical, true, useful, free, beneficial, beautiful and possible.

March 23, 2020
Dario Renzi

(the fundamental outline of this text was presented and discussed by the Methodological Theoretical Leadership of the Humanist Socialist Current)

**A process of mobilization which has been taking place in Italy in recent months*

*** It refers to the Italian national anthem*

**** The International School of the Humanist Socialist Current takes place every year at “La Casa della Cultura” in Vallombrosa (Firenze, Italy)*