

Abridged version of the Convivialist manifesto

Declaration of interdependence [1]

Humanity has never had so many material resources as well as scientific and technical expertise at its disposal. Taken as a whole, its wealth and power have grown to an extent unimaginable in previous centuries. There is no evidence that this has made us any happier, but there is little desire for a reversal of the trend, given the prevalent view that new opportunities for personal development and collective achievement continue to unravel every day.

Yet, conversely, there are plenty of reasons to believe that this accumulation of power cannot continue endlessly, in its present technological logic, without becoming self-destructive and threatening to the moral and physical survival of humanity. The first threats that we are required to address are material, technical, ecological and economical. In a word: Entropical threats. We are, however, much less able to even begin to imagine answers to the second type of threats, that is moral and political threats. In a word: Anthropogenic threats.

The fundamental problem

The evidence lies before our eyes: humanity has managed to achieve stunning scientific and technological progress, but it has so far remained powerless at solving its most essential problem: How to deal with rivalry and violence between human beings? How to encourage cooperation while allowing for confrontation that does not lead to deadly violence? How to resist the unlimited and potentially self-destructive accumulation of power over humanity and nature? If it fails to answer this issue promptly, humanity could disappear, even while the necessary material resources are in place for us to prosper, if we fail to recognize the finiteness of these very resources.

Many elements of a response are already at our disposal, such as those that have been offered by religions, moralities, philosophy and political doctrines over the centuries, as well as by humanities and social sciences. Moreover, the initiatives which point towards an alternative to the current organisation of the world are also countless, and carried out by tens of thousands of organisations and associations, and by tens or hundreds of millions of people. They appear under a wide variety of names, forms and scales: the defence of human rights in general as well as those for citizens, workers, the unemployed, women, and children; solidarity economy and all its components: consumer' and producer' cooperatives, mutualism, fair trade, alternative and complementary currencies, local exchange systems, mutual aid associations; open-access and sharing based ITs (eg. Linux, Wikipedia, etc.); de-growth and post-development; slow food, slow town, slow science; the claim for the buen vivir, the assertion of the rights of nature and the praise of the Pachamama; anti-globalisation, political ecology and radical democracy, the Indignados, Occupy; the search for alternative wealth indicators, movements promoting personal transformation, voluntary simplicity, frugal abundance, dialog initiatives between civilisations, care theories, emerging debates around the notion of commons, etc.

In order for such rich initiatives to successfully overcome the deadly dynamics of our times, and so that they are not limited to a mere protest and palliative role, it is essential to bring

together their strengths and energies. Hence the importance to name what they have in common and draw attention to this rather than to what opposes them.

On Convivialism

Their common point is the search for what we call a Convivialism, i.e. for an art of living together (con-vivere) that would allow humans to take care of each other and of Nature, without denying the legitimacy of conflict, yet by using it as a dynamizing and creativity-sparking force, a means to ward off violence and killing. To achieve this, we now need to prioritize the definition of a shared “doctrinal” minimum that can fuel, sustain and legitimize an array of simultaneous answers applicable across the globe. This basis should address at least four (plus one) basic questions:

- *The moral question*: what can individual hope for and what should they forbid themselves from doing?

- *The political question*: what are the legitimate political communities?

- *The ecological question*: what can we take from nature and what should we give back?

- *The economic question*: how much material wealth are we allowed to produce, while remaining within the boundaries framed by the answers provided on the moral, political and ecological planes?

- Anyone is then welcome to add, or not, to these four questions, ones related to the relationship to the *supranatural or the invisible*. In other words: the question of meaning.

General considerations:

The only legitimate, generalizable social order is one inspired by a four-pronged principle of common humanity, of common sociality, of individuation, and of mastered and creative confrontation.

Principle of common humanity: beyond differences of skin colour, nationality, language, culture, religion, wealth, gender, or sexual orientation, there is only one humanity, which has to be respected in each and every one of its members.

Principle of common sociality: human beings are social beings for whom the greatest wealth is the wealth of social relationships.

Individuation principle: in agreement with the two aforementioned principles, a legitimate politics is one which enables anyone to assert and develop, at best, their singular individuality, by increasing his or her power to be and behave without harming others.

Mastered and creative confrontation principle: because everyone is destined to express his or her singular individuality, it is natural for humans to oppose each other. It is, however, legitimate to do so only as long as it does not endanger the framework of common sociality which makes this rivalry a fertile and non-destructive one.

Ensuing from these principles are:

Moral considerations

What every individual is entitled to hope for is to see him or herself recognised with equal dignity with all other human beings, to reach sufficient material conditions to realise his or her vision of a good life, whilst respecting other people's views.

What every individual is not allowed to in turn is overbearing excessiveness (the Greek's hubris), to violate the principle of common humanity and endanger common sociality.

In concrete terms, everyone's duty is to fight against corruption.

Political considerations

From the Convivialist perspective, a state, government, or newly-formed political institution shall only be held as legitimate if:

- They respect the four principles: of common humanity, common sociality, individuation and mastered confrontation, and if they help the implementation of moral, ecological and economical considerations which ensue from them.

More specifically, legitimate states guarantee to the poorest of their citizens a minimum amount of resources, a minimum wage, in any form, which shelters them from the abjection of deprivation, and progressively prevents the richest, through the implementation of a maximum wage, from the abjection of extreme wealth to such a level which would neutralise the principles of common humanity and common sociality;

Ecological considerations

Humanity can no more consider itself as the owner and master of Nature, in accordance with the fundamental tenet that, far from opposing Nature, we are part of it, and must therefore restore, metaphorically at least, a relationship of give and take with it. In order to leave for the future generations a preserved natural heritage, we shall give back to Nature as much, or even more, than we take or receive from it.

Economical considerations

There is no proven correlation between financial and material wealth on one hand, and happiness or welfare on the other. The ecological state of the planet makes it necessary to endeavour to achieve every possible form of prosperity without growth. It is thus necessary, in the perspective of a plural economy, to reach a balance between market, state and cooperative-based economies, depending on whether the goods or services to be produced are individual, collective or common.

What's to be done?

It should not be concealed that, in order to succeed, huge and formidable powers - financial, material, technical, scientific, intellectual, military and criminal -, will have to be faced. Against

those colossal powers, which are often invisible or difficult to locate, the three main weapons will be:

- *The indignation* felt in front of excessiveness and corruption, and the shame that must be made to be felt by those who, directly or indirectly, actively or passively, violate the principles of common humanity and common sociality.
- *The feeling of belonging to a human community on a global scale.*
- Far beyond the “rational choices” of one or the other, *the active mobilisation of affects and passions.*

Breakthrough and transition

Any concrete and applied Convivialist politics will necessarily have to take into account:

- The imperative of justice and of common sociality, which imply the reduction of the staggering disparities between the richest and the rest of the population, which have exploded globally since the 1970s.
- The desire to give a voice to regions and localities, and thus to ‘re-territorialise’ and re-localise what globalisation has externalised to an excessive degree.
- The absolute necessity to preserve the environment and natural resources.
- The pressing obligation to eradicate unemployment and to offer everyone a function and a role that is valued, in activities that are useful to the society beyond strict economic appreciation.

The translation of Convivialism into concrete actions must articulate, in practice, the pressing need to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged groups in society, and the development of alternatives to the present way of life and ensuing threats. Alternatives that effectively counter the efforts deployed to make people believe that endless economic growth can continue to be the only solution to all our problems and evils.

Translated from the French

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A few time after the post of this abridged version in English on the internet site

<http://lesconvivialistes.org> an English translation of the full manifesto has been offered by a German team : *Varii Auctores*. (2014). *Convivialist Manifesto – A declaration of interdependence*, with an introduction by Adloff, F. translated from [Varii Auctores. 2013, *Manifeste convivialiste – Déclaration d’interdépendance*, Editions le Bord de l’eau, Paris], by Clarke, M. Center for Global Cooperation Research, Global Dialogues 3, Duisburg.