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BUILDING FORWARD BETTER AFTER THE RAIN

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PREPARING OURSELVES FOR WHAT'S TO COME

Jacques Attali

THE incredible efforts, undertaken in several countries with the help (in many cases) of both public and philanthropic resources, to develop, test, and manufacture effective vaccines against the COVID-19 disease, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, are to be lauded. This series of initial successes is a testament to the awesome potential to advance the human condition even, and perhaps particularly, in times of adversity and crisis. But we are far from having won the day: not just because we still do not know when, perhaps even if, this virus will be eradicated, but because the pandemic is still far from being brought to heel: to speak seriously of herd immunity requires one to speak in planetary terms—and we must acknowledge that the effort to vaccinate the Global South has barely gotten off the ground. At certain stages of the crisis—perhaps

still today—we could even say that the developing world had never been more overlooked by the developed.

Moreover, the larger question of the nature of the recovery—the manner in which it will take place (and here again the scope is planetary); whether it will be sustainable; whether it will be put in the service of what I call the “economics of life” —is only now being put on the agenda.

To all this we must add that our inter-necine quarrels continue unabated.

All told, humanity still appears to be going through a nightmare. And it seems to me that too many of us still have only one desire, one ambition, one plea: that this nightmare ends and that we come back to the world of before.

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Photo: Guiver Image/Getty Images

Jacques Attali

I am enraged in the face of such blindness, because even if this pandemic were to disappear quickly and completely—by itself or thanks to a super vaccine or a wonder drug—we would be unable to return to the way of life of before with the wave of a magic wand.

I am enraged that we have not yet sufficiently understood that the current crisis has shown that a global recession—negative growth in virtually every country—is not enough to solve the environmental problem; and, moreover, that trying to solve ecological problems without solving social and democratic one at the same time will get us nowhere.

I am enraged to see so many governments around the world, including those of Europe, preferring to follow, in a panic, the model of Chinese dictatorship, that had failed when it really mattered, at the beginning; and to put their economies at half-mast rather than taking, say, South Korean democracy as their model, which, like several others, knew as early as January 2020 how to define a strategy, persuade its public opinion, and mobilize its companies to make them produce masks and tests in a timely manner—without putting its social fabric in the temporary grave in which too many other countries, in imitation of the Chinese, decided to lock themselves up.

I am enraged to see that so many countries failed to understand, for so many years, that healthcare is an asset and not a burden. I am enraged that so many countries, for so many years, cut the budgets of hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

I am enraged to see the world put itself on pause, as if it had understood that everything needed to be changed, but without daring to do so.

I am enraged to see all governments—or nearly all governments—move from bewilderment to denial, and then from denial to procrastination; and then to just stop there for much too long. I am enraged that no country truly shifted to a war economy footing. I am enraged to see the criminal economy profit from the misfortune of ordinary people.

I am enraged to see the implementation of needlessly liberticidal, falsely temporary measures. I am enraged to see the poorest, and their children, having to pay with their lives for the neglect of leaders. I am enraged to see so many people dream of returning to the world of before—the world that produced this crisis. I am enraged to see so many others striking such lovely poses before the cameras whilst expounding on what sort of new society will be

necessary without even a scintilla of an idea of how to get us there.

I am enraged to see those who lead—or aspire to lead, like those who advise or opine—offer next to nothing about how to adapt to the exhilarating times

to come, and how to meet the fantastic needs of the world.

PANDEMICS AND WAR

Like previous major pandemics in history, today's is

first and foremost an accelerator of developments already in the making. Disastrous developments. Positive developments.

A very brutal accelerator.

Many wanted to question the comparison of a pandemic—particularly of this pandemic—with a war. And yet, the comparison is apt—and easier to embrace by countries that have won a war than in those, like France, that lost all their recent conflicts or even collaborated with the enemy during, say, World War II.

When this pandemic started, as when a war starts, the world turned upside down in a matter of hours; and as when a war starts, hardly anyone in almost any country had a real strategy.

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As in August 1914 and September 1939, it was initially thought that the pandemic would only last a few months.

As in a war, fundamental freedoms have been abused; many have died and are still dying; many leaders are being swept away; a ruthless battle is being fought between those who want to return to the world of before and those who have understood that this is impossible—impossible socially, impossible politically, impossible economically, and impossible ecologically.

As in a war, everything will depend on the relationship to death. A collective death, not an individual one. A visible death, not an intimate one. A multiple death: creeping, present; a death that loses its uniqueness, and also makes everyone lose it.

Everything will therefore be played out in relation to time. Because in a pandemic, only time is valuable—as in a war. Everyone's time. And not just that of those who, come what may, will benefit from this crisis.

As in a war, the victors will be those who were the first to display courage and have recourse to arms. And to have both

one and the other in the time ahead, an unflinching mobilization around a new, radical project will be required. This is the meaning of the title of my book: *The Economics of Life* (2020), from which this essay is extracted.

An untold number of past generations, also having faced major crises, chose to play the part of an ostrich. Then, seized with childish conceit, they had believed that the evil was conquered and

that they were done with it. They then abandoned all caution too quickly to return to the world of before. And they lost everything.

Conversely, others were able to identify what was in the process of being born; and they were able to refashion their troubled era and transform it into a moment of overtaking, of paradigm shift.

Will we be able to make this pandemic into such a moment—into *the* moment—for humankind?

AFTERWARDS?

Irepeat: plenty of people will come out of this pandemic armed with a frantic desire to return to the world of before. And we can understand them: many wish to return to a world

in which they were neither surveilled nor infantilized. Those who have lost their jobs, their businesses, and their workshops will dream of regaining their previous way of life and previous standard of living. They will want to buy the car of their dreams. Those who love to travel will want to rediscover their passion and visit all the world's places. Many captains of industry, believing they are done with the panic that dictated all their essential decisions, will want to return to previous levels of production and profit, without however recruiting new employees, or producing anything new, or anything similar. Many political leaders will want to regain their former popularity, all the while attempting to retain the supposedly temporary powers that the emergency allowed them to obtain.

Conversely, a few people will emerge from the still-ongoing confinement with a feeling of nostalgia: those who worked at their own pace, embraced their loneliness, or enjoying this break to a precipitous life. The privilege of such people—whether due to their high remuneration or retirement pension—has not been brought into question.

Many democracies will have been so profoundly damaged by this ordeal that they could disappear, unless we move from the economics of survival to the "economics of life"—unless we move from a "democracy of abandonment" to a "combative democracy."

Many others, having lived through their confinement in a hellish state, will want to rediscover other conversations, other friends, other spaces, other loves. Many occupations will no longer have a *raison d'être* and tens of millions of

people, brutally thrown out of work, will have to reinvent themselves.

Many nations will have been too affected to hope to quickly regain their previous standard of living—unless they are able to change profoundly how they organize themselves.

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that they could disappear, unless we move from the economics of survival to the "economics of life"—unless we move from a "democracy of abandonment" to a "combative democracy."

What then is this "economics of life"? This crisis revealed that our economic and social system was not prepared for a huge yet predictable event. It has likewise revealed that this pandemic has been greatly aggravated, if not even provoked, by our lifestyles and our deleterious impact on ecosystems.

So it becomes obvious: we have to call into question very deeply our modes

of organization, consumption, and production. Our societies must reorient their economies towards sectors in which production has been sorely lacking yet has been found to be vital. First, the sectors needed to win the battle against the pandemic. Then, those for which pandemic has revealed a need.

Together, they form what I call the "economy of life," which must be promoted.

The economy of life brings together all the companies that, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, make it their mission to allow everyone to live well.

They are very numerous: healthcare, prevention, hygiene, sport, culture, urban infrastructure, housing, food, agriculture, territorial protection; but also: the functioning of democracy, security, defense, waste management, recycling, water supply, clean energy, ecology and the protection of biodiversity, education, research, innovation, digital technology, trade, logistics, freight transport, public transport, information and media, insurance, savings, and credit.

Today, these sectors represent, depending on the country, between 40 and 70 percent of GDP; and between 40 and 70 percent of employment. They represent around 58 percent of GDP in

The economy of life brings together all the companies that, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, make it their mission to allow everyone to live well.

the United States, 56 percent in the European Union and 51 percent in Japan. It is these ratios that must be changed to reach 80 percent. The development of these sectors will be the best and fastest means of securing a durable and sustainable exit from our global recession.

It is also towards this economy of life that companies in other sectors must be reoriented—companies that today, in vain in my opinion, await the chimerical return of their markets to the status quo ante: automotive compa-

nies, aeronautics, machine tools, fashion, chemicals, plastics, hydrocarbons, sugar, luxury goods, tourism; none of these will see their previous markets in the same way again.

These companies are not, however, condemned: their leaders, and their unions, must also mobilize to find other ways of providing the same service, or to render others, in the sectors of the economy of the life. All have the wherewithal to achieve this, if they are willing to dare to rethink completely.

The "combative democracy" of which I speak is just as necessary to securing our future as is the economics of life, and it should be based on five basic principles:

One, combative democracy must be *representative*. Its elected officials and leaders must reflect all of a country's social classes.

Two, it must *protect life*. And, for that, it must reorient itself towards the economics of life.

Three, it must be *modest*. The current crisis has shown that no power can claim to know everything. That even the greatest power must confess its ignorance. That it must share both its questions and doubts with its citizenry, especially with regards to the future. That it must allow both criticism and conflicting proposals to flourish, and for these to be permitted to be debated freely. Such requirements are also valid for opposition parties, journalists, commentators, and specialists (and those who claim to be specialists).

Four, it must be *just*. Any crisis most affects the most vulnerable. And politicians must admit at the onset the imperative of social justice in order to make bearable that which is now and that which is still to come. A fair system of taxation needs to be put at the very top of the pile. Democracy in particular will not survive a refusal to tax the great fortunes operating within its midst at a

much higher rate—some of these, as we know, have grown even more affluent during this crisis.

Five, it must finally take into account, democratically, the *interests of future generations*. Since they cannot have the right

Combative democracy should be based on five basic principles: it must be representative, protect life, be modest, be just, and take into account the interests of future generations.

to vote, it will be necessary to measure how the current generations take into account the interests of future generations and to organize debates around these measures, of a duration proportionate to the urgency of the decisions to be taken.

The five principles of combative democracy should be applied differently in different countries, of course, and it would take us too far off course to get into the details here. But this does not mean it is not of critical importance.

Wanting to return to how it was before is to condemn oneself to suffer even more seriously during the next major incident that will affect humanity. This is not solely about preparations for the next pandemic or the next climate tragedy. It is also about preventing the definite condemnation of democracy, which will be unable to recover from a new attack on its principles and practices if we allow ourselves to return to the pre-pandemic business-as-usual approach.

Because there will be other pandemics, other shocks of a different nature yet of the same magnitude. And worse ones still; many others. Any one of these could lead to the collapse of our economies, our liberties, our civilizations.

To foresee and counter them, it will be necessary to use all the weapons of the imagination, much more than those of forecasting.

One will need not only to draw lessons from the past and be prepared for its return; one must also be prepared for the unexpected, for the unknown. And for that, an analysis of what are called the “forms of madness” will be much more important than those of the accountants: science fiction will be more useful than economics textbooks.

For a long time, thousands of science fiction books and films have spoken to us about what threatens humanity, providing us with the means to predict our own future. Here we can refer only to a few that evoke a pandemic: Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826); Jean-Pierre Andreuon's *Le monde enfin* (2006); Danny Boyle's film “28 Days Later” (2002); Marc Forster's film “World War Z” (2002); Deon Meyer's *Fever* (2016); Russell T Davies'

mini-series for television “Years and Years” (2019); and Steven Soderbergh's film “Contagion” (2011). And there are so many others that portray other threats to the survival of humanity, like Richard Matheson's great classic *I Am Legend* (1954); Bernard Wolfe's lesser-

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known *Limbo* (1952); and Liu Cixin's extraordinary *The Three-Body Problem* (2006)—the first volume of a trilogy, the subject of which is humanity's reactions to an extraterrestrial announcement that our race will be destroyed four centuries hence.

And there are so many others that have also fed and still feed my imagination.

I learned much more from reading such books and watching such movies and shows than from any economics or political science article. With these works I have learned to think outside the box—to explore roads of light and darkened paths in unexpected places. I also discovered that the best way to avoid the worst is to prepare for it. And to love.

Even video games have a lot to teach us. So with “World of Warcraft,” which a bug transformed for a week into a place of an uncontrollable pandemic, a pandemic so complex, although limited to the interior of a video game, that

no one could predict its course—until, that is, the moment its creators choose to reinitialize completely the game's servers to end it.

The thing is this: in the face of the present pandemic or in the face of future threats—unforeseeable or foreseeable—we will not be able to pull the cord out of the wall and reset humanity. We will have to deal with ourselves as we are at the moment when the next calamity hits. And we can hope that by then humanity becomes more sagacious, more just, more free, and, at long last, mindful of the fate of future generations.

For this to stand a chance of happening, we will have to start by predicting the worst that may await us. To prepare for it and to avoid it.

FUTURE PANDEMICS

No one yet knows how the current pandemic will evolve or when it will come to an end. It all depends on the effectiveness of deconfinement measures, in addition of course to the development and deployment of vaccines to counter not only the original virus but the growing number of mutations—vaccines that need to be distributed not simply across the developed world but also as rapidly as humanly possible in the developing as well. Additional waves are still possible, and we must be prepared to organize and

introduce new lockdowns, at random intervals, when the situation calls for it.

As we know quite well already, each new confinement has constituted a new economic, social, and political shock that added new misfortunes to existing tragedies. In particular, exhausted and decimated (in the literal sense of the word) hospital staff faced the initial onslaught of the pandemic with great courage, dedication, and competence. And we know that they have had increasing difficulty in coping with successive waves. Should these continue—or get worse—worn-out and exhausted democracies would accept to slide towards dictatorship even more quickly, in the event that the exigencies of surveillance would impose themselves and supersede upon all laws. With the media more concerned with reporting on scandal than telling the truth. Without exception. Until they are gagged by the dictatorships they helped create.

Beyond the current pandemic, others are possible. Even probable. On indiscernible dates. And it would be criminal to prepare for it as badly as we did for the one that we continue to experience today.

First, another variant of the H5N1 avian influenza virus is almost inevitable. Its place of origin is likely once again to be China if live animals come again to be sold in markets without concern for the dangers emanating

from microbial excreta. This was the case during the H3N2 influenza pandemic in 1969, which came from pigs, and during the H7N9 virus in 2013, which came from birds—it was also perhaps the case with regards to our present virus. We can nevertheless hope that this one will lead to changes in practices with respect to large animal husbandry in both Asia and Europe, and that it will also lead to better monitoring mechanisms for emerging contagious diseases.

This would require coming to an agreement on a universal standard as well as equipping ourselves with the means to enforce it. Such rules exist with respect to other threats; but they are only really effective if they benefit from global means of control. This is only the case with respect to the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons.

Neither is a large part of humanity protected from a return of cholera, a highly contagious disease that spreads both through the environment (water) and by people-to-people contact. No one is really prepared for it.

We are also at the mercy of an edible plant that is believed to be the carrier of a deadly microorganism. More than 200 diseases can be caused by eating foods containing pathogenic microorganisms. Each year, 600 million people fall ill after consuming contaminated food; 420,000 die from it. In 2011, the sudden

emergence in France and Germany of an epidemic associated with the contamination of plant products affected more than 3,500 people. Episodes of contamination of plant products have also occurred in England and the United States in the past ten years. Others of the same kind but much more massive in scope are possible. There again, to avoid them, it would take planetary standards to impose a flawless hygiene regime concerning fields, vegetable gardens, systems of transport, storage, conservation, preparation, and sale. And of course the means to effectively enforce them.

We can also imagine an act of bioterrorism, by which a microbe or a virus would be deliberately spread by terrorists, criminals, or madmen. The most dangerous and most likely agents are anthrax, botulism, smallpox, and hemorrhagic fever viruses. Such an act, committed without an immediate claim of responsibility, would give the scourge time to run undetected through airports, trains, and subways, which would make it almost impossible for the authorities to react in a timely manner in containing the deadly outbreak.

One cannot rule out that some stocks of deadly microbes may have been recovered by various terrorist groups following the collapse of the Soviet Union. And agents of this sort are not that difficult to make.

In anticipation of this type of attack, many countries, including the United States, have developed specific detection methods and early warning systems.

While an international treaty—the Biological Weapons Convention, as it is now known, which currently has 183 states parties and four signatory states—prohibits these weapons. But it does not provide for any compliance monitoring regime. In other words, it is totally useless.

Finally, cyberattacks can destroy economies; this category represents one of the main threats of the future. They can also directly attack increasingly smart-wired human beings, not only through pacemakers but through many other digital prostheses to come (e.g. implants, batteries, nanobots regulating blood flow). Such prostheses are being developing as we speak: a company called Cyberkinetics is working on a system of neural implants whose signals could be decoded in real time. The chipmaker Intel plans soon to market electronic brain chips capable of controlling computers without a keyboard or mouse. And so on.

Experiments and simulations of attacks against such digital prostheses have already taken place: in 2010, for example, a British doctor named Mark Gasson intentionally attacked an RFID chip grafted into his left hand.

A terrorist (or an intelligence service, for that matter) could remotely empty the batteries of a pacemaker or send it a fatal shock. One could also hack into neurostimulators implanted in the brains of patients with Parkinson's disease or those suffering from epilepsy. Or others to come. Body implants could be diverted from their mission and used, for example, to inject devastating hormones. And many other acts of madness.

ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

In the same way as with these pandemics, which are predictable and must be anticipated, we must prepare for future ecological disasters. Especially since, unlike pandemics, they have been already predicted with precision and we know full well what should be done to avoid them.

These disasters are already here: nine out of ten people breathe polluted air. According to the WHO, each year more than 12 million people die from causes related to environmental problems like air quality, water quality, exposure to chemicals, and climate change.

We know everything about the growth to be feared from non-biodegradable waste, the decline of coral reefs, and the disappearance of diversity in nature; we know that, at the current rate, there will be more plastic by volume than fish in the waters of the Earth by 2050.

Each year, more than 8 million tons of plastic are released into the oceans. By 2050, all species of seabirds will ingest plastic regularly. In addition, the current health crisis seems to be causing the greater consumption of single-use plastics, perhaps putting an end to the trend towards their reduction. In France, for example, 50 percent of manufacturers in the plastics sector have seen their activity increase since the start of the pandemic crisis. And global production is expected to increase threefold within five years, and fivefold by 2050.

By 2050, soil degradation could reduce agricultural yields by 10 percent on average and up to 50 percent in some regions, particularly in Africa.

In addition, as land (especially forests) is degraded, natural carbon deposits essential to the Earth's balance will disappear.

In addition, climate change is accelerating.

We must fear an increase in the temperature of the Earth's surface of more than 4°C in 2100. Since the beginning of 2020, the average temperature in France has increased by more than 2°C higher than that of the average for the years 1980-2020, and this temperature is the highest since it began to be measured at the beginning of the twentieth century. If ecological transition efforts

are not accelerated, the average temperature could increase by 7°C by the end of the century. In this case, 300 million people could face flooding at least once a year in 2050, and by 2100 the sea level would rise by at least 1,1 meters, or even by 2 meters in the most pessimistic scenarios.

If we do not act, natural disasters will also increase in frequency and intensity; rainfall will increase in humid regions, resulting in more frequent storms, and decrease in dry regions, causing severe droughts. By 2100, 75 percent of the population will be exposed to deadly heat waves.

Such climate change would further exacerbate land degradation and put pressure on global food security.

The pollution of fresh water threatens drinking water resources, exacerbating the risks of water stress and scarcity of drinking water in the most vulnerable regions.

So many other ecological issues are involved; in particular the threat of biodiversity. Many fear—or hope—that an increase in this threat will cause a collapse of our civilizations and even result in the disappearance of the human species: a new mass extinction.

In any case, all this will very quickly have major economic consequences.

Many analyses show that global warming alone could lead to a 3 percent drop in global GDP by 2030.

NOTHING SERIOUS

Faced with all this, what are we doing? Not much. We know that the use of carbon energies should be massively reduced. This requires immense efforts and the 2015 Paris Climate Accords—which aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—is absolutely not in a position to be respected. Its goal was to contain the rise in average temperature by 2100 to well below 2°C above the pre-industrial level, by setting a target of 1.5°C.

To have any chance of achieving this, nearly 75 percent of primary energy production would need to come from non-fossil fuels by 2040. This will notably require a much greater use of carbon-free electricity. However, in 2020, the share of fossil fuels in energy consumption was still around 80 percent, while carbon-free electricity represented only 12 percent of the total energy consumed in the world.

According to the United Nations Environment Program, the commitments made so far by the signatories of the Paris Climate Accords put the planet on a warming trajectory of 3.2°C by the end of the century.

Another striking example of the defection of the vast majority of states: the signatories had, according to the principles set by the Paris Climate Accords, until early February 2020 to submit to the United Nations a list of their national contributions to the fight against global warming. Only three countries met this deadline, representing less than 0.1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions: the Marshall Islands, Surinam, and Norway!

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And nothing serious is being done to limit the use of plastic, to organize the reduction of waste and its recycling, to protect the corals, to expand the marine protected areas, and to reduce the use of certain harmful chemicals in agriculture.

Ecological change is not just an issue in itself. One of its consequences would be to increase the risk of pandemics: many infectious diseases will be aggravated by the rise in temperature and humidity as well as by the increase in waste and pollution of the sea.

A warmer climate could decrease human beings' immune responses and make us more vulnerable to influenza epidemics. With global warming, the flu could indeed extend throughout the year, giving it more time to mutate.

Mosquitoes, whose habits will be disrupted by global warming, could easily cause new kinds of pandemics; in particular mosquitoes of the Aedes family, carriers of dengue, chikungunya, and Zika. Originally from Africa and Southeast Asia, they could settle permanently much further north. In addition, anopheles could cause a return of malaria to Europe, after a century of respite. This is already the case for the tiger mosquito, which, before 2004, was not present in France, whereas it is now found in 51 out of France's 101 départements.

Their danger is established: one million people in the world already die each year from diseases transmitted by mosquitoes, particularly in Asia and Africa. And this number will increase—especially since the area of rice paddies, which are excellent breeding sites for anopheline larvae, must double for basic food security reasons. If temperatures rise by 4°C by 2100, these mosquitoes could threaten the lives of nearly one billion people. In particular, the number of Europeans exposed to viruses transmitted by mosquitoes could double.

Finally, due to the rise in temperatures, permafrost (ground frozen continuously for at least two years) could lose 70 percent of its surface by 2100. However, the viruses and bacteria it contains are not all inactive, which

could bring back diseases that were thought to have disappeared completely—and about which we know nothing.

And again, nothing serious is being done. We are even witnessing the introduction of yet another new form of carelessness, similar to what we experienced a few years ago with regard to masks: the production of mosquito nets, so essential to curb pandemics carried by mosquitoes, has been interrupted in India and greatly reduced in Vietnam. And the fight against stagnant water, which is the other critical way to protect oneself from mosquitoes, is not progressing as quickly as it needs to.

THE DARK PANDEMIC

Faced with this, we can fear a “final pandemic,” as it were: a dark political wave in which, in an End-of-Days sort of political climate, dictatorships increasingly prevail, with slogans openly advocating xenophobia and a firm hand. The proponents of these regimes will say, against the evidence, that democracies had not been able to resolve previous crises; that border closures are necessary; that foreigners, whoever they are, are a threat; that we have to produce everything at home and not rely on any outsiders; that we must arm ourselves against all those, at home and abroad, who will be identified as the enemies. They will want a society in which everyone will be watched

for everything—where we will know everything about everyone’s health and behavior. A society that will ignore democracy and one in which the media will become nothing more than a conduit for entertainment and propaganda for those in power.

This already exists in many countries. And this would be expanded in the event of further pandemics. Such a state of affairs would be accepted in many places and by many people: because the pandemic leads to distrust of others—to accept being watched, so that others may too be watched. Because fear always pushes people to prioritize security over freedom. And because social distancing and mask-wearing push people to dehumanize the Other, which can lead in turn to an indifference towards the destiny of the Other...

These threats are not unrealistic. Even in many European countries, democracy is already being brought into question. One can feel its fragility; and one can hear views expressed to the effect that democracy in its current form is simply not up to meeting the challenges of the world.

Even in many European countries, democracy is already being brought into question. One can feel its fragility; and one can hear views expressed to the effect that democracy in its current form is simply not up to meeting the challenges of the world.

In the same way that the temperature rises slowly, without realizing it, totalitarianism will advance continuously, sometimes without a dictator taking over, without a regime break, without any particular announcement, and

served by politicians who will still believe themselves to be democrats but who will in truth no longer be so. They will put themselves in the service of interest groups that will remain discreet at first.

We will then discover a new form of dictatorship within our midst: one that will continue to be called “democra-

cy” and to which no one, or almost no one, will contest the right to be called such. What is also called today, too loosely, “democratorship”—a combination of the words ‘democracy’ and ‘dictatorship.’

Much worse still: one can fear that the desire to end the human race will arise, for it will have done too much harm to nature and to itself. A bit like in “World of Warcraft,” where players have found pleasure in infecting others, to see what ensued. Or like a terminally ill patient, who would choose suicide, so as not to have to suffer too much from his own death...

SEMPITERNAL FUTURE

To continue like this is to go straight towards a revolution, of which the middle classes will be the engines, before they too, in the end, together with the poorest, become the victims: for more than 70 years of ultra-liberal drugs have killed all will and all means for the democratic state to act firmly and with sufficient resolve to conceive and execute truly grand projects.

To continue like this is to play into the hands of dictatorships, which are preparing for the future. Two examples will suffice.

One, China recently announced the launch of a program focused on seven skillfully chosen sectors: 5G, the internet, rapid transit between cities, data centers, artificial intelligence, high voltage energy, and charging stations electric vehicles. All are sectors that will make it possible to strengthen the surveillance of the citizenry—and to do so without having to import hydrocarbons.

Two, the United Arab Emirates also recently announced a project focusing on six sectors: health, education, economy, food hygiene, social life, and public administration.

To think not just about tomorrow but the day after tomorrow and all the days that follow is really to think broadly—it is to think about life plentifully and the human condition holistically.

It is up to the democracies to do better. As quickly as possible.

To think not just about tomorrow but the day after tomorrow and all the days that follow is really to think broadly—it is to think about life plentifully and the human condition holistically. It is to really think about what we want to do with our life—so short, so fragile, so full of surprises; and so rare, too.

It is to think about the lives of others: of humanity and of the living.

It is to think not with a fear of dying, but in the jubilation of living. To live every moment, happily. With the smile of the condemned that we all are. In gratitude to those who make the future possible and the desire to create a world in which the disasters discussed in this essay, although undoubtedly inevitable, would be so well prepared that no one would have to worry about them—neither before nor during. For ourselves, our children, our children’s children, and so on into sempiternity.

So many beautiful, exhilarating things await the generations to come, but only if today we make a choice to take care of them and their future. Properly, with sagacity and forethought. ●