THE DAY AFTER*

No future
We lost floor underfoot.

Our world was reasonably predictable. Suddenly, from one day to another, deep trends that allowed us to anticipate the general and probable course of events and behaviors disappeared. We can no longer foresee what will happen. We are facing radical uncertainty.

There are inertias, obsessions and propensities. We can correctly assume that a variety of actors and sectors of society will persist in the lines of behavior that characterize them. But we cannot know the outcome of their actions in what will undoubtedly be a new balance of forces, under radically new circumstances.

The world we will experience after the pandemic will not have changed because of it, but for previous critical conditions. We know almost nothing about the climate that is emerging after the climate collapse. Even less do we know what will remain of the institutions after the socio-political collapse. The pandemic only heightened the challenges at the crossroads we had already reached.

The end of the world

We must vigorously reject the apocalyptic randiness that has been proliferating to spread panic, but we need to acknowledge that the world we knew came to an end and will not return. None of the forms or definitions we can give to "normality" will come back...and many people are joining Evade Chile in its statement on March 19: "We will not return to normality, because normality was the problem".

To the very real danger of the virus, another one is now added: an unprecedented authoritarian wave. The darkest forces in society, throughout the world, are using all their power to establish a society of

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The Chinese government has been trying for years to create a “social credit system”, rewarding or punishing people for what they do or fail to do in their daily life. It is not yet fully implemented, but it was used during the pandemic to identify contacts of the people infected and to control the general behavior. The Western system goes a lot farther and in another direction. For years, Google, Facebook, Amazon, Uber and other corporations transformed personal information into a commodity. Their increasing knowledge of what the people think and do allows them to anticipate what they will do. Anticipations, increasingly precise, are an attractive commodity. A market for “behavioral futures” is now thriving. Within the frame of the extractivist imperative, the dispossession of personal information would be the ultimate expression of the dominant voracity.

The pandemic precipitated decisions that governments have not dared to try, like closing universities and schools to operate only online teaching. These kind of measures, temporary for now, mark a path towards conditions in which "machines will replace all contact -all contagion-between human beings"¹ Not even Orwell was able to imagine such dystopia.

As Boaventura de Santos warned, democracy is being democratically dismantled.² In many places the police arrived long before the medical personnel. Many people, until yesterday passionate advocates of democratic practices, are fervently applauding the process that eliminates them. What Foucault called the fascist that we all carry inside, the one that makes us love the power that oppresses us, is exploited in the name of the pandemic.³ COVID-19 would be justifying general obedience to often-foolish rules and instructions. The broth of social discipline necessary to establish the new authoritarian regime is thus cultivated.

**A new horizon**
People are using every opportunity of their inevitable local rooting to regain meaning in their lives and recover their senses. Millions of people are now forced to locally produce their own lives: neither the market nor the state will be able to take care of them. Thousands of urban and rural communities are no longer obliged to dance the music that all kinds of social forces played for them, and now are silent. They have to create survival conditions by themselves. Suddenly, unexpectedly, the importance of the local is restored.

The main battle of the war involving every one of us will be fought in the stomach.

Since the thirties there were not lines like those observed recently in the Great Food Depository of Chicago or in thousands of *kitchen soups* that distribute free food in the United States. Many people cannot pay for their food. Before the emergency, more than 800 million people in the world went to bed every night on an empty stomach. The number increases every day. In the coming months, according to the experts, famines not seen since the Middle Ages will emerge.

During the emergency, millions of people were fed at home by the dominant system. If that pattern continues and most people consume again the food offered in the market, agribusiness may intensify its devastating operation generating more pandemics. Rich Argentine pampas will continue to be used to feed Chinese pigs and the Amazon will become a soybeans factory.

The dominant food system loves to feed people in their home; if they could they would feed them in the mouth, as with babies. But people are already resisting. They are closing malls, multiplying partnerships between urban consumers and rural producers and increasing cultivation at home. The emergency propelled such arrangements like never before.

The awareness that Eduardo Galeano formulated like no other is widening and deepening: “In these times of global fear, those who are not
afraid of hunger are afraid of eating." The food offered in the market is sickening and killing us. It is time to embody the notion of food autonomy suggested by Via Campesina: to determine ourselves what we eat...and to produce it.

In April 2020 a peculiar shortage arose in New York and other big cities: the yeast to make bread ran out. Thousands of families were recovering traditions and skills to prepare their own food. Many people learned with the emergency that the places where they live may no longer be mere bedrooms and TV rooms; they could again become homes for the daily practice of the art of eating, the art of dwelling, the joy of living.

Most people, either confined or forced to struggle in the streets for survival, either constrained by imposed rules that they consider appropriate to obey -even when they seem foolish- or in the freedom of towns and neighborhoods that are defining their own norms, were forced by the pandemic to reconsider the direction of the gaze. They began to see their places again, the specific persons around them, even those neighbors who barely said hello. Instead of looking towards the global, the national, the population, human lives probabilistically modeled by the experts, instead of a perception imposed by a maddened system, they began to recover their own gaze.

Day after day, the mental and practical fabric that refuses to accept im-munity, the rejection of all reciprocal obligations (the common munus) to assert itself in the community, begins now to be forged. In "enemy’s territory", just as Giap used the North American war machine to defeat it, new expressions appear. "Cultural hacking" consists of "making radicalism common sense. Open source insurrectional narratives. Defend life and territory; disrupt oppression systems one meme at a time".

Finally, it is about returning to what we are, what dharma expresses in India, or comunalidad among the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca: persons, knots of nets of concrete relationships, which can only be what they are
when those nets form community. There is no better antidote against the rampant authoritarianism stimulated by the pandemic, in the last expression of the patriarchal kingdom. And it is bringing new hope to a world falling into desperation.

San Pablo Etna, April 15, 2020

1 Giorgio Agamben in an interview: “The epidemic shows that the state of emergency has become the normal condition”, Le Monde, 03/24/2020.


